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**AN INVESTIGATION INTO CONTEMPORARY HOTEL GENERAL MANAGERS
BEHAVIOUR AND ACTIVITY IN THE CONTEXT OF PRIVATE, FRANCHISE AND
CHAIN OWNERSHIP/BUSINESS MODELS**

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Andrew Lumsden Martin

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Abstract

Since the early 1990s, the rapid growth of international hotel chains and its effects on managerial work have drawn the attention of researchers (Gilbert & Guerrier, 1997 and Ladkin & Juwaheer 2000). There is a current need to investigate how management in hotels is adapting to the significant change in the last decade (McKenney, 2016).

The contemporary Hotel General Manager's (HGM's) role, responsibility, and ultimately autonomy, are seen to be largely influenced by the owners, management companies or the franchise the hotel is operating under. "Understanding the scope and limits of HGMs decision autonomy is an understudied yet important topic for hospitality research" Hodari & Sturman, 2014 p.434

How management is practiced at the highest level in the hotel is the research problem to be investigated. Kotter (2010), Whitley (1989) and Hales (1986) emphasised how the nature of managerial work is closely linked to its organisational context. Accepting that managerial work is shaped and exercised in context (Dierdorff et al, 2009; Akrivos, Ladkin and Reklitis 2007), the aim of this research is to explore and understand the way in which contemporary HGMs manage and what influences how they manage. This work aims to shed light on hotel general management across three contemporary business models in the operating environment of Aberdeen city and Aberdeenshire.

The research strategy will be interpretivist, with a qualitative approach taken to elicit HGMs' experiences about their working life and chosen activity to understand the influences on their management practice. Dann (1990), credits Hales (1987) with providing a methodology, which allows the conduct of managerial work to be placed within the context of the management process. On account of this Hale's five broad questions are built into the interview schedule. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews are held with HGMs who were members of the Aberdeen City and Shire Hotel Association. This Association has a membership of thirty-eight hotels operating through private, chain and franchise models. In total 21 HGMs are interviewed. From this data a profile of the HGM is provided, as found in each of the three ownership/business models (private, chain and franchise). The data were analysed by the constant comparison method.

This study contributes to the body of research through looking at what HGM's actually do, and how these individuals practice management. This work provides new knowledge in the form of a model, which maps out the identified management context (characteristics) that influence HGM behaviour/activity and the consequences for management across business

models surveyed. The business model under which the HGM manages is found to be the primary influence on HGM activity and behaviour. The work sheds light on the meaning of work, and why it is the way it is. At the first level of analysis management context across three business models is identified. These then map onto the second level of analysis, which explains how these influences shape management behaviour and activity. The model identifies consequences for management across the business models. The proposition in the study is that HGMs have not been de-skilled; they have instead prioritised skills and activity in line with the demands of the business model and the ownership style under which they manage. In effect new skills have been learnt, and behaviour and activity tailored to meet the contemporary demands in context of the business model. This research has found that although HGMs have the same title, they are found to be very different managers that are managing different things. Not only do the HGMs manage differently the priorities of management are also quite different. The contribution to knowledge is considered at theoretical and practical levels.

At the theoretical level a modern take on Taylorism shows that specialisation is relevant to contemporary hotel management. Silos are created on account of the business models, with markedly different ways of hotel services being delivered. The priorities of HGMs, dictated by the business model, are different. The extreme cases being the people centric, long term focus of the private sector manager juxtaposed with the short financial term focus by the chain HGMs.

At the practical level, accepting that hotel general management is not homogeneous, and driven by the business model, hotel organisations need to develop their own organisation-specific competency framework for their HGMs. Success across the business models is measured differently; for chain and franchise HGMs there is a need to generate higher gross profits and for results to be reported frequently, and for the private sector HGMs success is linked to long term sustainability, serving the community and providing a personal service. A challenge for each HGM in each of the models is managing stakeholders. These stakeholders vary with the model; managing the owners and operating company superiors are vital in chains, while the customers and staff are more important to HGMs in private model. For HGMs in both chain and franchise business models activity and behaviour is influenced by the need to ensure brand compliance through standard operating procedures.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

The role of the unit level Chief Executive Officer (CEO), carrying the title of Hotel General Manager (HGM), is arguably the most important post in the hotel industry. This is the view of Calori, Baden-Fuller and Hunt (2000) who when investigating management in Novotel, recognised the importance of the HGM role. Hcareers (February 2014) report that Hotel General Managers (HGMs) have the best jobs in the industry. The article reports that jobs in the hotel industry are on the rise and that HGMs are seen to have a range of career options from working in independent hotels to chains, with all HGM posts offering prospects for: advancement, salary increases, and travel. This study focusses upon unit managers, HGMs, managing a single, definable, unit operation, as, according to Hales and Nightingale (1986) “in an industry of decentralised, relatively autonomous unit operations which form the interface between organisation and consumer, the unit manager’s job is a, if not the, key managerial post” (p.8).

Nicolini (2012) observes that following on from the seminal work of Mintzberg (1973), writers have recorded long catalogues of things that managers do, but this work sheds little light on the meaning of work, or why practice is this way. A number of authors have confirmed the long-held notion that the hotel general manager (HGM) is fundamental to a hotel’s success (Forte 1986; Mayock 2012, and Woods et al 1998). Although the importance of the HGM role, and the activity these managers undertake is recognised, little is known about the how and why of HGM management practice. This is the research problem to be investigated.

Strong growth in any industry creates challenges such as the availability of a trained management and workforce (Chio, et al, 2000). In response to the labour market challenges and pressure for sustained growth, hospitality professionals will need to possess the skills to be proficient and effective managers in the current dynamic hotel industry (Wisansing, 2008). Understanding the role and activity of HGMs in this period of change in a dynamic and growing hotel sector is timely.

1.2. Hotel industry and contemporary business models.

UK Hotel ownership, at first sight, appears straightforward. Large international chains with established brands and reputations are represented worldwide, normally operating large hotels, with the balance of market supply being made up of national or local companies and/or independent properties, often well rooted in the local community and owned by local investors. However, closer examination reveals hotel ownership and as a consequence governance, to be more complex, largely as a result of strategic changes in the hotel industry that have gathered pace in the last two decades (Melissen, van Ginneken and Wood, 2016). These authors go on to propose that there can be five different stakeholders directly involved in the business of a hotel:

1. the owner of the physical buildings
2. the owner of the land on which the hotel buildings are sited (and in some cases the air above the hotel)
3. the person or business entity entitled to the hotel operating profit
4. the operator, that is the party running and managing the hotel
5. in the case of a branded hotel the owner of the brand.

In practice, these stakeholders combine in a number of standard configurations, mostly referred to as owner-managed, leasing, and management contract/agreement (deRoos and Eyster, 2009). Arguably the franchise model does not fit within these stakeholder groupings, as it refers to the owner or operator using a brand of an established third party in return for which the franchisee pays a royalty fee (Field, 2006).

Recent industry developments have seen large multinational chains growing through divesting themselves of hotel ownership, exemplified by the Intercontinental Hotel Group (2015) owning only 8 hotels, managing 767, and operating around 4167 franchises over various brands (Roper, 2017). From the operator point of view, the management contract seems to be the preferred model for the large international chains and luxury high-end brands (deRoos, 2010). Cunill and Forteza (2010), reporting on the contemporary situation in European hotel chains recognise the drawbacks of growth strategies requiring capital investments. Hotel ownership and leaseholds are giving way to development that is not now based on capital transactions, as companies can earn more money by managing (through management contracts) rather than owning hotels (Burgess 2007), with franchises being

the most popular business model. Franchising is identified as the preferred model for expansion of hotel businesses in the economy and middle markets (Cunill and Forteza, 2010).

Hotel ownership, then, has clearly become more complicated, with a number of stakeholders coming together seeking to maximise their financial returns through collaborations, although not always in a harmonious way. It is notable that hotel operators and hotel owners will not always have an alignment of interests (Turner and Guilding, 2013). These individual stakeholder interests are likely to bring conflict between owners and operators, with owners tending to look for short-term financial returns rather than long-term returns favoured by operators (Olsen *et al*, 2004; Lashley and Burgess, 2007). At the same time the branded operator's objective of brand value maximisation can also easily conflict with the owner's focus on profitability of their individual property (Detlefsen and Glodz, 2013).

These industry developments are thought to impact on the role of the HGM across the varying business models. The challenge for the 21st century HGM would seem to be a degree of shareholder management, keeping those with financial interests in the hotel business broadly aligned.

This contemporary ownership and business structures in place in UK hotels is of interest in this thesis, and adds context to the research questions. As observed, "The European hotel industry has changed significantly in the past decade as a growing number of companies have sold off their assets to focus on managing and franchising their operations; or have sold them only to lease back to release capital" McKenney, 2016, p.2. How these movements impact on the HGM's role and activity is a key area of investigation to be undertaken.

Evolution of the hotel business models

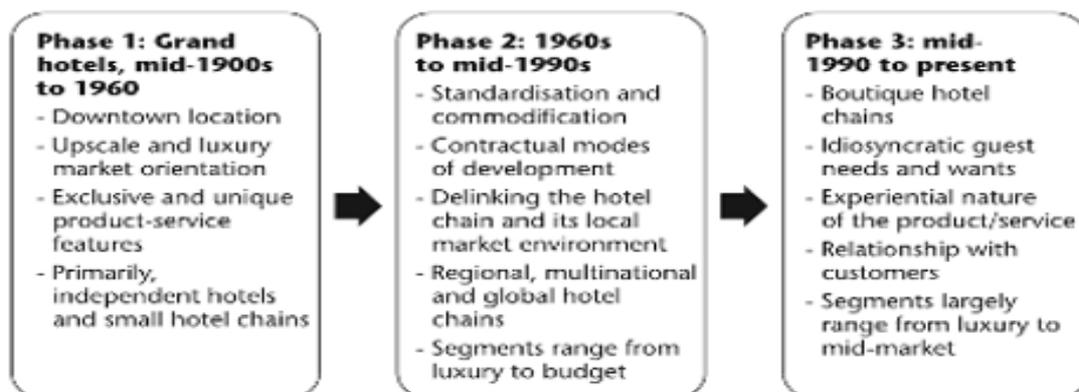
Chathoth (2016) identifies hotel development from the post World War 2 era to the current day as moving through three distinct phases:

Phase 1: Grand, largely independent hotels developed to serve the needs of affluent travellers.

Phase 2: The rise of the multiunit hotels through the internationalisation of hotel chains. This era marked the emergence of franchise agreements and management contracts. This period is characterised by standardisation, with hotels globally being operated through quality standards that were implemented through sets of rules and regulations.

Phase 3: An era plugging niche gaps left from the second phase, with a focus on the customer to create a unique and memorable experience (Chathoth *et al*, 2013).

Figure 1: Evolution of hotel chain characteristics, Chathoth (2016) p 27.



Looking to the future, HGM's will have to manage: brand recognition, economies of scale and ensure financial benefits surpass costs of affiliation; all to support the expansion of hotel business models (Chathoth, 2013). All at a time when the competitive environment has become more challenging as technological developments (a theme returned to in literature review) have eroded the significance of economies of scale, allowing the emergence of small boutique hotels and hotel chains (McKenney, 2016; Chathoth, 2016).

1.3. The position of Hotel General Manager (HGM)

The HGM will often be in the limelight, or on show, while performing his or her normal duties. (Jayawardena, 2000). Although the HGM can be thought of as the public face of the hotel, this person has numerous roles to perform within the hotel. These include: operational controller (solving immediate operational problems and effective interaction with subordinates), the organisational developer (monitoring information in the competitive environment and improving hotel efficiency and service strategy), and business maintainer (prospecting new business and nurturing new talent). Effectively acting in different work roles requires the HGM to have competitive and diversified skills (Tavitiyaman, Weerakit and Ryan, 2014). Kline et al (2009) undertook their research into hotel general managers as they recognised the importance of studying HGMs, citing the “tremendous” influence they have on the success of the US lodging industry.

“An effective hotel general manager (HGM) has a substantial impact on business success and profitability” Tavitiyaman et al 2014, p.192.

The role of HGM is more complicated now than has been the case in even the recent past because of the way hotels are owned and operated. In the past companies like British Transport Hotels, Trust House Forte, and Rank managed the hotels as well as owning the freehold. Today there is a more complex separation between ownership and management. It has been argued that contemporary HGMs have to juggle their time looking after all stakeholders (owners, asset management companies, management companies, brand or marketing companies), in addition to taking care of the guests (Harmer, 2015).

This research sets out to overcome a significant gap identified by Kim, Chun and Petrick (2009), which states that in previous studies no acknowledgment has been made of the influence on HGMs from hotel business factors which are seen as: international brand vs. local brand, hotel size and ownership - which can include the type of management contract or licence. Previous work by Worsfold (1989 A) into HGMs found differences in hotel style, location, and owning companies “would result in the need for different types of people for different positions” p.58. Taking the point that in hotel management one size does not fit all, these authors suggest a literature gap to be investigated. The HGM activity and behaviour, it is suggested, will vary on account of the influences of hotel brand and hotel ownership. This, in turn, is likely to require a variation in management style to fit within the requirements set by business models.

Building from the general management literature, there has been a movement away from the 1970’s work on creating snapshots of the managerial job “towards a more synthetic approach providing a moving picture of the fluidities of managerial work in its different guises” (Hales, 1986, p.93). This suggests that, in terms of what managers do there is still a need to “better refine the terms that are used to describe managerial functions and there is still a widespread need to study what managers actually do in terms of functions other than those of Fayol (1949) or Mintzberg (1973). The work of managers needs more research to present it with a wider tranche of descriptions than are currently on offer.” (Dann, D, 1990, p. 330). Accordingly, this study will examine the nature and processes of hotel general managers’ work. Everyday tasks and routines will be categorised as HGM practices, whilst similarities and differences will be considered in the light of hotel operation models. The theoretical contribution will be in understanding, and explaining how the nature of HGM work is shaped by the priorities of stakeholders. The practical contribution will be about the implications arising from the different practices for customers and customer care and for the careers of the managers themselves.

1.4. Research Problem

Mintzberg (1973), when analysing the varying roles senior managers are required to perform found that managers are required to be both generalists and specialists. This is certainly the case for HGMs who have to be well versed in both the specialist operational management ability required to run hotels (e.g. food and beverage management, conference and banqueting management, accommodation management) and general management ability. In the hotel industry, Guerrier (1987) observes that managers who are generalists have not been wholly successful in taking over from the superior craft specialist manager, with both styles of management evident in the hotel industry at the time of her study.

Research into the role and activity of HGMs needs to be set in the context of more general research on the role of the manager across all industries. What a manager's role is has been a topic of debate since the time of the classical management theorists, seminal writers being F.W. Taylor and Henri Fayol.

From the early writing of these authors through to the 1970's a number of studies were undertaken which sought to describe what managers do (Horne and Lupton, 1965; Stewart, 1967; Mintzberg, 1973). Mintzberg's work proved most influential, where his classification system (an approach being used in several subsequent studies), found management work to be fragmented, complex and ambiguous. Managers being seen to interact frequently with many different people, preferring oral to written communication. These managers are dealing with many and varied issues in a day and spending relatively short periods on each. Subsequently there have been applications of Mintzberg's ten-role model in hospitality literature (Ley, 1978; Arnaldo, 1981; Shortt, 1989; Chareanpunsirikul and Wood, 2002). Each of these studies has taken a tight focus, on, for example, HGMs in Northern Ireland, and cross cultural issues in time allocations to these roles by Thai and non-Thai general managers. However, a central research question on what management activity looks like in the hotel business is not addressed and that is the focus of this study.

Management in practice

Recognising that management can never be an exact science, Drucker sees it as "a practice, rather than a science or a profession, though containing elements of both" (Drucker, 1954, p.9). In Taylor's 1911 concept of management, decision-making is centralised and organisations are hierarchical formal identities whose primary goal is profit maximisation. This, in Taylor's model, ensures optimum efficiency. Such an approach to

managing a business still has relevance today, as arguably multi-national hotel chains are managed in this manner. However, studies into management practice tend to have a manufacturing bias (Fayol (1949); Taylor (1911); Drucker (1954, 1974); Hall (1993); Peters et al (1982). Peters (1996) admits that the original work missed “the service sector” (p.240). This is a significant gap because the service sector is now larger than manufacturing (ONS, 2016). There is a need to find how applicable management theory rooted in manufacturing is to the service sector and hotel industry in particular. What characterises the service sector from manufacturing is the closeness and direct involvement with the customer. This leads the discussion to the importance of the customer.

There is agreement between Hall (1993) and Peters and Waterman (1982) on the importance of the customer. Hall puts customer satisfaction as a priority in the *new soul for enterprise*, while Peters and Waterman single out putting customers first as one of their eight themes from companies they considered excellent. There is a need to test for tensions in hotel management between Hall’s contrasting priorities of the customer and profit. Considering management in hotels, which requires the knowledge and skills of service sector management, how do HGMs reconcile these two priorities from Hall’s old and new *souls* in their management practice? Hotels, in contrast to manufacturing are people based, not just as people are customers, but as people are also the service providers.

Peters (1996) re-visits his eight themes in light of this emerging issue, with his third theme; *productivity through people*. The importance of people in the organisation and the value and knowledge to be tapped is a theme for writers in organisational theory (Handy, 1989; Moss Kanter, 1983). For Hall (1993) the new soul of enterprise also recognises people as assets. In his model there seems to be a clear contrast between the *old* model concerned with profit and tangible assets, and the *new* concerned with customers and people. Accepting this contrast there is an interest in conducting an investigation that will establish the focus for management practice in hotels; a profit focus or a people focus. This is a contrast on which this study aims to shed light on.

How management is practiced at the highest level in the hotel is the research problem to be investigated. The subject will be the Hotel General Manager (HGM) who is recognised as the leading management figure because he/she leads the management team and subordinates in implementing the business strategy (Tavitiyamman, Weerakit and Ryan, 2014; Nebel & Ghei, 1993).

As stated, managing hotels in the contemporary business environment appears to be more complex than has been the case in the past. In the traditional model where a hotel owner engages an HGM the result is a single principal-agent situation (Panvisavas and Taylor,

2008). However, with the advent of hotel management agreements and contracts the HGM is likely to be reporting to more than one stakeholder. In this model the HGM is effectively the primary agent acting on behalf of both principals (owners and operators) (Hodari and Sturman, 2014). The HGM is usually an employee of the management company, given the posts' responsibilities and the management contract reporting structure, they are typically responsible to both owner and operator (Hodari, Turner and Sturman, 2017). It is, therefore, timely to consider how this emerging business model is impacting on the behaviour and activity of HGMs.

1.5. Justification for study

“The manager is the dynamic, life-giving element in every business” Drucker, 1954, p.113. Managers embody their organisation’s mission, develop and retain subordinates, co-ordinate various activities, set goals, “and make things happen” Zahra, 2003, p16. In terms of making things happen, it is evident from the literature that there are only a few empirical studies into hotel management practice.

Brooms and Bitner (1980) recognised that management literature and management research focuses largely on manufacturing activities, noting that little has been done to tailor traditional models to service managers. Consequently, Shortt (1989) suggests Mintzberg’s (1973) claim that managers’ jobs are remarkably alike needs to be tested within the context of the hotel industry.

Drawing on classical literature Taylor (1911), Mintzberg (1973; 2013), Miller and Mintzberg (1974), Drucker (1954) and Hall (1993) provide insight, but at times conflicting thoughts on management and management practice in manufacturing. The views of these authors will be compared and contrasted as part of the literature review that follows, as there are differing schools of thought on management and management practice, and what is best practice. The relevance of the theory to contemporary hotel management practice is sought. Peters and Waterman (1982); and then Peters (1996) identified eight themes found in excellent management. However, these companies surveyed and business leaders interviewed by Peters and Austin (1985) have a manufacturing bias, so the applicability of these themes to hotel management needs to be considered.

Richardson (2008) proposes there is no one best way to manage, and management is as much an art as a science. Writers in organisational theory and management practice have given managers insight into this art and science, leaving the questions to be answered on what is actually practised in hotel general management, and why. One theme that seems

helpful in considering what managers do is Peter's (1982) "management by walking around" (MBWA). The practice of MBWA has found favour with hotel managers (MacVicar and Brown, 1994; Bell, 2001). However, there is a contrast in the outcomes sought from MBWA by managers, and this aspect of hotel management practice deserves further investigation. The study will investigate whether HGMs conduct MBWA as a controlling function (Liyanage, 1999) or as a means of keeping in touch with and learning from the "people"; who are the customers and staff. "MBWA is designed to bring us a little closer to the humans who act and react to all that data. A little human-human interface is always a good thing" Vavra, 2015, p.72.

Hayes, Ninemeir and Miller (2017) recognise that the business model under which the HGM operates presents unique challenges which affect HGM activity and behaviour. These authors identify 5 areas where the business model affects the HGM role:

1. Managing owner demands, specifically actions required on cost reduction and the need for short term returns.
2. Relationship with Franchise Services Director (in franchise model).
3. Brand and the need to adhere to brand standards. The requirement for the HGM to deliver consistently and consistency on brand standards set. For the HGM there is potential conflict here between the directives from brand managers and the HGMs own management approach, and potentially the delivery sought by the managing company (should this is in place).
4. Relationship with staff, whether it is the HGMs personal standards being imposed or those of brand or franchise, staff are required to deliver for the HGM.
5. Guests and meeting guest expectations. Across hotel chains guests should know exactly what to expect. However, brand compliance and customer experience will vary. When expectations are exceeded in one franchise or chain hotel that can create problems for the guest's expectations at the next franchise or chain hotel. An example of this is where an HGM in a difficult competitive environment enhances service above the franchise or chain standard to win and retain customer loyalty.

Investigating these five factors in modern hotel general management practice is justification for this study.

Returning to issue of contemporary ownership and business models, hotel owners are found to frequently contract with hotel management companies to operate their hotels through management agreements (Melissen, van Ginneken and Wood, 2016). Separating hotel ownership and operations through such agreements is thought to benefit both parties. Operators can generate income streams, expand brands where these exist, by being asset

light. Owners are able to invest in hotel real estate and access the professional operating expertise of hotel management companies. (Hodari, Turner and Sturman, 2017; Sohn, Tang and Jang, 2013). “This change in ownership structure has opened up opportunities for companies to provide hotel management expertise to new hotel owners, many of which lack knowledge in the industry” McKenney, 2016 p.3. There is a need to consider HGM activity and behaviour in light of these structural changes in the hotel industry.

1.6. Purpose and Objectives of the Study

“Following the seminal work of Mintzberg (1973), dozens of scholars recorded and assembled long catalogues of things that managers do. Reading through their painstaking, but often plain, descriptions of roles and tasks, one is left wondering “so what”? The mere “a-theoretical” cataloguing of what practitioners do may be an exciting endeavour for academics who are unfamiliar with the specific occupation, but it sheds little light on the meaning of work that goes into it, what makes it possible and why it is the way it is”. Nicolini 2012, p.13.

This study aims to go beyond the plethora of categories for describing the phenomenon of managerial activity, and investigate the phenomenon itself. A major limitation of previous studies into HGM’s, according to Hales and Nightingale (1986), “is their failure to locate evidence on what managers actually do” (p.8).

This work aims to shed light on general management across three hotel business models identified by McKenney (2016), specifically:

- an unbranded hotel fully owned and managed by an independent investor(s) designated as the private model
- a hotel owned by a third party, with management through a franchise agreement, designated as the franchise model
- and finally a hotel either fully owned and operated by a hotel brand, or a hotel owned by a third party and managed by a hotel chain, designated as the chain model

setting the following research objectives:

1. Critically analyse Hotel General Managers’ activity and priorities. A key objective is to understand what contemporary HGMs actually do, and to explain and theorise any differences in practice.

2. Establish what influences and shapes the behaviour of HGMs employed across hotels in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.
3. Understand, theorise and explain why differences in management style and practices come about.

1.7. Methodology

Accepting that managerial work is shaped and exercised in context (Dierdorff et al, 2009; Akrivos, Ladkin and Reklitis 2007), the aim of this research is to explore and understand the way in which contemporary HGMs manage and what influences how they manage. This work aims to shed light on hotel general management across three contemporary business models in the operating environment of Aberdeen city and Aberdeenshire.

The research strategy will be interpretivist, replicating the research approach taken by Giousmpasoglou's (2014), study into the influence of context on Greek senior hotel managers. A qualitative approach (Veal, 2011; Guba and Lincoln, 1994) is taken to elicit HGM's experiences about their working life and chosen activity to arrive at an understanding on how the business model of their hotel influences decisions on priorities for practice. Dann (1990), credits Hales (1987) with providing a methodology which allows the conduct of managerial work to be placed within the context of the total management process. On account of this Hale's five broad questions are built into the interview schedule. This semi-structured face to face interviews were held with HGMs who were members of the Aberdeen City and Shire Hotel Association. This Association has a membership of thirty-eight hotels operating across the full range of styles from budget to luxury, with a mix of private, corporate and franchise models. In total 21 HGMs are interviewed. From this data a profile of the HGM in each of the three business models is generated. The data were analysed by the constant comparison method.

1.8. Outline of the Research

Chapter two comprises of a literature review. The review of relevant literature begins with a review and discussion on the classical theorists, contrasting the approaches of Taylor, Mintzberg and Drucker. Discussion takes place on management writing generally and the notion that the HGM being required to be a generalist and specialist is explored. Traditional and modern approaches to hotel management are considered, followed by reflection on what competency means for HGM practice.

The influences on HGM activity are discussed, with consideration being given in particular to different business models as a significant influence, seen as the context of HGM management practice. Other influences investigated are: the level of HGM education, and the extent to which the HGM adopts a people focus, and then habitus. Habitus leads to the related issue of autonomy and control.

Chapter three logically follows on to discuss methodology and research design. The appropriateness of qualitative research in tourism is discussed, along with research design considerations prior to the data collection through interviews with hotel general managers.

Chapter three justifies the choice of methodology and approach taken in this study since the research problem. The methodological position and research in tourism and hospitality are discussed.

At the end of chapter three there is acknowledgment of the external operating environment at the time of the study. This is tackled on two levels. Initially the importance of the industry is addressed, followed by the Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire operating environment.

Both chapters four and five deal with data analysis. Initially chapter four opens with descriptive analysis on HGM respondents' backgrounds, then presents the HGM role as reported across three business models surveyed: chain, franchise and private. A thematic analysis is undertaken across business models on: Management by Walking Around (MBWA), operational involvement by the HGM, the need for HGM presence, and time the HGM spends hosting. Chapter five follows on with a second level analysis to explain differences in management style and behaviour, concluding with the influence of the business model in shaping HGM behaviour/activity.

Chapter six presents a discussion linked to the three research objectives, and presents a model that maps the influences of management context onto management behaviour/activity, and the consequences of this across three business models of: chain, franchise and private.

Chapter seven presents conclusions which emanate from an understanding that HGMs across the three business models manage different things in different ways. Conclusions are given with reference to the three research objectives, and in conjunction with the model given in chapter 6. Managerial role requirements for HGMs although similar in nature vary greatly in importance within the context in which they are enacted. In each of the three models HGMs face their own unique challenges. It is concluded that rather than being de-skilled, specialisation is being undertaken by HGMs in order to meet the demands presented through the context of the business models under which they manage.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The literature review evolves on the basis of enhancing an understanding of the research problem with a grounding of past research in the area of management practice and the unique challenges in hotel management. The project moves beyond previous work by considering the differences in hotel general management across three business models.

Chapter 2 considers initially the contrasting points of view as found in the classical writing on management and then moves to appraise writing on the evolution of management thinking on practice. The theory on management styles or approaches for hotel management are discussed in comparison with Hall's (1993) new and old souls of enterprise thinking. The significant influences on HGM behaviour and activity are identified, starting with the significant influences presented by context and specifically the business model within which the HGM manages. Other significant influences are seen as: HGMs level of education, a people focus and habitus. Habitus links to the section on theory of autonomy and control, and practice in hotels. The chapter concludes by acknowledging change in the operating environment, considering industry structural change and the challenges for hoteliers in the north-east of Scotland.

At the end of chapter 3 there is acknowledgement of the external operating environment of the study. This is tackled on two levels. Initially the importance of the industry is addressed, followed by the Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire operating environment. This local economy has delivered a sudden shock across all industries as a result of the slump in oil and gas activity. With a very challenging operating environment for hotels, HGMs are being tested.

2.2. Management

Squires (2001) concluded that there was still no clear picture of what management activity is, "and what form of thinking is appropriate to that activity?" (p.484). These thoughts provide a starting point in developing objectives for this study.

Ever since Taylor's (1911, p.46) work study method dubbed "one best method" researchers have been searching for the Holy Grail of management in science and professionalism. Such utopian thoughts seem unrealistic. Managers deal with some unscientific issues; dealing with apparently intractable problems and the complicated connections that

accompany the role. This is what makes their work so fundamentally “soft” and why labels such as experience, intuition, judgment, and wisdom are commonly needed to describe it. (Mintzberg, 2013).

Changes to managerial work are exemplified in increased spans of control, intensified work regimes, longer working hours, reduced promotion opportunities, less career certainty and greater job insecurity. Yet, in some other contexts, the emergence of neo- bureaucratic organisational forms has been accompanied by vertical disintegration necessitating more diffuse methods of managerial control. (Clegg et al, 2011). Despite these changes to managerial work there is still relatively little known about how these changes affect managers and what they do at work. (Mintzberg, 2013).

Accepting that: there is no single best way to manage, there are changes in managerial work, and that the manager’s job is a practice rooted in context; then these contextual influences need to be examined. The study is focussed on HGMs and seeks to identify significant contextual influences and how they influence management behaviour and activity. To garner a historical perspective on the role of management the writing of classical theorists are considered. After considering the evolution of management theory related to management practice, the relevance of this theory can be applied to the current management practice in hotels.

2.2.1. Classical theorists

2.2.1.1. F W Taylor

Taylor is the major contributor to American management thought and practice according to Giannantonio and Hurley-Hanson (2011). Taylor (1911) believed that it was possible, through scientific study and analysis, to determine the best way to do each job to ensure maximum efficiency. By scientific management, Taylor meant: management based on proven fact (e.g. research and experimentation) rather than tradition, rule of thumb, guesswork, precedent, personal opinion or hearsay (Miller, 1976). This element of Taylor’s philosophy is accepted in modern management (Locke, 1982). Taylor saw the manager’s job as planning and cognitive functions, as he did not believe that low level supervisors and line workers were qualified to plan how work should be done (Blake and Moseley, 2010). With scientific management major tasks are broken into smaller tasks, to be completed efficiently by workers. A perception is that the worker has no opportunity to think or excel. Taylor argued that his scientific management was in the interests of both management and workers, maintaining that from higher production and lower costs higher wages were

delivered for workers. His critics argue that his philosophy is: an oversimplified view of human motivation (the two main motivators being money and goals), authoritarian (works not involved in management matters, and required only to show obedience to facts and practice), a specialisation of labour, anti-unionism and results in worker exploitation (rates of pay not increasing in a linear way with production).

This work found favour in US firms, with managers able to apply Taylor's thinking. There is much to be commended in stop-watch efficiency in manufacturing. During Taylor's lifetime scientific management as a system of improved worker performance was sold to companies and installed in return for a fee (Nelson, 1992). Before Taylor's death, he and his associates had introduced the system in nearly 200 businesses, most of which were factories (Blake and Moseley, 2010). However, delivering tangible products in factories is a different management challenge to delivering intangible services. For the service sector manager the challenge is more complex; services cannot be stored, production and consumption is simultaneous as they are highly perishable, and the products are delivered by a server to a customer. This human interface is the feature of the delivery of hotel products.

Although Taylor's work has attracted followers and critics, it does offer an approach to understanding management practice. It is based on a systematic approach to improving work performance. Management is required to do the thinking and planning, then: develop, train and direct the workforce, offering monetary incentives for increased rates of production.

2.2.1.2. Fayol and Mintzberg

Fayol (1949) delivered a classic answer to the question what do managers do? The simple definition is that managers: plan, organise, co-ordinate and control is only a starting point in unpicking managerial activity in general.

Managers do not plan, organise, coordinate, command and control as Fayol claimed, rather, Mintzberg (1973, 1974) asserted they enact a series of roles, these being: informational, decisional and symbolic, in various combinations according to the day-to-day challenges they meet. According to Lamond (2005) Fayol offers a view on management that is attractive, while Mintzberg offers a realistic view of management. Reflecting on the theorists, Smith and Boyns (2005) conclude that while Fayol's (1949) theory makes intuitive sense it is not easily translated into the action consistent with the demands confronting managers in the workplace.

Mintzberg's writing (1973, 2013) investigated what managers do, how they do it, and why. Managers believe that they deal with big strategic issues, but in reality they move from task to task dogged by diversions. Managerial work is seen to be marked by variety, brevity, and fragmentation. This is borne out by Kurke and Aldrich (1983) who in their replication of Mintzberg's (1973) study found managers operating in a work setting characterised by fragmentation, brevity, and a concentration on live media.

Despite the ten management roles described by Mintzberg in 1973 (figurehead, leader, liaison, monitor, disseminator, spokesman, entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator, and negotiator) receiving a good deal of attention; by 2013 Mintzberg was less happy with this aspect. He felt the description inadequate, generating a list rather than a model. *Simply Managing* proposes a model based on managing on three planes: information, people, and action into the organisation and out to its surroundings. There is an appreciation here that there is great variety in management practice, with both texts having chapters on the varieties of managing. Management is seen not to be simple at all, with managers required to deal with individual industry and operating environment challenges. Mintzberg's 1973 work acknowledged the influence on management from the nature of the industry, level of job/post, and the size of the organisation.

2.2.1.3. Drucker

The publication of Drucker's *The Practice of Management* in 1954 was a turning point in the development of the discipline of management (Zahra, 2003). Unlike Taylor's view of organisations and their managers, Drucker's vision of the business and its executives recognised the influence of the external environment (Wren, 2011). Drucker's view on the role of management is broader, and more proactive than is the case in previous writing (Zahra, 2003). Drucker notes that "... managing a business must be a creative rather than an adaptive task. The more a management creates economic conditions or changes them rather than passively adapts to them, the more it manages the business" Drucker, 1954, p.47.

Zahra, (2003, p.17), provides a summary of Drucker's thoughts on management and managers responsibilities:

- Management is a distinct and important function that determines the viability and success of the firm.
- The managerial task, though amenable to scientific analysis, is practice-orientated. Management education enhances and sharpens management skills.
- The management task combines creative and adaptive components.
- There are two entrepreneurial dimensions to management: marketing and innovation.
- Managers should follow a systematic decision-making process that focuses on: defining the problem, developing alternatives, selecting the approach to be followed, implementation, and using feedback.
- Managers are responsible for building the organisation and integrating its different functions.
- Managers are responsible for developing and leading knowledgeable workers.
- Integrity is the hallmark of managerial character. Along with integrity comes a sense of accountability.

It may seem that Drucker's business is more decentralised, less hierarchical and more informal than the companies Taylor had visioned. Drucker (1974) emphasises a core concept of "management by objectives" (MBO), and this approach has divided writers on the subject. Zahra (2003) credits MBO with generating a sense of shared responsibility and accountability throughout the organisation, thereby weakening Taylor's hold on management thinking. MBO is seen to deliver improved company performance through a focus on key goals, dedication of effort, the use of real-time feedback and effective communication.

Critics have, however, accused Drucker of continuing Taylorism and bureaucratic traditions under another label (Waring, 1992). Others maintain that this one core concept of MBO is flawed and has never really been proven to work effectively. Krueger (1994) maintains that the system is difficult to implement and that companies often wind up overemphasising control, as opposed to fostering creativity to meet their goals.

Drucker repeatedly emphasised the importance of innovation throughout his books; given his direction on MBO it is difficult to see how this would be possible. Genuine risk taking with innovation are thought to be stifled by MBO, Joulle and Spillane (2015).

2.2.1.4. Contrasting the approaches of Taylor, Mintzberg and Drucker

There is a contrast between the work of Taylor and Drucker. Taylor exhorts the benefit of ensuring efficient operations through organisational centralised decision-making with the primary (if not only) goal of profit making. Here the command and control function was left in the hands of the upper echelon. Drucker's view of the firm and its functions differed significantly from Taylor's. Drucker sees the firm as a social entity with multiple goals that revolves around producing things not simply making money.

Where Taylor believes there is an approach to management that can be applied to every situation, Mintzberg believes the manager's role and activity is unique to the situation, stating that "management practice as largely facilitation" (Mintzberg, 2013, p.11).

Managers in Taylor's model apply the formula of scientific management, with the outcome of efficient operations. Mintzberg's model sees the manager managing his/her unique set of circumstances.

2.3. Evolution of Management

Peters and Waterman (1982), then Peters and Austin (1985) took issue with a number of management theorists: Bruce Henderson of the Boston Consulting Group and McKinsey being examples (Peters, 1996). Their work, in contrast, offered eight common-sense themes. These themes were seen by the authors to be linked to excellence in the companies studied:

- A bias for action
- Customers first
- Autonomy and Entrepreneurship
- Productivity through people
- Hands-on, Value driven
- Stick to the knitting

- Simple form, lean staff
- Properties that are simultaneously loose/tight

These eight pieces of advice are straightforward and easily understood, being translated after interviewing business leaders around the world. The writing of Peters is concerned with linking management behaviour/action to high performance and “excellence” as found in the companies surveyed. A number of these themes appear to describe hotel management practice: *a bias for action, customer first, productivity through people, and hands-on value driven*. This is endorsed by Sisson and Adam’s (2013) study which found the two most essential soft HGM competencies were developing positive customer relations and working effectively with colleagues.

2.3.1. Management By Walking Around (MBWA)

The theme of being *hands-on* spawned the lauded practice of Management by Walking Around (MBWA). This management practice has found favour in hotel management (MacVicar and Brown, 1994; Bell, 2001). There is evidence of this practice in all the hotels surveyed by Liyanage (1999, p.20), who found that “the General Manager is very often seen in the restaurant and the lobby areas, talking to the staff. A system of interactive controls is very much in place”.

This quote suggests that MWBA, as a practice, may vary in interpretation for different managers. Writers do view MBWA as a positive practice (Collins, 2011, and Mohan et al, 2013.) MBWA shows employees that management is directly involved in the running of the company, is interested in its workers’ performance and will take necessary steps to remedy any problems that may arise see.

In contrast, Liyanage (1999) sees the management practice as a controlling function. Hamister (2007), provides a balanced opinion; he sees management undertaking MBWA as providing positive re-enforcement of a job well done, with MBWA ensuring praise and correction can be given immediately. In conclusion, while HGMs may report undertaking MBWA, their motivation from undertaking MBWA, and the outcomes from the MBWA could be very different.

Applicability of Peter’s themes to the post of Hotel General Manager

As mentioned above, a number of these themes appear to describe hotel management practice: *a bias for action, customer first, productivity through people, and hands-on value driven*, and this was borne out by Sisson and Adam’s (2013) study. To check if Drucker’s

themes are relevant in modern day hotel management, a survey of job vacancies for this post as advertised internationally on-line in January 2016 was undertaken. In all 13 job advertisements, along with any supporting information also posted (job descriptions for example) are considered.

Main purpose of job:

“The HGM is responsible for achieving optimal guest satisfactions... to achieve this the HGM should run the hotel in accordance with the Standard Operating Procedures”. Richardson Hotels (2015, p.14).

“The HGM ensures the smooth operation of the hotel focussing on profitability and guest satisfaction”. RHW Hotels (2007, p.32).

“To manage the hotel’s operation and maintain established cost and quality standards to ensure delivery of superior service product and to maximise the Hotel’s profits”. Core Recruitment (2016, p.65).

“To maximise the financial performance of the hotel by providing the highest possible quality of guest service and product, by fostering a positive work environment for all employees, and by developing and implementing an aggressive sales and marketing plan”. Leisure People (2015, p.3).

Summary of most reported key duties and responsibilities:

- Guard the efficiency/productivity and commercial accountability
- Maximise revenue and profitability
- Oversee all aspects of hotel operation
- Achieve exceptional levels of guest and team member satisfaction.
- Creating, managing and delivering plans and budgets
- Develop and promote sales initiatives at hotel level and as directed by head office
- Report on financial results of the hotel
- Meeting and greeting customers
- Recruitment and selection of key team members

Source: Accor Hotels, 2015; CATER.COM (2016 a,b,c); Core Recruitment (2016); Kim, Chun and Petrick (2009); Leisure People (2015); Pratt Place Inn (2015); Richardson Hotels (2015); The Daffodil Hotel & Spa (2016); The Royal Portfolio (2015); UBD Corporation (2016); Umbreit and Eder (1987).

This post of HGM appears to have a wide remit; from hard business duties and responsibilities of being accountable for profit and financial performance, through to the people role in terms of looking after customers and employees. In the job advertisements and job descriptions considered there is broad agreement on the purpose of the job and key duties and responsibilities. In essence delivering on the key aspects of guest satisfaction (through hotel keeping practices, including: *a bias for action, customer first, productivity through people, and hands-on value driven*, and also maximising financial returns to owners (through business management). This leads the literature review to consider Hall's (1993) work which highlights these two, seemingly conflicting forces in two models

2.3.2. Hall (1993) the old and new soul of enterprise

Continuing with the exploration of a new philosophy of management, Hall (1993) contrasts the *old* hierarchal spirit with a *new soul of enterprise*. The characteristics of Hall's *old* and *new* models are given below.

Table 1: The old and new soul of enterprise (Hall 1993:281)

Old	New
Profit first priority	Customer satisfaction first priority
Assets are things	Assets are people
Thinkers are separated from doers	Doers and thinkers are the same
Organisations controlled by hierarchies, functional departments separated	Organisations based on team work, numerous cross teams
Performance measurement for control, financially dominated	Performance measurement for improvement, broader measures
Separated marketing, with suppliers and customers at arm's length	Integrated marketing with partnership based relationships with suppliers and customers
Mass production	Lean production
Scale economies important	Time economies important

As seen earlier Drucker (1954) states that a company's primary responsibility is to serve its customers. Profit is not the primary goal, but rather an essential condition for the company's continued existence and sustainability. Hall (1993) agrees in his *new soul of enterprise* model which is in line with the broad direction of organisational thinking proposed by Handy (1994 and 1989), that organisations are knowledge based.

Although the Hall (1993) work relates to American manufacturing, the identification of two models does offer insight into approaches to hotel management. Hall identifies a number of contrasts across his *old* and *new soul of enterprise*. Of particular interest are the first priorities, a profit focus for the old soul of enterprise, as opposed to customer satisfaction for the new soul of enterprise. Significantly, and presenting a contrast, these have been identified in the job advertisements as the two priorities in hotel management practice. There are echoes of Taylorism in the *old* model: organisations controlled by hierarchies, with financial performance as a measure. Whereas the *new* system embraces the thinking of Handy (1989, 1994). Handy believes that knowledge in the company is no longer held at the top of the organisation, but on the front line in organisations that have been turned upside down. Moss Kanter (1995) speaks of the customer-driven economy, while encouraging business to invest in their people and act as partners with suppliers and customers. Appreciating the value of the human capital as assets again fits with Hall's (1993) *new* model. There is also agreement between Hall's (1993) *new soul of enterprise* and the Peters and Waterman (1982) priority of the customer.

2.3.3. The nature of modern managerial work

As discussed earlier Mintzberg (1973) provided one of the most influential works on managerial roles. Prior to his research the roles of managers were thought to be functionally orientated revolving around planning jobs, organising staff and leading personnel (Pearson and Chatterjee 2003).

Mintzberg identified ten roles of managerial work, which were divided into three categories: interpersonal roles, informational roles, and decisional roles.

In the intervening years since Mintzberg's research, the work environment has undergone significant change. Organisations have become flatter and less hierarchical (al, 2001). According to McCann, Hassard and Morris (2004) corporate restructuring has taken place on account of the need to reduce costs in the face of heightened international competition. In practice managers were found to manage groups and tasks in a flattened hierarchy. Worrall and Coper (2004) express concerns that much organisational change (redundancy

and delayering) in the UK is being driven in the private sector by a singular focus on maximising shareholder value.

Empowerment, meanwhile, has been embraced in the hotel industry as a part of a customer service strategy. Ogbeide et al (2017) found empowering front line staff to accept, process and react to complaints had a direct co-relation on customer satisfaction, loyalty and a predisposition to recommend the hotel. Which is a marked difference with the work of Hales (2000), which concluded that there is a divergence between the rhetoric of empowerment and the lack of evidence of empowered workers.

Re-examining Mintzberg's (1973) work Tengblad (2006) found modern managers' activity orientated towards working with subordinates in group settings and paying more attention to information giving than performing administrative duties. However, 30 years after Mintzberg's (1973) original study, Tengblad (2006) found that while there has been change, managerial work has largely remained the same.

Johnson and Dobni (2016) used Mintzberg's (1973) propositions and structured categories for describing what managers do to compare results found for public sector senior managers with Tengblad's (2006) study. On the management activity of tours, or MBWA, Johnson and Dobni, (2016), support Mintzberg's (1973) finding that this activity was regarded not only important for staff engagement, but also for senior managers to get an understanding of the daily issues as they present themselves.

A second contrast with Tengblad (2006) concerns the amount of deskwork undertaken by managers. The second study 10 years after the first, provides insight into modern management practice. A major difference is linked to advances in technology, with e-mail supplanting telephone and face-to-face interactions. Johnson and Dobni (2016) found managers on average spending 43.1% of their deskwork on e-mail (10.4% of total work time).

Modern Management Skills

Gentry et al (2008) specifically addressed changes in managerial skills since the 1980's.

These authors found that communication of ideas, taking action, making decisions and following through on these was considered important. Also, skills not thought important 30 years earlier, for example: self-management, self-insight, self-development and flexibility were still not thought of as important for managers in the more modern work context either. Relationships were found to be more important than in the past, and using communication technology alongside the existence of geographically dispersed teams required managers to be more deliberate in the effort they make in forming and maintaining relationships. Time

management appears more important to the contemporary manager, the reasons for this are identified as changes in work context, specifically technology allowing people from around the world to work in real time. (Gentry et al, 2008)

Work context and impacts on management

In comparing public and private managers' leadership styles, Hansen and Villadsen (2010) considered job content as a moderating factor. They argued that organisational differences between the public and private sectors results in different job contexts for managers, who in turn will employ different leadership styles. This was found to be the case with participative leadership being used by managers who perceived their job to be complex and have a larger amount of job autonomy and role clarity. In contrast directive leadership was found to be used by managers who have perceived role clarity, but who have lesser job autonomy. Hansen and Villadsen (2010) concluded that public managers use more participative leadership while private managers use more directive leadership. The argument being that this is due in part to job context differences, where public managers having higher perceived levels of job complexity, role clarity, and job autonomy.

In the hotel context Nolan (2002) highlights the importance of the dominant role of the manager. It is this post-holder who frames the world view of the firm and who, through managerial processes, can leverage the human resources of both manager and employee.

Since the 2007 UK economic crash employment conditions for managerial workers have been negatively affected by organisational change. In the private sector change has been driven by the desire to reduce costs to enhance competitiveness in increasingly competitive markets (Worrall, Mather and Cooper, 2016). These authors conclude that culture change initiatives have been broadly damaging for managers, with the need to work faster and longer in an atmosphere of fear. Worryingly this study found managers more accountable for performing work over which they feel they have less control.

Baum (2015) reflected on change in tourism human resources against his earlier (2007) work, and found tourism stakeholders lacking in vision and not planning for the future industry workforce needs. Baum (2015) identifies the blurring of managerial roles for operational managers as a contemporary issue. Specifically managers trained and developed to manage the internal daily challenges being charged with externally facing strategic activity. This blurring of managerial and operational roles in tourism, he observes, is taking hold in larger organisations as well as small businesses. Arguably this blurring of operational and strategic management roles has been HGM management practice for Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) in private ownership hotels for some time. Looking for support to help cope with such a wide remit, Kearney, Harrington and Kelliher (2014)

found that owner/managers in SME hotel firms benefited from joining as a member of a network, as this enabled learning from others. Interestingly, and perhaps unexpectedly, a managerial capability for innovation is found by Kearney, Harrington and Kelliher (2014) in these SME's, suggesting approaches through which owner/managers can use to unlock innovation in this context.

2.3.4. An emerging contrast in management approach

It appears that there is a contrast emerging between a hard-nosed profit approach, based on maximising profits and a customer/people approach. The hard-nosed approach can be seen to owe much to scientific management and the old soul of enterprise, while a people approach based on putting customers first and recognising the human capital in the firm owes much to Drucker and Hall's new soul of enterprise.

2.4. Hotel management models

The traditions of hotel management emphasise the HGM as the host in the front hall meeting and greeting the guests. "The Victorian hotelier was almost like a host welcoming a guest into his own home, and like any good host needed to be available at all times" (Guerrier and Lockwood 1989, page 84). Although modern HGMs do not feel they need to meet every guest, the "greeting" and "being there" aspects of the role remain important for some. For example, Venison (1983), has stressed the importance of the HGMs presence in the hotel. He contrasts what he terms the "administrative manager", who is largely office bound, spending time on systems, planning, accounting and control orientated work, with the "being there manager", who is more customer orientated, spending plenty time in the public areas of the hotel and less time on administration activity. Venison (1983), although favouring the "being there" approach, accepts that the ideal HGM will be able to combine both of these aspects.

As identified earlier this management activity of "being there" found favour with Peters and Waterman (1982) when they identified the management approach of "management by walking around" as one of the elements contributing to the success of their "excellent" companies. It could be argued that for this management approach HGMs were ahead of management theorists.

Guerrier and Lockwood (1988) found that HGMs expressed a preference for being on the front line. The unpopular aspects of their job being confined in their office and doing

paperwork and accounts. In 1988 then HGMs saw their jobs very clearly in terms of being out and about in the hotel.

Venison (1983), Peters and Waterman (1982), and Guerrier and Lockwood (1989), in their observations have identified two styles of hotel management. One acts as a traditional, visible, customer orientated manager and the other is a more office based administrative manager. These two styles deserve further investigation and explanation and this is undertaken in the following section.

2.4.1. Traditional and Modern Manager models

Researchers have identified two schools of thought on UK hotel management. There is the European style, emphasising tradition and high levels of service, with an emphasis on food service identified as the *traditional* approach. Then the USA led approach with an emphasis on standardisation, the use of modern management techniques and rooms management rather than food service; identified as the *modern* hotel manager (Guerrier, 1987). Each of these hotel management styles is considered in turn.

The traditional manager

The traditional HGM model identifies someone with: knowledge and experience of quality food and beverage operations, no formal qualifications, craft training and vocational skills developed in top class hotels, typically working long hours and highly involved in hotel operations. (Guerrier, 1987; Guerrier and Lockwood, 1990).

Further studies (Harper et al 2005; Harkison, 2011) into the HGM role and career progression have identified food and beverage management expertise as most often the career route into an HGM position. HGMs are also found to progress from backgrounds in sales and marketing accounting and finance and (to a lesser extent) from housekeeping (Ladkin, 2002). These authors identify personal development in vocational specialist knowledge as the way to the first HGM post.

The way in which HGMs have traditionally been trained and developed acted to reinforce an operational perspective, as opposed to a business perspective. (Guerrier 1987). It follows that if an HGM has worked his or her way up through the ranks and having been operationally involved, this practice will continue in the role of HGM. The Baum, (1988) study into Irish hotel management found that practical experience in the hotel sector is a prerequisite for effective hotel management. Managers were found to be operationally active in hotel departments, at the expense of actually devoting time to running the

business. Baum's (1988) study indicates that the 1970's style of management still prevalent in the 1980's, with these managers emphasising the mine host element of their role. The managers indicated that they are actively involved in the supervision and, frequently, in the operation of such areas as the front office, restaurant, bar, and kitchen. These findings were found to echo in the later views of Hales and Tamangani (1996), concluding in their work that the day-to-day operational problems in hotels are service orientated. The authors argue that HGMs need to devote more time to longer-term needs, while acknowledging that the day-day-day business problems have extremely short term lead times, with the immediate needs pushing out longer term.

It has been reported that hotels that focus on the core business (of hotel operations) perform better than those that have diversified to related or unrelated activities (Neves and Sofia, 2009). The implication being that the specialist hotel manager is superior and desirable. This fits with the findings that in the increasingly competitive new millennium, international hotels are finding competitive advantage through driving up levels of service and having the management ability to empower employees to deliver superior service. (Jones and Davies, 1991), (Heney, 2009), and (Higgins, 2007).

McCarthy (2008) goes further by not only recognising that HGMs need to be the champions of superior guest service, but suggesting the competitive power of the HGM receiving, meeting and greeting key hotel clients. All activities thought to be the preserve of the traditional manager.

"In the hotel industry, the notion of the manager as a generalist "organisation man" seems to have been less successful in supplanting the notion of the manager as the superior craft specialist than in other industries". (Guerrier, 1987, p. 130). This shows that in the late 1980's a vocational focus is seen to be a style of management suited to hotels.

These seminal studies found HGMs operationally involved, with the authors questioning the effectiveness of an HGM carrying out manual and craft level work. The hotel industry has been characterised by demanding long and anti-social hours and the expectation of face time for managers (they are expected to be physically present, regardless of the actual necessity to be there) Mulvaney et al, (2006). HGMs who have grown up in the industry may see this behaviour as the norm and continue to work the long hours. Providing face time is very much associated with the traditional manager profile.

The modern manager

The modern model profile is of a manager that has: knowledge from being relatively well qualified, formal training in management, a business focus where profitability is more

important than quality of service and working reasonably conventional working hours (Guerrier, 1987). Interestingly Guerrier found the modern manager making a choice between Shamir's (1978) conflicting objectives and choosing to generate sales and deliver profits to owners, as opposed to focussing on service. This is understandable, as the hotel industry is still considered as a high risk business by lenders and investors and shortfall or poor financial trading can affect these stakeholders adversely claims Chen (2009). As a consequence the modern HGM has to be on top of the financial trading position of the hotel.

Gamble et al (1994) comment on the changing emphasis of European management skills from traditional craft skills to more generic management skills. The observed outcome being a more business orientated hospitality manager acting as a team facilitator rather than someone required to draw on traditional/vocational skills.

This theme continues with researchers seeking to understand the driving forces behind the HGM activity and dividing HGMs' responsibilities into five main areas: strategy, operations, marketing, human resources and finance (Aldehayyat 2011; Harper et al, 2005; Ladkin 2002; Nebel and Ghei 1993). Interestingly these business-focussed responsibilities appear to be applicable to any business unit manager, and do not appear to be specific to the HGM post.

Craig Barnett, former Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the computer industry firm Intel in retirement became the owner and operator of a luxury resort in Montana.

"Barrett states that many of the same skills needed to be a CEO apply to his new role as a hotel manager". (Reingold, 2009, p. 10). This supports the view that the skills and approach of the business manager, with generic management skills, in the modern model is all that is required for hotel management.

It is the traditional model, owing much to service, that is seen as dated, harking back to a previous age. While hotel management was at one time was seen as a vocation or following in family footsteps, investigating this Philips (2009), found an HGM actively discouraging a sibling to follow the vocational route, advising instead a degree in travel and tourism. This seems to suggest that the route to management in the hotel industry has changed between the late 1980's and 2009.

2.4.2. Review of traditional and modern models

Considering management in hotels, authors have identified two distinct models of management. One owes much to the tradition of hotel-keeping, the other to a business management approach. The contrast in focus found in these models is acknowledged in Shamir's (1978) finding of inherent conflict between the two main objectives of the industry; one management style appears to favour a style focussed on sales and the delivery of profits to owners the other favours focussing on providing a service to customers.

Criticism of the traditional model

As a criticism of the traditional manager being drawn (or perhaps choosing) to become operationally involved in service level activities seems to be unproductive on two fronts. Firstly, there is the opportunity cost of the manager being away from the business management of the enterprise (e.g. business development, product development and capital requirements, developing future strategy, direction of sales and human resource planning). Secondly, the manager is only worth a craft level salary when undertaking such activities. Historically HGMs have made themselves available at service times and banqueting/functions and consequently get caught up in short term decision making and problem solving, as identified by Hales and Tamangani (1996).

Breaking this cycle needs managers to develop a business perspective. The goal for these HGMs to continue to be effective while they are "being there", but not afraid to trust their staff to get on with it while they are not. The purpose of "being there" then becomes much closer to the ideas of MBWA; less to do with controlling the minutiae of an operation and more about making contact with customers and staff to collect data with which to make decisions. It becomes less to do with activity and more to do with results. (Guerrier and Lockwood 1989).

Hales and Nightingale (1986) provide encouragement for this approach, finding that customers seem to hold expectations of the hotel itself rather than HGM. As long as all is well, there is no need for contact with the HGM

Reviewing the writing on 25 years of Hospitality leadership, Johanson et al (2011) found the changing role of HGMs exemplified by HGMs putting greater emphasis on strategic and corporate skills and a correspondingly less emphasis on the importance of operational and technical skills. However, the authors identify a focus on service management skills in contemporary literature too. This is thought to reflect the increasing emphasis placed on customer service as a way to secure competitive advantage. Taking the view that customer

service is the most important outcome sought by HGMs, then one suggestion is that HGMs need to possess the leadership skills to be able to ensure employees are able to deliver the service quality sought, not necessarily deliver the service themselves (Johanson, 2011; Solnet, Kralj, Kay, and DeVeau, 2009).

From what has been written, the simple view that the traditional model is outdated and an old style and the modern more appropriate in the current climate, is to treat the management style debate overly lightly.

It is attractive, but perhaps overly simplistic to believe that the “modern” manager fits with HGM activity in the twenty-first century. There is evidence to show how and why the traditional style gave way to a more business oriented focus. Harper et al (2000) found that the HGM role encourages a greater business than operational perspective and as a consequence demands a higher level of technical and business skills. This is supported by Aissa and Goaid (2016) who concluded highly qualified managers are required for an optimum hotel efficiency and profitability, as this brought enhanced creativity and innovation. Certainly, it follows that as more graduates emerge from Higher Education with both degree and masters qualifications, the shift towards the modern manager will gather pace. Unfortunately, this conclusion sits uneasily with the Jaykumar, Fukey, and Balasubramanian, 2014, study which reported that a large majority of HGMs still believed that three years of experience is more valuable than a hotel management degree for their company.

Considering a hybrid management model

A hotel manager is responsible for day-to-day operations of a hotel and its staff. An organisation makes a hotel manager accountable for budgeting and financial management, planning, organizing and directing all hotel service. (from a hotel manager’s job description by Baxter, 2010.) This job description embraces aspects of both traditional and modern approaches, showing that the two are not mutually exclusive.

The issue of context may be at work and needs to be factored into this discussion, in the case of Giousmpasoglou (2014) this varies with the scale of operation. He concludes that the adoption of the “traditional” management approach proves successful for family businesses and local (Greek) hotel chains. Then, when regional businesses seek to expand the modern style suits through the control delivered through generic business and management skills. Scale appears to inform the thinking on the fit between hotel management and the contemporary operating environment.

For Tavitiyaman et al (2014), the context is the star rating of the hotel, and this is thought to influence the HGM management practice. The suggestion being that HGMs in 4 and 5 star hotels require more highly developed generic business and soft skills than those HGMs managing in 2-3 star hotels.

The major outcome of the (Harris and Mongiello, 2001) study was that HGM's are using an increasing variety of managerial tools "and their confidence in strategic issues seem greater - theoretical concepts are being realised more and more in operations". During the course of their study Harris and Mongiello (2001) found that even when financial indicators are being used as a primary measurement of performance, they are not so prominent as to dominate the HGMs behaviour. The study found that when HGMs want to improve their business performance they initially act on human resources (training and staffing levels), then marketing (review of market and sales strategy, pricing, and service) and finally move to operations (product and service). The conclusion being that the behaviour of the HGM is balanced in the different dimensions of the business they run.

The literature indicates that both styles of management and hybrids of the two styles can still be found in contemporary HGM practice. The traditional style may have for a while in the 1970s and 1980s given way to a business style. However, there is now evidence that this style is finding favour again.

For hotels seeking competitive advantage through quality service delivery, differentiation can be secured through food and beverage offerings, which draws on the knowledge and skills linked to the traditional management style. This fits with the thinking on Hall's (1993) *new soul of enterprise* and Peters and Waterman (1982) where the priority of the business is the customer.

A review of the debate seems to indicate that contemporary HGMs are unlikely to be found to be exclusively practicing as either a traditional or modern manager. In the blend of the two, other factors seem to influence the choice HGMs' make on how to allocate their time and efforts. This comes back to the issue of context, which will be addressed in more detail in section 2.6.1.

The following section considers what hotel general management should look like. This aims to uncover what competencies lie behind both the traditional, modern, or hybrid styles of hotel management.

2.5. What “competent” hotel general management should look like

In a cover article for the *Caterer and Hotelkeeper*, Redford (2005), offers advice on how to become a HGM. Important factors mentioned in the article are: qualifications, experience in different departments of the hotel, a networking ability, leadership and communication skills and a passion for service. This acknowledges the importance of a (business) qualification, but also hotel experience as a pre-requisite for hotel general management. This implies that aspects of the traditional manager’s profile and aspects of the modern manager’s profile are required. The article then identifies key competencies of: a networking ability, leadership and communication skills linked to being an HGM.

2.5.1. Competencies required for professional hotel management

According to Rach, (1992) competency is evidenced by individual achievement of required skills and knowledge, while a job competency is “composed of activities and a cluster of related knowledge, attitudes, and skills that are correlated with performance and can be measured against standards” (Sisson and Adams, 2013, p.132).

With a link to the classical theorists Raelin and Cooledge (1995) report new interest in Taylor’s (1911) scientific management in the form of a “new rubric” (p.25) called Management Competencies movement.

Ever since McClland (1973) first proposed the concept of “professional competency”, the research and application of the Competence Theory has become popular.

This leads the discussion on the required competencies for successful hotel management. In essence, what should hotel management look like?

There have been significant changes in hotel management and the demands made on hotel managers in the last 10-15 years. Work by (Kay and Moncarz, 2004) reaffirms “that hospitality management requisites have changed over time, with increasing importance placed on competencies such as financial management and marketing”.

A review of literature on hotel management competency is carried out to appraise what writers identify as essential activities and the required clusters of related knowledge, attitudes and skills for hotel management. Insight is sought into what is seen as the most highly prized skills/competencies for HGMs.

Corpus of Knowledge

The first industry benchmark was created by the publication of the Corpus of Knowledge in Hotel, Catering and Institutional Services under the auspices of the Hotel and Catering International Management Association (HCIMA) (Johnson, 1977). Eleven years later, this was updated with The Corpus of Excellence (HCIMA, 1988). Three levels of management and four levels of knowledge are identified. At the senior level the main concerns are: environmental goals, and strategy and structure. The professional body (the HCIMA) is seen to be keen to strike a balance between generic skills and specific job related skills required by managers in particular circumstances (Brotherton, 1999). Although these studies are designed to aid in providing supervisory, operational and senior management benchmarks for the industry, the value of this document is limited, as the findings are broad, and not focussed on unit HGMs.

Hales and Nightingale (1986) updated the HCIMA Corpus of Knowledge. The purpose was to identify some key unit level managerial activities in the wider industry. This work provides a starting point by identifying common core elements for all unit level managers:

- maintaining organisational standards
- monitoring customer satisfaction
- controlling costs
- controlling stock
- training, motivating, recruiting and disciplining staff

These five broad core elements of a manager's job in hospitality start the debate on what managers should do. Hales and Nightingale (1986) management activities pick up on themes already discussed. Customer satisfaction features again, and a conclusion is that this is an important focus for all HGMs. Maintaining standards along with customer satisfaction align with the traditional style, while controlling work aligns with a modern approach. There is an absence of a sales orientation, which for contemporary management seems a glaring omission.

2.5.2. Evolution of key HGM competencies

A full summary of key management competencies from previous studies is tabularised in Jeou-Shyan et al (2011) and adapted in Appendix 1.

Literature following the hospitality management competency studies between 1988 and 2006 reflects the changing role of hotel managers, with both an increased emphasis on strategic and corporate skills (Gilbert & Guerrier, 1997; Raybould & Wilkins, 2006) and a corresponding decrease importance of operation and technical skills (Tas et al., 1996; Raybould Wilkins, 2006). Industry professionals agree that in the past human resource related skills were the competencies most emphasised for hotel managers (Birdir & Pearson, 2000; Tas, Labrecque & Clayton, 1996). However, current research advocates that knowledge of finance, marketing and information technology is becoming increasingly important. This is thought to be due to the increased demands from property owners to report on financial performance (Kay & Moncarz, 2004).

Limited agreement on key HGM competencies

The findings of Cheung, Law, and He (2010) largely fit with what has gone before, as they classify managerial competency dimensions in the hotel industry as: communication, industry knowledge, self-management, interpersonal skills, leadership, strategic positioning, implementation and critical thinking. It is accepted that good leaders are able to develop their staff, build a good management team, be motivators, be good delegators, foster good communications and be caring, trustworthy, and consistent (Nebel, 1991).

Industry managers agree, indicating that having excellent communication skills are essential for an HGM to be successful, as 80% of their daily job is discharged through interpersonal communications (Woods & King, 2010).

Park and Allen (2013) found next to communication skills, problem solving skills the second most highly prized general competency for HGMs. Problem solving skills, they propose, enable HGMs to analyse and evaluate financial data, make better decisions and equally importantly use problem solving when responding to customers' feedback to assist in improving their satisfaction.

The more contemporary study by Jeou-Shyan et al. (2011) considers competency as found in senior managers in Taiwanese hotels. These results report the necessity of having generic management skills, soft skills and technical competencies.

Against the earlier literature, this appears to be the logical consensus. Generic management competencies include: analysis, strategic management, implementation, problem-solving, personal relationship communication, leadership, self-management, attitude, creativity and foreign language skills. Technical competencies comprise of: field management, human resource management, financial management, business and marketing acumen and information competency. Perhaps unsurprisingly Jeou-Shyan et al. (2011) report Taiwan's top managers draw on both generic competencies and technical competencies to increase hotel profits.

2.5.3. Conclusions on HGM competency

The conclusion on the subject is limited agreement as to what exactly the profile of the "competent" manager in hotels and tourism looks like. "After several decades of research, however, there is considerable confusion surrounding the failure to identify one set of essential managerial competencies for the hotel industry" Jeou-Shyan et al, (2011), p.105. In fairness, this has changed and developed over time, largely in reaction to changes in the hotel industry and the resultant demands being made on HGMs. Most, but not all studies, found that competencies in listening, communication, human relations, leadership and the management of others were most important for success. A few studies found leadership and interpersonal competencies to be of lesser importance than being adaptable to a changing environment or possessing strong financial competencies. Even fewer studies identified working knowledge of the product as essential for managerial success.

Within the academic writing, there does seem to have been a move in thinking from identifying a historic set of core competencies (mainly featuring in Tas's (1988; 1996 work), to new competencies which have developed in recent years. Seeking the optimum set of competences for all HGMs seems difficult to specify, with a blend will generic and technical competencies being most likely in most management situations.

Recent literature suggests that there is a 'contemporary' focus on service management skills. This perhaps reflects the increasing emphasis organisations have placed on superior levels of customer service as a route to competitive advantage. As a result, the literature analysing successful leaders of tomorrow suggests that hotel managers need to possess the leadership skills to be able to generate a critical level of commitment to service quality among employees (Solnet, Kralj, Kay, & DeVeau, 2009).

Knowing these required competencies enables human resource personnel to recruit suitable potential managers Chung (2000), develop a foundation for job descriptions (Kay & Russette, (2000), and create training and career development plans within the hotel

industry. These human resource based interventions need to recognise the variation in HGM needs and activity, shaped by their choices and their context. HGMs jobs and the way individual HGMs approach these jobs are found to be variable. There are contextual variables that influence which competencies are required in specific unit management. Recognising the management context as a significant influence on HGM behaviour and activity will be considered first in the following section. The influence of context in relation to HGM activity is of interest in this study.

2.6. Significant influences on HGM behaviour/activity

After the **influence of context** is considered, further influences on HGM behaviour and activity are investigated in turn: **HGMs level of education**, then linking to Hall's model, **a people focus as an influencing factor HGMs**, and then **habitus**. Habitus links to the section that follows on **autonomy and control in hotel general management**.

2.6.1. Influence of context in management practice

"Put together a good deal of craft with the right touch of art alongside some use of science, and you end up with a job that is above all a practice, learned through experience and rooted in context. There is no "one best way" to manage; it depends on the situation" Mintzberg (2013, p.9) acknowledges that situational factors influence management practice and that management practice is embedded in experience and the context of the organisation.

Akrivos, Ladkin and Reklitis 2007 (2007, p.386) also laments the lack of research that fully appraises the influence of context in organisational research. In this seminal work context is seen as "situational opportunities and constraints" (p.386). Previously, John's (2006) work examined how managerial roles vary depending on the context within which these roles are enacted. There is agreement in literature that organisational factors can influence managerial behaviour (Mintzberg, 1973; Dierdorff, Rubin and Morgeson, 2009). Worsfold (1989 B) agrees with the general conclusion of Deirdorff, Rubin and Morgeson (2009), that the work context and role requirements (applicable to HGMs), find that managerial role requirements, although similar in nature "vary greatly in importance with the context in which they are enacted" p. 984.

2.6.1.1. Managing hotels

The job of a manager in the service sector is more complex than that of a manager in a firm producing goods. Tourism managers and by implication HGMs “find that they are also “doing” operations, marketing, and physical distribution”. (Brooms and Bitner, 1980, p. 132). The role of management in hotels appears more complex because of this operational dimension. There is the customer interface absent for management in other industries, with an absence of the operational imperative to deliver largely intangible services throughout the day.

The review of job advertisements uncovered the influence of the “work environment”, and “standard operating procedures” that had to be adhered to. HGMs behaviour and activity seems to be heavily influenced by the context in which they manage. This has resonance in literature. Reflecting on Mintzberg’s (2013) view that management practice is largely concerned with facilitation and that the manager’s activity is unique to the situation, the influence of context is now seen to shape HGM management practice.

Nebel and Ghei (1993) suggested that a HGM’s job could be better understood by examining the contextual variables that influence and shape it. In addition they argued that a hotel's context presents HGMs with a series of job demands and relationship issues with which they must deal effectively in order to be able to perform successfully. These contextual elements (job demands and relationship issues) differ depending on the time frame (short-run, intermediate-run, or long-run) under consideration:

- In the short run, the HGM job function was described, based on Mintzberg's 1993 model, as that of operational controller.
- In the intermediate run (medium term), the HGM job function was described as that of organizational developer.
- In the long run, the HGM's job function was described as that of business maintainer.

Their argument being that a hotel’s context presents HGMs with series of job demands and relationship issues which they must deal with effectively in order to be able to operate successfully. HGMs are required to move between short, medium and long term thinking as part of their daily management role, and manage relationships with both staff and customers. Hales and Tamangani (1996) concluded in their work that the day-to-day operational problems in hotels are service orientated and as such a major focus of the role of any HGM must be service quality. They argued that HGMs need to devote time to longer-

term needs too, while acknowledging that the day-day-day business problems have extremely short term lead times, with the immediate needs pushing out longer term considerations. While managers should also concern themselves with medium and long term needs (notably the development of staff) “the pressing needs of the immediate and recurrent often drive out longer-term considerations” Hales & Tamangani (1996, p.748). These short and long term considerations are seen to revolve around the characteristics of the hotel industry. Shamir (1978) in his study argues that the hotel industry is characterised by an inherent conflict between the two main objectives of the industry:

1. To generate sales and deliver profits to owners, and
2. To provide a service.

How the HGM balances these objectives leads to the discussion on two distinct types of HGM. The HGM who can be seen to favour the service delivery objective, thus embracing the “traditional” HGM style, and the HGM who embraces the sales and profit objective favouring the “modern” HGM style. As observed, the hard-nosed profit approach, based on maximising profits owes much to scientific management and the old soul of enterprise. The people centric approach of putting customers first is thought to owe much to Drucker and Hall’s new soul of enterprise.

Bringing the discussion up to date, Chris Nassetta, President and Chief Executive Officer for Hilton Worldwide states “Those underlying principles that are driving our growth are: better serving customers, creating opportunities for owners, (and) creating more opportunities for our team members”. (Evans 2015, p.7). Driving hotel growth is seen to be important, and a measure of success for the hotel and the HGM (Morey and Dittman, 2003). The route to this growth for Nassetta is through better hotel service to customers and creating opportunities for owners. For Nassetta hotel management practice must concentrate on both of Hall’s primary foci from both *old* and *new* models, and consequently deliver on both Shamir’s (1978) conflicting objectives.

In discussing theory on management models applicable to hotel management there is an implication that HGMs’ behaviour and activity would fit with one of the models

However, accepting there is no one best way to manage acknowledges the influence of context, the most powerful of these seen to be the business model under which HGMs manage.

2.6.1.2. Context limiting HGM choice

HGMs need to make choices about how they allocate their time between office based management activities and operational duties. Harris and Mongiello (2001) understood this, viewing management practice in terms of making choices on: prioritising work activity, how much time to spend on each issue; and choices surrounding what not to do through delegation. In a review of the nature of management work, Hales (1986, p.101), comments that “managerial jobs seem, in general, to be sufficiently loosely defined to be highly negotiable and susceptible to choice of both style and content”; and further that “part of managerial work is setting the boundaries of and negotiating that work itself”.

Stewart (1982) considered all managers have choice in what they do, then Hales (1986) later agrees, implying that HGMs have a free choice to interpret their management role in the way they see fit. Based on the writing of Lamond, (2005) and Humpreys, (2005) this may not be the case. These more contemporary writers point to the influence of context and culture on management behaviour in leadership. The culture is seen to be closely related to the hotel business model and as a consequence of this the way hotels are controlled, is seen to be an influence on hotel management activity. A centralised hotel chain, or a clear service specification from a franchisor are examples of context in the hotel industry. Such contexts are thought to moderate the range of choices open to HGMs when managing their hotels. The hotel business model and the associated culture is thought to be a major influence in the hotel managers’ behaviour and require further investigation, which will now be addressed in the following section.

2.6.1.3. Context provided by hotel business models

During the past couple of decades, many hotel chains in the United States have shifted their business strategy. In the 1980s, brands such as Marriott International Inc. and Hilton Hotels Worldwide began reducing the number of properties on their balance sheets to concentrate on the more lucrative and less capital-intensive business of operating properties for fees (Hudson, 2010).

Most property sales are followed by management contracts: the seller still operates the property while the new property owner pays fees for the service provided by the seller, now the operator. Fee business allows firms to expand their market share with limited capital investment. In terms of profitability and operating risk, fee business is also favourable.

Operators are reimbursed the cost of operating hotels by property owners, and the cost of fee based revenue is lower than that of sales from owned properties. Fee income also has less variance than income from operating owned properties (Roh, 2002).

Accor applies dissimilar strategies to different business segments, the “asset-right” strategy rather than the “asset-light” strategy. Accor usually retains ownership for economy hotels, where return on investment is generally the highest, while steadily disposing upscale brand Sofitel and Pullman properties under a sale and manage-back agreement (Sohn, Tang and Jang, 2013).

In this globalised business environment, the development of HGMs is seen as being of critical importance for multi-national companies, recognising the changing demands on the post and postholder (Adler and Rigg 2012).

The European hotel industry has changed significantly in the last decade as a growing number of companies have sold off their assets to focus on managing and franchising their operations; or have sold them only to lease them back and use the capital to fund expansion elsewhere. “Publicly quoted hotel operating companies began divesting of owned real estate and focussed on management as they were unrewarded for ownership stakes in hotels”. McKenney, (2016, p.3).

The change in business models in hotels has made management increasingly complex, and has opened up opportunities for companies to provide hotel management expertise to the new owners, many of whom lack knowledge of the industry (Hotel Analyst, 2014). These developments are arguably the most significant aspect of the HGM work context.

HGMs are now required to be conversant with asset management tools, to enable them to demonstrate financial performance. For hotels, and hotel managers, the critical success factor is increasing the return on the owners’ investment (Anson, 2012).

There are five business models reported within the hotel industry, with permutations within each of these:

- Property fully owned and operated by hotel brand.
- Property leased by a hotel brand, which pays rent for the “walls”.
- Property owned by a third party and managed by a hotel chain.
- Property owned by a third party, with management through a franchise agreement.
- Property fully owned and managed by an independent investor.

(McKenney, 2016)

Change in the hotel industry is observable as the industry develops brands to suit the newest generation entering the workforce (Ernst & Young, 2006). Examples of brands in development as a component of this expansion are Indigo Hotels, part of Intercontinental Hotels, with a focus on the eco-friendly hotel. At the Aberdeenshire regional level a number of sub-brands have emerged since 2012, examples being: Hilton Garden Court (Hilton), Courtyard by Marriott and Moxy (Marriott).

The modern hotel industry is a differentiated industry and serves different segments of the market from budget to luxury segments. Multinational hotel corporations deliver services via broad brand portfolios to cover all segments in the market. They wholly or partly own hotels, and work with other hotel owners through leases, management contracts and franchise agreements. In the hotel business there is a widespread practice of hotel management through both contracts for management and the use of franchise agreements. While a management contract does not involve high risk and can yield higher returns for a company; a franchise agreement involves lower levels of resource commitment and lower levels of control, but returns are lower, as a significant part of income is returned to the franchise (Papiryan, 2014).

Management contracting is an agreement between hotel investors or owners and a management company (e.g. Hilton) hired to coordinate and oversee hotel operations. This contract requires owners/investors to pay a management fee, and is for a specific (usually long-term) time period with clear conditions (Aissa and Goaid 2016).

Studies investigating the impact of international affiliation on hotel performance (Chen 2009; Wang, Hung and Shang, 2006) recommend that owners of independent hotels who want to join chains should adopt management contracting.

In terms of hotel performance, however, Hsieh and Lin (2010) found that although management contracts deliver better overall effectiveness, franchises and independently owned hotels perform better in areas of accommodation and catering (food and beverage).

Aissa and Goaid (2016, p.485) concluded that hotels affiliated with an international chain, and those under management contracts benefit from higher profitability than others, as this model of management assures “management performance by skilled managers”. This conclusion appears sound, with the chain delivering: a formula for service delivery, recognisable brand, and management familiar with the requirements for successful trading.

2.6.1.4. Business models influence on HGM behaviour and activity

The hotel industry has for some time been characterised by a dichotomy of independent (privately owned) and branded (chain and franchise) hotels. Typically, in the private ownership model, and on account of this model, hotels can lack sufficient resources, which can lead to poor financial performance as suggested by the resource constraint theory (O'Neill and Carlback, 2011). Branded hotels (chain and franchise) are able to draw on resources such as: marketing, operational and technical assistance (Hayes, Ninemeier and Miller, 2017). The franchising business model allows a hotel to use a recognisable logo, trademarks, operating systems, standards, services, and resources of another business entity in a given location for a period of time in exchange for a fee (Blair and Lafontaine, 2005).

What is normally referred to as the hotel industry consists of two segments; independent hotels (85% of all hotels) and a comparably small number of branded hotels comprised of large hotel groups (15%) (Euromonitor 2010). Although the hotel industry is very fragmented, hotel groups account for as much as 52% of global sales and therefore play a dominant role in the industry overall (Euromonitor 2010). A hotel chain is a group of hotels which operate under the same brand, maintain the same standards of service and have a uniform marketing policy (Littlejohn 2003). A hotel chain can thus be a separate company or part of a larger group comprising several chains. A form of chain affiliation (a brand) is what distinguishes chain hotels from independent outlets. (Niewiadomski, 2014).

Hotel chains play a major role in the hospitality industry. As complex organisations, they share the attributes of multinational enterprises and still have their specific characteristics as service industry businesses (Ivanova and Ivanov, 2015).

Historically companies like British Transport Hotels, Trust Houses, Forte, Swallow Hotels (Vaux), Embassy, Scottish and Newcastle (Thistle), and Rank all managed their hotels as well as owning the freehold of the property. By 2015 the business model options have become more varied, with a growth in management contracts and agreements.

Hotel owners more frequently contract hotel management companies to operate their hotels through hotel management agreements (Melissen, van Ginneken and Wood, 2016). Separating hotel ownership and operations through such agreements is thought to benefit both parties. Operators can generate income streams, expand brands where these exist, by being asset light. Owners are able to invest in hotel real estate and access the professional operating expertise of hotel management companies. (Hodari, Turner and

Sturman, 2017; Sohn, Tang and Jang, 2013). “This change in ownership structure has opened up opportunities for companies to provide hotel management expertise to new hotel owners, many of which lack knowledge in the industry” McKenney, 2016 p. 3. HGMs may now have to juggle their time looking after all these stakeholders, in addition to taking care of guests (Harmer 2015).

The contemporary pace of change in the hotel industry is exemplified by hotel and leisure-focused property investment firm, International Hotel Group Limited (IHL), completing the acquisition of two Holiday Inn Express hotels in Redditch and Southampton in the UK for £26 million plus costs. The group owns eight hotels in the UK and has a primary listing on the Euro MTF market of the Luxembourg Stock Exchange and a secondary listing on the JSE's AltX. Both the 100-bedroom Holiday Inn Express Redditch and Holiday Inn Express Southampton are freehold properties and have new 20-year franchise agreements with InterContinental Hotels Group, Cokayne (2016).

The reported deal by Marriott to buy Sheraton owner Starwood for \$12.2bn highlights the increasing concentration on an international scale, and the premium placed by owners on brands.

“The deal will create the world's biggest hotel company, operating and franchising more than 5,500 hotels. The US hotels giant behind the Westin and Sheraton brands is to be bought by rival Marriott International for \$12.2bn, forming an industry behemoth and potentially firing the starting-gun on a wave of consolidation. The takeover of Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide by Marriott will create the world's biggest hotels company that will either own or franchise more than 5,500 hotels offering about 1.1m rooms around the world under 30 brands” (Martin, 2015, p.17.)

Studies have shown that the branded hotels are operated more efficiently than their independent/private counterparts, even though branded hotels have to carry high changes in terms of franchise fees, royalty fees, reservation fees, marketing fees, guest loyalty program fees, and other fees associated with brand affiliations and compliance (Yang and Mao, 2017; O'Neill and Carlback, 2011). O'Neill and Carlback (2011) found little difference in net operating profit between branded hotels and privately owned hotels during periods of economic growth, while in periods of recession branded hotels achieve a higher profit. This is attributed to management in branded hotels having competitive advantage of being able to draw upon sophisticated management tools, provided centrally, to maximise accommodation income.

Financing hotel expansion is reportedly easier currently than has been the case in the past. The perception exists that the financial market has become more comfortable with branded

hotels, offering higher loan to value ratios than could be obtained after the last recession (Richard 2017).

Looking forward, growth opportunities for hotel chains are likely to be more challenging, as a one-size-fits-all approach will give way to a more unique or bespoke experience (Yeoman, Oskam and Postma, 2016; Richard, 2017). Franchising is more popular in the economy or middle market while management contracts are more popular in the luxury market (Cho, 2004).

Bulgarian HGMs see being part of a chain advantageous in: coordinated personnel training, a common reservation system, economies of scale and centralised management of bookings (Ivanova and Ivanov, 2015).

The business model, therefore, and the degree of dependence on other organisational structures (in management contracts, licences, or dealing with head office) influence the framework of managerial decisions (Martinez-Ros and Orfila-Sintes 2012; Sirilli and Evangelista, 1998). This is reinforced in the conclusions given by Hodari and Sturman (2014), that HGMs' decision making autonomy is influenced by the hotel's ownership, business model and management structure, although how this influences HGM practice is not addressed.

Drawing on the Management Competency movement's *new rubric* (Raelin and Coolege, 1995), (seen as Taylorism revisited) scientific management could be seen to be practiced in the chain model. There is a case to be made that the HGM's job has been stripped back to the elements of maintaining standards of performance. This sees other management functions being located at a head office level. According to Mullins and Davies (1991) many hotel chains are operated within a bureaucratic structure, with standardised methods and procedures laid down by head office, and characterised by excessive paperwork. In such circumstances, they propose the HGM "requires little vision but must have the temperament to carry out detailed instructions" (p.24).

The issue of "temperament" implies there is perhaps a best fit for an HGM approach in chain hotels. The work of Gunz (1989) addresses the way in which organisations remake themselves in their own image by promoting what is perceived to be the right kind of manager. This tendency may have been particularly marked in the unit-based companies that typify the hotel industry. (Gilbert and Guerrier, 1997). For chain HGMs then, there appears to be a requirement for compliance, linked to the suggestion that the organisation (chain) seeks HGMs that fit in with the style and culture of the organisation and ultimately carry out the required activity at unit (hotel) level. The benefits for owners from the chain model being a formula for service delivery through a recognisable brand. This requires

management familiar with the requirements for successful trading through a standardisation in delivery, and resonates with Hale's (1986) requirement for the HGM to maintain organisational standards.

Where the hotel is in private ownership and in instances where the HGM has shared ownership, Martinez-Ros and Orfila-Sintes (2012) found there is more evidence of a desire to innovate. In contrast, Galende, (2006), found HGMs in a reporting structure (chain business model), less inclined to invest in innovation. This expense was seen to affect immediate bottom line profitability, and was only likely to deliver profits in the longer term, by which time the HGM is likely to have moved on as part of his/her career progression. These authors touch on the issue of autonomy, which is covered in a later section. HGMs in private model appear to have the autonomy to invest time and resources where they see fit.

By way of concluding this section, Hotel Analysis (2014) identifies that change in ownership and resulting business models has made management increasingly complex. The literature suggests that the ownership and resulting business model chosen significantly influence the focus, priorities and decisions taken by the HGM.

2.6.1.5. HGMs level of education as an influence on behaviour/activity

As discussed earlier, Guerrier (1987) identifies and categorises HGMs as practicing management in a traditional or modern style. Guerrier and Lockwood (1988; 1989) build on this work and make a distinction between managers who adopt a business perspective and those that adopt an operational perspective to hotel management. Connolly and McGing (2006), explore HGMs attitudes on tertiary education in three, four and five star properties in Dublin. The study found that the industry values experience, problem solving and decision making skills highly, while analytical skills are not considered to be very important.

Although the outcomes in terms of skill sought are not a perfect fit, both these sets of authors argue that the way HGMs are educated acts to reinforce an operational perspective rather than a business perspective.

Given recent changes in the hotel industry regarding organisational culture, with the move to flatter, leaner companies, it is possible that some of the traditional career routes will be lost. (Ladkin, 2002). Prior to this in the UK the traditional route to the top in hotels, the post of HGM, was through working in hotel departments and assistant management roles thus ensuring vocational competency in all areas of: food and beverage, housekeeping,

reception, conference and banqueting, and accounts. This took on average 8.5 years from entering the hotel industry. (Ladkin and Riley, 1996).

Spowart (2011) suggests that a well-rounded HGM also requires soft skills such as customer service and communication skills, believing that these should be included and assessed as part of the hospitality curriculum.

The influence of education on the shaping modern managers will be addressed in the next section.

2.6.1.6. Education influences a modern approach to management

Hotel Management can be considered a relatively new profession, with the first degree programmes only becoming available in the UK in the late 1960's, although E.M. Statler and the American Hotel Association helped establish the first hotel management programme at Cornell in the 1920's (Chung, 2000).

In 1990 it was found that while two-thirds of US HGMs held a hotel management degree, only 16% of UK HGMs held a comparable degree. (Baum, 1990). Throughout the 1990's to the present day HGM positions are reached from two distinct tracks; either through the traditional route, or through a route via some formal further or higher education.

With a new generation of graduates emerging from UK universities since the 1980s it is now timely to investigate how these new managers are running their hotels, apportioning their time, and activity they choose to undertake in their HGM role.

Once the graduates from Higher Education began to feed through into the industry, Harper et al (2005) and Ladkin (2002) observe that qualified managers were promoted faster than unqualified managers, noting that qualifications are an integral part of career development.

“Every occupation carries an image of what the job entails. In the case of the hotel manager, the popular image suggests that food and beverage knowledge, working in a large hotel, being an assistant manager, being committed to the industry, (and) going to college”. (Ladkin, 2002, p.78).

Over the years there have been some changes in thinking in terms of what is required for hotel management and educational programmes have been adjusted accordingly. No longer is competency in the vocational skills alone prized; a grounding in business and general management is also being sought. Gamble and Lockwood (1994, p.14) acknowledged this change, highlight a changing emphasis from traditional “craft skills to management skills, the outcome being a more business orientated hospitality manager as a team facilitator rather than someone with traditional skills”.

As a result, it has been argued, that hospitality educational programmes needed to move away from the traditional preoccupation with a vocational orientation (Morrison et al., 1999), to programmes that develop creative, imaginative and innovative interpretation of conventional business practices and understand the specific interface between entrepreneurship and hospitality operations, leadership and management strategy (Tracey and Hinkin, 1994; Jayawardena, 2000).

(Naipaul and Wang, 2009, p.56) again championed the case for entrepreneurship and leadership, but also found HGMs motivated by philanthropy and “enjoyment of the game”. More recently, Whitelaw et al. (2009) concluded that academics are pushing for the development of higher order skills such as critical thinking, management, and strategy development, whereas the industry places a greater emphasis on frontline supervisory and interpersonal skills. Hodari and Sturmmann’s (2014) conclusion is more polarised; HGMs who want careers in chains should gain advanced degrees, while HGMs with experience but limited education should seek employment in privately owned hotels.

Despite the limited regard some business leaders have for Further and Higher Education as a requirement for recruitment to management in hotels (Nicely and Tang, 2015), ever since the first four year college level programme in hospitality management was established at Cornell University in the 1920s, “educators have looked to industry leaders for advice and feedback” (Kay and Russette (2000, p.52). This relationship has informed educational programmes, which over time have devoted more curriculum time to pure management topics and less time on vocational and technical education. This in turn informs the approach to management taken by HGMs once in post, with hotel conditions being a reflection of the educational approaches (Campos-Soria et al, 2005).

2.6.2. A people focus as an influence

For certain companies the emphasis is on intellectual resources rather than financial resources (Eskildsen and Nussler, 2000), recognising that employees have evolved from a resource to be exploited to an asset that needs to be nourished and developed.

“The hotel industry is often described as a people industry”, (Worsfold, 1989 A, p.59) with the characteristics most frequently identified by HGMs as necessary for the job being people skills.

As has been implied by Hales (1986), HGMs have a free choice to interpret their management role in the way they see fit, although this is thought to be moderated through context. Accepting this element of HGM choice and reflecting on the previous section where

the HGM is predisposed to either an operational or business bias on account of educational influence, there is an argument that the HGM can choose to have a people focus. However, more compelling is Hall's (1993) *new soul of enterprise*, which places customer satisfaction as first priority. With a feature of the HGM's role being the customer interface (Brooms and Bitner, 1980) considering how this people interface and the drive for customer satisfaction influences HGM behaviour and activity is investigated.

Significantly Tas's (1983 and 1988) and Nelson and Dopson (2001) in their work specifically mention understanding guest problems and being sensitive to guest issues as important in management.

The work of Hales and Nightingale (1986) acknowledges the need to be people oriented as an HGM. They suggest that hotel management is charged not only with the concerns for: standards, costs, materials and staff, which might be shared with the office or factory manager, but also with a responsibility for customer satisfaction.

Kim and Moon (2016) highlight the importance of both customer satisfaction and employee in hotels. Managing these people oriented stakeholders is a key focus for any HGM.

The HGM is reliant of his/her people to deliver the hotel service. Should the demands from customers exceed the supply of people, there is also a case for the HGM to become operationally involved, as discussed earlier in the traditional style of HGM. Notwithstanding the debateable requirement for the HGM to be operationally involved, HGM's do have a responsibility to ensure subordinates are trained and motivated to deliver the hotel service to the standard set by the HGM (Wong and Lee, 2017).

2.6.2.1. HGMs' use of people skills

In a market environment where there are competitive pressures, hospitality managers realise that the acquisition and retention of high performing employees is a key to delivery of service quality. (Ariffin and Ha 2015)

Research conducted by Connolly and McGing (2006) finds that "soft" skills such as people management, team working and communication skills are considered to be more important when compared to "harder" skills such as analytical skills. These skills are seen to be important to the HGM who is people centric.

The general literature on HR planning and development strategies in the hospitality industry heavily emphasise the importance of soft skills. (Kay and Moncarx, 2007). It is often a

managers' soft skills or personality that are cited as predictors of success (Tews et al; Wilson-Wunsch et al, 2015). During the course of their study Harris and Mongiello (2001) found that even when financial indicators are the most used, they are not so prominent as to dominate the HGMs behaviour. The study found that when HGMs want to improve their business performance they initially act on human resources (training and staffing levels, in essence focussing on the people inside the organisation), then moving to address marketing (review of market and sales strategy, pricing, and service), and finally on operations (product and service).

The HGM role involves continually mixing with people, dealing constantly with customers, staff, superiors and owners – and seeing their point of view (Mullins and Davies, 1991, p.26), who go on to state “an understanding of the pervasive influences which determine the behaviour of people within the work organisation should form a central focus of the education and development of hotel managers”.

In his 1993 study, Lee-Ross revealed HGM management styles that appeared to result from the immediate demands of customers but also linked to their department expertise. HGMs were found to be hands-on when customers' service demands exceeded staff capacity to deliver. HGMs were found unable to be hands-on in departments where they were not skilled in the specialist operations (reception for example). This is a significant finding, and poses some inter-related questions: do the HGMs need to be involved; are those lacking in vocational skills business managers at a disadvantage? A choice for business style HGMs could be to simply not get involved but provide a higher staff complement.

An HGM choosing to adopt a people centric approach to hotel management means choosing Hall's (1993) *new* model of putting customer satisfaction first and seeing people as assets, over the *old* model of profit as first priority. Choosing to be people centric influences HGM behaviour. By implication there will be more time spent by the HGM in contact with both customers and staff. Hotels seeking competitive advantage through quality service delivery, fits with the thinking on Hall's (1993) *new soul of enterprise* and Peters and Waterman (1982) priority of the customer.

2.6.3. Habitus as an influence

In seeking to uncover factors that influence HGM's choice of time allocation and choice of what to actually do, literature on communities of practice and the notion of habitus is considered.

Habitus has a number of theorists, but the work of Bourdieu (1986, 1990) appears to be seminal in the area.

Bourdieu's habitus being acquired at an early stage is resistant to change; is described as being: durable, unconscious and an embodied set of transposable dispositions.

Mutch (2003, p.396) when providing a critique on habitus in relation to public house managers commented on a "lack of treatment in the literature of dispositions that managers bring into communities from experience".

Mutch (2003) used the study of public house managers to question the validity of habitus and test a number of theoretical standpoints. This work was of interest as it considered two distinct groups of managers: those recruited from the traditional group (male, little or no education, second career, working class roots) and those more recently recruited from a more heterogeneous group (graduates and women).

One conclusion being that "Habitus suggests that we need to pursue the social and educational origins of our chosen group of managers in order to examine their effects on current practice" (Mutch, 2003, p.397).

The area of habitus and the theoretical debate that surrounds the extent to which the foundational habitus can be sustained in the face of technological advances for example is not an area to be drawn upon. However, the concept has provoked thinking, and has given rise to the notion that personal dispositions may influence HGM activity and practice.

The extent to which these influences impact on what HGMs actually do, and how this influences HGM behaviour and actions regardless whether they be *traditional* or *modern* is of interest to this study.

Considering an applied influence of habitus in the context of how personal dispositions influence activity leads to considering the latitude or ability on the part of HGMs to choose activity that is of personal interest or perceived importance to them. This latitude would be governed by the amount of autonomy and control the HGM has over his/her own choice of activity. The amount this varies across business models is of interest.

2.7. Autonomy and control in hotel general management

Martinez-Ros and Orfila-Sintes (2012) and Galende (2006), introduced the notion of autonomy earlier, proposing that reporting structures within organisations restrict HGMs' ability to innovate. A conclusion from the work of Aissa and Goaid (2016) is that the chain model provides a formula for service delivery, which requires predetermined standards to be delivered, which as a consequence limits HGM autonomy.

As explained by Ouakouak et al (2014), autonomy incorporates the extent to which managers are allowed to make decisions without the need for approval from line managers above, and also the ability of managers to work without much supervision and control (Wilkinson, 2004). Brook (2003) defines autonomy as the degree to which one may make important decisions and choices without the consent of others and autonomy describes the independence and authority given to managers within organisations to develop new thoughts or proposals and carry them through to completion (Hughes & Morgan, 2007).

The degree of autonomy available to the HGM will influence behaviour and activity. Where the HGM is tightly controlled and operates with limited autonomy certain decisions will not be taken or implemented without authority from above.

Stewart's (1976) investigation into management jobs was framed by what a manager must do, what he cannot do, and what he may exercise choice or discretion over. In *Choices For the Managers* (Stewart, 1982), develops the idea that managers are given a significant amounts of choice in their management practice. Stewart's work concentrated upon the choice in managerial jobs and the resulting discretionary variation in what managers do. This being the case, HGMs could choose their management practice. However, choice and autonomy may be limited as these are moderated by the demands of the job (Machin, 1980).

How managers use choice and autonomy is thought to be influenced by their personalities and personal preferences, Legoherele, et al (2004). Writers (e.g. Mintzberg, 1975; Hales 1986) have commented that most managers prefer the tangible to the theoretical, the active to the reflective – the proposition being that managers would rather be out front dealing with live problems than in the office devising future strategy. Clearly other people's expectations will also have an influence on the choices that a manager makes about his or her work priorities, as Hales and Nightingale (1986) noted. For HGMs there are superiors who have control over their career progression. Managers who progress and get promoted in an organisation tend to be those who define their jobs in a way that the organisation thinks appropriate, where their priorities match the organisation's priorities (most likely defined as

the priorities of their superior) and their style matches the organisational style.(Guerrier and Lockwood 1989). This fits with the discussion by Gunz (1989) on the way in which organisations remake themselves in their own image by promoting those who fit in.

2.7.1. Autonomy and control in practice

A hotel property's growth and survival are often aligned to its capacity to attend to the changing needs and expectations of customers (Hodari, Turner and Sturman, 2017). Hence, hotel properties often pursue customer focused business strategies (Pizam, 2009). HGMs often have a relatively high degree of autonomy in devising the business strategy of their hotel to best suit the needs of customers (Hodari and Sturman, 2014) and this autonomy can improve hotel performance (Hodari, Turner and Sturman, 2017).

HGMs are formally in charge of their hotel, oversee the hotels functional departments (Nebel and Ghei 1993), and are held accountable for achieving hotel level objectives (Morey and Dittman 2003; Woods et al 1998). Selection and implementation of a competitive business level strategy has traditionally been seen as one of the HGM's major strategic responsibilities (Enz, 2010).

When HGMs allocate resources they are affected by how much autonomy they have, and the level of control they are subjected to (Elbanna, 2016).

While increased autonomy may deliver the positive outcomes of: an increase in the sense of responsibility amongst managers (Ouakouak et al 2014), the ownership of organisational problems (Morgenson et al, 2005), innovation (Zehir & Ozahin, 2008) and flexibility (Hughes & Morgan, 2007), it can also cause the negative outcome of drift and resource wastage (Hues & Morgan, 2007).

Hodari and Sturman (2014) state in an introduction to their research that a HGM's authority to make key property decisions will primarily depend on the level of autonomy the HGM is afforded. They go on to find that HGMs in chain operated hotels have lower autonomy in operations, marketing and HR management than those HGMs running independent hotels. The rationale for this is clear. The strategic management literature advocates the importance of a strategic control system to monitor progress and ensure the execution of strategic plans (Goold & Quinn, 1990). Strategic control addresses the central strategy problems of an organisation seeking to align the activities and performance of managers with its objectives, by providing the basis for actions and direction to correct deviations from objectives. Retaining control above the HGM level in the chain model should achieve this strategic control.

Multi-agency relationships

At first sight contemporary HGMs in the chain model appear not to have full control over their property. Instead HGMs are responsible to hotel owners or superiors in a corporate management firm hierarchy (Corgel, Robert, and Woodworth 2011). This alludes to the complex, tripartite relationship between the hotel's owner, management company and the HGM. Within this scenario the HGM acts as an agent for two principals: the hotel's owner and the hotel operator (Hodari and Sturman, 2014), this complicates management for the HGM.

Hotel owners frequently contract hotel management companies to operate their hotels through management contracts (Melissen, van Ginneken and Wood, 2016). Separating hotel ownership and operations through a management contract is attractive to both parties. Owners are able to invest in hotel real estate, while the hotel asset is professionally run by the hotel management company. In turn, these operators can generate income streams, expand any brands they may have, and earn profits, without incurring the real estate capital costs (Sohn, Tang and Jang, 2013).

Although both parties have a vested interest in the hotel's success, their different sources of income, risk profiles and investment strategies (Turner and Guilding, 2014) mean they often have misaligned goals (Turner and Guilding, 2013). This presents a potentially difficult set of relationships for the HGM to manage: the relationship between the two (owner and operator) but also his/her relationship with each individually. In practice the majority of operator fees are derived as a percentage of hotel sales or income and they may wish to spend resources on growing sales even if the owner does not receive a corresponding increase in profit (Turner and Guilding, 2013). Operators are also focussed on their brand reputation and the HGM may need to make hotel level decisions to support this at the owner's expense (Dev et al, 2010).

Although the HGM is usually an employee of the management company, given the position's responsibilities and the reporting structure, they are typically responsible to both the owner and operator (Turner and Guilding, 2013). Certainly there is a role to be played by the HGM in aligning goals.

The results from the Hodari, Turner and Sturman (2017) study found such goal congruence leads to superior hotel performance, causes greater HGM autonomy, which in turn causes greater hotel performance. These authors argue that a goal congruence performance relationship could be attributed to the tripartite relationship that a HGM has with the hotel's owner and operator, especially since the impact of congruence on performance has greater

effect when the HGM has more autonomy. There is agreement amongst authors (Giousmpasoglou, 2014; Hodari, Turner and Sturman, 2017) that hotels in which HGMs have more autonomy outperform hotels where they have less autonomy. The traditional top-down operational control often prescribed for single agency settings does not, therefore, seem to fit with the requirements in a multiple agency scenario. In fact, greater control, as evidenced through reduced HGM autonomy, has been found to negatively impact on hotel performance (Child and Rodrigues, 2003).

2.8. Change in the external environment

Guerrier and Deery (1998) identified managing quality and handling risk and uncertainty as key roles/activity for HGMs, with a conclusion being that a manager's individual attributes are crucial to successful organisations. This being the case, the HGM's ability to manage in a changing environment is seen to be of great importance and central to the management role. Investigating how HGMs manage in a challenging changing operating environment is an area of interest and the backdrop for the research.

Winata and Mia (2005) assert that HGMs face increasingly uncertain and complex work environments because of the industry's unique service characteristics. These authors suggest that the contemporary HGM role is becoming more challenging, and that handling change and uncertainty tests the HGM.

The context for this research is change: the research is conducted at a time of change in regards to the national hotel industry ownership structure, and in the case of the region where the hotels are located, dramatic change in the regional economy that presents a significant challenge to HGMs.

According to Olsen (1999), hospitality professionals must learn to anticipate the ongoing changes the industry as a whole if they expect to survive. He goes on to suggest that managers will be forced to open their perceptual window, using experience, along with the cognitive and information skills they have developed to scan the environment for significant variables which influence industry change.

Three of the key changes will now be considered in the following section.

2.8.1. Contemporary hotel industry changes influencing hotel management

Considering the literature on the external environment three drivers of change facing the hotel industry are discussed: technology, diversity and gender and globalisation.

Technology

The hotel industry is witnessing the growing use of mobile technology, such as i-pads and other tablet computers as a vehicle for service delivery. The primary driving force for this trend being the increasing number of mobile device users. (Okumus and Bilgihan, 2014). Today hotel guests rely on new sources of knowledge to make decisions on hotel choice; 49 percent of travellers reported that travel review websites are the most useful source of information when planning a trip (Raguseo and Vitari, 2017). However, these authors found that not all hotels can exploit being on websites featuring user-generated content to enhance financial performance, “since branded hotel chains do not see any additional financial performance from such content” p.266.

For hotel operators the benefits from adopting this technological innovation should translate into: increased revenues through on-selling of hotel services, a reduction in labour costs and increased customer loyalty by nurturing customer engagement (Kandampully, Zhang and Bilgihan, 2015)

Technology enables companies to provide an autonomous, private and effective service, but such operational innovations may not satisfy the guest’s emotional side of transaction goals (Ko, 2017). Piccoli et al (2017) concluding that “customer service provision is both challenged and influenced by the continuous evolution of customers’ service expectations and the introduction of increasingly personal technology that such as smart phones and wearable devises”p.360.

Kim (2016) found all customers regardless of age or gender valued the opportunity to use mobile technology to: browse hotel facilities, review current charges and check out. However, the likelihood of using app functions was found to vary across genders, with Gen-X and Gen-Y demographic group most likely to use a tablet to control hotel room features. Each of these market segments are predisposed to booking hotel features and services of interest to them via mobile apps.

Kim (2016) concludes that it is vital for hotel operators to acknowledge the revenue producing opportunities that reservations for services or future business made via tablet apps can generate. Furthermore hoteliers drive to cut costs can be aided through non-

revenue generating self-service app functions being used by guests reduces labour costs and can improve the customer experience.

Certainly travel booking behaviour has changed substantially over the past two decades. The traditional approach of utilising travel agents and booking ahead has evolved into a fast-paced, last-minute booking environment. This evolution has had substantial effects on revenue management (RM) in the areas of forecasting, pricing and online travel agency inventory allocations. These changes have made understanding the consumer booking process a necessary requirement for success (Webb 2016). Maximising RM is a priority for an HGM, now the challenge is to make the most effective use of on-line travel agents and exploit all the smart technology available to this end.

In this context, information and communication technologies (ICTs) have been changing the way in which products in the tourism and hospitality industry are distributed (Buhalis and Law, 2008): the development of Computer Reservation Systems (CRSs – 1970s), Global Distribution Systems (GDSs – 1980s) and the arrival of the Internet (1990s) generated a change in operational sales practices in the industry (Buhalis and Law 2008).

Hotels were slower and less efficient in using the opportunity offered by online distribution (Gazzoli, Kim and Palakurthi, 2008; Hayes, Ninemeier and Miller, 2017, 2017), thereby losing control over this channel (Phelan et al., 2011) and losing profit margins significantly as direct bookings went from the hotel web sites to the On-line Travel Agents (OTAs) (Thakran and Verma, 2013). Hotels still prefer to sell rooms directly via their own web sites, as they perceive OTAs as competitors in terms of distribution – even though OTAs are in many cases important tools for filling rooms that might otherwise not be sold (Anderson, 2011). OTAs and internet consolidators, however, will continue to play a strong role in the market (Oskam and Zandberg, 2016), charging substantial commissions.

Hayes, Ninemeier and Miller (2017) in considering technology challenges for HGMs found the most significant impact to be in the ways in which hotel rooms are purchased. The contemporary HGM is confronted with the problem of choosing the ideal mix of channels for his/her hotel, to maximise RM, given a limited amount of time, resources and information. These challenges cannot be met without proper RM systems and advantage that hotel chains have over the private/independent properties (Ivanov and Ivanova, 2016).

The combination of the higher booking volumes passing through intermediaries, the costs related to intermediation, the increasing lack of transparency in the hotel distribution landscape and the pressure on rates (rate parity, best rate guarantee) challenges hotel managers by seeming to make it harder to maintain profit levels and bargaining power. (Beritelli and Schegg, 2016).

A contrast with SME hotels, which are probably the most under-automated segment of the international travel industry (Buhalis, 2003), with private/independent hoteliers reluctant to implementing ICTs. According to Schegg and Scaglione (2014), more than half of Swiss hotels managed their rates and availabilities manually on OTAs in 2011.

However, Richard (2017), in considering survival strategies for hotels concluded that for all the technology available (mobile apps, online booking, intelligent hotels) a hotel, or more accurately the HGM, must not lose sight of what differentiates the hotel from competitors, and that is the people that work in it. While Information Technology in business processes gives organisations the ability to provide a personalised service at a reasonable cost (Buhalis and Law, 2008), there is still the reported desire for human interaction, which is often the critical reason for loyalty in the industry. Chieh-Heng (2017).

Diversity and Gender

Kim (2016) identified that male and female guests had different needs when seeking hotel app functions. This gives rise to consideration of diversity and gender in contemporary hotels from the management perspective.

Brownell (1994 A) found women advancing rapidly into senior management positions, and she expected by 1999 to see a dramatic increase in female HGMs, and more female HGMs in larger hotels. This optimism is underpinned by equal numbers of both sexes entering hospitality management programmes. DelSesto, (1993).

Hard work is recognised by both men and women as the key to success in the hospitality industry, however, a positive attitude, excellent communication skills, and problem solving ability are also essential for those who aspire to upper management positions. Brownell (1994 B).

The hotel management career path is a linear progression from entry-level posts to senior management roles (Ladkin, 2002). Progression is based on the individual attaining technical specialisation, in addition to other career competencies (Kong, Cheung and Song, 2011). To reach the position of HGM, managers must also gain breadth of experience across different functions (Yamashita and Uenoyama, 2006).

At first sight, a hotel management career appears conducive to ambitious individuals regardless of sex or ethnicity (Wang, 2013). In practice this may not always be the case. HGMs are predominantly male, while women dominate in functions such as housekeeping and reception (Ng and Pine, 2003). Mooney, Ryan and Harris (2017), found women were penalised by gendered and body-aged norms that kept them in feminised spaces with curtailed career paths and inequality ingrained in hotel career structures. Further

commenting that “There appears to have been no fundamental change in hotel hierarchy over the last 20 years, as the elite continue to protect their privileges by marginalising those who challenge the organisational cultures” (Mooney, Ryan and Harris, 2017, p.13) . This fits with earlier work across four countries by Burrell et al (1997), who found women employees in the main employed in lower status, less well-paid positions. The main barriers to women’s equality being identified as stereotypical attitudes held by employers. Ng and Pine (2003) concluded that changes in management practices are needed in the hotel industry before the vertical and horizontal sex segregation gaps will narrow.

In addition to ethical and legal reasons, the management of diversity is also supported for economic reasons. The management of diversity seeks to achieve the optimal contribution from all colleagues, with the different talents of these employees being developed. Through policies and their application, efficiency, effectiveness and ultimately an increase in profitability is secured. (Sezerel and Tonus, 2016). It appears that the hotel industry still has work to do in the management of diversity and maximising talent in female management and employees (Mooney, Ryan and Harris, 2017; Burrell et al, 1997; Ng and Pine, 2003).

Globalisation

Tourism and other related industries are an inseparable part of globalisation in the world economy. Global markets have encouraged the removal of many trade barriers while fostering the free movement of people and know-how across borders that have benefitted the tourism industry (Brondoni and Franzoni, 2017).

The external aspects of globalisation in the hospitality industry according to Zaitseva, et al, (2016) are: an increasing level of competition that leads to the higher level of hosting service, active acquisition of small entities of the hotel business by large companies and the formation of international hotel chains as a new approach to the organisation of the hotel business in various countries. Hotels, in particular, employ market-driven management strategies (Brondoni, 2008, 2009) that in recent years have resulted in a marked tendency to: increase their speed of adaptation to change through mergers and acquisitions, increase structural flexibility by reducing the number of owned hotels and focusing on hotel management and franchising and increase their number of brands on the market. This has been exemplified in the Aberdeen marketplace since 2016 with new brand entries from: Courtyard by Marriott, Residence by Marriott, Moxy, Hampton Inn and Ibis.

Currently, the top ten hotel chains have a large number of hotels across the globe and control 75% of the biggest hotels. (Salvioni, 2016). Therefore, the expansion of hotel chains has led to an increased level of globalisation of the chains themselves (as seen by the increase in the number of countries they operate in) Ivanov and Ivanova (2016).

The driving forces behind the growth and complexity of global markets have led hotel companies to adopt territorial expansion strategies according to the following models: ownership, leasing, management and franchising. The ownership model, as the term suggests, implies the hotels are owned and operated by an owner who bears all the costs and benefits. The leasing model is similar, except that the hotel owner-operator does not have outright ownership of the hotel but has signed lease agreements. With the management model, hotel owners use other organizations to operate the hotel on their behalf and pay management fees or brand-licensing fees when the hotel operates under a third-party brand. Conversely, franchised hotels are owned and operated by third parties and the owner receives a brand-licensing fee. (Salvioni, 2016). Ivanov and Ivanova (2016) observe that hotel expansion is predominantly through non-equity contractual modes (franchise, and management contract) with low financial risk. Such non-equity modes do not require much financial involvement and transfer the capital risk to local partner (hotel owner) Cunill and Forteza, (2010).

Globalisation also has an impact on the individual HGMs career choices, which requires these individuals to draw on knowledge and experience from beyond national borders. The growing internationalisation of the hotel industry means that today's managers may find themselves working in a number of countries throughout the world. In each country cultural, political and legislative factors influence the workplace, and managers need to understand these if they are to be effective (Burrell *et al*, 1997).

2.9. Summary of literature review

The hotel industry is important to national and international economies, literature showing that HGMs are key to a hotel's success (Hodari and Sturman, 2014). HGMs are formally in charge of their hotel, oversee the hotels' functional departments (Nebel and Ghei 1993), and are held accountable for achieving hotel level objectives (Morey and Dittman 2003; Woods *et al* 1998).

Reflecting on management writing generally, and Mintzberg's 1973 work in particular, the notion that the HGM is required to be a generalist and specialist resonates with the traditional and modern approaches to hotel management (Guerierr, 1987) considered. There is evidence to show how and why the traditional manager style gave way to a more business-orientated style (Harper *et la*, 2000; Aissa and Goaid, 2016). Hotel and hospitality educational programmes develop future managers with a "modern" management approach. This influences their approach to management and the activity undertaken when

their career reaches the HGM level. However, (Jaykumar, Fukey, and Balasubramanian, 2014) acknowledges the relevance of the traditional underpinning in contemporary hotel general management. This approach recognises the importance of the customer in sustainable hotel profitability, securing competitive advantage through superior service, Solnet et al (2009).

This is supported by the review of HGM job advertisements (Richardson Hotels, 2015; RHW Hotels, 2007; Core Recruitment, 2016; Leisure People, 2015), which found that delivering on the key aspects of both the traditional and modern manager were important, specifically; satisfaction to guests (through hotel keeping) and maximum financial returns to owners (through business management). It appears that contemporary HGMs need to be well versed in generic management skills, and have an operational ability, with the balance in favour of the respective styles being moderated by ownership and scale (Giousmpasoglou, 2014).

Drucker (1954) states that a company's primary responsibility is to serve its customers. Profit is not the primary goal, but rather an essential condition for the company's continued existence and sustainability. Hall (1993) agrees, as in his model the *new soul of enterprise* puts customer satisfaction as first priority. In contrast with the old soul of enterprise in which profit is the first priority. There are echoes of Taylorism in the Hall's *old* model: organisations controlled by hierarchies, with financial performance as a measure. In Taylor's 1911 concept of management, decision-making is centralised and organisations are hierarchical formal identities whose primary goal is profit maximisation. This, in Taylor's model, ensures optimum efficiency. Such an approach to managing a business still has relevance today, as arguably multi-national hotel chains manage in this manner.

The findings of Cheung, Law, and He (2010) echo what has been written before on competency dimensions for the hotel industry, which in effect are a mix of professional management skills and professional/vocational knowledge.

However, there is limited agreement on the profile of the "competent" HGM, with Jeou-Shyan et al (2011, p.1052) stating there is "failure to identify one set of essential management competencies for the hotel industry", concluding that HGMs need both generic and technical competencies, and this appears to be the logical consensus.

Following a review of competency there is found to be no "one best way" to manage; it depends on the situation" Mintzberg (2013, p.9) acknowledges that situational factors influence management practice, and that management practice is embedded in experience and the context of the organisation.

The Influence of context in management practice is seen to be a major driver of HGM behaviour and activity. From the literature, specific contextual influences are identified; hotel ownership/business models being identified as the most powerful, but also other lesser influences are identified as: individual HGMs' level of education, the extent to which the HGM engages with people, habitus, and finally, a related issue to the business model, that of HGM autonomy. Hodari and Sturman (2014) discuss autonomy in the hotel industry by observing that an HGM's authority to make decisions will depend on the level of autonomy the HGM is given. In the case of chain operated hotels this was less than for those HGMs in the private model.

The reason for examining what HGMs do across varying business models is the dramatic changes to ownership and management structures in the hotel industry in recent years (Slattery 2012). This change has resulted in contrasting approaches to hotel management. For example the Accor multinational chain competing in an emerging market, according to Aung, (2000), has a decentralised structure delegating responsibility to HGMs, who best know their local market needs. Here authority for managing and autonomy is with the HGM. This is diametrically opposed to Mullins and Davies (1991) observation that many hotel chains are operated within a bureaucratic structure, with standardised methods and procedures laid down by head office. This style of management owes much to scientific management, albeit rebadged as the Management Competencies movement.

Tengblad's (2006) more recent work on managers' activity found an orientation towards working with subordinates in group settings and paying more attention to information giving than performing administrative duties. However, 30 years after Mintzberg's (1973) original study, Tengblad (2006) found that while there has been change, managerial work has largely remained the same.

But there is change, with three contemporary changes which are providing challenges for today's HGM being identified as: technology, diversity and gender, and globalisation, and Baum (2015) identifying the blurring of managerial roles with operational managers. Managers trained and developed to manage the internal daily challenges are being charged with externally facing strategic activity. This blurring of managerial and operational roles in tourism and hospitality he observes is taking hold in larger organisations as well as small businesses as has been the case in the past. Arguably this blurring of operational and strategic management roles has been HGM management practice in SME private ownership hotels for some time. Looking for support to help cope with such a wide remit, Kearney, Harrington and Kelliher (2014) found that owner/managers in small independent

hotel firms benefited from becoming a member of a network, as this allows learning from others.

Hotel ownership has clearly become more complicated, with a number of stakeholders coming together seeking to maximise their financial returns through collaborations (Hotel Analysis, 2014). Although not always in a harmonious way. It is notable that hotel operators and hotel owners will not always have an alignment of interests (Turner and Guilding, 2013). These individual stakeholder interests are likely to bring conflict between owners and operators, with owners seeking short-term returns rather than long-term returns favoured by operators (Olsen *et al*, 2004; Lashley and Burgess, 2007). At the same time the branded operator's objective of brand value maximisation can easily conflict with the owner's focus on the profitability of their individual property (Detlefsen and Glodz, 2013).

These industry developments are thought to impact on the role of the HGM across the varying business models. The challenge for HGMs would seem to be stakeholder management, keeping those with financial interests in the hotel business broadly aligned.

RM has always been important to hotels. For an HGM to satisfy stakeholders, then success in RM is thought to be pivotal. The contemporary HGM is confronted with the problem of choosing the ideal mix of channels for his/her hotel, to maximise RM, given a limited amount of time, resources and information. These challenges cannot be met without proper RM systems, and advantage that hotel chains have over the private/independent properties (Ivanov and Ivanova, 2016).

In summary hotel management is open to variation across the business models in operation. For HGMs in the chain model historically there appears to have been a requirement for compliance. (Gilbert and Guerrier, 1997). This contrasts the decentralised approach of Accor (Aung, 2000).

2.10. Literature Gap

The profile of the HGM has been largely influenced by the growth of international hotel brands/chains. The transformation of the hotel sector into a truly globalised industry occurred after a prolonged period of mergers and acquisitions during the 1990s.

This brought changes in the adopted growth strategies of many hotel companies who were now competing on a global basis (Nickson ,1998; Charalmpos,2014). Thus, since the early 1990s, the rapid growth of international hotel chains and its effects on managerial work

have drawn the attention of researchers (Gilbert and Guerrier, 1997 and Ladkin and Juwaheer 2000).

Theoretical and empirical efforts focussing on the interplay between work context and managerial roles have been largely absent despite the recognition that context meaningfully shapes behaviour (Dierdorff, et al, 2009). The work context can be thought of as a set of moderating factors that influence employees and management behaviour (Strong et al 1999). Dierdorff et al (2009) further argue that context can exert a profound influence on what work role requirements are more or less important for managers. This influence on what managers actually do, in the context of Hotel General Managers, is central to this study.

In literature there has been a move away from the 1970's work on creating snapshots of managerial activity "towards a more synthetic approach to providing a moving picture of the fluidities of managerial work in its different guises" (Hales, 1986, p.93).

The second shift identified in Hale's (1986) work is from measurement of managerial jobs across pre-formed categories towards the discovery of categories. This research identifies with this approach and seeks to apply the discovery of management categories to that of hotel managers.

The preceding sections have discussed the literature on the HGM role, how this has evolved and the current challenges for the post holder in terms of the complex ownership structures present in 2015.

Giousmpasoglou (2014) concludes that the adoption of the traditional management approach proves successful for family businesses and local (Greek) hotel chains. This study promises much in terms of the stated research objectives (identifying key HGM roles in the Greek hotel sector and influence of local national context to managerial work) but, the outcomes prove of limited value. There is a lack of focus in the data collection questions, the semi-structured questions are too generic and lack the probing anticipated, with a number of questions simply requiring self-reporting on perceived competencies. This is compounded by respondents being asked to make comparisons outside their sphere of knowledge (similarities between family owned Greek hotels and multi-national chain hotels for example).

Previous studies focussed on HGMs have been subject to limitations by using samples of HGMs without distinguishing between the different types of hotels they managed and factors influencing the hotel business (e.g. international brand vs local brand, hotel contract

types and wider ownership/business models). Kim, Chun and Petrick, 2009. The significance of these is confirmed by Ladkin (2002).

Hodari and Sturman (2014) state that research into managerial work in the hotel and hospitality industry has almost always been restricted to the US, and so far has been inconclusive due to its predominantly exploratory, qualitative nature (e.g. Gannon, Roper and Docherty 2010) and the small numbers of the studies' participants (e.g. Arnaldo 1981; Dann 1991). The rationale for investigating the behaviour of HGMs is further amplified by the fact that studies about hospitality industry managers' activities have generally focussed on a variety of industry sectors, functional levels and departments (Gamble, Lockwood and Messenger 1994; Kay and Russette 2000) thereby preventing any significant analysis about HGMs in particular. Furthermore, most research on HGMs predates the industry structure changes, which currently is characterised by multinational hotel chains contrasting approaches to HGM practice. There is a need to examine how these changes impact on individual HGM management practice.

This study seeks, to remedy these knowledge gaps, and focus on HGMs operating in north east Scotland, within a mix of business models and ownership types.

"What do managers do?" is a question which has been asked by many management writers. (Hales, 1986, p.88). The study aims to go beyond the plethora of categories for describing managerial activity, and investigate the practice itself, in the context of hotel management in a time of change.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

A number of authors have confirmed the long-held notion that the hotel general manager (HGM) is fundamental to a hotel's success (Forte 1986; Mayock 2012; Woodes et al 1998, and Hodari & Sturmand 2014). Although the importance of the HGM role, and the activity these managers undertake is recognised, little is known about the how and why of HGM management practice. This is the research problem to be investigated.

“What do managers do?” is a question which has been asked by management authors. (Hales, 1986, p.88). Nicolini (2012) observes that following on from the seminal work of Mintzberg (1973), writers have recorded long catalogues of things that managers do, but this work sheds little light on the meaning of work, or why practice is this way.

The aim of this research is to explore and understand the ways in which contemporary HGMs manage and what influences how they manage across three contemporary business models, in the geographically constrained operating environment of Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, posing the following research objectives:

1. Critically analyse Hotel General Managers' activity and priorities. A key objective is to understand what contemporary HGMs actually do, and to explain and theorise any differences in practice.
2. Establish what influences and shapes the behaviour of HGMs employed across hotels in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.
3. Understand, theorise and explain why differences in management style and practices come about.

3.2. Methodological position and research in tourism and hospitality

Literature suggests that deliberation on ontological and epistemological issues should precede methodological decisions (Seale, 1999; Silverman, 2001), and this section sets out to address this approach.

Dann and Phillips (2001) argue that qualitative methods are particularly suited to areas of tourism research, as it allows theory to emerge rather than being imposed on a topic through

participants discussing their own experiences. This approach provides a greater richness and depth to the data collection, and is thought to fit within the scope of this study into what HGMs actually do.

There are many, often contrasting methodological approaches to research in social science in general and tourism related enquiries in particular.

Differences occur in philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology), knowledge (epistemology), research strategies (methodology) and procedures (methods).

Consideration of the philosophical issues helps to clarify the research design, but more importantly facilitates the identification of the most suitable approach to deal with the research questions (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012).

Ontology, epistemology and method

These are terms frequently encountered in discussions of research approaches, and need to be understood and fleshed out prior to developing the thinking on methodology.

Ontology, epistemology and paradigms are in effect key concepts related to a philosophical stance. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of these concepts and then justify the philosophical stance adopted for the research.

In simple terms: ontology is defined as a way of looking at the world, and epistemology as the relationship between the researcher and the subject of research.

“ontology refers to the nature of reality assumed by researcher – in the interpretive approach the researcher’s perspective is not privileged: emphasis is placed on the varying views and realities as perceived by the people being studied.

Epistemology refers to the relationship between the researcher and the phenomenon being studied ... the interpretive researcher is more subjective and engaged with the subjects of the study” Veal (2011) p.30.

This thesis investigates what HGMs actually do through an interpretative stance, as opposed to a counting approach such as measuring time allocated to tasks or activity.

The simplest definition of ontology is a way of looking at the world. Applying Veal’s (2011) definition to the research into HGMs, the interpretative approach an emphasis is placed on the varying views and realities as perceived by the HGMs being studied.

Method is simply ways of gathering and analysing data (Veal, 2011). Stewart et al (1980) in a seminal study of NHS managers, gathered data through open-ended interviews; later, Kotter’s (1982) studies investigating the work of 15 high level general managers over a

range of corporations in the US, again involved the use of interviews. As the use of interviews proved appropriate for both these studies in the same research area of investigating management activity, adopting interviews as the method of data collection seemed justifiable for this study. The methodological approach employed by Giousmpasoglou (2014) is replicated in this research, as his 2014 work with Greek HGM's considered the nature of managerial work in cultural contexts.

Qualitative researchers draw upon philosophical paradigms "to help locate themselves and their studies by adopting a given paradigm to guide their ontological, epistemological and research perspectives" Savin-Baden & Major (2013, p. 59). A paradigm is a belief system or worldview that guides the researcher and the research process (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

Guba and Lincoln went on to identify four competing research paradigms: **positivism, post positivism, critical theory and constructionism** (1998, p.202-203). Positivism refers to the traditional approach derived from the natural sciences. This paradigm assumes that there is a single objective reality which can be measured in absolute terms and is independent of the values of the researcher. Post positivism incorporates some qualitative methods; it accepts that findings are probably rather than definitely true and objective reality can only be partly, rather than fully known (Guba and Lincoln, 1998). Increasingly, social science researchers have questioned the traditional, scientific approach on a number of counts (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; Guba and Lincoln, 1998; Lee and Fielding, 1996; Miles and Huberman, 1994). The natural scientific enquiry formulates a theory or hypothesis and then tests it. However, the scientific/positivist approach, relying on quantification and generalisation, takes no account of the meanings and purposes attached by human beings to their behaviour, or of the context in which the behaviour takes place. Moreover, the theory proposed by researchers within this paradigm may have little or no meaning for the group or culture being studied. Guba and Lincoln (1998) acknowledge that the post positivist approach, which uses qualitative data to give richer insights into the context and meaning of human behaviour in studies, addresses some of these criticisms. However, they note three further criticisms of the positivist and post positivist paradigm (1998, p.199):

- Facts are not independent of theories. This undermines objectivity, because facts can only be seen in the context of a particular theoretical framework. Similarly, facts are not independent of values.
- One set of facts can support several theoretical frameworks. This means that if a researcher has a theory, they can deduce what facts ought to exist. However, they cannot arrive at one single theory from a given set of facts. The example most

commonly given is that the existence of one black swan disproves the hypothesis that all swans are white.

- Developments in the physical sciences brought into question the assumption that the researcher has no effect on the phenomena he or she is observing. Social scientists now argue that it is more accurate to recognise that there is inevitably some form of interaction between the researcher and the subject, and that knowledge or findings are created out of this interaction.

Following positivism and post positivism, Guba and Lincoln (1998) suggested that critical theory and constructivism were a distinct move away from the belief in an objective reality to the view that reality is shaped by the macro context of social, political, cultural and gender values (critical theory) and/or the micro context of individual, local or specific values (constructivism). Denzin and Lincoln (1998) and Lincoln and Denzin (2003) traced the development of qualitative, or interpretivist, research in sociology and anthropology through five “moments”, as shown in Table 2. They located each moment in a time period of the twentieth century but noted that researchers are still working in each of these moments. This is either because of the legacy of a previous piece of research or because they are following a set of practices in terms of research design, data collection and analysis belonging to one of the moments (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998a, p.22).

Table 2: Moments of Qualitative Research

Traditional Period	1900s – 1914. Objective, colonising, depersonalised accounts reflecting positivist paradigm. Researcher as expert, findings presented as fact
Modernist Phase	Post war – 1970s. Move away from positivism, whilst attempting to maintain positivistic rigour in qualitative research. Researchers interested in ways people categorise the world and meaning placed on events
Blurred Genres	1970 – 1986. Wide range of paradigms, methods, strategies and theories available. Boundaries between disciplines becoming blurred. Naturalistic, post positivist and constructionist paradigms gain power. Author’s presence in the interpretive text becomes an issue.
Crisis of Representation	Mid 1980s - 1990s. Research and writing becomes more reflexive. Issues of validity, reliability and objectivity once more problematic. Interpretive theories become more common. Fieldwork and writing blur into one another.
The Fifth Moment	The present. End of the grand narrative. Focus on more local, small scale, context specific theories. Researcher as expert rejected, instead becomes one voice among many.

Adapted from Denzin and Lincoln (1998) and Phillimore and Goodson (2004)

Some authors prefer the term interpretive for the fourth major paradigm (Goodson and Phillimore, 2004), and there is a sense in which the terms constructivist, constructivism, interpretivist and interpretivism can seem interchangeable. There is a similar apparent interchangeability between “qualitative” and “interpretive” as umbrella terms. Qualitative research is the favoured catch all term to encompass research approaches which do not proceed from the natural scientific perspective, and is commonly used as the opposite of quantitative.

As qualitative methods have become more popular in tourism studies, a variety of methods have been embraced including: in-depth interviews, focus groups, participant observation and even diary-based methods (Phillimore and Goodson 2004).

The qualitative technique for collecting data of in-depth interviews is seen as wholly appropriate for this study into HGMs, who are interviewed in their own hotel. This choice is supported by characteristics of the qualitative method proposed by some tourism writers (Creswell, 2013; Rossman and Rallis, 1999; Coles et al, 2013):

- Such methods are not tightly constrained within a study but rather emergent; evolving during the research with the researcher learning more about the questions to ask.
- Qualitative methods are useful for researching complex ideas, especially opinions and perceptions.
- Research involving such methods may take place in the natural setting of the respondent.
- The methods are interpretative, putting emphasis on the researcher to interpret the data.

3.3. The Interpretive paradigm in tourism and hospitality research

This research examines the management practices undertaken by HGMs in three separate hotel ownership types, the objective being to make a contribution to understanding how HGMs actually manage, and what influences this practice. The context is the contemporary business models of hotels. The research will provide a fuller appreciation of the differences between what HGMs do in the three business models and seek to explore and why these exist.

This study will adopt an interpretivist approach to understand the activities undertaken by HGMs in their working role in the hotel. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007) define interpretivism as “*an epistemology that advocates that it is necessary for the researcher to understand the differences between humans in our role as social actors*” (p.106). According to Roth and Mehta (2002) “*the interpretivist approach does not seek an objective truth so much as to unravel the patterns of subjective understanding*”. (p.131).

Riley and Love (2000) concluded from their review of published qualitative tourism research up to 1996 that positivism is still the dominant paradigm. They suggested that this is partly because academic journals that concentrate on applied research may feel uncomfortable in drawing bottom line implications and impacts from qualitative research, and therefore lean towards the positivist tradition. Updating the Riley and Love review in 2004, Goodson and Phillimore (2004) considered that qualitative tourism research remained largely situated within Denzin and Lincoln's (1998) traditional and modernist moments. However, they noted that tourism researchers were beginning to question whether positivism and quantification were "*fully equipped to explore questions of meaning and understanding*" (Goodson and Phillimore, 2004, p.30). In particular, they suggested there had been "little real attempt to understand individual experiences of tourism" and that little attention had been paid to:

"a more person-focused approach which takes account of the individual's subjective experiences and perceptions and the roles these play in constructing tourist, or indeed, host experience." (Goodson and Phillimore, 2004, p.40)

3.4. Grounded Theory

There is an argument that all qualitative research is interpretive, in that it involves the researcher watching, listening, asking, recording, examining and then writing or presenting the resultant information. Within this overall approach, however, there are different perspectives depending upon the particular answers to the ontological and epistemological questions noted above (Goulding, 1999; Hollinshead, 2004; Schwandt, 1998). Schwandt (1998, p.221) suggests that the terms constructivism and interpretivism "*are best regarded as sensitizing concepts*" and notes that those who espouse these persuasions share a common goal, that of "*understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it*".

The intent of a grounded theory study is to move beyond description and provide a unified theoretical explanation (Corbin and Strauss, 2007). Creswell and Poth's (2017) direction that participants in the study would all have experienced the process, chimes with the HGM research undertaken. Grounded theory methodology employs the method of constant comparison. Theories are not applied to the subject being studied, but emerge from the empirical data themselves (Gray, 2014). Empirical indicators from the data (in the words of HGM interviewees) are looked at for similarities and differences (Schwandt, 1997). This methodology fits with the approach to data gathering for the thesis.

3.4.1. Constant comparison and the study of Hotel General Managers

Constant comparison is a technique similar to the analytical element of grounded theory to explain how experiences, and activities are compared and contrasted into themes (Jack et al, 2015). The process of using themes can be seen in the model produced for discussion in Figure 6. The raw data feeds into the themes in the left hand box, sorting the data from the HGM interviews. These are shown as influences on management behaviour and activity, the box on the right hand side.

There is clear rationale for investigating HGMs activity across ownership types as the contemporary changes in hotel ownership and operation is the most significant change facing the UK hotel sector. The reason for examining and comparing what HGMs do across these varying ownership types is the dramatic changes to the ownership and management structures in the hotel industry (Slattery 2012).

“In many hotel structures the HGM manages property-level issues according to the owners’ or operator’s specifications and achieves the objectives of the owner and of the hotel management company (HMC), if the hotel is operated under a management contract. Even small hotels that are owner-operated must still meet outside standards if they have a franchise agreement” (Hodari & Sturman, 2014, p.433).

The contemporary HGM’s role and responsibility and ultimately autonomy, are therefore largely influenced by the owners or management companies or the franchise the hotel is operating under. “Understanding the scope and limits of HGMs decision autonomy is an understudied yet important topic for hospitality research” (Hodari & Sturman, 2014, p.434).

In tackling these questions, this research aims not simply to capture the experience of work and activity of HGMs, but to go beyond that to an understanding of the choices of activity being made and the influences acting upon the HGM, depending on the business model under which the hotel is being managed.

There is a desire to get behind the choice of tasks or behaviour of those being studied. This work will be enhanced by the intimate subject and industry knowledge of the researcher.

At the time of data collection the researcher was Vice Chair of the Aberdeen City and Shire Hotel Association and is known to those providing primary data. The benefits in terms of the data collection being gathered by a known contact are:

1. Access to subjects
2. Openness and confidence
3. A shared frame of reference in terms of language and job context.

(Schwandt, 1997)

3.5. Methodological issues

The strength of a qualitative method of investigation in comparison to a quantitative one is the ability to provide a rich and detailed understanding of human behaviour (Hewitt-Taylor 2001). According to Meyers (2000) “One of the greatest strengths of the qualitative approach is the richness and depth of explorations and descriptions” (p.3). While this methodological approach is wholly appropriate for generating rich data on the activity of HGM’s in the context of 1:1 interviews carried out by an informed researcher, there is a criticism in terms of the transferability of the methodology to other studies, as highlighted by Myers (2002). Future researchers will not be able to access the same subjects (interviewees). The researcher was known to all the interviewees and agreement to the interviews was granted on the knowledge of the researcher and trust developed over a number of years. The researcher brought an informed standpoint to the interview, not only of the trading position in the Aberdeen marketplace, but also a knowledge and expertise of hotel management by virtue of being a previous hotel manager.

3.6. Research Design

As seen earlier in this chapter the ontological and epistemological perspectives underpinning this research were set out.

This section addresses the third of the paradigm questions posed, that of Methodol, by which is meant the general and specific research strategy to be used to find out what the researcher believes can be known (Guba and Lincoln, 1998).

In summary; in terms of what managers do there is a need to “better refine the terms that are used to describe managerial functions and there is still a widespread need to study what

managers actually do in terms of functions other than those of Fayol (1949) or Mintzberg (1973), the work of managers needs more research to present it with a wider range of descriptions than are currently on offer.” (Dann, 1990, p. 330).

In more recent studies there has been a movement away from the 1970's work on creating snapshots of the managerial job “towards a more synthetic approach providing a moving picture of the fluidities of managerial work in its different guises” (Hales, 1986, p.93). Hales (1986) goes on to identify a change in emphasis in aims, methods and models that has also occurred; the move from a search for definitive characteristics of the managerial job to considering the diversity and variety in managerial jobs. The second shift identified is from measurement of managerial jobs across pre-formed categories towards the discovery of categories.

This study aims to explore and understand the way in which HGMs manage and what influences how they manage across three business models.

The research strategy, as stated, will be an interpretivist one, drawing upon qualitative methods to elicit HGMs' experiences about their working life and chosen activity to arrive at an understanding on how the ownership type of their hotel influences decisions on priorities. An insight into the management practice required in each of the three business models will be generated, seeking contributions to knowledge at both a theoretical and practical level. Originality will come from new insight gained into HGM practice and behaviour.

3.7. Qualitative research in tourism

Although some early tourism research did have a quantitative bias, an example being host/guest relations work (Cohen 1973), in terms of the historical development of research, it may be that qualitative approaches were still emerging and gaining acceptance at this time. Support for this view comes from Riley and Love (2000) who propose that these early researchers were just less familiar with qualitative methods than researchers are now, and in the early period the techniques were less well defined.

Much of this early tourism research was in fact follow-on work from work by sociologists and anthropologists and as such was published in journals not tied to tourism (Riley and Love 2000). There was a widespread belief among tourism researchers that statistical methods were necessary to give tourism research the academic rigour sought.

There has been discussion in earlier sections regarding an increasing recognition of the need for tourism researchers to find research strategies which enable them to gain a better

understanding of various phenomena within tourism and of the benefits of adopting interpretivist approaches (Botterill, 2001; Goodson and Phillimore, 2004; Riley and Love, 2000; Walle, 1997).

3.7.1. Criticisms of Qualitative Research

According to Myers (2002) “One of the greatest strengths of the qualitative approach is the richness and depth of explorations and descriptions” (p.3). This is the benefit sought in interviewing HGMs; the opportunity to develop a picture of their approach to hotel management across three ownership types.

While it is believed that this benefit outweighs any disadvantages in the approach, there are weaknesses to be acknowledged.

Qualitative research has been criticised and regarded with suspicion and hostility largely on account of its general characteristics remaining poorly understood and as a consequence its potential is arguably underdeveloped (Sandelowski, 1986). A recurring criticism of qualitative methodology revolves around questions on the value of its dependence on small samples, which is believed to render it incapable of generalising conclusions (Yin, 1994).

Myers (2002, p.5) makes a pertinent criticism, in relation to the transferability of the methodology to other studies in that “future researchers may not have access to the same subjects, and if other subjects are used, results may differ”. Continuing “subjects (respondents) may openly communicate with one researcher and remain distant with others”.

While this limitation is accepted, it is not a limitation in the study, as the access to subjects (HGM respondents) is also seen as a strength on the part of the researcher. The result is a unique insight into hotel management, which is unlikely to be replicated. The transient nature of hotel management, and the relatively short periods of time managers stay in post makes re-running the data collection virtually impossible.

3.7.2. Approaching HGM research

Walle (1997), in discussing the merits of quantitative and qualitative research in tourism, noted that whilst the scientific route is powerful, it takes time and excludes topics it is unable to deal with. The qualitative approach is insightful and can be used to tackle most topics, although it generates fewer numbers of responses. He concluded that the majority of tourism research lies on the continuum between science and art.

A number of studies have contributed to the understanding the management role of the HGM in hotels; Schmidt (1961) in assessing the career paths of HGMS in 60 Midwestern hotels in the USA, Nebel, 1991 and Ladkin, 2000, further examined career histories of HGMs, the business philosophy of HGMs has been studied (Getz & Peterson, 2005; Glancey & Pettigrew, 1997) and competency studies on HGMs (Akrivos, Ladkin and Reklitis 2007; Brownell, 1994 A; Morey & Dittman, 2003).

There is, however, as reported by Raybould and Wilkins (2005) a need for a better understanding of the processes which influence the nature of managerial work. The debate being to what extent managerial work is influenced by the nature and personality of the individual (choices they make) or the nature of the job (demands), which in this study would be those as presented by ownership type.

This research sets out to overcome a limitation identified by Kim, Chun and Petrick (2009), in previous studies that no distinction has been made of the influence on HGMs of hotel business factors, which are seen as: international brand vs. local brand, hotel size and ownership, which includes the contract type.

Discussing the trade-off between depth and breadth involved in research design decisions, Patton (2002) contrasts the depth of detail, nuance and context afforded by qualitative research with the breadth of response available using quantitative instruments, but then notes that there is a similar trade-off to consider within qualitative research (2002, p.227-228). Patton (2002) concludes that the decision as to the range of focus of a particular study will be influenced by a number of factors, such as resources available, as well as the research questions and objectives.

Hodari & Sturman (2014) found that in many contemporary hotel structures the HGM manages property-level issues according to the owners' or operator's specifications and achieves the objectives of the owner and of the hotel management company (HMC). Even hotels which are owner-operated must still meet outside standards if they have a franchise agreement. They concluded that the HGMs' role, responsibilities, and ultimately autonomy, are largely influenced by the owners or management companies or the franchise the hotel is operating under.

It was considered important to interview HGM's in their place of work. All interviews took place in the hotels in which the respondents were the HGM.

Edwards and Holland (2013) suggest that the interview site itself produces micro-geographies of social-spatial relations and meaning that reflect the relationships of the

researcher with the participant, the participant with the site and the site within a broader socio-cultural and power context that affects both researcher and participant.

Interviewing HGMs in their own working environment has two distinct benefits: the respondents were relaxed as in their own environment and the researcher was able to observe the respondents' behaviour and any interactions with others in the hotel. By being part of the hotel environment a richer picture of what the HGM does was possible, by setting activity in context.

Interviews were carried out in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire between July and November 2015.

3.8. Data Collection

This interview is seen as a collaborative approach, which is intended to evoke both a colourful description of the activity and behaviour, as well as an empathetic understanding of ways in which the individuals working experiences (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013, p221). In a qualitative study carried out on career path profiles of general managers of Korean super deluxe hotels and factors influencing their career development (Kim, Chun and Petrick, 2009) in their face to face interviews with HGMs found that the combination of recording the interview conversation, taking keyword written notes and transcribing the interviews as soon as possible, produced rich data sets from the conversations.

3.8.1. Interviews

Patton (2002, p.349) sets out the range of interview styles and techniques, from the completely structured and formal interview which is questionnaire based to the totally open ended, unstructured interview more commonly used in hermeneutic, grounded theory, ethnographic and other qualitative forms of enquiry (see Table 3). He recognises that each has its strengths and weaknesses, making it more or less appropriate for different research questions and situations.

Table 3: Interview Instrumentation

Type of Interview	Characteristics	Strengths	Weaknesses
Informal conversational interview	Questions emerge from the immediate context and are asked in the natural course of conversation; no predetermination of topics or wording	Increases salience and relevance of questions; interviews are built on and emerge from observations; interview can be matched to individuals and circumstances	Different information collected from different people with different questions; Less systematic and comprehensive if certain questions do not arise naturally. Data organisation and analysis can be quite difficult
Interview guide approach	Topics and issues to be covered are specified in advance in outline; interviewer decides sequence and wording in course of interview	The outline increases the comprehensiveness of data; data collection is more systematic for each respondent. Logical gaps in data can be anticipated and closed. Interviews remain fairly conversational and situational.	Important and salient topics may be inadvertently omitted. Interviewer flexibility in sequencing and wording questions can result in substantially different responses from different perspectives, leading to reduced comparability of responses.
Standardized open-ended interview	Exact wording and sequence of questions determined in advance. All interviewees asked same basic questions in same order. Questions worded in completely open-ended format.	Respondents answer the same questions, increasing comparability of responses; data are complete for each person on topics addressed in the interview. Reduces interviewer effects and bias where several interviewers used. Permits	Little flexibility in relating interview to particular individuals and circumstances; standardised wording of questions may constrain/limit naturalness and relevance of questions and answers.

		evaluation users to see and review the instrumentation used in evaluation. Facilitates organisation and analysis of data.	
Closed, fixed response interview	Questions and response categories determined in advance. Responses fixed; respondent chooses from among these fixed responses.	Data analysis simple; responses can be directly compared and easily aggregated; many questions can be asked in short time.	Respondents must fit their experiences and feelings into the researcher's categories; may be perceived as impersonal, irrelevant and mechanistic. Can distort what respondents really mean or experienced by limiting response choices.

Adapted from Patton (2002)

Semi-structured and unstructured interviews are used in a considerable range of qualitative approaches, as presented by Patton (2002) above.

Mason (2002) argues that despite the variations in style all qualitative and semi-structured interviewing has certain core features in common:

- The interactional exchange of dialogue.
- A thematic, topic-centred approach where the researcher has themes they wish to cover, but with a fluid and flexible structure.
- A perspective regarding knowledge as situated and contextual, requiring the researcher to ensure the relevant contexts are brought into focus so that the situated knowledge can be produced. Meaning and understandings are created in an interaction, which is effectively a co-production, involving the construction of knowledge [Adapted from Mason 2002, p.62]

What Mason describes here fits well with the Objectives of this study of HGMs. To gather richness and depth of primary data from the HGMs in-depth semi-structured interviews were chosen.

3.8.1.1. Semi-structured 1:1 interviews

As previously stated the Hotel General Managers (HGMs) that were interviewed were all members of the Aberdeen City and Shire Hotels Association (ACSHA), and located in the same geographic region.

The interview locations stretch from Aberdeen city to Inverurie in the north and Dinnit to the west. Every hotel across this region is facing similar economic challenges. The assumption being made is that each of these HGMs trading in this region, and part of the ACSHA, will face similar external challenges on account of the operating environment they are trading in.

In the final analysis 21 transcriptions were used. Each of these interviews were either preceded or was followed by a guided tour of the hotel by the HGM.

One interview had to be discarded. This interview was with an owner/manager of a small hotel, with the date and time having been set by the HGM some time in advance of the interview. On the date and time of the interview, however, he had to cover Reception, with check-out and any other duty management requirements. The interview was started and

stopped on four occasions, and ultimately not only was the flow of discussion lost, answers were becoming rushed, and the demands of the hotel were so great it was inappropriate to continue.

When given the choice of place to conduct the interview twenty of the twenty-one HGMs chose a public area of their hotel: Reception lounge, bar area, restaurant, or unused conference rooms. Only one interviewee chose to go to their own office.

Being in the public areas seemed to put the HGMs at ease, although all were still very much aware of what was going on around them operationally, as were their colleagues/staff. These locations on occasions brought challenges. However, having learnt from the pilot interview where the background music interfered with the recording clarity, interviewees were asked to turn off music and site the location away from noisy bar areas (staff cleaning). On one occasion an interview was broken to move from a noisy Reception area to a closed conference room.

3.8.1.2. Pilot interview

Veal (2011) advises one or more pilots before embarking on the main data collection. The main proposes of the pilot are summarised as:

- Test the wording.
- Test the sequencing.
- Test layout and flow.
- Gain familiarity with respondents.
- Test fieldwork arrangements.
- Train researchers.
- Estimate interview time.
- Test analysis procedures.

Adapted from Veal (2011, p.314)

The first interview, the pilot, was conducted outside the Aberdeen City and Shire Hotel Association (ACSHA), with the HGM of the Perthshire hotel. This hotel and manager was chosen on account of the hotel's complex ownership type and the fact the participant and the researcher were at one time HGMs together in a large company. The researcher sought

to practice the interview style on a HGM known to be supportive, and a participant with whom the researcher felt comfortable trying out questions and potentially making mistakes. This hotel is managed by Hilton and there are a number of owners in a consortium that owns the property. Following the pilot a number of changes were made to the running order of the semi-structured interview. Also, an explicit question was introduced as the opening question "Can you describe the business model of this hotel". Previously a question on ownership style was used, which it was felt didn't fit with the franchise business model. Following the pilot the researcher was more confident with the flow of the interview, and more confident in approaching the HGMs to be surveyed in the main data collection stage. In summary amendments to the semi-structured interview guide were made:

- an opening question on business model inserted
- the sequence of questions to be adjusted to aid flow
- two questions were removed, as there was duplication

the siting of the interview was to be considered, the recording of the pilot interview was impaired by background music in the bar/lounge areas used.

In summary, from Veal (2011), p.239, in-depth interviews are:

- Usually conducted with a relatively small sample of subjects.
- Interview guided by a checklist of topics rather than formal questionnaire.
- Interviews often recorded and notes or verbatim transcript prepared.
- Interviews typically take at least half an hour and may extend over several hours.
- Repeat follow-up interviews possible.

In this study, it was considered important to cover the same general areas with each interviewee, whilst allowing them flexibility and freedom to tell their stories about their experiences. It was therefore decided to take an approach part way between the interview guide and a completely informal conversation. The interviews were allowed to develop as conversations, with the aim of covering the (five) key topic areas. Each conversation was initiated and developed using the open question asking the HGM to talk about the start of their day.

The aim of the interviews was to encourage interviewees to talk about how they conduct themselves as a HGM.

The researcher sets out to capture their working experiences. As the study focussed on specific research questions relating to the elements of HGM work, it was considered helpful to have a number of key interview questions to act as conversation starting points and elicit interviewees' narratives and anecdotes. After the first five descriptive questions were asked, interviewees were asked to simply talk about how their "typical" day starts, allowing the interviewee the time and opportunity to talk through activity and interactions fresh in their mind and familiar to them. This question had a number of benefits:

- Eased the interviewee into the interview, with a question drawing on recollection only. This meant the questions requiring reflection could be asked later once the interviewee was comfortable and understood the style of information being sought.
- Set the interview in context for both interviewee and interviewer.
- Allowed the interviewer to get a personal insight to the interviewees working day.
- Allowed follow up and probing questions based on interviewee narrative.

A copy of the interview guide which was used is given in Appendix 2.

There is consistency with the opening question, each interviewee was asked to describe the ownership/business model of their hotel. This description is recorded later in Table 6. Of the 7 HGMs being surveyed as privately owned hotels, 5 had some ownership in the property, while 2 were HGMs with no share in ownership.

All conversations are recorded at the time on an electronic device, and transcribed verbatim later. This leaves the researcher free to encourage the interviewee and probe when necessary. Brief notes, considered field notes, were made by the researcher to aid later interpretation, these being made against each of the questions, noting any follow up or supplementary data requested or given.

The data from the research is in the form of transcripts from interviews which were recorded, and the field notes written during the interview, used for context.

3.8.2. Sample and sample size

Consideration has been given to the question of sample size and number of interviews. In a quantitative study, the aim is normally to test a hypothesis on a sample which is large enough to permit use of appropriate statistical techniques, and can be considered representative of the population to which it is intended to generalise the results. Various

techniques for sampling can be used, depending upon circumstances and purpose of the study. Patton contends that:

“Validity, meaningfulness and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than with sample size.” (Patton, 2002, p.245)

In a qualitative study where there is no intention to generalise results to a particular population, data collection and analysis generally continue until the same themes and issues recur continually, when data saturation is said to have been reached (Gibbs, 2002).

The respondents were drawn from the Aberdeen City and Shire Hotel Association (ACSHA), an association which presently has a membership of thirty eight hotels and conference venues ranging from 3 star to 5 star (VisitScotland grading) providing a total of some 4000 bedrooms.

Hotels have to apply for membership of the ACSHA, and admission is dependent on a successful inspection of the hotel by members of the executive committee.

This means that the hotels in the ACSHA have all reached a required standard, regardless of star rating, and are deemed quality in the terms of the ACSHA criteria.

The ACSHA has hotels with a mix of ownership types of interest, and by virtue of the membership criteria for entry (VisitScotland grading and passing a quality inspection visit by two committee members) the hotels can be considered comparable.

Surveying hotels, of varying business models in the same operating/business environment was thought important in terms of consistency. Each of the HGMs are facing the same challenges as posed by the external operating environment. Surveying HGMs across the whole of the UK, for example, would mean each surveyed HGM would be dealing with different external environmental challenges, and as a result their activity would not be exactly comparable.

Although Robson (2002, p.198) comments on the difficulty of pre-specifying numbers of interviews in what he calls flexible design studies, but notes earlier that typically in grounded theory studies, for example, some twenty to thirty interviews will be carried out to achieve saturation (p.165). Patton (2002, pp 227-8) also recognises that there is a trade-off between breadth and depth, i.e. a larger number of shorter, less in-depth interviews may be required to reach saturation, whereas the same richness of data and saturation point may be reached in a smaller number of more in-depth interviews. Nevertheless, it is data saturation which is important, rather than sheer numerical size of the “sample”. Indeed, earlier in the same

work, Patton argues that sampling “*is aimed at insight about the phenomenon, not empirical generalisation from a sample to a population*” (Patton, 2002, p.40)

As this study aims to describe and elucidate the phenomenon of HGM behaviour/activity, it was considered that a sample size of 20 HGMs taken from across the three business models would generate the required data for analysis, with any more thought to lead to saturation and duplication of data. Ultimately 21 interviews were undertaken, and the decision to stop at this point was on the basis of saturation. The data being generated by this stage was yielding no fresh information.

The sample frame is the Aberdeen City and Shire Hotel Association, with the selection of interviewees being made on a non-probability basis. Edwards and Holland (2013) state that in general academic researchers’ favour the convenience sample – available by means of accessibility, and this is a consideration. The choice of participant being guided by the willingness of HGMs in the sample frame to take part. In total twenty-one (21) HGMs were interviewed, of which two were female.

3.8.3. Interviewing Hotel General Managers

As the study questions require an in-depth exploration of the individual HGM’s activity a semi-structured approach was favoured. Allowing the HGM to open up about their activity and work in a relatively unstructured interview provided the best opportunity for understanding what these HGMs actually do. Oppenheim (1992) points out that semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to develop a set of outline questions/themes; however there is freedom to adapt the fine detail of questions and follow up probing based on what seems most appropriate in the context of the conversation. In addition, while this interview approach allows the interviewer to ensure that all relevant matters are discussed, there is scope for the interviewee to introduce ideas they feel are important (Stephens 2007). The semi-structured interview is therefore valuable as it not only allows respondents to discuss their own experiences in their own words; it also provides the researcher with a detailed and comprehensive understanding of their real life activity, action, and priorities towards the work of a hotel general manager. Accordingly, Stephens (2007) observes that “the [general] consensus on semi-structured interviews ... is that they provide the opportunity to gain an account of values and experiences of the respondent in terms meaningful to them” (p.205).

As this research is concerned with what HGMs actually do in their workplace, open-ended questions were used in the main. It was felt that this would provide a greater degree of

flexibility both for the interviewer and the respondent. Oppenheim (1992) suggests that a key advantage of the open question is the freedom it gives to the respondents.

The interviewees were offered confidentiality and anonymity, but no HGM felt commercial sensitive data was being given.

In qualitative interviews, the spoken words are the primary data to be analysed later; with audio recording of interview talk a standard approach. During the interview, recording the discussion means that the qualitative interviewer can focus on listening, probing and following up, and maintaining eye contact and positive cues with the participant, (Edwards and Holland, 2013).

The interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder and only a very few notes were taken during the interview itself. Riley (1996, p.30) considers that audio taping is the preferred way to record conversations, noting that the fact of taping gives weight to the interviewee's views and taping also reduces the distractions of note taking for both interviewer and interviewee. Previous experience has shown the researcher that it is difficult to take notes and listen actively to the narrative. Interview transcriptions in the main ran from between 60-100 minutes, with two, on account of interruptions, running to 120 minutes. This does not include the meeting and necessary pre-amble between researcher and HGM participant. This was important to: re-establish the bond between the two, explain and put the participant at ease with the data collection experience, and set the context for the interview.

Qualitative research is usually grounded in the researcher's experience or field of interest, in this case hotel management, and the issue is not that this does not exist, but that the researcher can be honest and open about their orientation to the research question.

3.9. Ensuring Quality in the analytical approach

Qualitative research is increasingly regarded as a credible tool for revealing and understanding the human world. It provides an approach and framework to help researchers understand the inherent complexity and variability of human behaviour and experience (Higgs and Cherry, 2009).

A qualitative approach is believed to be the optimal approach in this study into HGMs, allowing the researcher to gain an understanding of the human behaviour of these individual post holders.

Malterud, (2001 p.398) captures the essence of this qualitative research, and the analytical approach taken:

“Qualitative research developed within the social and human sciences refers to theories on interpretation (hermeneutics) and human experience”.

The quality of research and the trust which can be placed to a large extent in it depends on the methods used and the way in which they have been deployed. Two dimensions are generally considered in this context: validity and reliability. These dimensions as criteria for assessing the quality of research came from the positivist tradition and as such are not always appropriate for non-positivist approaches. Veal, 2011.

Lincoln and Guba (1995) produced seminal work in this area, recommending four main criteria to guide researchers address quality in qualitative research:

- Credibility
- Transferability
- Dependability
- Confirmability

Credibility rests on the notion that results should be convincing and can be believed. Credibility implies that findings represent some sense of reality, in the qualitative research case the reality is the participants’ reality (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). This component is fulfilled in the HGM study as the interviews are undertaken with a former HGM, and the study framed in the reality of managing hotels.

Transferability infers that findings may have applications in similar situations elsewhere. Considering the transferability component, in contrast to quantitative studies, exact replicability of qualitative research findings is unlikely. This can be seen to be a weakness of this approach. However, the accumulation of findings from studies in related fields of study, in this case management behaviour and actions, lends strength to findings, not in a statistically measured sense, but, in a robustness of findings in differing settings. Veal, 2011.

Dependability suggests that the findings will endure over time. This component requires the researcher to document the research context, making clear the changes that occur while the research is on-going (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). The dependability component has been addressed through the use of the transcripts of interviews and the field notes taken by the researcher.

Finally, the fourth component, confirmability, is a term that suggests that the researcher has remained value neutral during the data analysis and interpretation (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013).

In conclusion qualitative research cannot provide the same types of tests of validity and reliability associated with quantitative research, however alternative forms of assessment of the trustworthiness can be provided.

3.9.1. Advantages and disadvantages of computer assisted qualitative data analysis software

Considering the issues of ensuring quality related to the study, and seeking demonstrable robustness in the handling of the data the use of NVivo software package was considered. The researcher attended a two day course for NVivo to assess the suitability for the package. The NVivo package does not claim to do qualitative data analysis; it is a software tool which assists with organising, interrogating and analysing qualitative data.

The case for or against using computer assisted qualitative data analysis software has found to be a moot point, the advantages and disadvantages are given in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Advantages and disadvantages of computer assisted qualitative data analysis software

Advantages	Disadvantages
Efficient, consistent data management	Can distance researcher from data
Ease of searching for words and phrases	Danger of forgetting to ground theory in data
Ease of sorting and organising data	Some programmes too influenced by grounded theory approach
Facilitates code and retrieval of data	Potential over emphasis on code and retrieve approaches
Facilitates model and theory building	
Facilitates checking for negatives, unusual cases	Unmindful manipulation of data

Adapted from Gibbs (2002), Gilbert and Abdullah (2002)

This modelling tool is quite useful, but, it is time consuming, and its main disadvantage is the difficulty in making reciprocal links between specific passages in different documents, in that the links between documents are only at document to document level.

Reflecting the quality issues and in particular the Whitemore et al (2001) argument that investigators can rely on the theoretical assurance of validity at the expense of practical application it was thought that NVivo too clinically constraining for the study involving less than 25 interviews. Should the number of respondents have been in excess of 25-30, there is a compelling case for employing NVivo. In effect NVivo allows the opportunity for better management of data and nothing else.

3.10. Reflections on the methodological approach

This research project was partly born from the researcher's experience as a hotel general manager and partly from observations of differing managers' approach to unit management when attending Hotel Association meetings.

Personal observation uncovered two distinct manager types; one was the old school manager who had a food and beverage background and knowledge, and was very much a mine host character in establishments, the second usually a graduate, with a more general management training. Given a mix of business models across the ACSHA the researcher was curious to explore HGM activity and behaviour across three distinct business models.

3.10.1. Method

This research is located in the applied discipline or field of management, and identified by Tribe (2004), as tourism business studies.

The investigation was data led rather than a hypothesis being tested. Peterson (1994) identifies this as a use for qualitative research. The research thus took a grounded theory approach being concerned with the generation of theory from research, as opposed to theory that relates to or denotes reasoning or knowledge which proceeds from theoretical deduction (Creswell and Poth, 2017). This fits with the thesis being data driven.

In this paradigm, theory is generated through the researcher approaching the data with no pre-formed notions, instead seeking to uncover patterns and contradictions through close examination of the data, as suggested by Veal, (2011). In this thesis the patterns of behaviour and activity are that of HGMs. Veal (2011), goes on to state that "to achieve this the researcher needs to be very familiar with the data, the subjects, and the context if the research" p.238. The researcher fulfils this criteria.

3.10.2. Methodological choices

Qualitative research was chosen, and is wholly appropriate for this tourism management research. Kelly (1980) outlines the advantages of this approach:

- Tourism involves a great deal of face-to-face interactions between people and qualitative research is well suited to investigating this.
- Qualitative techniques are better at providing an understanding of people's behaviour and needs.
- The method corresponds with the nature of the study – that is a qualitative experience of the individual (HGM).

Although a qualitative approach fits with the Objectives for the research, Miles and Huberman (1994) do identify a number of limitations to a qualitative approach: frequent data overload, the possibility of researcher bias and the time demands of processing and coding data. Each three of these limitations have potential to impact on the data collection undertaken for the thesis. Data overload and the time demands for processing and coding were dealt with in undertaking analysis. The possibility of researcher bias deserves greater attention.

The researcher was mindful of his potential impact on interviewees; Riley's observation being that:

"Topic focus should be provided by the interviewer but the direction of conversation and subject matter must remain the domain of respondents" (Riley, 1996, p.27)

Steps were taken to ensure that the researcher facilitates the narrative, but does not influence it. As identified by Robson, 2002, the researcher sought to ensure that interviewees did not seek to satisfy perceived needs on the part of the researcher (Robson, 2002).

The potential limitation of researcher bias is returned to in 7.5.1 Limitations in methodology.

All of the interviewees chose to conduct the interview in quiet areas of their hotel, but these were usually in public areas (reception, meeting room, bar, and lounge areas). Hospitality was always offered, and taken by the interviewer on every case. This was thought to help put interviewee at ease. Interviewees all appeared comfortable and open to discussion in their own operating environment. By offering hospitality, and giving hospitality in their own hotel, there was a feeling of control, which aided an openness in the responses to questions.

Reflecting on the interviews, Savin-Baden and Major's (2013) assertion that the face-to-face approach in research improves researcher's understanding is thought to be accurate. This data collection approach allowed the researcher to get closer to the participating managers and their work environment which allowed a better insight to what the managers actually did, and what their working environment felt like.

For data collection convenience sampling was undertaken, within the frame of the Aberdeen Hotels Association HGM members. The choice of sample frame is sound, as the researcher wished to consider HGM activity and behaviour across an operating environment similar for all respondents. However, it is fair to acknowledge that convenience sampling does have limitations. This sampling technique while saving time and effort, comes at the expense of information and credibility (Creswell and Poth, 2017). Yin (1994) cites a recurring criticism of a qualitative methodology as the dependence on small samples, arguably incapable of generating conclusions. To overcome this criticism the data collection was undertaken until data saturation, where nothing new was emerging from the interviews (LoBiondo-Wood and Haber, 2014).

3.11. External operating environment for the study

The hotel industry is a sector of growing significance, and its development is closely related to the regional economy; however, the industry's performance is seldom considered in both the regional and hotel situation (Yang, Xia and Cheng, 2017). This research considers the regional and hotel situation.

Appraising the external environment is tackled on two levels. Initially the importance of the industry is addressed, followed by the Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire operating environment. This local economy has delivered a sudden shock across all industries as a result of the slump in oil and gas activity. With a very challenging operating environment for hotels, HGMs are being tested on their ability to manage in an economic downturn. The challenge, and the change in the environment should be consistent for HGMs across the region.

3.11.1. The UK and Scottish Tourism industry and hotel sector

The tourism industry in general and the hotel industry in particular are of significant importance to the UK and Scottish economies.

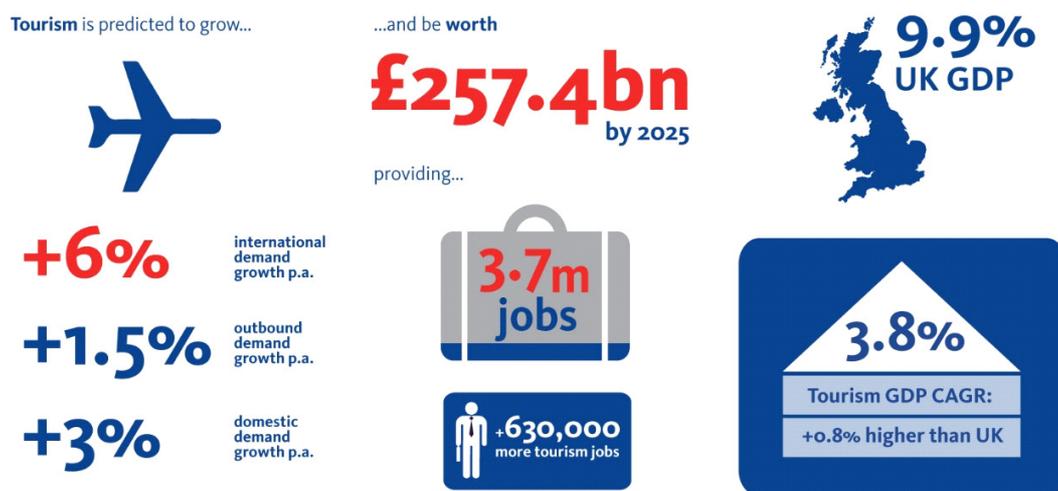
National governments are looking to this industry to deliver real economic growth.

“For too long tourism has been looked down on as a second-class service sector. That’s just wrong. Tourism is a fiercely competitive market, requiring skills, talent, enterprise and a Government that backs Britain. It’s fundamental to the rebuilding and rebalancing of our economy.” (Rt Hon David Cameron MP, Prime Minister, August 2010 Serpentine Gallery, VisitBritain 2013).

The UK hospitality and tourism sector continues to experience significant growth and to be a large employer, currently employing a workforce of 2.4 million, a rise of 493 000 since 2009. (People 1st 2015)

Since 2010 tourism has been the fastest growing sector in the UK in employment terms and is forecast to be worth over £257 billion by 2025 (VisitBritain, 2015)

Figure 2: Volume and value of UK Tourism



Source: *Tourism: jobs and growth*. Deloitte November 2013

just under 10% of UK GDP and supporting almost 3.8 million jobs, which is around 11% of the total UK number. Looking forward, Key Note forecasts that annual growth in the UK market for hotels and similar accommodation will range from 5.1% to 5.5% between 2015 and 2019, with overall growth of 22.8% between those years. (Key Note 2015).

At the Scottish national level tourism is recognised as a key industry, one of growing importance to this peripheral region of the UK.

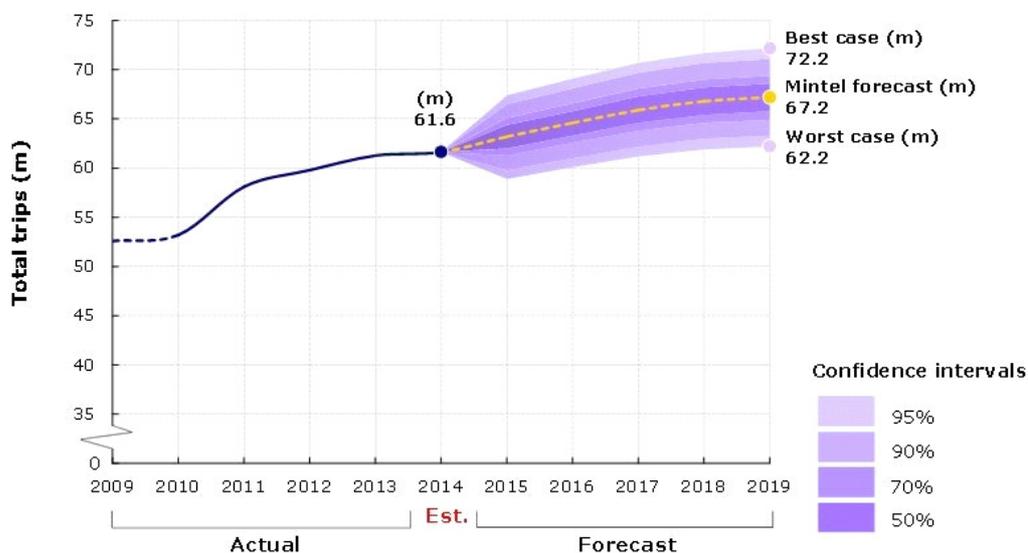
“The tourism sector is of vital importance to the Scottish economy, latest figures indicate total overnight and day visitor expenditure in Scotland was around £8.9 billion in 2015 - this comprised of expenditure from overnight visitors of £4.9 billion and expenditure by day visitors of £3.9 billion. In 2015 Scotland attracted over 14.6 million visitors”. (The Scottish Government, May 2016). Spending by tourists in Scotland generates around £12 billion of economic activity in the wider Scottish supply chain and contributes around £6 billion to Scottish GDP (in basic prices). This represents about 5% of total Scottish GDP (Visit Scotland, July 2016).

3.11.2. The significance of the hotel sector

According to figures from the *Annual Business Survey 2013* from National Statistics, total turnover of hotels in the UK grew from £13.49bn in 2010 to £16.04bn in 2013. KeyNote estimates that the market grew by an additional 6.5% in 2014, taking the market size to £17.09bn and representing an overall rise of 26.6% over the 5-year period.

With the market having declined in the midst of the 2008/2009 recession, growth has since been restored, with annual growth rates of 4.9% in 2011, 6.6% in 2012 and 6.4% in 2013. (KeyNote, 2015).

Figure 3: Volume forecast of UK hotel/motel/guesthouse trips, 2014-19



Source: GBTS/ONS/Mintel

Figure 3 tracks historic data in terms of tourist trips to the UK hotel/motel/guesthouse and then extrapolates future forecasts. This graph indicates future growth for the sector.

According to Mintel (2014) continued strong performance from the inbound (tourist) segment, coupled with capacity increases from a strong pipeline of new supply and a fall in closure rates should see the UK hotel market enjoy steady growth over the next five years. Mintel expects the number of visits to increase 9.1% by 2019 to 67.2 million trips, while the number of nights stayed is expected to increase 11.5% over the same period to hit 180.8 million.

Figure 4: UK accommodation usage as reported by type



Source: Lightspeed GMI/Mintel

Mintel finds that 55% of adults say they have stayed in a hotel in the UK in the last 12 months (not shown on bar chart) and the penetration of chain hotel brands like Premier Inn and Hilton is double that of independent hotels – 46% compared to 23%. Experience of chain hotel brands is higher amongst the under 35s, suggesting that chain hotels have been successful at courting the Millennials demographic. This foothold is likely to become even more entrenched as chain hotels invest in tech-savvy features such as mobile check-in and check-out or concept models such as Hub by Premier Inn.

3.11.3. Industry growth potential

The hotel industry is of significant economic importance to the Scottish economy. As a consequence the post of HGM has moved from being the preserve of the “gifted amateur” to that of the professional manager; certainly this was the views given by the then Chief Executive of VisitScotland at the Scottish Hospitality Industry Conference held in Edinburgh in January 1999. There is now recognition that across all segments of the hospitality industry, high-quality and well trained managers are needed for the success of the organisation (Wilson-Wunsch et al 2015).

The National Tourism Organisation (VisitScotland) and the regional Destination Marketing Organisation (VisitAberdeenshire) operating across Scotland and in the North-East of Scotland recognise the importance of the hotel industry in Scotland’s continued economic growth. Marketing initiatives at a regional level involve the hotel sector generally and the Aberdeen City and Shire Hotel Association specifically.

The hotel sector makes the most significant contribution to the economic multiplier. In terms of economic importance to the national and regional economies the management of the hotel sector is worthy of investigation.

3.11.4. Change in the Aberdeen operating environment

“Aberdeen is a mature hotel market, with all segments represented, including privately owned, budget hotels, boutique hotels, and full service four star and five star hotels. International hospitality brands represented in the city include: Marriott, IHG Holiday Inn and Holiday Inn Express, Hilton, Accor (Ibis and Mercure)” (Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce, 2015, p.14).

Aberdeen’s economy is heavily reliant on oil and fluctuates in demand to changes in oil price. (Adams, Kavanagh and Tighe 2015). In contrast to the financial crisis in 2008 when Aberdeen was the only major UK city to experience market growth, research suggests that Aberdeen could be set to experience an economic slump during 2015. This is due to the price of oil falling by 60% to around \$50 a barrel, its lowest in six years. (MacAlistair 2015) With lower industry investment, oil and gas giants such as BP and Talisman Sinopec are cutting hundreds of jobs. Leading experts predict that the oil industry will wind down in the next thirty or forty years through lower exploration investment. Therefore, it is important for the region’s economy that Aberdeen has a focus on other industries. The City is looking to tourism to support future economic growth. (Roberts, Hall and Morag, 2004)

After extremely buoyant trading years from 2010 to 2015, when the \$ barrel price (Brent Crude) was between \$85 and \$115, at the time of the research being carried out the

dollar/barrel price of Brent Crude had fallen from that record high of \$115 in 2010 to \$37 in November 2015, and then onto \$27 by February 2016, see Figure 5:

Figure 5: Crude oil and UK stocks



Critchlow (2014) reported that the high cost of operating in the North Sea, means some companies require an oil price in excess of \$80 per barrel to just break even.

Historically the tourism industry as a whole has prospered within Aberdeen. In 2011 this was worth £547 million per annum to the local economy. (NESTOUR, 2011). Business tourism accounts for a large proportion of this revenue which although economically beneficial to the city, it has created one of Aberdeen's biggest challenges in attracting leisure tourism which is much more price sensitive. Prices have gradually increased across many sectors in response to high levels of demand and has led to Aberdeen becoming an expensive destination to visit. The city had enjoyed the highest average room rates in the country at £92 a night and a recent survey by Airbnb ranked Aberdeen as the sixth most expensive destination to visit in the world. (Redpath 2014). Although the recent oil slump has seen a fall in hotel occupancy by 4.5% compared to 2013, occupancy rates still remain relatively high. This means that attracting leisure visitors to Aberdeen can be difficult midweek due to the price and limited availability. (The Scotsman 2015) This does however mean that Aberdeen is competitively placed as a weekend leisure destination with room rates significantly lower at the weekend to increase occupancy.

Table 5: Hotel occupancy revenue earned per room 2012-2014

	2012	2013	2014
Occupancy	77.3%	78.6%	77.0%
Avg. room rate (AARR)	£76.75	£89.17	£97.65
Revenue per available room (RevPar)	£59.35	£70.10	£75.17

Source: STR Global Annual figures, 2014

Table 5 records the high points of hotel accommodation trading in the years 2012-2014. Across these three years total occupancy (across the seven days) does not drop below 77%, with an average room rate climbing to £97.65 in 2014. To set this in context, the Scottish national average room occupancies recorded are:

2012	65%
2013	68%
2014	70%

Source: VisitScotland Scottish Accommodation Occupancy Survey Annual Report 2014

At the time of study the city and region were experiencing unprecedented changes in the economy, with the loss of oil and gas related business tourism placing hoteliers in a time of change. The economic crash following the severe contraction of the oil and gas industries was swift and not anticipated. After many buoyant years where ACSHA hotels returned super profits, by the middle of 2015 the economic operating environment became very challenging. Hoteliers had to adapt quickly to the hostile trading environment they found themselves in.

3.11.5. Current trading situation

In a briefing given by the Chair of the Aberdeen City and Shire Hotel Association the following information was given (Atkinson, 2016, personal statement). “Having recorded 12 months of consecutive double-digit decreases in occupancy, Aberdeen hotels achieved an occupancy rate of 62.6% in April 2016, which was down by only 2.5% compared to the previous year. Despite the decrease and the occupancy figure being nearly 19% below that of two years ago, the data suggests some signs of stabilisation in the market. This finding

is further highlighted, as forward bookings for the next three months, May to July, are over 3% higher compared to last year.

That said, evidence of the ongoing challenges in the Aberdeen City was apparent as the average room rate (ARR) decreasing by 26.8% to £67.74. As a result, Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR), the industry's main performance measure which combines occupancy and room rate performance decreased for the 17th consecutive month falling by 28.7% to £42.37".

Against this backdrop, the problem for the HGMs in the ACSHA is compounded by further change in the supply side. At a time when hoteliers found demand for their services at a 9 year low, a number of entrants came into the market with 5 new hotels opening in 2014/2015.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1. Introduction

The aim of this research is to explore and understand the ways in which contemporary HGMs manage and what influences how they manage across three contemporary business models, in the geographically constrained operating environment of Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

This chapter presents the analysis of the interview data, explaining the development of various descriptive and analytical categories and demonstrating how they assist in furthering an understanding of the various factors which mediate the sense-making process. Given the interpretive approach taken to the analysis, these sections contain some comment on and interpretation of the findings. However, the full discussion of the findings in the wider context of the existing literature, and further discussion is presented in Chapter Six

4.2. Data Description

The analysis begins by sorting the data into descriptive categories built from the initial questions used in the interview. Responses to these initial questions simply sheds light on the background of the twenty-one HGMs surveyed.

A summary of this data is presented in tabular form in Table 6, the five categories being:

- Hotel business model – the research is conducted across three business models, with the expectation that this is a major influence on HGM management style and activity.

The first column in the table provides an overview of hotel business models, as given by the individual HGMs.

- HGM family background

There is a variety in the background of the HGMs. However, there appears no connection between a family background and becoming an HGM, although this influence could have been expected for the private HGMs

- HGM educational attainment

The educational attainment for HGMs employed in the Private sector is seen to be at a lower level and does have an operational bias. These HGMs' reported educational attainments and a background in craft areas, specifically: chef qualifications and HND Hospitality. Having a craft background or craft related educational attainments at this level fits with the private sector HGMs greater involvement in operational activities in their hotel. It can be seen to prepare them with the requisite skills to be operationally involved.

Two HGMs report no educational attainments. For both of these interviewees their skills in either food preparation or service was the entry mode into the industry.

Private 6
"I'm a chef to trade"

Private 2
"I suddenly realised I was holding the keys (to the hotel) while my old man was away on holiday and found I really enjoyed food service. And since then there's not been any reason to get qualifications, as I'm here forever!"

There is a connection between the educational attainments for HGMs employed in the chain and franchise models and their reported management style. Eight of the fifteen HGMs in these models are graduates, and as such have been taught management skills. It is found that these HGMs regularly cite desk bound management activity, which sees them practicing their knowledge from education.

Chain 5
"...to an extent I drive a desk. My management activity is managing the business, it's what I was trained for".

- Number of years interviewee has held current post as HGM

In terms of length of time in post, private HGMs report significantly more years in their current HGM post than chain and franchise counterparts (27 years as an average from the sample). Chain and franchise HGMs report less time in post (4.3 years as an average from the sample).

- Number of HGM posts that have been held by interviewee

The number of prior HGM posts held varies across the sample. This column simply gives context to the HGMs comments.

Table 6 shows that there are differences in HGM backgrounds that may have shaped their approach to the HGM role in which they operate and provides a context for further analysis.

Table 6: Summary of Respondents' Backgrounds

Hotel Type	Business Model	Family background in Hotels / Hospitality	Educational Attainment	Number of Years HGM in current post	Number of prior HGM posts held
Private 1	3 Partners, the Managing Partner is HGM	No	706/1, 706/2 Chef	20	5
Private 2	Owner (HGM) + private investor	Yes	No	11	0
Private 3	HGM is Owner/manager	Yes	BA Hotel M'gt	18	1
Private 4	HGM is Owner/manager	No	None	22	Pub M'gt
Private 5	Family owned. HGM no share in ownership	No	HND Hospitality	9	2
Private 6	HGM is Owner/manager	No	None	31	0 Chef to trade
Private 7	Local investors own, HGM no share in ownership	No	HND Hospitality	7	0
Franchise 1	Franchise	No	5 Highers then hotels	9	3
Franchise 2	Franchise	Yes	BA (Hons)	1	0
Franchise 3	Franchise	No	ScotVec in Hospitality	12	1

Chain 1	Thistle	Yes	BA	9	6
Chain 2	Thistle	No	No	1	0
Chain 3	Thistle	Yes	Diploma (OND) in Hospitality City & Guilds catering	11	1
Chain 4	Management Contract Carlson Reizidor	Distant	BA Catering and Accommodation	1	4
Chain 5	IBIS	Yes	SVQ, BA and MBA	3	2
Chain 6	Management Contract	No	None Started in Hotel Security	2	5
Chain 7	Marriott Abu Dhabi Investment Authority	No	BA (Hons) Hosp.	7	2
Chain 8	Managed Hilton	No	BA (Hons) Business Studies BA (Hons) Hosp. Pg Dip	1	3
Chain 9	Crerar	No	BSc Cons Product M'gt	1	2
Chain 10	Management Contract	Yes	HND	2	3
Chain 11	MacDonald	Yes as chefs	NVQ Level 3 Customer Care	1	0

4.3. The Hotel General Manager role as seen across three business models

Having set the HGMs background in context the research explores the HGM role seeking to investigate the business models as a likely influence on HGM activity and behaviour.

In line with the expectations from findings in the literature, there appears to be clear differences emerging. A contrast emerges across traditional hands on hotel-keeping on the part of the HGMs working in the private sector with the chain HGMs who appear to be much less hands on, and perform more of a business manager role.

The business model emerges as the major influence on how HGMs manage and operate their hotels. The HGMs in private sector ownership, as typified by Private 1, below, see their role as being operationally involved, undertaking operational tasks, as well as what is termed the “business” of running a hotel. These HGMs are seen to be active in hotel operations, personally delivering for their customers, being active and are visible in the public areas.

Private 1
“I’m a traditional hotel manager. Sure, I have to manage the business, but I’m very much hands on and am involved in my business at all levels”

In contrast, as exemplified by Chain 1 HGMs in the chain model see their role as more supervisory, managing in a line manner.

Chain 1
“I’m a business manager, bringing sound management practice to a hotel business. I don’t get involved operationally, I couldn’t. My people are better equipped than me to do that”

This contrast in interpretation of the HGM role between business models is central to the research. The differences between the chain and private models were, to an extent, expected in the results. However, no expectation was made in relation to the franchise employed managers interpretation of their role. These fundamental differences in approach are further examined, seeking to tease out the causes of any differences across what appears to be the major influence on HGM behaviour and chosen activity; the business model.

The following section considers what identifies HGM practice in each of the models of interest in turn, starting with the franchise model, then moving to chain model and finally the private model.

4.3.1. The HGM role in the franchise model

At the time of the data collection the three HGMs interviewed from the franchise model explained the change that has taken place within IHG (the franchisor). This is the context in which the three HGMs operate, and, supports the view that hotel management and ownership is undergoing change. There is a reported growth in popularity of the franchise model.

Franchise 3
“Over the recent past IHG have moved massively from being a hotel management and ownership company to much more of a franchise model, all the assets have been sold off, as a lot of hotel companies have done. So they’re much more of a franchise business now”.

This respondent is picking up on the national move by the franchisor and other companies, from being a hotel company owning the assets and buildings, to the franchise model. The franchise hotel operation is different to other business models. While there is a nationally or even internationally recognised brand above the door, the hotel itself can be locally owned.

Franchise 1 spoke about the context of his management role:

“We’re an Aberdeen company with two owners, two directors, and five hotels. But we’re part of a global brand which gives huge strength to us”

The franchise HGMs reported that the major benefits of being a franchise over a privately owned hotel is access to markets and the sales and revenue management benefits that delivers.

Franchise 3

“Part of our franchise fee covers Holidex, which is the global reservation system. Every Holiday Inn, in all 4500 hotels around the world have Holidex. And that’s linked in everywhere; linked to travel agents, linked to GDS systems”.

Franchise 1

“The biggest advantage we have of being part of Holiday Inn is the fact that we’re on their global distribution service. This means we have little work to do to make sure our rates are represented in every key buying market. We literally have to switch off our rates or availability as opposed to an independent having to knock on doors, and actually fight for representation. So the Holiday Inn badge at your front door give you access to all that sales and revenue management support. I would say that’s the biggest advantage we have over being independent.”

The Franchise HGMs interviewed felt being part of a large organisation helped with sales activity and personnel issues. As seen HGMs were able quote tangible support from the central personnel.

Franchise 2

“Through IHG Merlin we can access HR support on many levels, and designed to develop a range of our staff. These on-line resources are used, and supplemented by our own trainer. For me, again, there is Health and Safety information and guidance available. Holiday Inn itself, IHG itself, is available to us 24 hours a day, should I need help”.

For HGMs this level of support is comprehensive and readily available. These HGMs report that they receive sales and marketing support from the franchisor, which they believe gives them competitive advantage over private (independent) hotels. This support, in turn, reduces their span of control, as: national initiatives and sales activity is in effect out-sourced. It does deliver a prescribed way, or system of managing franchised hotels. Support, direction or control, however, can cause tension for the HGM. To an extent the HGM scope for operational and sales decisions is seen to be taken away by the franchise.

This response came from questioning the HGM on the breakfast buffet specification:

Franchise 3
“IHG tell us what the standard is. There’s a brand standard that will state a minimum and maximum standard, down to, say, a minimum of five flavours of yoghurt, maximum seven, must include these. So there’s limited scope there. They’ve told us, “these are the products, these are your suppliers””.

The respondent went on to talk about undertaking refurbishment and purchasing soft furnishings:

Franchise 3
“There are guidelines from IHG. When we opened this hotel, this was very much to the brand standard. IHG were heavily involved in the décor and for instance in bedrooms I had a choice of two carpets. So we picked the lesser of the two evils, the less ugly one. And the colours and everything was IHG. ”.

The choice of breakfast buffet items, the specification of the breakfast buffet and hotel refurbishment are all decisions that have been thought of as the preserve of the HGM, albeit with some specialist support. Considering these two examples the scope of responsibility and influence in the franchise model appears to be at best constraining for HGMs. These HGMs report that room sales systems and procedures are dictated to the HGM. These directions, or support, as the HGMs themselves call the control, have to be followed. This is what the HGMs seem to see as their role, compliance with brand standards.

Hotel Marketing

Franchise 2
The brand standard is of massive benefit to both the guest and ourselves because they know what they’ve come to expect. And we know what to deliver”.

This HGM is comfortable with following the direction and specification as set out by the franchisor. So, to a large extent the HGMs role in this business model can be seen to be diminished, as a significant part of their sales and marketing role, and the product design is undertaken by the franchisor. These HGMs in effect have to accept and adhere to the franchisor sales initiatives in relation to bedroom sales, bedroom standards, breakfast offering, with HR policies and training pre-determined. As managers these HGMs are dictated to in terms of national sales and marketing initiatives, and brand standards that need to be adhered to at the hotel level.

Franchise 1
“...being a brand hotel there are certain brand requirements, but we can decide on our menus and how we generate function business...”

HGMS in the franchise model surveyed have a limited discretion in the service style and delivery. These HGMs report being charged with brand compliance and supporting a brand, rather than managing the hotel. Across the three HGMs interviewed a difference in approach was found in one (Holiday Inn Express). The HGM working under this arrangement quoted examples of rigid standards and criteria that he and the owners had to comply with. Examples given were: bedroom layout and furnishings, the prescribed specification for carpeting in public area, setting in restaurant, and, as mentioned, breakfast specification. The other two franchise agreements with owners is less tight. The reason given by the HGM for him being tied so rigidly to specification was the that this was the first franchise agreement for his owners, and the franchisor wanted to ensure total compliance to protect their brand. With subsequent agreements, when the HGM and owners had gained franchisor trust, more discretion was allowed.

In summary, the HGM employed in a franchise model is largely concerned with ensuring the hotel conforms to brand standards. This focus is to deliver a consistency of product and service for the customer. The focus for the HGM is on managing a system to deliver customer service and revenue, not actually delivering the service personally. On account of the prescribed brand standards there is a requirement for the HGM to ensure the individual franchised hotel delivers hotel services in a form and manner that is the same as all other similarly branded hotels. The rationale for this is sound from a marketing point of view, but it has implications for the HGMs. The role of these HGMs is to ensure compliance with and to manage systems of delivery. The standards are not thought by HGMs to be rigid across all hotels. In the three hotels surveyed there is scope with two properties for the HGM to personalise the offering, examples given as function business, food and beverage product offerings and decisions on service style that can be introduced to fit the situation.

4.3.2. The HGM role in the chain model

Every chain HGM reported the daily importance of being a business manager, primarily driving sales and initiatives that aim to maximise revenue.

Chain 9
“I need to do a lot on the finance side, checking what your revenue is, forecasting it, crunching the numbers, (and) assessing the manning costs against that. That takes up a fair bit of time”

This response alludes to the control on these HGMs from above. Head office and their line manager request constant financial reporting.

At the time of data collection three HGMs made mention of a period of change in terms of their role and activity. There is a reported move away from “operations”.

Chain 6
“My job as a hotel general manager now has changed from the days of being quite operational. My job is now quite commercially focussed, driving the sales, driving the business. So basically my job now is more commercially focussed than the old days when it was checking they’ve set the room correctly for conferences.”

This quote identifies the changing role of the HGM in the chain model. A change that is reportedly making the HGMs more accountable for the revenue, and requiring them to make more forecasts and reporting to head office than was the case historically.

Each of the interviewees in this model devoted time to interrogate the sales management activity, which involves meeting with stakeholder colleagues (both internal and external) to work at maximising future sales revenues. These HGMs reported less focus on the day to day hands-on hotel operations, with more of a future focus. Referring back to Table 6, this fits with their education and background, with the HGMs being familiar and comfortable with business management principles and practice.

Chain 8
“A focus for me is the daily report. Looking at sales activities, focussing on particular markets, market segments, how we’re going against the comps set (comparative hotel performance) and the STR reports – to see how we’re doing for the month.”
Chain 2
“I think the day divides into different bits. Dealing with today and tomorrow, and then to what the future looks like. I’ve started looking at a year out, and working back, because now we can influence what’s happening in 12 months’ time. We can’t necessarily influence what’s going to happen next week, as the decisions have been made. And do we need to start changing decisions for quarter 4 next year?”

Significantly, HGMs in the chain model do not report contact with customers. These HGMs do not seem to focus on the customers.

The HGM’s employed in the chain model see themselves as the CEO of a local business, with the HGM being responsible to and reporting to the equivalent of a Board or Regional Director.

Chain 4
“I report to the Director who looks after Park Inns in the UK”. So I speak to him most days”

HGMs employed in the chain sector, however, also expressed frustration with the amount of time effort required on this pure management activity: accounts, sales, forecasts, and budgeting.

Chain 1
“We do a lot of work on segmentation, market segmentation and which are the right segments. A lot of work on channels and the channel mix as well, and do we have the right channels, and are we looking the right way? A lot of my time is spent doing that, and that sort of thing”.

There is a feeling expressed by these HGMs that they are being forced by their superiors in the organisation to move away from being a hands on visible hotel manager to being a business manager directing a hotel business.

Chain 5
“I don’t call myself a hotelier anymore, I’m actually a manager. The future (hotel) manager is actually a manager rather than a hotelier”
“...look at the football team. The coach is not the best player, he’s the best coach”.

As reported in a later section, chain HGMs are on the whole are not becoming operationally involved. Chain 1 echoes the views of 11 chain HGMs that sales administration activity is undertaken in preference to being operationally involved.

Chain 1
“I’m much more sales involved than operationally involved”

These HGMs seem to have their working hours filled with responding to controlling activities as dictated by above, their head office taking up time that could have been hours spent operationally involved.

In summary, HGMs managing hotels as part of a chain consider themselves business managers. As will be seen, their approach is more office based and less operational than found for their private sector counterparts. The HGMs were found, on the whole, and with one notable exception, to be very much hands-off. The maximising of future hotel sales is important across the sample, and a large amount of time and effort is reported undertaking this activity. These HGMs are being pushed away from front line hotel keeping to a more office based managerial role. Time historically being spent engaging with customers and operations being replaced by head office control activities like forecasting and budgeting. There is an issue here regarding the nuances around direction and control of these HGMs. This theme will be returned to later.

4.3.3. The HGM role in the private model

There is a consistency in the profile across the seven HGMs working in the private sector. All reported that they are operationally involved, all believe they need to be present, and all spend considerable amounts of time acting as host in their hotel.

Private sector HGMs see themselves very much as independent operators working their own local market. The “people” side of their work is important, specifically: the staff, customers and even suppliers that work with these HGMs.

Private 1
“Most enjoyable part of my job? Dealing with the customers. Just getting feedback and general chat. Most of my customers have been coming here for years, and are very loyal. My menu changes involve them, and give them what they want, not what I want to serve!”

The Private sector HGMs report that their most important relationship is firstly with their customers, and secondly with their staff.

Private 2

“Customers, and our many regulars, are the focus for the hotel and restaurant. We want to make them happy, and couldn’t do it without our people”.
--

These HGMs seem to have a closer working relationship with their staff than other two HGM groups. This largely autonomous group of HGMs are therefore seen to be concerned with people rather than systems.

The private sector HGMs see themselves as traditional hoteliers, where service and operational attention to detail is seen as a major driving force in activity. For this group of HGMs the customer, and dealing with the customer, comes across as being of paramount importance. This reported customer focus is a key result, especially as it contrasts strongly with results from the HGMs in chain and franchise models who largely failed to mention their customers.

Private 7

“And I think what we do here is traditional hotel keeping and hospitality. If I was working for Hilton or Marriott, I’d be run by accountants. And accountants are running the business. I mean I could spend days in the office doing forecasts and re-forecasts, but are the customers happy, is the hotel clean? Are the staff in uniforms? Are the staff motivated? Are the suppliers happy? Is the grass cut? Are the fires blackened? Welcome cards signed? That’s what we do”.

There is a requirement for Private operators to operate at both an operational level and a strategic level. There is also a need to move seamlessly between the two roles. Within operational roles, as seen in the Management By Walking About (MBWA) activity, when moving between food service and food preparation work, but also between strategic and operational roles.

Private 4 made the point that he could think clearly and make operationally administrative decisions while engaged in an operational role, as a chef and serving meals to customers as a host.

Private 4

“You’d be in the kitchen and then make a decision on a brewer, through to a decision on a refurbishment. Sometimes I surprise myself how I manage it all. That’s no joke”

Each of the seven HGMs were found to draw on a wider range of skills than their counterparts in either chain or franchise hotels. The range of skills being cited ran from:

being able to fix toilets, to dealing direct with banks (lender), aspects of HR, and running restaurant service.

Private 4
“Everything is done by myself”.

Private 7
“I try to do 12 hours a day, five days a week. I try to take Sunday off if I can, but if the needs of the business demands it then I’m here”

HGMs in the Private sector tended to work longer hours and were often relied upon by staff to run the business operationally. This is a disadvantage of this business model, the hotel business model is overly reliant on the HGM.

Private 1
“I do a lot myself. The one thing about being your own boss is that you don’t have the wealth of knowledge of a head office to call upon.

The interviews found that this group of HGMs had to draw on a wider range of skills than their chain and franchise counterparts. These HGMs appear to have to be more self-reliant and resourceful, and in many instances (“plumbing”, Private 4, “refurbishment”, Private 1, 3, and 6, “project planning”, Private 1,5 and 7, “picking up refurbished chairs, Private 4) undertake tasks and duties themselves. These HGMs are more involved and engaged with all aspects of running and maintaining the hotel. For this set of HGMs a wide range of activity is reported, with activity that requires a broad range of knowledge and ability to be effective in the role. However, being so involved in the hotel seems to come at a price and that price is long hours at the hotel and losing time with family and friends.

Private 3
“My wife and I have spent many holidays apart, and it looks like the same will happen this summer, as I’m not comfortable leaving here. We’ve had to cancel holidays because staff have let us down”

Private 4
“I haven’t had a holiday in 2 years” “Two weekends ago I was here all Saturday and that was from 7.00am right through to 3.00am”

Private 2 felt that he and his wife were involved in the hotel and complemented each other. However it was the hotel that bound them together, and meant that they actually saw each other during the day.

Private 2
"I honestly don't believe that if Sharon didn't work here that we'd still be married".

This group of HGMs can also be seen as HGMs of community based hotels. Regular return trade to the hotel is highly prized. The personality of the hotel, created by the hands on HGM is seen as important to keeping customers loyal.

Private 2
"We're lucky, we've a great many regulars. Keeping them is vital, there's a lot of choice out there, so if they feel part of the Mariner, and come back for that atmosphere, then great".

In summary, the hours worked by Private HGMs is reportedly higher than their counterparts, and the range of activities and duties undertaken is wider.

Employees rely on their HGMs to delivery service, with HGMs in this model of ownership taking their turn on duty rotas. These HGMs are seen to work closely with their employees. In the following section this relationship between the HGM in the private sector has with employees will be further explored.

4.3.3.1. Relationship with employees

A feature of the private sector HGMs is their relationships with their staff. Four of the hotel managers, in interview, quoted the length of service a number of their employees have. These loyal employees had a personal loyalty to the HGM and in many ways were very much part of the service/product.

Private 1
"We have 15 or so staff working here for 10 years plus, some for over 20 years"

This finding supports the reported result that these HGMs are concerned with the people in the business. Earlier this was seen to be customers and here there is concern and caring for employees.

Private 2 re-called how customers ask if “George”, the Head Chef, is on when making the booking “as they know he’s been here for 25 years”. This respondent than added that customers have asked “is George not on tonight” when something’s not quite right with their meal. This HGM was proud of the Head Chef being known to customers.

Private 6 was proud to talk about long serving staff in his employment; four members of staff employed since 1985, and others with over twenty years of service.

His reported critical success factor was to “keep your staff”, with the “same faces representing the hotel right the way through”.

This HGM ensures that staff work a maximum of 40 hours per week, through regular work patterns and have every second weekend off.

For this hotel the devolved authority works for the HGM. A case was re-told of an incident when he was away, and a guest flooded an upper bathroom and bedroom. The water came through to the lower room as well. When the HGM returned the incident had been dealt with and the bedrooms re-furbished without him “being bothered”.

Private 6
“When I go on holiday all 28 members of staff are in charge. We show them the way forward and they just get on and do it”

During the visit, when the HGM took the interviewer on a tour of the hotel, it was obvious from the staff reactions that there was great loyalty to and respect for this HGM. The HGM was greeted by name by every employee he met and was engaged in brief conversation. All employees demonstrated a desire to please the HGM and show the hotel off to its best. This included offering bedrooms to inspect and making reference to the HGMs favourite dish being on for lunch. The team spirit that Private 6 talked about in the interview was evident when walking around the hotel and meeting employees. All the employees met appeared highly motivated and capable. The style of management was caring, paternalistic and supportive of those working for him. In return those employees bought into the ethos and style of the hotel. They took the responsibility, authority and trust and worked in the style and manner expected and exhibited by the HGM. In this hotel the style of hospitality and service is based on the personality and approach of the HGM. The loyalty exhibited by the staff is to the person, not the business or the hotel.

Private 7 makes having a meal with his staff on a daily basis an important part of his routine. He is in the kitchen at meal times and eats food with staff, believing that “if the staff tea is

not good enough for me to eat, it's not good enough for the staff to eat". He reports that four nights of the week he eats with the chefs for "a bit of banter and to show I care".

He then went further detailing how he supports staff with personal problems.

Private 7
"I've helped girls (employees) that have been in abusive relationships get enough money to move back home. I've taken (staff) to Tesco to buy toiletries. I've given people food before pay day so they can feed children at breakfast"

Across all of these HGMs there was a consistency in the desire to get the most out of staff, and motivate them. This is typified by:

Private 2
"We want to find out from staff what they're good at and what they get a buzz out of. I want everyone to get a buzz out of working here and to want to come into work each day".

These HGMs work alongside their staff, and have more interaction with them than their chain or franchise counterparts. This is attributed to their hands on role. The relationship between the HGM and hotel staff across the private sector hotels appears to have a paternalistic style. This approach underpins the loyalty exhibited by employees. There appears to be a relationship between employees' behaviour and HGMs style of management in the private hotels. These private hotels reflect the values and personality of the HGM, in many cases through the presentation of the building, but also, in the way the hotel staff represent the hotel. Examples of this are the attention to detail at the Atholl hotel where exterior plaques and brasses are shining; the manner guests are approached at the Mariner, Atholl and Strathburn hotels, where guests are greeted warmly and responded to immediately. HGMs in these properties reported that the staff seem to be able to understand what is important to the HGM, and on visiting the hotels staff activity bore this out. The attention to detail in terms of how meals were served, the appearance of the servers and above all the customer focus is observed.

In summary these HGMs are seen to be concerned with the people in their hotel. They have a customer focus, value staff loyalty and long service. There is a deep and genuine concern by the HGMs for both customers and those employed in the hotel.

4.3.3.2. Private sector HGMs report creativity

This section reports on the creativity found in the private sector HGMs. These managers were found to be open to new ideas, and prepared to make changes, often major capital expenditure as Private 1, for example, talked about the new entrance and bar refurbishment he felt the hotel needed. HGMs in this business model are free from the controlling systems imposed on their counterparts in the chain and franchise models. All seven of the Private sector HGMs also exhibit more of an entrepreneurial flair:

Private 6 built and opened his hotel in the mid-1980's, as a functional new build hotel, on the edge of a town, with standardised bedrooms connected to restaurant and limited lounge areas. The HGM reported that a hotel inspector categorised the hotel as the first ever "Travelodge" style hotel, many years before the majors introduced the concept nationally.

Private 7 is able to cite opening high quality apartments in a block beside the hotel and buying a run-down public house in the same block as the hotel and integrating that into the hotel as a resident's pub, also serving locals.

Private 3 points to the house next to the hotel which he has just purchased. It will be refurbished as a bunk house, to complement chalets built in the car park, and the accommodation in main hotel. All of these purchases and developments are evidence of entrepreneurial thinking and action. The HGM in this private hotel is clear on new markets he hopes to reach.

Private 1
"At the moment I'm about to invest in technology to allow bills to be paid by mobile banking or a phone app."

In summary HGMs managing in the private model operate significantly differently to their counterparts in the franchise and chain managed properties. HGMs surveyed all see themselves practicing "traditional hotel keeping and hospitality" (Private 7), as distinct from the business and sales focus reported in the other two business models, but are still open to new ideas. HGMs in this business model are required to operate at a strategic level, examples of refurbishment and market development have been cited. But these HGMs are also required to be more operationally involved than either of HGM counterparts in the other two business models. It also appears that this group works longer hours and more days

than the other two groups surveyed. A significant finding is the focus by this group of HGMs on people with customers and employees are reported as being important to these HGMs.

Finally, this leads to finding contrast in management. The HGMs in the private model are concerned with people. These HGMs have demonstrated creativity in implementing hotel improvements, because the business model allows this. In comparison chain and franchise HGMs do not have the scope to use their creativity, as they are constrained and controlled by their management systems in their business model. This system directs them to concentrate efforts on more immediate actions, largely administration linked to sales and profits

4.4. Comparing the nature of HGMs' managerial work in franchise and chain models

Analysis indicates that the interpretation of the two roles is similar, and that managerial life and practice for an HGM is similar in both business models. The following section compares the challenge for management in both models.

In the UK at present these two business models operate side by side, and the customer is unlikely to be able to distinguish between them. Both chain and franchise operated hotels are branded and follow brand standards in product service delivery; this is exemplified in soft furnishings, breakfast service and tangibles such as room cards. The reported primary focus for both sets of HGMs is "revenue management" (Franchise 2 and Chain 1). Both sets of HGMs share a focus of optimising (room) sales:

Franchise 2
"I'd say there's probably only one aspect that takes up a significant amount of time and that's the revenue management".

Chain 2
"My critical success factor is maximising accommodation revenue."

Comparison and contrast

However, there are differences which impact on the HGM role and activity.

Two of the HGMs in the survey were employed by a chain (Hilton) that was a managed hotel, as distinct to a franchised hotel. One of these HGMs had worked in a franchise hotel prior to taking up his post as a managed chain HGM. He believed that managing in the franchise model is much harder, as a result of a lot less support from the centre.

Chain 8
“It’s your property when in franchise, whereas you’re part of an organisation when managed. In franchise you’re very much on your own. You work for the company not Hilton”

The conversation then probed what that meant to the HGM, and sought to explore any differences:

Chain 8
“In Franchise the (HGM) job is much tougher. I think coming in here sometimes I feel everything is done for me! Before when with Cairn (with Hilton franchise) we very much stood alone, with the brand over the door.

In conversation with Chain 8, it emerges that the HGMs of chain managed properties have more direction, support and ultimately control provided. This is the case in sales and HR, with the direction, support and control coming from regional managers/directors. It is these superiors who request the data from HGMs that takes time to complete and deliver. This relationship with a regional manager/director is absent in the franchised HGMs reporting structure, as they deal with the owning company personnel (as quoted earlier).

All chain HGMs, as typified by Chain 6, report to a line manager, usually designated a Cluster Manager or Regional Director.

Chain 6
“So I report to our regional Hilton guys”.

Chain 6 is the HGM at the other Hilton in Aberdeen city, this one a managed chain operation. In interview this HGM was asked “Does this hotel operate like a chain?”

Chain 6
“From a branding, meeting (conferences), event, standards and quality assurance, yes, it does run like a chain. As a managed property there’s a lot of cost involved, cluster costs and such like. For me maintaining the brand is chain led. I think there’s a lot of change coming though. Hotels find the franchise route more attractive, it costs less for the owners, and they can still use the brand.”

Chain 6 is reporting that hotel owners are finding the franchise route of hotel operation attractive, being less costly than the traditional chain model (management contract). The chain model is more costly to create and run, while with a franchise the benefits of being

part of a brand are secured without the costs associated with chain management. HGMs in franchise model consistently reported the benefit in bedroom sales as key in their business model. There's a belief that the rewards schemes and customer loyalty, as well as on-line sales support in delivering bookings into the hotel system are the benefits of being part of a franchise.

In the key areas of: corporate sales and revenue management, purchasing and cost control, and refurbishment support is provided centrally. The nature of management in these models seems to be about ensuring brand delivery and compliance.

In summary there are commonalities between what the franchise and the chain HGMs are required to do:

- Each set of respondents picked upon the importance of the brand above their hotel door. Brand compliance is reported to be very important.
- Both sets of HGMs are driven by a line manager and are expected to ensure their hotels conform to brand standards.
- The reported focus is revenue and bottom line profit. Perhaps as a consequence both sets of HGMs reported the drive by their respective bosses to be more of a business manager and less time being hands-on.
- For three chain HGMs there is a feeling that their role is changing. These HGMs are less operationally involved than was the case in the past. This change seems to be driven by the need for the HGM to devote more time to the future sales and business for the hotel in his or her charge.

Both sets of HGMs have complicated relationships. The franchise HGMs surveyed need to manage relationships with the local owners and comply with brand specification. The managed HGMs, in chains, need to manage within what seems to be a tighter reporting structure. Within the Hilton model, as found in the sample, there is the complication of multiple ownership. Although this does not directly affect the HGMs surveyed as (chain) HGMs they simply report to their regional (Hilton) director.

Having reported the broad issues that have emerged in the data, key themes are now considered. The following results are considered under four themes.

4.5. Thematic analysis

Hotel general management practice varies across the sample and this is largely influenced by the hotel business model, as reported when HGMs were questioned on how and what is prioritised, and why this is the case.

Within the interview discussion on the individual HGMs approach to managing their hotels a number of themes emerged. The HGM responses across the interview are brought together here in the themes that recurred.

The data from HGM responses can be categorised into four key themes.

These themes are presented in Table 7, and then discussed in turn:

- Management By Walking Around (MBWA)
- Operational involvement (the need to be involved in hotel operations)
- The HGM need for presence
- Time spent hosting

Table 7: Management activity

Hotel Manager	MBWA *1	Operationally involved	Need to be present	Time spent as “host”
Private 1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Considerable
Private 2	Yes	5 out of 7 mealtimes	Yes	Considerable
Private 3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Considerable
Private 4	Yes	Very: Covers chef and manager	Yes	Some
Private 5	Yes	When required	Yes For key functions	2hrs per week
Private 6	Yes	Yes	Yes	Considerable
Private 7	Yes	Yes	Yes	65-70 hrs pw
Franchise 1	Yes	No	No	Negligible
Franchise 2	Yes	Limited	No	Negligible
Franchise 3	Yes	No	No	Negligible
Chain 1	Yes	No	No	None
Chain 2	Yes	No	Start of large function	Some
Chain 3	Yes	Yes	Yes	40%
Chain 4	Yes	No	No	None
Chain 5	Yes	No	Yes	Most time spent with guests
Chain 6	Yes	No	No	None
Chain 7	Yes	No Discouraged by Marriott	No	Negligible

Chain 8	Yes	No	Yes	2.5 hours per day GM drinks party and meet and greet daily
Chain 9	Yes	Yes	Yes	1-2 hour on weekdays 4-5 at weekend
Chain 10	Yes	No	No	5% of time
Chain 11	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

*1 Management By Walking Around (MBWA)

4.5.1. Management By Walking Around (MBWA)

While there is variation on how individuals choose, or are required, to manage their hotel, one constant in HGM behaviour is undertaking MBWA.

Every HGM, when interviewed, reported that they under-took a walk of the hotel as part of their morning duty/activity. Eighteen reported that they undertook MBWA at other times of the day too: lunch-time service, at breaks and meetings/conferences arrivals and at the time of evening functions and restaurant service.

An opening question in the interview asked respondents to talk the interviewer through how their day starts and then re-count their activity from this point through to the end of their working day. When asked this question all HGMs described starting the day by walking about.

Although every HGM undertakes this activity, the rationale for MBWA varies across the sample. So, despite every HGM reporting MBWA, what this means in practice is different across the three business models. The management style is reported across all models with a clearest difference identified between those employed in the chain and private models. This will now be discussed in the wider picture of managerial practice across the business models.

4.5.1.1. An emerging picture of HGM managerial practice across business models

Earlier the HGMs managing in the chain and franchise sectors were seen to be concerned with managing systems, and were tightly controlled from above. Their HGM counterparts managing in the private sector in comparison were concerned with people; customer and staff being their focus.

This distinction is amplified in the results considering MBWA. There are, however, differing reasons for the activity: checking on standards, showing leadership to employees, meeting guests, assisting with operational activity, meeting staff and showing presence. As these reasons vary across the differing business models, chain and franchise employed HGMs will be addressed first as their practice in this regard was found to be similar. Then the private employed HGMs will be reported on.

Chain and Franchise employed HGMs

Mangers in both of these models report a similar approach. They report a need to connect with their business first thing, and get a feel for what is happening. There is also a reported desire to connect with staff, and believe that this face time with employees motivates their staff.

These HGMs don't spend a lot of time on MBWA, it's very much just showing face to staff and interest in the operations, rather than getting involved in the service delivery. MBWA was all about supporting staff and showing leadership and in some cases it's the only, brief, touch point with customers.

Chain 10
"I'm usually here by 8.10am, and walk around to see how things are going, what's happening in the hotel. But it's literally ten to fifteen minutes.

Chain 4
"Normally within half an hour of arriving I will have a quick walk around; check meeting rooms, check reception. And then we have the morning brief, where all the departments gather in my office. If we've got conferences on I'll normally pop my head into the restaurant just before they're due, to make sure they're OK. Again in the afternoon. And then have a wee wander round before I go and pop into the kitchen before I go to ensure they are OK".

It is noteworthy that chain and franchise managers, who according to their responses (detailed later) do not get operationally involved, HGMs are seen to be hands-off in terms of their management style, but are still undertaking MBWA.

Four chain HGMs reported that they don't have operational skills, for example to help with checking in a guest, but these HGMs still undertake MBWA.

So, while for chain and franchise HGMs the MBWA is not about being able to assist colleagues and members of staff by carrying out operational tasks, it is still seen as an important part of their daily routine.

Chain 3
"So I have a wander round breakfast, check the meetings that are coming in... generally just get a feel for what's happening."

Franchise 2

“For me it is always about walking about as well. In this small hotel, taking time say good morning to every member of staff and speak to some customers. And whilst you’re doing that you’re also doing a scan of the business; is it clean, tidy, and ready, is the breakfast specification as it should be.”

For the chain and franchise HGMs the MBWA seems to have three functions. Firstly check that the operational procedures in place are being adhered to by staff on duty delivering the required service to pre-determined standards. Secondly, acknowledge the staff on duty, then, finally, have limited customer contact. In essence checking that the systems are operating.

Should shortfall be identified during the course of MBWA these HGMs do not become operationally involved, but a supervisor or assistant manager is directed to sort out the observed shortfall.

Franchise 1

“There is always enough time to go around and say good morning to each of the staff you meet, and the customers. And whilst you’re doing that you’re also doing a scan of the business; hotel clean, tidy, ready? Whether the breakfast spec is as it should be. If not I’d bring up with the chef and DM (Duty Manager). But the first real time we get together is the 10.30am meeting. We scan last night’s business, assess what happening later in the day, and the action that is required. In these meetings with HODs (Heads of Department) and management, any shortfall in operations is spoken about and rectified.”
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These HGMs are more office bound than private sector counterparts and spend less time on MBWA. However, these HGMs all still wish to connect with the business, and need to have at least a feel for the operations they manage. That said, they are largely concerned with checking specifications on pre-determined service standards. Issues aren’t dealt with by these HGMs themselves and shortfall has to be formally addressed away from the front line.

Private HGMs

For the private HGMs there is focus on meeting the immediate service delivery, checking that the hotel is ready for daily operations, and ensuring the preparation is done for later that day. These managers are prepared to take more time on the MBWA than their chain and franchise counterparts. All private HGMs report giving direction on daily operations as part of their MBWA. The amount of time spent on MBWA is linked to the daily business.

Private HGMs are prepared to help with breakfast service, if required, or carry out tasks behind Reception.

There is evidence of a checking role, at a low level, to ensure the hotel is presented to the standards set by the HGM. These HGMs believe by undertaking MBWA and physically checking the surrogate quality standards that matter to them, the hotel is presented in the best possible way. Private 1, who is a shareholder of the hotel he manages still undertakes MBWA to a detailed level.

Private 1
“I walk round the car park, check the sand boxes physically myself once a week, make sure ashtray is emptied, come into the building and look at it as a customer”.

In contrast to their chain counterparts private HGMs are seen to be hands-on in terms of their management style and in undertaking MBWA. All managers in this ownership style were able to cite names of staff they spoke with on their MBWA.

The following quotes paint a picture of HGMs taking opportunities to interact with customers, and work alongside staff:

Private 7
“I generally go straight to Reception, check the girls are alright, before I’ve even got my jacket off. Be down again for a wee wander around 9.00am. Check if everyone on duty where they should be. Check breakfast. Are we ready for lunch? The walk round might take 10 minutes, or it could take 3 hours. It’s a chance to check in with guests”.

The importance of, and focus on customers is repeated by Private sector HGMs in the interviews.

Private 3
“I do like to come in first thing in the morning, see what’s happening and take it from there. Just picking up where staff are missing. We’ve a new girl on service this morning, so I’m supporting her, by working with her”.

Private 4
“I can, and do, help in Reception. And I expect my assistant managers to help at key times too. If I see any of them (Assistant Managers) walk past at a busy time, they’re in trouble”

When problems arise in service delivery during the MBWA these HGMs get involved and support their people. There is a concern with daily operating standards, how the hotel looks,

and on supporting staff. The MBWA enforces the HGMs own standards, and the staff seem to expect the HGM to inspect the hotel. These HGMs seem to want to make a personal connection with as many of their front line staff as possible.

Private 5

“I always walk through the main kitchen and Molly’s Bistro on my way down to the office, which is in the basement, and that’s purely for visual to see everything’s up to scratch. It’s really just to see the staff up there. It’s a catch up with the breakfast chef for example, and ensure the breakfast buffet is up to standard.

In my daily tour generally I’d meet the Housekeeper, I’d see the Bistro Manager, the Chef, now this is for 10 minutes generally on a daily basis. I do formal meetings every three months too, but this a daily catch up”.

In summary, MBWA is undertaken by all managers. When this term is explored, however, it has two meanings. For the chain and franchise HGMs it’s a quick tour of the hotel with the focus is on: checking standards, brand compliance, and essentially checking that the prescribed systems for delivery of service are being followed. Shortfall triggers formal rectification procedures, as HGMs direct staff and discuss the shortfall away from service. Private HGMs spend more time on MBWA. Here the focus is on: adopting a customer perspective in the MBWA, supporting staff and personally being involved with and directing operations. Any observed shortfall triggers the HGM to become a front line worker. The HGM directs staff on the operational requirements for the rest of the day on this morning tour of the hotel. This direction is seen to be personal to the member of staff (as cited: Housekeeper, Chef, and Assistant Manager) and based on the HGMs own knowledge and experience, not predetermined brand standards.

The differing motivations for MWBA prompts further analysis of related aspects in hotel general management, which were further investigated with interviewees:

- **the HGM being operationally involved,**
- **the need to be present,**
- **and time spent as a host**

These interweaving aspects are analysed in the following three sections.

4.5.2. The HGM being operationally involved

Private sector HGMs

All seven of the HGMs surveyed in the Private sector reported an ability to carry out an operational role effectively. Although HGMs also believed that they are required to be present in the hotel (refer to **Table 7** summary). HGMs were questioned on these two aspects separately, but, there appears to be a link between the two.

It is significant that all private sector HGMs felt that they should not only make their presence felt in the hotel, but make an operational contribution too. This group report that being seen by, and acknowledging customers, is important. Being operationally involved, and leading from the front in a hands-on manner is also reported as being important in terms of motivating staff, and setting operational standards.

Private 1
“Your customers all like to know that the boss is on hand, They don’t need to have a long conversation with you, a hello, a wave, an acknowledgement. They see the boss carrying plates, pouring pints, tidying tables. It starts from the top and works the way down, so you have to lead by example”.

Private 3
“Staff see me laying up at table, or serving properly, then it reinforces the training they’ve been given. We’re keeping the standards. And they know how I like to see the tables and buffet set out.”

The HGMs working in privately owned hotels are found to be operationally competent and both willing and able to undertake operational duties. Across the HGMs the following skills were found to be: food preparation, food and beverage service, and reception skills. Seven respondents deployed these skills were on a daily basis.

Whilst most interviewees had food preparation or kitchen skills, all HGMs had food service skills and some had reception skills (the ability to check a guest in or check a guest out). If required six of the seven were able to work as a chef in the kitchen, with examples of covering for food preparation staff being given. Most reported that they worked in food service at peak service times.

In interviews all HGMs reported the need to be operationally involved with their hotel (examples being were covering food service, being on the hot-plate, or covering for a chef) and also the enjoyment that this activity brought.

Private 1 and Private 2 reported being actively involved in food service in the restaurant in answer to the question on what takes most of their time;

“service time certainly” Private 1, and

“service, actually working on the floor” Private 2.

Scale of operation is seen to be a factor impacting on the HGM activity. With a small number of bedrooms, and limited food and beverage sales, less staff are employed. HGMs surveyed in the two smaller hotels need to undertake shifts in operational roles to cover the business requirements. The HGM in the smallest hotel managed in this survey:

“A lot is down to covering staff days off, not staff absence” Private 3.

For this HGM there is an operational imperative, which is not the case for the other HGMs. All of the HGMs surveyed reported that they enjoyed “service” and customer interaction. For the private operators, who are in most cases their own bosses, they can choose to do whatever they like in terms of defining parameters of their role. It follows that there is an element of choice in being operationally involved. Certainly if an HGM appears on a rota there is a need to be operationally involved and this is the case in the HGMs in the two smaller hotels in the sample. However, when HGMs are not actually on a rota, then technically there is no real need to be involved. In which case it can be seen that these HGMs express a perceived need to be involved. Which perhaps, can be their choice, as this people contact at service is reported as an enjoyable part of the HGMs work.

Private 7
“So you come in on a Saturday to a busy day and busy service, that’s the fun. You deal with the stress through the day. When it comes to service, that’s then fun”

Chain hotel HGMs

Here there is a stark contrast between the private HGMs and the chain HGMs on being operationally involved. Nine of the eleven sampled are not operationally involved in their hotel. Three chain HGMs reported that they did not have the skills or knowledge to be able to check in a guest at Reception, so are unable to be operationally involved.

Interestingly Chain 5 echoes the views of private sector HGMs.

Chain 5
“There’s not a need to be operationally involved, I just love to do it. But again it’s back to you if you are a good manager, if you are organising your things correctly, there’s definitely no need. It doesn’t matter how big your organisation is, it’s really the fact you are a good manager”.

This suggests that HGMs in both private and chain models actually enjoy being operationally involved.

The nine HGMs who were not operationally involved felt that their head offices have steered these HGMs towards more strategic, sales and external facing activities rather than the internal hands-on activities. There is a feeling being expressed that for these HGMs to become operationally involved is an admission of failure on their part.

Chain 7
“If my boss came in...and saw me behind the bar making cappuccinos and pulling pints he'd be saying something's wrong here “Who's doing the management things”.

This shows that there is an expectation that the HGM should be undertaking the pure management activities as directed by head office.

Chain 3 is an exception in the sample of 11 chain HGMs. This HGM reports being a hands on HGM, although admitting in interview “less so than in the past”. Even so, this HGM shares much of the traits of her private sector counterparts: working longer hours, being operationally involved and being in the same hotel for a comparatively long time (11 years). There is a desire to be operationally involved, and a choice on her part to be “more hands-on than a lot of HGMs”, but she recognises that her line managers would like her to be less operationally involved.

Chain 3
“I'm not expected to be operationally involved, because they (Head office) keep telling me in great detail that's what I've got an operational team for. I like to get involved, I'm very hands-on. Always have been. Although in the last 4 years I've done less, on account of the workload given (to me) by head Office, and it was suggested that I needed to look how I organised my work and that of the team to benefit the hotel. So, I've done that, and I'm less operationally involved, but it will never go”.

Across all the chain HGMs interviewed there is no doubt that their line managers are looking to these HGMs to be the Chief Executive Officer in charge of the hotel business. On the whole chain HGMs embrace this direction. However, there is also reported a source of frustration, which underscores the change that chain managers are experiencing currently.

Chain 10
“The job is now very very much more administrative than it ever was before. In my day when I started as an HGM twenty plus years ago, there was a lot more interaction with people, whether it be staff, guests or general operations. I do still try, but in a day from 8.00am to 6.15pm I’m spending very little time interacting with staff or customers. Part of the reason I got into Hospitality was the draw of interacting with people. I find the drive away from operations into office management challenging”

This supports the data pointing to the chain HGM being pushed to more office based system and compliance activity, at the expense of “interaction with people”.

Franchise hotel HGMs

The HGM as a point of contact is to a large extent is removed by the franchise model. Even the figure-head and go-to role, which at times requires the HGM to deal direct with customers with a complaint is removed in the franchise model. Across the three respondents there is consistency with little or no operational involvement.

Instead all front line staff are empowered and trained to deal with customer interactions and complaint resolution. This responses, below, came out of the HGMs being questioned about a customer complaint, and being pushed on when the HGM would become involved. The apparent contradiction can be attributed to the external focus of the franchise HGM, engaging with the community, which is different to the day to day meet and greet role dealing with internal customers.

Franchise 1
“If there was a problem or complaint at breakfast this morning I would expect it to be dealt with and resolved. We get measured on problem resolution as a brand. It’s one of the winning metrics that IHG get as a franchise. Our customers measure us on if they’ve encountered a problem and how effectively it was resolved. So all our team have undergone problem resolution training. So if there was a problem at breakfast I’d expect Tony (head waiter) to have handled it The problem resolution training is carried out on a WebEx seminar. So we’ve got a trainer within the company based in the Aberdeen”.

This is endorsed by Franchise 3:

Franchise 3
“Every single member of staff that deals with customers has authority to do whatever they need to make a customer happy. Receptionists can give a 100% refund, with the backing of management”

The franchisor (IHG in this case) sees this approach as being important in delivering and maintaining customer satisfaction. There are demonstrable benefits to this approach, however, it does mean the HGM is removed from this direct customer contact.

Two HGMs reported that they were not operationally involved. For one HGM, Franchise 3, this is explained by the fact that his hotel is a city central branded hotel offering a bed and breakfast service only. The breakfast is a buffet service and outside breakfast service there is no food and beverage offering. As most HGMs when operationally involved are spending time in food and beverage areas (lunch and dinner service, kitchen work, and function service), without these offerings there is no opportunity for this franchise HGM to get involved.

Franchise 3
“This is a bedroom factory, with breakfast. Breakfast is served by agency staff, to a brand specification. Housekeeping is provided by agency staff. There’s no opportunity for me to get involved”

The only franchise HGM to get operationally involved realised that there is a limit to the benefits to being involved.

Franchise 2
“ ...there isn’t a requirement for me to be involved operationally. I like to think it’s appreciated (when I do get involved). There’s times when I know it’s not appreciated and I step away, and leave them to it.”

A consistent profile emerges for these three franchise employed HGMs, as seen in Table 7: only one has limited operational involvement, none felt the need to be present in their hotels, and time spent as a host is negligible.

In summary, across the three business models there is a contrast in this aspect of hotel management. Both franchise and chain HGMs are not expected to be operationally involved, in fact there is evidence that being operationally involved is discouraged by at least two chains. There are reported instances across these two models where HGMs have made the choice to be operationally involved. In one case (chain 3) this is identified as a personal choice, and a choice that is against the direction from head office. Referring back to the responses by Franchise 1 and 3, regarding dealing with a complaint highlights that it is a system that these HGMs manage. The emphasis in responses was to the complaint and dealing with this rather than the customer. The system is managed, and the system ensures that the complaint is dealt with by trained front line staff. The direction from the centre (IHG) is that this process is used to resolve the complaint in the manner that that the

franchisor sees as appropriate, which does not involve the HGM. The HGM has to ensure that the front line staff are trained and able to response to the complaint effectively, i.e. the system is in place and effective. The HGM can be seen to be one step removed from the customer.

Private sector HGMs are the most operationally involved. In the case of small scale hotels, this is through necessity with the HGM required to undertake operational tasks as part of a duty rota. Operations, largely in food service, takes a considerable amount of these HGMs time. These HGMs have less choice, as it is reported that they have to be operationally involved to ensure the service delivery happens. There is also evidence of these HGMs choosing to be involved in service as this activity is enjoyable.

It seems that for all HGMs actually being operationally involved is enjoyable. It is the private sector HGMs that are able to choose to be operationally involved, while the HGMs with corporate bosses, are more and more being discouraged from being involved operationally, being directed to other areas of compliance.

4.5.3. The need to be present

The data in Table 7, highlights differences across the business models in relation to the reported need by the HGM to be present.

All the seven private sector HGMs reported a need to make their presence felt in the hotel. This is in contrast with both the franchise and chain HGMs. On the whole franchise and chain HGMs do not report the need to make their presence felt in hotels they manage.

As highlighted in the earlier section, there is consistency across the franchise employed HGMs as all three did not feel the need to be present.

Franchise 2
“Customers don’t come to see me, the corporate regulars come back because there’s been a consistent offering of produce, facilities, and quality”

A similar picture emerges in the chain model where five of the eleven HGMs interviewed did not feel the need to be present in the hotel.

Chain 4
“I think as far as the customers who are in the hotel are concerned, they don’t need to see me”

The systems in place seem to negate the need for these HGMs to be present.

Chain 4 went on to echo a theme with chain operated hotels, that being that the HGM needed to have an external focus rather than an internal focus.

Chain 4
“In terms of customer relationships that I’m building, these are at an organisational level outside the hotel, so for me that’s the important bit. I don’t need to be mine host in this hotel, it’s not necessary”.

Again, there is a contrast in the response for chain 3. This HGM believes it is important for her to be present. In the opinion of chain 3, customers expect to see the HGM.

Chain 3
“On the function side of things, certainly the big ones, I’m here for every one of them...for arrival and until the sweet is served. Because a lot of our functions are repeat business, clients expect to see you. I’m not here necessarily to check up on what they are doing, I’m here because clients expect to see me here”

This is linked to her belief that loyal customers re-book on account of an affiliation to her, the HGM, not the hotel or brand. This aspect will be picked up on later in this section.

Chain 3
“If you do that touchy-feely stuff; that’s what brings business back.”

While the HGMs in chain and franchise models don’t report a need to be present, HGM counterparts in the private sector do. This group of managers believed strongly that their presence had to be felt in their hotel. Connecting with customers is seen to be very important; more so than reported by either franchise or chain employed HGMs.

Private 1
“... there needs to be presence. I know that some of the chain hotels the rule of thumb is that the HGM shouldn’t work more than 9-5 Monday to Friday, but that’s the hours head office work. How do they know their customers? And you’ve got to know your customers.”

This quote signals a disdain on the part of this private sector HGM for the management systems imposed on chain and franchise colleagues. In this quote there is clearly frustration that customers are not known to these chain managers. This amplifies the point that private sector HGMs are concerned with people; and their customers in particular. For the private HGMs there is a reported desire to please customers, but also a strong belief that the HGM being present is part of the customer experience.

Private 7
“Last night there was a conference dinner, with a local VIP, so you naturally stay to make sure you touch base with him and make sure he’s OK”

The private sector employed HGMs believe that HGMs need to be able to devote time to meet and greet their customers. More than that, they believe that through interaction with customers the HGM learns about customer preferences, which ultimately helps build loyalty. In summary, there are clear differences across the sample of HGMs on their reported need to be present. Franchise and chain HGMs do not feel the need to be present, with the exception of Chain 3, who exhibits the traits seen to be attributable to private sector HGMs. These private sector HGMs identify their role with traditional hospitality and believe that there needs to be HGM presence.

4.5.4. Time spent as a host

There is a cross over between the HGM perceived need to be present in the hotel, addressed above, and the role of host. Although treated as two sections they can be considered together.

The contrast sought in the research across the business models between the hosting role and business/office management is exposed and captured in the responses by Private 7 and Private 1. Insight into the individual HGMs priorities and their balancing of office work against the hosting activity is uncovered. For private sector employed HGMs there is a suggestion by Private 1 and Private 7 that their chain and franchise counterparts are choosing not to be present in their hotels, choosing instead to work office hours.

The need for the HGM to be present and perceived importance of hosting in the hotel are thought to be closely related. It is expected that the HGMs in the private sector will devote time and effort to being a host, in line with their reported presence in their hotels, with franchise and chain HGMS opting not to host to any extent.

This is indeed the case. All three franchise HGMs reported no need for them to undertake a hosting role, or be “mine-host” in their hotel.

Franchise 2
“...it’s being that person of presence to walk around is maybe 2%, if that’s what you call hosting”.

Franchise 3
“Because it’s not a family run hotel, nor a small hotel, there’s no customer expectation of seeing me as mine host”.

Franchise 2 dismisses his own role in relation to hosting customers, stating that they don’t come to see him, regulars “come back because there’s been a consistent offering of product, facilities and quality”. This HGM believes the brand, and a consistent product offering is more of a pull for customers than the presence, or personality, of the HGM in charge. An insight into the role of the franchise HGM is that the managerial challenge would seem to be brand compliance and ensuring consistent service delivery within the guidelines for the franchise.

Franchise 3 reported that the franchisee has pushed HGMs to empower front line staff, making them the contact point with customers. The front line staff deal with any complaints and they are the performing the host roles.

Franchise 3
“Every single member of staff that deals with customers and has authority to do whatever they need to do to make a customer happy. So, receptionists have full authority, if they feel a complaint is serious enough to make a 100% refund, they can, and have the backing of management to take such action. It’s a relatively new concept, IHG empowering people... as customers don’t want a complaint or request to go up the line: receptionist, duty manager, general manager. They just want it dealt with”.

This is the reported belief on the part of the HGM. It’s not necessarily the view of the customer.

HGMs in the private model devote significant time to being a host, and see this activity as an important part of their job.

Private 6
“Just being a host takes up most of my time. Going around, making yourself available, which I think you should do.”

Private 2
“Technically I host five out of seven mealtimes. In reality, whenever someone walks through the door I’m here, and say hello. I’m usually visible at the Front Desk.”

There is also the reported belief that the HGMs of privately owned hotels need to know and engage with their customers. Customer loyalty is important to these HGMs, and there is fear that if they aren't in the hotel, present, and hosting guests, loyal customers could be lost.

Private 2
"It doesn't take a lot for a customer to move and make somewhere else their local. Someone just being less welcoming than they could be. So I don't like not being here".

HGMs in the Private sector, as noted, report on the importance to them of customers, with the theme of these HGMs being people focussed. For Private 2 this focus appears to be partly due to fear if losing customers.

One HGM in the private sector reports a lack of hospitality (linked to hostmanship) in the wider industry, which is taken to be a criticism of chain and franchise HGMs.

Private 5
"There's not enough people in hotels at the moment who show genuine hospitality"

The exception is Chain 3. This HGM is working weekends, and acting as a host in contrast to her chain counterparts across the sample.

Chain 3
"Most of my hosting work occurs at the weekend, Friday and Saturdays in the hotel. I also meet conference delegates during the week at their lunch breaks. I'm the best soup ladler in Aberdeen!" If you do that touchy-feely stuff; that's what brings business back."

More typically of chain HGMs, Chain 5, reports that the customers in his hotel did not need to see him. This HGM believes that while in smaller scale hotels the "mine host style" was important, as his hotel was larger this was not necessary. For this HGM the focus was on developing internal people to deliver the service and hosting for customers.

Chain 5
"For me, training and empowering our people to be the front line hosts is where we need to be. I've delegated authority on handling complaints, there's no need for even these complaints to be escalated to the duty manager. The front line staff, those bright young things, they're the hosts"

Three of the chain HGMs mention a relatively new position in the hotel structure, that of Operations Manager. This post holder in chain hotels has the responsibility for day to day operations, allowing the HGM to devote time and effort to other activities. How far this post releases the HGM from the host role, the need to present, or even operationally involved seems to vary across hotels and is subject to individual preferences.

Chain 6
“My job as HGM has changed from the days of being quite operational. Now my job is quite commercial focussed, driving the sales, driving the business. And my Number 2 is the Operations Manager.”

Again, there is some frustration being reported here by HGMs in the chain model. This response was given to a question on how much time is devoted to being a host, with the issue of how the role of HGM has changed being cited in this response.

Chain 4
“The demands of my job at the moment probably mean I see more of the inside of my office than I’m comfortable with. I think most people won’t know who the General Manager is, or see the General Manager in a hotel of this size, because the job of general manager now is very different to what it was when I started”

In summary, there seems to be a choice, or trade-off that HGMs need to make between office work and hosting activity. In terms of this trade-off there is a clear difference across the business models. HGMs in privately owned hotels push themselves, or choose, to devote more time to hosting. This fits with their focus on their customer. Counterparts in chain and franchised hotels appear to be directed to devote more time to office work.

Acting as a host, by the very term, implies a performance or an act. The following section picks up on results that endorse this point.

4.5.4.1. Acting and performing

Spending time hosting can be seen to be akin to acting, or carrying out a performance.

This point is made by Chain 5, likening the role of an HGM in the public arena to that of being on stage.

Chain 5
It’s like being on stage. When you go to the hotel you start acting, we usually say being on stage...”

Representing the hotel, and presenting the hotel to a paying public could be seen as preparing for and delivering a performance. In terms of an act or performance, there is an expectation that a HGM will act, speak and conduct themselves in a certain manner.

The appearance of the HGM, the way the hotel is prepared for the performance, the presentation of the hotel, the food and beverage offerings and the staff themselves is to a lesser or great extent (depending on ownership) influenced by the HGM. The performance or act is orchestrated by the HGM.

There is some evidence that the business and sales are linked to the HGM. This individual, and that person's personality, has potential to influence business being placed in the hotel. There has to be confidence on the part of those placing business in the hotel in either the brand or for the person to deliver.

Private 5

“... a golf dinner that came to us from another hotel, so for that evening if I wasn't here on the night they would be quite upset. There are a number of key function clients, people with whom I've built up a relationship with, and deal with their bookings personally, they expect to see me at the door on the night. I'd never work nine to five Monday to Friday, I know some of my counterparts do, and very lucky to do so I'm sure, but for the large dinners, which happen every year, and been here for the last 7 years, it takes an hour of my time to be here. Yes, the Operations manager is fine, he or she will get on with it, but I have to be here, and I'll continue to do so”

HGMs in the private model get operationally involved. However, it is a chain HGM that explicitly likened an HGM role to being on stage. There is evidence, then, that HGMs do see themselves as playing out a role when visible in their hotel.

5. SECOND LEVEL ANALYSIS

5.1. Introduction

Chapter 4 reports on results from the key sections within the semi-structured interviews.

Chapter 5 seeks to summarise results into emerging themes.

The themes to be addressed in this chapter are:

- Hotel General Managers' activities and priorities as influenced by brand and hotel identity
- The influence of Place in shaping the behaviour of HGMs
- Differences in HGM management style and practices; considering the influence of control and support across the business models
- Consortium membership
- The influence of ownership shaping HGM behaviour

5.2. Hotel General Managers' activities and priorities as influenced by brand and hotel identity

Drawing upon results presented earlier it is believed that for franchised and chain hotels the brand, and all that means in terms of the business model, is a significant influence on HGM behaviour and activity. The HGMs in the private sector considered in parallel find that standards set by them are personal to that individual HGM. These operating standards are synonymous with the HGM, personal and unique to that HGM and his/her hotel.

The results indicate the requirement to manage systems as dictated by the brand and in practice by line management/head office control, is a major influence on HGM's activities and priorities. Likewise, the absence of line management control and direction sees the HGMs in the private sector imposing their own personal standards in the management of hotels in their charge. It has been shown that brand compliance is crucial for HGMs in both the franchise and chain models. By comparison the HGMs in the private sector set their own standards.

The franchise HGMs are the most constrained in terms of the product and service offerings in their hotels. This implies that the franchise HGMs' scope to personalise their offering is very limited.

Franchise 1
“We have to conform to a brand standard. The pillow I mentioned, the three suppliers that I mentioned are capable of supplying a pillow that meets the brand requirement for a pillow. And the same for towel. A Holiday Inn bed has got to have a specific thread count, it’s got to have a specific type of pillow, specific type of mattress”.

Franchise 3
“Yeah. Everything’s according to brand standards. It’s all laid down by IHG. There’s a brand standard that will state a minimum and maximum, even down to, say, a minimum of five flavours of yoghurt, to maximum of seven. So there’s limited scope for the HGM to personalise.”

These HGMs recognise that they are charged with ensuring a consistent brand delivery, which to an extent diminishes their opportunity to personalise the hotel. This reduces the scope of their role as HGMs. A consistent brand delivery across all hotels is sought by the Franchisor.

Franchise 1 explained the focus of his work is ensuring global brand standards set by the franchisor are met, as these are the criteria on which the hotel, and by association he is measured:

Franchise 1
“If there was a problem at breakfast this morning I’d expect it to be dealt with and resolved. We get measured on problem resolution as a brand. It’s one of the winning metrics that IHG get as a franchisee. So all our team have undergone problem resolution handling, and if there was a problem at breakfast I’d expect the waiter and restaurant supervisor to have handled it”

This underscores that being an HGM in the franchise model is different from the other two models surveyed here and consequently has different challenges. From the foregoing it could be anticipated that chain employed HGMs would be similarly constrained in the range of personal influence they are able to exert on their hotel management. This is indeed the case. Chain 6 reported not working for a chain, but for a brand, and that the main driver in his work is “to maintain the brand”.

In common with their franchise counterparts the chain HGMs believed that their customers also came to their hotels for the brand experience and not on account of the personal pull of the individual HGM. These HGMs are charged with and are measured on, consistent brand delivery.

Chain 4
“So you’ve got a corporate traveller who travels round the UK, and they stay at the Park Inn in Northampton and the Park Inn in Aberdeen, they are buying the brand because they are reassured by what they are going to get and the consistency of the product ”

This is exemplified by the measurement undertaken in Marriott. Service Level Agreements are used as a measure of quality. The outcome of this inspection exercise generates a score for the hotel and the HGM. This can result in a written commendation or an improvement notice. HGMs recognised the importance of a good score on service delivery, as they are judged on this.

The private sector HGMs are not bound by brand compliance. Although standards of service delivery are considered very important to these HGMs, they do have the opportunity to influence and direct the product and service delivery in the way they see fit. Examples of this influence, and activity were given in relation to their food and beverage operations.

In the case of Private 1, this HGM talked about and showed the new menu introduced for lunch service. This was done after consultation with the customers and then the Head Chef at the hotel. Again, the importance of customers to these HGMs is notable. Crucially the HGM believed the menus had to reflect the style of his hotel and deliver what his, very local, customers sought. He went on to cite the case of an item being dropped on a previous menu revision and having to be put back onto the menu on account of customer pressure. The point being made that although the small private hotel does not have a brand standard for food, this new menu had to represent the hotel standard, and be of the quality demanded by the local, loyal, customers.

Also, as discussed earlier, the close working relationship that the private sector HGMs have with employees means that standards can be established and enforced by these HGMs being present at the operational activities the staff are engaged with. The product style and service delivery across the six private sector HGMs does reflect their personality and style.

Private 1
“Its attention to detail. And that’s where we have advantage over hotel chains, because they’re too busy looking at their manuals. We don’t have manuals to look at. I work with staff, so they pick it up... so they know the standard”.

The HGMs in the private model are seen to set their own standards and expected their staff to follow these. Checking for these HGMs is against the product and service standards they have set, not a franchise or chain brand standard imposed upon them.

Private 7
“I’m the public face of the business”

Their personality is the brand, and these HGMs impose their own brand standards.

In the way that the franchisor gives guidance on brand compliance for a nationally identifiable brand, in the private sector HGM sets and imposes these standards.

This respondent went on to comment that he could be considered the brand.

Private 7
<p>“It’s personal here, you’re working for people, and you’re not working for a brand. It’s maybe a bit of a big headed statement, but you could argue that 70% of people coming to (named hotel) don’t necessarily know me, but know who I am, and they like the fact that I’m in and about the business. I spend a lot of time at the weekend standing at the front door”.</p> <p>“Sometimes, on a Sunday if I’m off, I put my shirt on at 12 o’clock come in here for 12.30pm and be home again at 1.00pm. My wife thinks I’m mad, but there’s just certain hands I have to shake””.</p>

This quote encapsulates the priorities and activities of the HGMs in the private sector. This group of HGMs: work long hours, are people focussed, with the customer being seen as very important, and a service delivery that is personal and distinct in a contrast to the brand compliance seen to be driving priorities and activities for chain and franchise HGMs.

5.3. The influence of Place in shaping HGM behaviour

Time Horizons

In Table 6, private sector HGMs report significantly more years in their current HGM post than their chain and franchise counterparts (27 years as an average from the sample). Chain and franchise HGMs report less time in post (4.3 years as an average from the sample). This could be explained by the notion that HGMs in these models are required to move more regularly for internal promotion and ensure their own career progression.

HGMs in the private sector do report being in their hotel for “the long run” (Private 1).

HGM commitment to the community

It was noted in the data collection that the private HGMs all have a connection with the community in which their hotel is located, or have a personal link with the area in which they manage the hotel.

Private 4
“This is my twenty-sixth year, so it’s varied during that time. In my early days it was about: the rooms, customer service and being behind the bar. I was there myself, and connected with my regulars. My business serves the community and is part of the community”.

All seven of the Private sector HGMs cited examples of activity and initiatives they have undertaken to benefit the immediate community, or place in which they operate. The location of the private sector business affects the HGM, and there is seen to be a connection with the community which they serve. Their long service in the hotel means that they become part of the community, this can create a sense of belonging.

The Private HGMs do plan and act for “the long term”, and the quote, above, implies that they want their community to benefit from their hotel through a long term sustainable approach to managing the property.

As examples of this both Private 4 and Private 6 became a local hub for displaced people during a natural flooding disaster in Winter 2015.

Private 6
“In the recent flooding in Inverurie, I offered all my hotel space free to anyone flooded out. This offer went out on Facebook, and the hotel was full in a very short space of time. We filled the public areas too, just to give people shelter and warmth”.

Private 3 cited the snow clearing activity he undertook (with mini-tractor) on the pavements throughout the village in which his hotel is situated, and the floral decorations/displays he has created and maintained on entry and exit to the village (without being attributed to the hotel).

The influence of “place” and a sense of belonging could be an influence on HGMs in the chain model too.

This can be seen as further evidence of these HGMs being people orientated, and the HGM and the hotel being part of the community.

There is a criticism by three private sector HGMs of their chain counterparts having a short term business focus, while they have a longer term commitment to the hotel and the community it serves. Private 7 typifies the criticism:

Private 7
“There’s been the case in Aberdeen that guys are sent up here, they do their two to three years, they milk the property for whatever they can get out of it, then go somewhere else. Whereas I came here six and a half years ago with a ten year plan”.

This highlights the contrast as seen in the results to date. The HGMs in chain model are reporting a shorter term focus on sales, a focus requested by their line managers. This focus is criticised by the HGMs in the private model, who have a longer term focus in which serving the community around the hotel is important.

5.4. Differences in HGM management style and practices; considering the influence of control and support across the business models

The data has indicated differing levels of personal support for the HGM across the three business models. The level of support and direction given is seen to influence the HGM role, as well as individual HGMs activity and behaviour. The degree of control and support is likely to be linked to the business model under which the HGM manages.

5.4.1. Hotel General Managers in chain properties

A benefit from being part of a chain, is the support from head office with functions like: Human Resources, IT, and operations. Each HGM managing in this business model was able to report examples of central support and has immediate access to support from colleagues by telephone and on-line. All aspects of hotel related support was detailed by every respondent. Personal development opportunities and training were reportedly available through the chain head offices.

Chain 11
“If it’s something urgent, I’ll pick up the phone. If it’s something that needs to be dealt with but not necessarily right this minute, I’ll drop and e-mail”.

Chain 11
“As part of a big company there’s lots of support. There’s a central marketing department where we can get our brochures and all that kind of stuff. We can create something ourselves, but it has to be to the brand standard. Sales and marketing, there’s a big sales office behind every hotel, a central reservations office. IT, there’s big IT support. HR support we share with one other hotel. We also have Health and Safety support provided centrally, with inspection visits. My own personal development is considered too, with investment in me”

Chain 7
“We’ve remote check-in that’s a great support. HR, sales, finance, culinary, beverage, procurement, health and safety, leisure every single discipline there is a line or two or three above us for support.”

Control from above

All of the 11 chain HGM’s cited that the closest working relationship they have is with their superior, usually an Area or Cluster Manager. A feature of the chain HGM role is relationship with his or her immediate superior. This relationship is not found for the HGMs in the franchise model.

Chain 6
“I speak with my Area Manager daily”.

Chain 2
“The biggest support is Steve (Cluster manager). Then being in a cluster helps. Me, Jane and Alison will bounce things off each other. And the good thing is that all three of us are completely different, obviously Alison has the most knowledge, but we all can help each other”.

There is evidence of these HGMs being quite tightly controlled as well as being supported. Each of the Chain HGMs has a clearly defined reporting relationship. Although as is the case in Chain 6, above, a daily contact is made and support valued, this regular contact is also a control mechanism as the HGM is effectively reporting that his/her proposed activity is being approved. There is a feeling that there is a significant amount of remote control by what can be considered head office.

Chain 8
“I’ve a daily chat with my Revenue Manger who’s based in Watford. She looks after four properties, we’ve a good working relationship. Once a week we do a business focus meeting. It’s at least an hour’s worth of a meeting. So, in terms of team wise with myself: deputy, res (reservations) team, we’ve got a cluster sales manager, he will be sitting in on the calls, and my cluster manager sits in once a week for that meeting.

On being pushed to disclose the agenda for these weekly meetings:

Chain 8
“And then sort of talking around the figures and I guess it’s looking forward, making decisions about next week, next month... You’ve got your sales column down one side, forecast next to it, then business in same period last year. All for comparison. We make decisions on rate strategy”

These important decisions on rate strategy are not left to the individual HGM to make, nor even just the local sales team - there is cluster and regional involvement in the hotel business development. In this case the HGM has little autonomy in making rate decisions. Chain 8 is a HGM who had experience of managing in the franchise model and now employed by a managed chain, felt a significantly more support from the chain model.

Chain 8
“Again coming from the franchise to managed Hilton are support mechanisms everywhere. Whereas in franchise, even though the Hilton name is above the door, it really was down to ourselves. We’re part of a cluster, we’ve got HR, you get cluster sales (support). I’ve obviously got Stuart as my manager (Area Cluster Manager), I can call him at any time. There’s cluster finance. The support mechanism is really really good.”

In summary, the chain model offers HGMs the most support. This support covers all aspects of hotel operations and management. The most important contact for these HGMs is their immediate superior, the Cluster Manager or Regional Director. There is a degree of remote control which goes along with the support and this interface influences HGM activity and priorities. This relationship is absent in both the franchise and private sector business models.

5.4.2. Hotel General Managers in franchised properties

Although the evidence suggests that there is more central support provided to the chain HGMs, those HGMs working in the franchise model do feel supported too. While Chain 8’s point about the responsibility for the hotel lying with the owners is accepted, it is likely that this will be a variable across hotels in the UK. There is evidence that the local owners in the sample do provide local support: there is an Area Human Resources Manager and Sales Manager. Beyond that the franchise HGMs surveyed are more than satisfied with support/help and guidance available from the franchisee (IHG).

Franchise 2
“There is on-line learning support through Merlin (IHG branded on-line system). You go into People Tools or into My Learning. There’s interactive systems too, so you can do ten minute trainers free of charge, other ones have a cost element”

During the conversation it was apparent that there is well thought out on-line support for all hotel operatives, including the HGM. However, the local owners are responsible for business direction and the line management direction provided by the managed chains.

Franchise
“Sales support is excellent, and the reason why we’re a franchise. Remember though, that we can either opt in or out of national sales initiatives. Mostly we’re in, as it improves our bottom line”.

Although no support with hotel level business direction is given, remote support with crisis management is available.

Following up the question on support, by seeking an example Franchise 2 replied:

Franchise 2
“If you need to phone someone, specifically in a crisis situation where we need support with Press involvement or something, we can contact anyone at any given time and they’ll have the right numbers of contacts with their crisis support, as well as supporting us. Which we did when we had the robbery here”

In summary and as evidenced earlier the franchisee gets access to sales channels and national sales initiatives, reward schemes, as well as strict guidance on brand standards. There are options for the HGM, by virtue of the franchise model, allowing opt in or out. Local support is cited as being available in HR for example, and the reservations system designed to maximise accommodation sales is used by all three HGMs in the franchise model. The influence of the franchisor, the need for brand compliance and local support is seen to impact on the HGM's autonomy. Franchise HGMs are not reporting the level of control their chain counterparts are.

5.4.3. Hotel General Managers in private properties

This group of HGMs report the least support. These HGMs do not have a central contact or head office to go to for support. As a consequence they have to be self-reliant.

Private 5
“There are various people I bounce off, but sometimes it can be a bit lonely because there’s no head office to go to and ask a question”

Private 1
“I do a lot myself. The one thing about being your own boss is that you don’t have the wealth of knowledge of a Head Office to do all your HR for you, all your IT for you, all your fire risk assessments, all your health and safety, all your cost training”.

Each of the HGMs is able to source local providers to undertake support that was in house for the chain HGMs. Examples cited was local providers for IT, local architects and designers for refurbishments, and local accountants to do hotel accounts. The results show that the span of control for the HGMs in the private sector is relatively wide.

In terms of peer support the regional hotel association was mentioned by four of the HGMs.

Private 1
“There are my chums in the Hotel Association that if I have problems I can phone.”

Of the sample of six HGMs working for private companies; four had at least a 25% share in the ownership of the hotel, and two were salaried employees. There was an expectation that the salaried managers would behave differently, and have perhaps more in common with their chain counterparts. This was not seen to be the case. The way these two managed was in line with the HGMs that have ownership. There is the same self-reliance, the local networks of support created and the same attitude to the industry, including some distain for the chain HGMs’ approach to managing hotels.

Private 7 is a salaried HGM, who comments:

Private 7
"I've no head office help. The owners aren't hoteliers, so they largely leave me to it. Sure the numbers have to stack up, but the owners rarely even visit the hotel. I'm quite lucky. I get to engage with the bank manager, if you're sitting running a Hilton or the Marriott you're not going to see the bank manager. You're not interested in cash flow as there's always money there. Whereas I need to think about having enough money to cover the wages. What deposits are coming in in January and February to help the cash flow? That's a side of the business that none of the chains will understand"

He continued when asked to expand:

Private 7
"I don't have an IT help-desk. Credit card machine breaks at six o'clock on a Saturday night, we have to fix it. Sewage pump breaks, we have to fix it. But I think that comes back to us being traditional hoteliers in a traditional hotel, not run by a corporate conglomerate"

Each of the private sector HGMs were able to cite examples of incidents when they had to solve problems that in chain hotels would be done centrally. Both Private 2 and Private 4 cited credit card payment systems failing.

In summary, these HGMs manage on their own, imposing their own operational standards. There is a lack of support, which is felt to be a disadvantage. For peer support one respondent cites his competitors in the regional hotel association.

5.5. Consortium membership

An option for private hotels seeking brand affiliation is to become part of a consortium. Best Western is arguably the most well-known consortium in the UK. This consortium has 290 independently owned three and four-star properties in England, Scotland, Wales and the Channel Islands (Travel Trade Gazette, 2007). Keith Pope, Director of Best Western, said that for independent hoteliers still experiencing a challenging time, it made sense to join a brand like Best Western to market their services, he continued:

"Best Western's profile has risen sharply over the past year since our Hotels with Personality launch and this has manifested itself in big increases in sales volume going through Best Western to its member hotels," (Caterer and HotelKeeper, 2011).

Being part of a consortium gives the HGM support from a central office, with the main benefit from Best Western being marketing support and quality assurance.

None of the private sector hotels in the Aberdeen City and Shire Hotel Association, and none of the seven private sector hotels surveyed in this research were part of a consortium. Private 4 was part of the Best Western consortium when he took over his hotel, but he withdrew:

Private 4
“When I took over the Northern (hotel) it was a Best Western and it was costing me £1000 a month to be a Best Western. So, I’m thinking I’d rather spend that on advertising and get away from the Best Western name, because people think it’s a brand, and Best Western own the hotel. So I ditched Best Western”

For the private hotels surveyed there was no perceived benefit to being part of a consortium. All the HGMs in this research have behaved like sole traders. This has simplified their reporting structures, and as a consequence broadened their span of control.

5.6. The influence of the business model in shaping HGM behaviour/activity

A contemporary feature of the UK hotel industry is a complexity of ownership and number of stakeholders involved at the corporate level. The data finds that contemporary business models in private, chain and franchise hotels impact on HGMs’ activity. Chain and franchise managers have arguably been found not to be managing hotels, but in fact managing systems. This is seen in the requirement to follow of sales systems and report through financial systems. This led to questions about HGM control and direction, and considering comparative data on control of these managers. This head office control is largely interpreted by HGMs in chain and franchise models as support, which could be a face-saving explanation.

Customers are acknowledged as important by chain and franchise HGMs, but in reality they hardly figure in their time allocation or as a priority in their working day. In this section analysis of the complexity of ownership in both the chain and franchise is undertaken through the responses gathered from HGMs employed in each of the business models. The HGMs of the Marriott hotel at Dyce and Hallmark Hotel at Dyce discuss the business models as found in the chain, and the HGM of the Holiday Inn Express in Aberdeen discusses the franchised hotel.

The Chain model as exemplified by the Marriott Hotel (Chain 7)

The hotel in which this HGM is employed is a Marriott managed property, owned by Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA). “ADIA own 53 Marriott hotels in the UK, which is about

all the Marriott hotels in the UK, apart from the Courtyard and Grosvenor House which Mr Marriott owns”.

He goes on to explain that:

“Marriott don’t own many hotels in the world. Hamilton partners are employed to look after the assets. So, we would speak to Hamilton, for Aberdeen, every month right now in the current trading environment. That will be a face to face meeting. But the Marriott hotels are managed to Marriott standards. My boss is not Hamilton, my boss is the (Marriott) Area Vice President who sits in London. Hamilton do not and cannot get involved in running the hotels. Hamilton employ a company called Tower Eight to look after things such as a refurbishment and as part of the contract (between Hamilton and Marriott) we put together a proposed ten year plan, essentially setting out what you need to do every ten years in order to protect the Marriott brand. Setting out what Hamilton needs to do, in terms of refurbishment for example and they have to do it. It’s quite a robust contract. That’s why you see consistency of Marriott products. You see the brand being protected so that everyone knows the Marriott brand, so I can’t go off and use a local designer. I’d lose my job if I chose my own bar seats and painted walls. For refurbishment, of course, I work with Tower Eight. We’re doing a bedroom mock up just now, that design then goes to Marriott to sign off on the brand standard, and ADIA then fund the refurbishment”.

A feature of this HGM’s job is the need for constant communication. The insight from the quote shows this HGM has lost control and authority in the refurbishment example.

The Chain model as exemplified by the Hallmark Hotel (Chain 8)

Chain 8 explained

“We’re owned by a London development company called the Top Land Group, who have a hotels division as part of the group. They now own 28 hotels around the UK, which they operate as a company, a chain if you like, through a management company. They own a number of hotels like the Hilton in Glasgow, Royal Crescent in Bath, but in terms of the Hallmark brand, there are 28 hotels and we are then subsequently managed by a company called Bespoke Hotels. So this hotel is owned by Top Land, operated as Bespoke, but part of the Hallmark chain/brand”.

This HGM has to go direct to the owners, Top Land, for capital expenditure, examples being roof repairs and the function suite partitions.

For this HGM the reporting structure highlighted in Chapter 4 relates to Bespoke, the managing company. However, the owner, Top Land, needs to authorise capital expenditure. The HGM in this business model has multiple stakeholders to deal with in his management role. In the same way that the Chain 7 HGM is seen to have lost autonomy, and ultimately a reduction of span of control, this is the case for Chain 8 too.

Both these HGMs lose autonomy, authority and have a reduced span of control on account of these ownership structures. This impacts in how the HGMs are allowed to behave and what activities they are involved in. At the most basic level the stakeholders have to be considered and consulted with on an ongoing basis. As seen in the chapter 4, there is a

need to devote time and effort providing formal reports on sales activity for example, and projections in terms of budgeted sales figures. Limits to the HGM's authority and autonomy are shown in the need to consult on refurbishment with the decisions on specification taken away completely on Capital expenditure.

The Franchise model as exemplified by the Holiday Inn Express (Franchise 3)

Franchise 3 talked about the tensions between owners, franchisor, and HGMs, citing an example whereby the owners Association announced at a franchisees conference that a hot breakfast was going to be provided as part of the bed and breakfast offering.

“And this (hot breakfast) came from the owners, because there's an owners association who have great influence in IHG. Nothing actually to do with the brand standards can be done without going through the owners Association and getting their agreement, because at the end of the day the *owners are your customers*. Yeah, they're paying millions of pounds a year in franchise fees so IHG has to listen to them. And it was them that pushed for hot food, and at an operational level we were saying “don't do it, it'll be a disaster”. But they didn't listen, they did it, and breakfast became a disaster. It's got to change again now”.

The quote that “owners are customers” is unexpected and revealing. For this HGM the owners dictate the style of service, and are the most important stakeholder group to him. A contrast with the HGMs in the private hotels who see the customer as their most important stakeholder group, customers being end users paying for service.

Summary

Across the three business models there is contrast in the level of support available to the HGM. The HGM employed in the chain model has the most help, support, and access to personal development opportunities. The level of support provided to HGMs in the franchise model will vary with the owning company and their culture and approach. That said there will be support available from the franchisor for crisis situations and as on-line support. The HGMs in the private model need to be resourceful and self-reliant, as the support networks need to be created by themselves.

Overall there is a graduation in terms of control reported by the HGMs. Chain HGMs are the most tightly controlled, the HGMs in the franchise model have some opt out and in options, with a wider span of control being reported. HGMs in the private model report the most autonomy, authority and a wide span of control.

These findings will be discussed in chapter 6 as part of the Discussion.

Summary of findings

There are marked differences in terms of what HGMs actually do across the three business models under investigation.

Franchise

In this business model the HGM ensures the hotel services conform to brand standards, effectively managing the delivery system. The HGM does not provide a personal service and there is no need for his/her presence. The service is delivered by front line operational staff, who are empowered to deal with customers and rectify shortfall when it occurs. For the franchise the brand, exemplified by the name above the door, is all important. The brand signifies the personality of the hotel, more than the individual HGM does. There is seen to be less control on the HGM from above in this business model than in the case of the chain. The level of support in will vary with the owning company and their culture and approach. That said there will be support available from the franchisor for crisis situations and also as on-going on-line support.

Chain

In this business model the HGM acknowledges the importance of being a business manager. There is a reported change in priorities/drivers over the recent years; the HGM is more commercially focused and less involved in checking the hotel is operationally ready for business. The chain HGM is accountable for revenue and bottom line financial performance, the reporting of which takes up a significant amount of HGM time. There is a frustration with the reporting and associated bureaucracy required by those controlling from above. These HGMs are, on the whole, familiar with management theory through their education. Perhaps as a consequence of the reporting needs, they are found to be office bound managers. The HGMs employed in the chain model are found to have the most help, support, and access to personal development opportunities.

Private

In this business model the HGM is largely concerned with people. In contrast to the other two HGM groups, HGMs in the private model do provide a personal service. Managers are found to be: operationally involved, present in the public areas of the hotel, and act as hosts. In privately owned hotels the HGM is the personality of the hotel. Further endorsing the people centric approach to management, these HGMs form a close, almost paternalistic,

relationship with their staff, with longer hours being worked than counterparts in chain and franchise.

HGMs in the private model report the most autonomy, authority and a wide span of control. Perhaps on account of this managerial freedom, these HGMs report and can evidence using entrepreneurial flair and creativity in their job.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1. Introduction

The title of Hotel General Manager (HGM) is one used across all business models found in the hotels across the industry. However, the activity and behaviour of the post holder varies across the three business models surveyed.

Nebel and Ghei's (1993) suggestion that an HGM's job could be better understood by examining the contextual variables that influence it is discussed in relation to thesis findings in this chapter. The context in which the HGM works presents unique challenges for the HGM. This context directly influences management behaviour and practice. Each individual HGM is required to develop the specialist, management and interpersonal skills, to manage in the context dictated by the business model. This affects the HGM's activity and priorities. In recognition of this finding, a bespoke approach is required by managers in each of the three business models.

This chapter provides a synthesis of the research findings, and a discussion on the study's results in relation to the research objectives.

This chapter starts by discussing MBWA and then leadership and communication as these two aspects of the role of HGM were reported as common practice by all managers. Although the terms are consistently used by HGMs, the meaning and interpretation into action by HGMs in the different models is different.

Chapter 6 proceeds by presenting a model, Figure 6, which summarises discussion relating to the three research objectives. The model is constructed with three boxes, each summarising findings related to objectives, and showing the relationship between these. The model captures the influences on HGMs (objective 2) across the three business models and how these contextual influences in turn influence HGM activity and priorities (objective 1). The third section in the model summarises an explanation of the differences in management style and practice (objective 3).

6.2. Management by Walking Around (MBWA)

Every HGM reported that they undertook a walk of the hotel as part of their daily routine. The HGMs all appear to embrace this management practice which was found by Peters and Waterman (1982) to be linked to the success of their top rated companies.

By undertaking MBWA the HGM connects with the business they are managing, which fits with Peters and Austin (1985, p.21) writing that managers at all levels can be more effective through Managing By Walking Around (MBWA), noting that this process involves “listening to your customers, keeping in touch with your people (staff), and paying attention to innovation. MBWA means spending time away from your desk or office and really listening—which is both the most obvious and hardest thing to do, but which is the mark of leadership and excellence”.

However, although all HGMs use the same term for this practice, their priorities in MBWA vary across business models. MBWA in its pure sense, (Peters and Austin, 1985) is only undertaken by HGMs in the private model. Here HGMs do spend time away from their desk, listen to customers and keep in touch with staff. More than that, these HGMs become operationally involved when they feel this is required.

Private 6 commenting:

“If I see that the breakfast staff are pushed, I jump in and serve tables”.

For the HGMs in the private model MBWA is about providing support and visible leadership to staff. Being people centric these HGMs connect with customers at service times when they are present in the public areas. They find this aspect of the managerial job enjoyable, which is part of the motivation for undertaking MBWA.

In contrast HGMs in chain and franchise models spend less time undertaking MBWA, although they still get a feel for the operation they manage through this activity. They are less inclined to become operationally involved, instead they choose to direct supervisors and front line staff on their duties.

Chain 11 commenting:

“Managing by walking around is something that is important. I could tell them (staff) from the office what I want them to do, but if they see me checking, it’s more powerful than anything”.

For the HGMs in franchise and chain models MBWA is about ensuring the brand specification is being delivered. Should shortfall or problems be seen, then the HGM directs

supervisors and front line staff to make corrections. For these HGMs this aspect of the managerial job is undertaken as they believe that checking has to be done and is the only way they connect with the hotel operation.

6.3. Leadership and communication

Leadership and communication was found to vary in terms of management style and practice across the business models. Each will be considered in turn.

Private sector

In the private sector the HGM leads from the front, is involved in operations and sets a visible standard for staff.

Private 1
“They see the boss carrying plates, pouring pints, tidying tables. It starts from the top and works the way down, so you have to lead by example”.

Leadership and communication by these HGMs is informal. Communication and coaching is delivered while working alongside staff. This fits with these HGMs being people centric, and being more operationally involved than counterparts in the other models. For these HGMs informal leadership and largely verbal communication owes much to their lack of formal education. These HGMs are comfortable on the front line, leading and communicating verbally and directing staff on the required standards through example.

Franchise

In the franchise model leadership and communication revolves around directing on the brand standards and ensuring specifications are adhered to.

Franchise HGM's empower front line employees to deliver the brand standard and resolve any customer complaints. While there is sound rationale for this, it does mean the HGM is not required in this interface. There is, however, a requirement for the HGM to ensure that staff are recruited and developed to deliver the brand standards, so they can take responsibility and carry the authority for undertaking remedial action when shortfall does occur. The implication being that the HGM should be able to pick the right staff, and provide the training and development to front line staff to discharge the host role as well as the consistency in service delivery sought.

Chain

In the chain model leadership and communication is more formal and bureaucratic. Chain HGMs do undertake leadership and communication, but this tends to be from the office, and down through a chain of command. These office bound business managers do not have the time to be active in operations. Their hotels' structure is more formal and bureaucratic, reflecting the reporting and control systems imposed on the HGMs themselves.

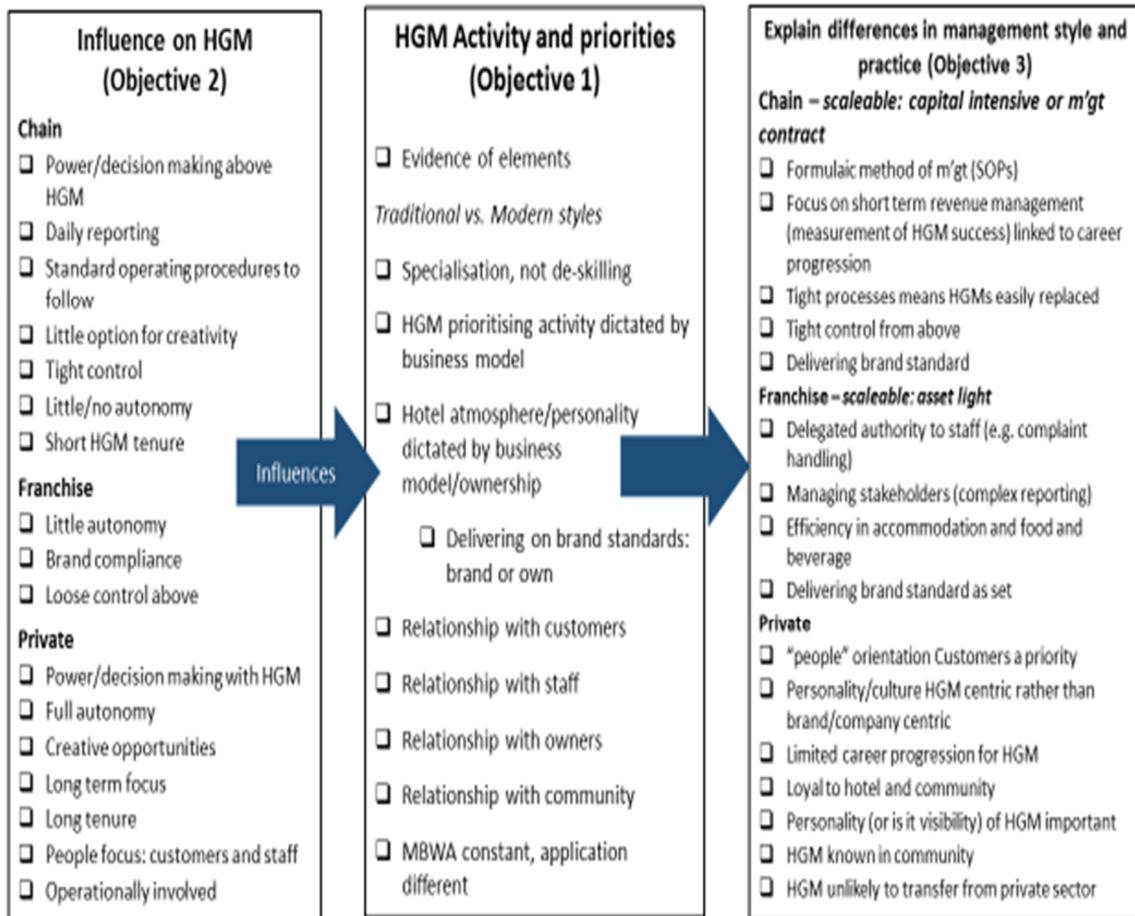
In summary there is a contrast on leadership and communication in HGM practice. The type of leadership and communication being used reflects the background of the HGM. Those in the private sector, whose personal profile sees a greater number of years in post and lower educational attainment than HGM counterparts adopt a more informal management practice. This fits with their preference to be present in the hotel, undertake host activities, and their bias towards a traditional style of hotel management. Those in the franchise and chain sector, whose personal profile sees less years in post and a higher educational attainment, adopt a more formal management practice. Both of these HGMs spend more time in the office on office work than their counterparts in the private sector. These managers have a bias towards the modern style of hotel management. Being office bound reduces their ability to lead and communicate informally with staff working in operations. Their educational attainment, however, equips them to manage through more formal methods of communication and leadership.

Having established there are differences in HGM behaviour and activity, the following section seeks to analyse and understand the influences shaping this individual HGM behaviour, and ultimately the consequences for management.

6.4. Overview of research findings

The following section, with the aid of Figure 6, discusses findings linked to the research objectives. The model in Figure 6 is constructed with three boxes, each summarising findings related to one of the objectives, and showing the relationship between these. Specifically the model captures the influences on HGMs (objective 2) across the three business models and how these contextual influences in turn influence HGM activity and priorities (objective 1). The third section in the model summarises an explanation of the differences in management style and practice (objective 3).

Figure 6: Overview of thesis findings



6.4.1. Influences on Hotel General Managers (objective 2)

The discussion deals with each business model in turn.

Chain

In the chain model the decision making power resides above the HGM level. Here daily reporting and seeking approval on decisions from above is a feature of HGM activity. These findings fit with Mullins and Davies (1991), who concluded that hotel chains are operated in a bureaucratic structure with standardised methods and procedures laid down by head office. This means strict limits on HGM financial autonomy as senior management require regular financial updates and re-assurance that costs are being managed effectively.

Therefore, despite authors proposing that HGMs be held accountable for achieving hotel level objectives (Morey and Dittman, 2001; Woods et al, 1998) the HGM in the chain may not have the authority and control to actually deliver on hotel level objectives. This analysis

agrees with Corgel, Robert, and Woodworth (2011), with HGMs responsible to their superiors, the owner's agents in the organisation hierarchy. That is where the decision making power lies in the chain business model.

A feature of both general management in chains and franchises is the need to deliver to standard operating procedures (SOPs). This encompasses the delivery of hotel services and reporting procedures to be followed. These HGMs are tightly constrained on what hotel products and services can be offered, even down to ingredients and presentation on menus. HGMs receive support, or control, from the centre in managing accommodation and sales through smart systems. For the chain this delivers financial benefits. Accommodation sales are maximised, purchasing is on preferential terms through of economies of scale, which yields better than industry norm liquor and food gross profits. All to the advantage of the owners and also the management company as their charge is likely to be based on a percentage of sales.

As a direct consequence of having to adhere to predetermined operating standards, HGMs have little option for creativity or scope to personalise the hotel offerings.

Chain and franchise HGMs report less time in post, which suggests that these HGMs are mobile. Chain HGMs in particular move on at regular intervals, which appears to be linked to career progression. It is proposed that HGMs who prove themselves to be able to manage: profits in line with budgeted financial forecasts, the service delivery and daily reporting, are rewarded with larger hotels to manage. Although daily reporting to chain superiors is reported as a frustration for HGMs, managing their managers and dealing with this bureaucracy effectively is a required specialism or skill. This skill when allied to satisfactory financial returns and adherence to standard operating procedures can lead to promotion.

Franchise

The HGM managing in the franchise model on account of the lack of autonomy has more in common with chain sector counterparts than private sector counterparts. A requirement for chain and franchise HGMs is to be able to carry out detailed instructions and ensure brand compliance. Consistency in the delivery of the services in the hotel under their charge is their challenge. This is evidenced through, for example: menus, bedroom specifications and staff presentation. That does not demean the challenges of ensuring compliance with standards and delivering a consistent service. It does, however, mean that these HGMs are constrained in setting the standards or creating a service strategy. The HGMs across both the franchise and chain models report "support" from above, in particular HGMs continually

cite support with accommodation sales. Support from the centre with accommodation sales helps with revenue, but does take decisions on rates and occupancies away from the HGM. This support from the centre (above) can also be interpreted as control. Control of both hotel revenue and the HGM. Such tight control can be positive from both the owners and franchisors perspective, as there is no drift or deviation from the business plan and no resource wastage (Hughes & Morgan, 2007). This was clearly reported by one franchise HGM (Franchise 2).

The control under which the HGM in the franchise model operates is looser than that of chain counterparts. There is a need for brand compliance, but there is scope for individual HGMs to personalise the hotel services.

Private

Private sector HGMs clearly have decision making power, and are able to turn decisions on organisational problems into action quickly. For example a crockery replacement and refurbishment decisions taken (Private 1) and staff structure (Private 2). With this authority there is responsibility too, and private sector HGMs need a resilience and self-reliance to be able to carry through their convictions on the way the hotel is managed. In conversation these HGMs commented on the fact that they lacked head office support and looked to the regional hotel association for peer support.

Zehir & Ozahin (2008), identify creative opportunities as a positive outcome of private hotel ownership. This is seen to be the case with all the private sector HGMs able to cite instances of creativity, examples being: hotel suites bring developed in nearby building (Private 4), bar food offering (Private 1), hotel design and build (Private 6).

The difference in time in post between those HGMs in private model with those HGMs in chain and franchise hotels is striking. As reported in the sample, privately employed HGMs have on average have spent 27 years in their current posts, against 4.3 years for chain and franchise HGMs. This shows that private sector HGMs are more settled than their counterparts in the chain model. These HGMs are very much connected with the community in which their hotel is located. The personality of the individual HGM is synonymous with the hotel itself, replacing the brand seen in the franchised and chain hotels. This does suggest that activity and behaviour of an HGM in the private model goes beyond the hotel itself. Engagement with community, with examples of community support being cited, goes together with a long tenure and a long term focus on the part of management. In turn this influences HGM behaviour within the hotel, which is tackled in the next section, as

customers from the community will have an expectation of meeting the “personality” when patronising the hotel.

This long term focus on the part of these HGMs and their length of tenure fits with the notion that these HGMs are people centric. This people focus is seen to be a major influence on the behaviour and activity of private sector HGMs, an aspect that will be more fully discussed later. All private sector HGMs comment on the need to make themselves available and visible to customers and spend time acting as a host. These HGMs also choose to work alongside their staff and be operationally involved more often than their HGM counterparts. These managers build close relationships with employees.

A profile emerges of a manager who is people centered; caring for staff, and seeing customer satisfaction as a priority. This profile fits with previous authors (Tas 1988; Nelson and Dopson, 2001; and Hales and Nightingale, 1986), who support the notion of a people focus, with the HGM responsible for customer satisfaction.

6.4.2. HGM activity and priorities (objective 1)

6.4.2.1. Evidence of elements of Traditional and Modern management styles

Researchers have identified a traditional and modern management style in hotels (Guerrier, 1987; Guerrier and Lockwood, 1989; 1990, Gamble and et al, 1994; Harris and Mongiello; Harper et al, 2000; Giousmpasoglou, 2014). HGMs in the private business model exhibit behaviour and activity akin to the traditional style. These HGMs have a vocational bias (in the main for food and beverage), are operationally involved, and act as hosts on a daily basis. With full autonomy these HGMs are able to influence and lead service developments on the front line of hotel operations. Their focus is people, pursuing both customer and staff satisfaction. These HGMs exhibit behavioural traits and undertake activity akin to Hall’s (1993) new soul of enterprise and the traditional style of hotel management.

In contrast HGMs employed in the chain model exhibit behavioural traits and undertake activity akin to both the modern/business manager (Guerrier 1987) and the old soul of enterprise (Hall 1993) placing profit as their first priority.

For the office based chain HGMs the focus is reporting on short term profit indicators. This is the measure of success forced upon them from above, a direction that keeps them away from front line hotel keeping activity.

Chain 10
80-90% of my time office bound: doing forecasts, financial planning, budgeting, putting together cap-ex projects, and answering and sending e-mails. It's very very much more administrative than before".

Chain 1
"I'm much more of a business manager. Whether that's right or whether that's wrong, it's my style of management"

For the chain HGM it is the context of the business model which drives these managers to become modern business managers as depicted in literature. There is a constant need to report up the line with the requirement to control costs and expenditures in the hotel. With little autonomy and option to personalise the product these HGMs are focussed on: managing short term financial indicators, formal staff development and managing relationships with colleagues at head office.

Educational attainment is thought to influence HGM behaviour and activity. The results show a connection between educational attainment for HGMs employed in the chain and franchise models and their management style. Eight out of the fifteen HGMs are graduates and describe a modern style of management. Privately employed HGMs in contrast favour the traditional style, influenced by their more vocational career progression. These private sector HGMs arrive at the post of HGM with the service and vocational skills required to be operationally effective. This background in both cases makes them pre-disposed to behave and act in the manner found.

The following discussion aims to inform future thinking on HGM models that reflect changing HGM practice as dictated by business models.

Updating the Traditional and Modern HGM profiles

To simply label privately employed HGMs as traditional managers and chain and franchise HGMs as modern managers would be an over simplification. This is on account of the results highlighting contrasts between management practice and established theory.

The modern office based business manager should, by implication, be thought to take a more strategic view of the business. This has not been found to be the case. However, the requirement by chain and to a lesser extent franchise managers to undertake the time consuming activity of daily/weekly reporting and forecasting is most pressing. In contrast

the private sector HGM is: operationally involved, caught up in daily service and required to undertake long term planning, entrepreneurial activity and business development planning. The private sector HGM is much more than simply the host or manager active during service. This HGM exhibits traits of the traditional manager; being hands-on and present, but also exhibits traits of the modern/business manager with long term planning and strategic activity. There is a blurring of the lines between the traditional and modern/business manager's profiles in contemporary HGM practice. And a blurring of lines between operational and strategic roles as identified by Baum (2015).

Certainly there are significant elements of both Guerrier's (1987) modern/business manager and Hall's (1993) old sole of enterprise found in chain HGMs' activity, priorities and behaviour. Likewise, there are significant elements of both Guerrier's (1987) traditional manager and Hall's (1993) new sole of enterprise found in private HGMs' activity, priorities and behaviour.

But, as McKenney (2016) observes there are moves by a chain to get away from centralisation and move decision making back to HGMs. The reason for this is the chain seeking competitive advantage through service, an approach recognised in literature (McCarthy, 2008; Neves and Sofia, 2009).

In this approach, Hall's old soul first priority of profit is embraced through the new soul of enterprise practice - putting customer satisfaction as first priority.

Turning to HGMs in the franchise model these managers have much in common with their chain counterparts, but cannot be simply labelled as traditional or modern/business either. These HGMs are encouraged to deliver the profit priority through driving up service levels and having the management ability to empower employees to deliver superior service (Jones and Davies, 1991; Heney, 2009; Higgins, 2007)

With the change in management structures and more complex hotel business models than in the past there is a need to update the work on manager profiles.

The following discussion aims to inform future thinking on HGM models that reflect changing HGM practice as dictated by business models.

6.4.2.2. Specialisation not de-skilling

From the foregoing discussion, it could be concluded that HGMs in franchise and chain models are being deskilled. McKenney (2016) makes this point, reflecting on what provoked change at GHL Hotels being partly down to HGMs being "de-skilled by chains swallowing

decision making authority away to centrally and functional silos that are ill-equipped to make business trade-offs on guest experience, pricing, sales and account development” (p.42). In the study comparable chain HGMs are found lacking the strategic focus anticipated, as they are constrained by tight control from above, the need for constant reporting and the need for consultation with owners and their agents prior to strategic activity being undertaken. This dimension has a significant influence in what the HGM can or cannot do. The HGMs employed in chain and franchise models were traditionally, and certainly up until the mid-1990’s, thought to be part of a company. Typically, this company had one head office location and straightforward reporting into that head office, for HGMs usually through an Area Director or Cluster Manager (Webster, 1994). The thesis 2015 study found reporting relationships more complicated, with HGMs having to manage relationships with: multiple owners, franchisors and management companies. A degree of specialist knowledge is required around the area of accommodation sales and an understanding of clever IT based accommodation management systems is vital. These HGMs need to be able to interpret and report on financial data in the form required by superiors, again, a specialist skill. In the franchise and management contract models soft skills are needed to manage the sometimes multiple owners and associated financial stakeholders. Managing these complex relationships are seen to influence HGM behaviour and activity.

The argument is that these HGMs have not been de-skilled; they have instead prioritised skills and activity that allow them to be effective. Essentially new skills have been learnt, and behaviour and activity tailored to meet the contemporary stakeholder demands in the business model context.

6.4.2.3. HGM prioritising activity dictated by business model

HGMs are reacting to and learning about their priorities. These priorities are seen to be influenced by and vary across the three business models studied. Private sector HGMs owe much to the traditional (Guerrier, 1987) model of hotel management, and Hall’s 1993 new soul of enterprise. In contrast to the other HGMs, the private sector HGMs are concerned with people in the widest context: customers, staff, and community. They are found to have strong relationships with staff, customers, and where required, the owners. This does fit with a historical view of hotel management, acknowledged by Munck, (2001), where the HGM is expected to be seen by staff and customers. Previous research suggests that there is an expectation that HGMs need to be physically present, regardless of the actual necessity for them to be there (Mulvaney et al., 2006). This has been borne out in the study

with the private sector HGMs working the longest hours. The private business model seems to require these longer hours to be worked.

Franchise sector HGMs are more constrained in their remit than counterparts in the private sector. The priorities for this group of HGMs revolve around; delivering profits to owners, and the standards of performance and then brand compliance required by the franchisor. There is a requirement to deliver hotel products in a consistent manner, replicating the delivery across all other franchise/branded hotels. The way this is delivered at the hotel level is by HGMs devolving authority down to front line staff. Franchise employed HGMs are found to be more loosely controlled than chain counterparts, although they too have limited autonomy; the bedroom specification and breakfast offering being examples.

Finally, the Chain HGMs are seen to be the most tightly controlled from above. A priority for these HGMs is daily reporting, with an emphasis on short-term sales and profits. Their activity and behaviour has been seen to be geared to deliver on this priority. The chain business model does not require HGMs to work beyond office hours and HGMs even report working from home on occasions. For both franchise and chain HGMs brand compliance is a measure of the individual HGMs performance. Each of the HGM groups acknowledged this as a priority and cited how they prepared their hotels for inspections. This priority will be further addressed in the next section.

6.4.2.4. Hotel atmosphere/personality

For both the chain and franchise models the brand is thought to create the atmosphere and personality of the hotel.

In the absence of a brand, it is the personality of the individual HGM in the private model that creates the atmosphere, style and personality for the hotel they manage.

6.4.2.5. Delivering on brand standards; brand and own

There is a significant finding here in relation to brand standards and brand compliance. Standards set by HGMs in the private model are personal to that individual HGM. These private brand standards are synonymous with the HGM, and by implication would change with a change of HGM. The challenge for these HGMs is to set and enforce their standards. Working without head office support HGMs in this business model need to be able to make decisions on service styles and product offerings based on their own knowledge and experience.

Brand compliance in both the chain and franchise models of ownership is not personal to the HGM. This brings a different challenge for these HGMs. The challenge is consistent brand delivery and compliance with standard operating procedures (SOPs).

6.4.2.6. Relationship with stakeholders; customers, staff, owners and community

Customers

Customers are the most important stakeholders to the private sector HGMs. In line with the writing of Drago et al (1999) HGMs devote “face time” to personally meet, host and serve their customers. Regular customers are thought to develop a strong relationship with private sector HGMs, which in some cases becomes a deep friendship.

For franchise and chain HGMs customer satisfaction is also seen as important. The route to customer satisfaction in their hotels does not, however, require HGM presence. The franchise HGM devolves authority and responsibility down to front line staff to deal with customers and their complaints, while the chain HGM manages through line management. As a link to the staff discussion, below, both chain and franchise HGMs cite investment in training and development in staff to ensure service delivery and customer care is up to the brand standard.

Implications for customers

As discussed earlier customers visiting the privately owned hotel expect to see the HGM host. Customers from the local area will have an expectation of meeting the “personality” when patronising the hotel. These HGMs undertake sales activity through meeting and greeting regular customers themselves and building customer loyalty as a result of this activity. They might not categorise the activity as sales, but they personally have developed friendships and relationships with customers. For these customers placing business or visiting the hotel is built on a personal connection with the HGM.

The implications for customers is a bespoke product and service, highly moderated by the individual HGM managing the hotel. Returning customers are likely to be at least acknowledged by the HGM. Customers are likely to see the HGM in person, and may be even served by the HGM. A potential disadvantage is that first time customers considering booking the private hotel in the absence of a brand do not know what to expect in terms of the standards in accommodation and hospitality. Should the HGM in a private business model move on from his/her post, then the customers are likely to miss the person they

have come to know and recognise, losing, perhaps the pull factor for the private hotel. The personal service from that HGM would be lost and the customers could feel they'd lost if not a friend, certainly a connection with the hotel.

Customers returning to, or visiting for the first time, a chain or franchise hotel are likely to have service expectations. The service expectations are thought to be linked to the hotel brand or previous experience of the brand elsewhere. The personal service by the HGM will most likely be absent, replaced by clearly defined service delivery from front line staff. For customers who value consistency and enjoy the service style and product offered by a national or international organisation, consistency in service delivery is expected. An interaction with the HGM is not required.

On two separate instances Private 1 and Private 7 reported discomfort with HGM chain and franchise counterparts not being present often enough in their hotels. The implication being that the chain and franchise HGMs do not know their customers. Private 1 and Private 7 felt strongly that by not being present in the hotel HGMs are not hotel managers. There is a reported disdain for HGMs in the other business models who were not present outside office hours.

Private 7
"I know some HGMs in Aberdeen that tell you they don't know what goes on in their hotel between five o'clock on Friday and eight o'clock on a Monday morning. That's bonkers. You're not a hotel manager, you're a corporate accountant. Being there is the critical success factor. Being present. Like I said, standing in the front hall and welcoming people".

Staff

There is evidence of franchise and chain HGMs investing in their people, both in terms of on job and off job training and development. Certainly people development was recorded and evidenced in the franchised hotels, where the front line staff are charged with the guest interface and resolving any customer complaints without involving management. This includes being able to make financial compensation without seeking HGM authority.

It is proposed that HGMs in both chain and franchise hotels have developed more sophisticated relationships with sales colleagues located on site, off-site and at the head office. A strong relationship with these staff members can help maximise hotel financial performance.

For private sector HGMs staff members are held close in a paternalistic way. Staff work alongside the HGM in operations, which creates a bond between manager and staff. The instances of long service seen in privately owned hotels is evidence this. HGMs in this

business model devote time to staff, not just coaching them on their roles, but also taking time to consider their wellbeing. This relationship, then, goes beyond the requirements of hotel service, and shows the people centric HGM devoting time and effort to ensure that staff are happy and feel supported.

Owners

Some private sector HGMs have a share in ownership of the hotel being managed, others do not. Where HGMs are employed the relationship is open, trusting and allows the HGM autonomy to manage the hotel as seen fit. There are control meetings, but these are infrequent, can be social, and tend not to constrain the HGM's management style, behaviour or activity.

Owners are likely to have some direct contact with the HGM in the franchise model. These stakeholders are thought to have a more immediate influence on HGMs than the franchisor. Owners will wish to influence the HGM to increase short term returns to them, while the franchisor will wish to influence the HGM to ensure that brand standards, and the necessary investment, is undertaken for the long term.

Chain model HGMs have least contact with owners. In the study both HGMs in franchise and chain hotels reported to a line manager/director, rather than direct to owner(s).

Managing owner relationships, however, is a reported challenge for chain HGMs operating under a management contract. Chain and franchise HGMs are subject to complex reporting systems which can include: multiple owners of the site and hotel, managing companies and franchisors. The skills to be able to handle this activity are not taught so HGMs need to learn the required soft skills on the job.

Community

All the private sector HGMs cited examples of how they engaged with and supported the local community. This seems to have a co-relation with both the length of tenure these HGMs have, and the personality of the HGM and the hotel. By being longer in post the HGMs are seen to become part of the community they serve. The connection and friendship that HGMs report with their customers must also support their place in the community.

Chain HGMs do interact with major clients, however, they are much less the face of the hotel than counterparts in private sector. This could be down to the fact that these HGMs have less tenure in post and do not have the time to get connected with community, or it could be that as they are not people centric and are not motivated to engage in this way, or

simply that this activity is not a priority for their time. HGMs in the franchise model believe that the franchise name is the pull for customers and that the HGM is not needed to be seen or present in the hotel. This is thought to influence their approach to engaging with the community. However, with local owners this is not always the case. One franchise hotel surveyed does undertake charity work and supports organisations in their immediate operating environment. This is interpreted in two ways. The national franchise brand talks to customers beyond the local area (not under the control of the HGM), while the location of the hotel and the community activities undertaken by local management connect with the local and regional community.

6.5. Explaining differences in management style and practices (objective 3)

This section will discuss differences in management style and practice found across the business models.

6.5.1. Chain

Formulaic method of management

In this business model there is little scope for HGMs to personalise the hotel product. HGMs are required to manage through implementing standard operating procedures. This is the view taken by McKenney (2016) reflecting on contemporary changes at GHL Hotels, describing chain HGMs as previously de-skilled through decision making authority being centralised.

The key to this management role appears to be managing relationships with support personnel and those directly above, while implementing standard operating procedures (SOPs) without challenge.

Focus on short term revenue management

Chain HGMs career progression is linked to successful short term financial results. There is a co-relation between the short term focus exemplified by the daily reporting found in the chain sector and HGM length of time in post. Success in this sector is measured by short term financial results. Therefore, these HGMs adopt aspects of Guerrier's (1987) modern/business style and Hall's (1993) old soul of enterprise to ensure they are seen as successful. This means that the HGM focuses on achieving and reporting profits. Likewise

poor short term financial results could result in a move for the HGM, again cutting tenure short. (There is an instance of this in the survey).

Three private sector HGMs reported criticism of their chain counterparts having a short term business focus, while they have a longer term commitment to the hotel. Private 7 typifies the criticism:

Private 7
“There’s been the case in Aberdeen that guys are sent up here, they do their two to three years, they milk the property for whatever they can get out of it, then go somewhere else. Whereas I came here six and a half years ago with a ten year plan”.

Chain managers interviewed accepted that being mobile was important in being able to progress their career. As a consequence of managing in the chain model HGMs will be required to be geographically mobile and spend relatively short periods in each hotel as they climb the career ladder. However, their privately employed counterparts cite this as a disadvantage for the Aberdeen community and hotel operating environment as a whole in the long run. As reported above three privately employed HGMs believed that a short term focus, typically trying to maximise profits in a 1-3 year time span by chain HGMs seeking progression was not serving the hotel nor the area well. This fits with Galende’s (2006), findings of HGMs in chain/corporate ownership that were unwilling to incur the expense of training and embracing new innovations as this return would only payback at some point in the future when the HGM would have moved on to another hotel in career progression. This, it can be argued is a negative consequence for the region and stakeholders taking a longer term view.

Tight control from above with the need for brand compliance

A feature of management in the chain model is tight control from above. HGMs are required to perform to the requirements laid down by superiors, being effectively charged with efficient brand delivery. Managing in this manner and ensuring a consistency of delivery has its own challenges. However, reflecting on comparable challenges across the business models a conclusion is that these HGMs have to follow orders and apply a given formula. Although this conclusion has a negative undertone, it does agree with Mullins and Davies (1991, p.24), who state that the chain HGM “requires little vision but must have the temperament to carry out detailed instructions”. There is a real need for HGMs to consider the reality of chain management in relation to their own temperament, and whether there is a fit or not.

If the individual's temperament fits with requirements of working for a chain, there are clear documented career progression routes. The Kline (2008) study considered HGM's career progressions and the danger of career plateaus. The majority of HGMs in the study (51%) worked for franchised properties that were independently operated; 42% worked for franchised properties operated by management companies; 6% worked for corporate owned properties (chain). However, it was found that career progression was available across all of the organisations, to HGM level and beyond. Some HGMs go on to become area managers, others move up to corporate positions, with others making the move to larger hotels. However, careers can terminate too. The proposition is that HGMs in this business model can easily be replaced should those above the HGM deem that his/her performance (through financial reporting or if brand standards were not being met) not satisfactory.

6.5.2. Franchise

Delegated authority

In the franchise hotels front line staff are charged with delivering customer satisfaction and have delegated power to solve customer complaints. The franchisor requires customer problems to be resolved quickly and at the point of delivery. This removes the HGM from this customer interface and obliges HGMs to ensure training and development programmes are implemented for staff to reach the required standard.

Managing stakeholders (complex reporting)

Franchise HGMs are required to undertake complex reporting to their primary stakeholders: franchisor, and owner(s). Managing these stakeholders can be challenging as their objectives do not always align. Investment at the behest of the franchisor, may not fit with the profit aspirations of owner(s). As a consequence the HGM in both the franchise model and management contracts has to devote time to manage these relationships in a diplomatic manner.

Efficient in accommodation and food and beverage

While not being active in operations nor front line hostmanship, the HGMs are active maximising financial returns from accommodation and food and beverage. These HGMs report specialist knowledge in this area, which they apply to enhance the hotel trading.

The brand name under which the hotel trades seems to signify certain standards. Brand offerings in the franchised hotels have to be consistent with delivery across all franchised hotels. HGMs are charged with delivering brand compliance. The brand is thought to deliver sales as customers buy the brand, recognising what that means in terms of hotel style and service. The business model giving rewards to loyal customers and delivering room sales direct into the hotel from franchisor system has a consequence for HGMs. They have to have, or develop quickly, a working knowledge of how to manage the systems, or manage the people capable of maximising sales for the hotel.

Franchise HGMs believe customers visit the hotel on account of the brand and brand reputation, and not on account of the HGM presence or personality.

Franchise 1
“Customers don’t come to see Bill. It’s the reputation of the hotel that makes people stay here. The corporate regulars come back because there’s been a consistent offering of product, facilities and quality”

Delivering brand standards set

The brand offering is thought to replace the HGM personality that is found in the private sector hotels, a positive outcome for the HGM is that they are not expected to be present in the hotel and as a result can work office hours.

Consequently there is a need to recruit an HGM with an understanding of people development. HGMs in this business model need to be able to consistently deliver the hotel product through their junior employees, and possess the diplomatic skills to manage the owner(s) and franchisor.

6.5.2.1. Multi-agency relationships

A feature of contemporary hotel industry is multiple ownership. This presents challenges when a hotel is either part of a chain or franchised. Although the HGM is usually an employee of the management company, given the position’s responsibilities and the

reporting structure, they are typically responsible to both the owner and operator (Turner and Guiding, 2013). The challenge for the HGM is effectively dealing with two bosses. This challenge was found in the survey with Chain 3 HGM reporting being told by both the local owner and the chain operator that he worked for them.

6.5.3. Private

In contrast the private employed HGMs report autonomy and exhibit more identity with the hotel. These managers are relatively free to behave and undertake activity that suits them. While some surveyed have a financial stake in the hotel this was not the case for all surveyed. However, all HGMs set the standards of service internally and are seen as the public face of the hotel. Private sector HGMs appear to choose to remain in post many more years than either their chain and franchise counterparts. This is likely to be as a consequence of having developed close relationships with customers, staff, and where relevant, owners. These relationships in turn require the HGMs to devote time to interacting with these stakeholder groups and in time become an anchor to the hotel and community.

People orientation

Managers' soft skills or personality are cited as predictors of success in the hotel industry (Wilson-Wunsch et al 2015). Soft skills, personality and a people orientation is found in the private sector HGMs. This approach to management activity is in contrast to the hardnosed short term focus on revenue seen in the chain business model. This study is not able to make a judgement on which approach is the most "successful", the differences in practice being the focus of the study. The people orientation is exemplified by these HGMs prioritising customers in their daily routine. It is suggested that the activity and behaviour has much in common with the traditional style of hotel management (Guerrier, 1987) and Hall's (1993) new soul of enterprise, is in fact influenced by a "people focus" on the part of the HGM. HGMs work to make their customers and staff feel valued through their behaviour and actions towards the people in the hotel. This people focus, as has been illustrated, extends out to the community as well with HGMs connecting with and showing loyalty to the community. This is seen by HGMs beautifying the immediate area (Private 3), or taking in locals when flooded (Private 6).

Personality/culture HGM centric

As privately owned hotels do not have a nationally, or internationally recognised brand to signify the level of service and product offerings likely to be delivered, the style of service

and hotels product offerings is dictated by the HGM. Unbranded private sector hotels rely on the personality of the individual HGM to set and deliver standards. As a consequence of their behaviour and activity they generate a personal profile, and become synonymous with the hotel they manage. In many ways they are the brand. Their visibility internally, for customers and staff, is as important as the provision of an external face for the hotel. These HGMs exhibit loyalty to the hotel and the community it serves. Service styles set by these HGMs are individual to the HGM, and replace brand and company centric service styles seen in franchise and chain hotels.

Limited career progression for HGM

A consequence for the HGMs is recognition that they have limited ability to transfer to a franchise or chain hotel. The length of tenure in the hotel also shows that there are very limited career progression opportunities for an HGM in the private model. This study finding supports the view of Hodari and Sturman (2014), which conflicts with Hcareers (2014), perhaps naively indicating that on account of the growth in the hotel industry HGMs have opportunities “for advancement” in both privately owned and chain hotels. This may not indeed be the case. Results indicate that once an HGM has worked in one of the business models, career advancement, or career plateau, is likely to be within that business model. There also appears little movement of HGMs between business models.

For HGMs without a financial stake in the hotel coupled with the reported lack of career progression results in a long number of years in post and the danger of career plateau.

Private 7
“Where do I go from here? Not sure I can work for a large company. I’ve done it all here and won many awards, where do I go? I guess I’m stuck, not that I’m complaining”

For career progression the HGMs in hotels with private ownership have to undertake their own career planning. It is thought that HGMs with a financial stake in the hotel are not likely to seek career progression outside the hotel/company. These HGMs report entrepreneurial activity on their part and that may satisfy their need to personally progress. All private HGMs surveyed talked about developing people in their hotel, innovating in service and undertaking further entrepreneurial activity to keep them motivated. Having the scope and freedom to progress projects can be seen as an avenue to overcome the feeling of career plateau.

This supports the work by Martinez-Ros and Orfila-Saintes (2012). They found owner-manager HGMs more inclined to innovate, being less constrained by the reporting structure, without the attendant fear of the expense of innovation hitting short term financial results.

Recruitment of HGMs for private model

Taking all of the above into consideration and accepting that the HGMs in private model undertake a broader range of activities, it is concluded that these HGMs are the hardest to replace. An established HGM leaving a privately owned hotel would have ramifications for the hotel, and customers. The customers would feel a loss, losing their face time (Munck 2001) which in turn jeopardises the return trade these HGMs work hard to secure. When the HGM changes in this business model it is anticipated that service styles and operating standards would also change.

In recruiting an HGM for a private hotel a candidate leaning towards a traditional (Guerrier, 1987) style of hotel management and embracing Hall's (1993) new soul of enterprise would be the best fit, while emphasising that management practice secures the new soul of enterprise priority of profit too. This approach is found by Giousmpasoglou (2014) to prove successful for family businesses and local hotel operators in Greece. This conclusion is thought to hold for the Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire region too.

Considering the community activity the HGMs in the study undertook it is worthwhile to seek an HGM who knows the area as this would help with integrating into the community. The post of private HGM requires an individual who is people focused and prepared to put down roots. The likely tenure in the post will be over a long term and the business development will be over a longer term too.

6.6. In summary; different business models call for different management practices

Investigating what managers do in the hotel industry finds variation across three business models even across common management practice reported by all HGMs, such as MBWA, leadership and communication activities.

The three business models are seen as the context in which the HGM works, each with their unique challenges for the HGM. This context directly influences management behaviour, activity and practice. Each individual HGM is required to develop the specialist management and interpersonal skills, to manage in the context of their business model. Regardless of the model, there is a requirement for all HGMs to be able to satisfy

stakeholders, or at least manage stakeholders' expectations. All HGMs recognise the key hotel stakeholders as: customers, owners, and staff. The HGMs have a different emphasis on their relationship with each, which is influenced by the business model of their hotel.

On account of the unique challenges from the context in each of the business models, it is recognised that there needs to be a fit between the person and the required management practice. Accepting that all HGMs are not the same and that the management approach to running a hotel varies with business model, a fit is required between the person and the environment they operate in.

The job title of HGM is thought to be outdated. HGMs in some chain and franchised hotels should hold the title of Hotel Brand Manager. Considering the current complex ownership and management contracts found in the chain sector the title Hotel Property Manager is proposed and for HGMs in the private model retaining the title Hotel General Manager seems fitting. This recognises that HGMs across the three business models are very different managers, with differing priorities.

7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1. Introduction

Over the past two decades hotel chains in the United States have shifted their business strategy. In the 1980s, brands such as Marriott International Inc. and Hilton Hotels Worldwide began reducing the number of properties on their balance sheets to concentrate on the more lucrative and less capital-intensive business of operating properties for fees (Hudson, 2010). Most of these property sales are followed by management contracts. In these cases the seller still operates the property and the property owner pays fees for the service provided by the seller, who now becomes the operator. Fee business allows firms to expand their market share with limited capital investment. This delivers the favourable benefits of profitability and lower operating risk, as operators are reimbursed the cost of operating hotels by property owners. The cost of fee based revenue is lower than that of sales from owned properties. Fee income also has the benefit of less monetary variance than income from operating owned properties (Roh, 2002).

These contemporary ownership and business structures are now finding favour in UK hotels and are the primary influence on HGM behaviour and activity. As observed, “The European hotel industry has changed significantly in the past decade as a growing number of companies have sold off their assets to focus on managing and franchising their operations; or have sold them only to lease back to release capital” McKenney, 2016, p.2.

At the time of study the Aberdeen city and regional hotel industry was found to be moving from Chathoth’s (2016) phase 2 to phase 3, and somewhat behind the rest of the UK in this transition.

Figure 7: Evolution of hotel chain characteristics, Chathoth (2016) p 27.



With the move to Phase 3, in 7 (above) , the hotel industry is characterised by: increasingly sophisticated guests with heightened expectations, workforce diversity, the emergence of new technologies and unrelenting cost pressures in the face of intense competition (Sohn, Tang and Jang, 2013; Adler and Rigg, 2012; Mooney, Ryan and Harris, 2017; Brondoni and Franzoni, 2017). Such challenges have precipitated a shift in the strategic imperatives of hotels and hotel companies and “thrown up a new set of role demands and professional challenges for senior managers” Bharwani and Talib (2017) p.394.

These new role demands and professional challenges for HGMs form the basis of the key findings and conclusions given in the following section.

In this concluding chapter links between the study’s findings and relevant literature are discussed. Indications are given on how the research questions have been answered with each of the three research objectives being addressed in turn.

7.2. Key findings and conclusions

Within the body of theoretical work considering the interplay between work context and managerial roles there is recognition that context meaningfully shapes behaviour (Deirdorff et al 2009). While Strong et al (1999) argue that the work context provides a set of moderating factors that influence both employee and management, Deirdorff et al (2009) go further arguing that context exerts considerable influence on the work priorities for management. The thesis findings support this theory, with HGMs priorities found to be considerably influenced by their work context, primarily the business model under which they are required to manage.

Specifically, thesis findings fit with Hayes, Ninemeier and Miller (2017). The business model under which the HGM manages affects his/her activity and behaviour across their 5 aspects, which are considered below:

1. Managing owner demands

This varies across the three business models, and is found to be tied to the priorities dictated by ownership/business model. Managing owner demands, and balancing these against other stakeholders significantly influences HGM behaviour and activity in franchise and some chain hotels.

2. Relationship with Franchise Services Director (in franchise model)

The Franchise Services Director is seen as part of the control from above exerted upon the HGM in this model. In the franchise model HGM activity and practice is: loosely controlled from above, centres on brand compliance and the delivery of brand standards.

3. Brand and the need to adhere to brand standards

HGMs in franchise and chain models are expected to adhere to the brand standards set. Delivery on brand standards is the major priority for HGMs in these models. In turn direction from above on these brand standards influences HGM behaviour and activity.

4. Relationship with staff, whether it is the HGMs personal standards being imposed or those of brand or franchise

The relationship the HGM has with staff is found to be closely related to the business model. For the private HGM there is a close relationship, with staff often working alongside the HGM in operational duties. Here the standards are clear and reinforced through practice. In both the chain and franchise models the relationship with the HGM is more distant, and standards more formally expressed, and reinforced by line managers. Findings show greater loyalty from staff to the HGM in the private model, as well as less staff turnover in this model.

5. Guests and meeting guest expectations

Consistency of delivery across all chain and franchise hotels was reported as important by HGMs. These HGMs believed that on account of the hotel brand name guests have expectations of the hotel in terms of atmosphere and service. The role of the chain and franchise HGM is to ensure their hotel meets the customer expectations. In the franchise model front line staff are specifically charged with delivering guest satisfaction and also dealing with dissatisfaction.

Returning guests to the hotel in the private model have expectations of a more personal service, and do expect to at least see, if not be greeted by the HGM. The atmosphere and service in this hotel is more bespoke and driven by the individual decisions taken by the HGM. The private sector HGM is also found to have a people orientation, so for these managers their customers and customer satisfaction is a priority

The work of Hayes, Ninemeier and Miller (2017), provides a valuable check against the thesis findings on their five aspects. However, the thesis findings go further by providing an explanation of how the business model affects behaviour and activity of HGMs. This is summarised in Figure 6, in chapter 6. From that model discussion now follows on: the influences on HGM behaviour and activity, HGM activity and priorities, and explanation on the differences in management style and practice found across business models.

7.2.1. Influences on HGM behaviour and activity (objective 2)

The discussion in the previous chapter and model in Figure 6 captures the influences on HGM behaviour and activity. These influences are presented in the model in the left hand box across the three business models investigated.

The timeliness of the study is acknowledged by Hotel Analysis (2014) in identifying how the change in ownership and resulting business models has made management increasingly complex. The business model, therefore, and the degree of dependence on other organisational structures (in management contracts, licences, or dealing with head office) influence the framework of managerial decisions (Martinez-Ros and Orfila-Sintes 2012; Sirilli and Evangelista, 1998). This supports the major findings of the thesis.

A key finding highlighted in the model (Figure 6) is the sliding scale of autonomy afforded to the HGM. This moves from little autonomy for the chain HGM with: power/decision making above him/her, daily reporting, standard operating procedures and little opportunity for creativity, to the private sector HGM who has: full autonomy, with power and creative opportunities. This fits with the conclusions given by Hodari and Sturman (2014), that HGMs' decision making autonomy is influenced by the hotel's ownership, business model and management structure. These authors' suggestion that the ownership and resulting business model chosen can significantly influence the behaviour and activity is found to be the case in practice.

Galende (2006), highlighted how reporting structures within organisations restrict HGMs ability to innovate. This is seen to be the case in the research findings, which supports a conclusion from the work of Aissa and Goaid (2016), that the chain model delivers a

formula for service delivery, which as a consequence limits HGM autonomy. While the common goal uniting all hotel stakeholders is profitability, the route to securing this, or management practice to secure it, is found to be quite different across the three business models.

Echos of Guerrier's (1989) modern and traditional management approaches were still evident; for the modern it is the chain HGM being office bound, and traditional in the private HGM engaged in a largely functional role. However, with the requirements of: management reporting, revenue management and brand compliance (Gentry et al, 2008) a more sophisticated management approach is required to meet the demands as presented by the business model.

Creative opportunities, or a managerial capacity for innovation was found by Kearney, Harrington and Kelliher (2014) in SME's, suggesting approaches through which owner/managers can use to unlock innovation in this context. Evidence of this activity was confined to HGMs in the private business model. However, scale alone is not the explanation, as none of the hotels in the research could be considered SMEs.

According to Martinez-Ros and Orfila-Sintes (2012) there is more evidence of a desire to innovate on the part of the HGMs in the private model. Galende, (2006) in turn found HGMs in a reporting structure (chain business model), less inclined to invest in innovation. In practice, the thesis findings agree with these authors.

7.2.2. HGM activity and priorities (objective 1)

Bharwani and Talib (2017), in coming up with their framework of 43 competencies, view hotel general management as homogeneous, reporting on hotel management moving from an operational role to a strategic one. This is not always the case in the research findings in that HGMs activity and priorities varies across the three ownership models. Referring back to Figure 6, the centre box considering HGM activity and priorities is influenced by the business models as discussed in the previous chapter.

Drawing on the Management Competency movement's new rubric (Raelin and Cooledge, 1995), seen as Taylorism revisited, could support the view that scientific management is practiced in the chain business model. HGM management practice in the chain model does owe much to Taylorism. This contradicts the literature on current developments in GHL Hotels (McKenney, 2015) and the decentralised strategy reported by Accor (Aung, 2000).

There is an argument to be made that in this model the HGM's job has been stripped back to the elements of maintaining standards of performance. The argument being made is that

all HGMs are prioritising activity as dictated by the business model, which results in specialisation by HGMs, which is not de-skilling.

Hotel general management is not homogeneous, as thought by Bharwani and Talib (2017), although their argument that the HGM is now required to take a strategic overview of operations and be less operational does fit with thesis findings. Each business model requires specialisation, for example: maximising RevPar, managing multiple stakeholders, ensuring consistency in brand compliance, delivering on hotel standards (own or imposed), and highly developed budgeting and numeracy skills for reporting financial performance.

Although the HGM is usually an employee of the management company, given the position's responsibilities and the reporting structure, they are typically responsible to both the owner and operator (Turner and Guilding, 2013). In practice this was found to be the case in management contracts (acting as chains) in the HGMs surveyed in Aberdeen.

Hodari, Turner and Sturman (2017) argue that a goal congruence performance relationship can be attributed to the tripartite relationship that a HGM establishes with the hotel's owner and operator. Being able to secure goal congruence is a skill not previously required nor recognised, but a specialism required by HGMs managing under such business models. In practice managing the owner(s) and superiors above in the chain model was activity that required diplomacy. Securing a goal congruence performance relationship is a necessary priority for HGMs in this business model.

All HGMs interviewed report the management practice of MBWA. This fits with Johnson and Dobni's, (2016), and Mintzberg's (1973) findings that this activity was regarded as important for staff engagement and also for senior managers to get an understanding of the daily issues as they present themselves. Although in the research the reporting of MBWA was constant, the application was found to be different. There was limited staff engagement reported across the chain and franchise hotels, while in private hotels HGM's were active in operations and service delivery to their customers.

This typified relationships with staff. HGMs in the private model worked closely with their staff, taking a paternalistic approach to their workers, and as a result securing loyalty from them. This resonates with Tengblad's (2006) more recent work on managers' activity which found an orientation towards working with subordinates, in group settings and paying more attention to information giving than performing administrative duties. In contrast, in other two business models HGMs report a more distant relationship with workers.

To conclude on activity and priorities reference is made to Dierdorff et al, (2009) who found managerial role requirements although similar in nature varied greatly in importance with

the context in which they are enacted. This is the case in the research findings. Different business models call for different management practice.

7.2.3. Explaining differences in management style and practice across business models (objective 3)

This section sets out to explain the differences in HGM management style, to answer Nicolini's (2012) "so what" question.

The emergence of the asset-light business model separating hotel ownership and operations through agreements is thought to benefit both parties. Operators can generate income streams and expand brands. Owners are able to invest in hotel real estate then engage the professional operating expertise of hotel management companies. (Hodari, Turner and Sturman, 2017; Sohn, Tang and Jang, 2013). Roper (2017) reporting on the industry trend from real estate to growth through fee based business models found franchising has proved popular. She proposes that this model requires a high degree of standardisation in hotel product delivery, which reflects the findings of the research, with the professional operating expertise manifesting itself in chain and franchise hotels as Standard Operating Procedures imposed from above.

In the Aberdeen marketplace under investigation the move towards this business model by the end of 2016 had gathered pace.

HGMs in both the chain and franchise business models are now required to juggle their time looking after these multiple stakeholders, in addition to taking care of guests; findings which agree with Harmer, (2015).

While the HGM title is constantly used by all managers surveyed, their management practice is found to vary. In each model the HGMs are managing different things, and have different priorities. This is reflected in the findings in this study. In practice HGMs in franchises and chain models are more constrained in terms of the hotel products they can offer and the type and style of service delivery in their hotels. Meanwhile HGMs in the private model are freer to innovate and personalise their hotel products and delivery.

Therefore, in each of the three models HGMs face their own challenges. It is concluded that rather than being de-skilled, specialisation on the part of HGMs is being undertaken to manage in each of the three business models studied.

Specialist hotel management

With hotel management becoming more professionalised, there is now recognition that high quality and well trained managers are needed for the success in the industry (Wilson-Wunsch *et al*, 2015). This means high quality well trained HGMs ready to face the unique challenges across the business models. In each of these there are different priorities, which influence the type of HGM that is required to manage the business and the resultant management practice these HGMs undertake. Anson (2012) commented that ownership has become increasingly complex and consequently managers are required to run the business with asset management tools, with the aim of achieving positive financial performance, driven by the need to increase the return on the owner's investment. This is certainly found to be the case in the thesis, with HGMs in the two corporate business models focussing on short term revenue management, and squeezing gross profits in all revenue areas. In each of the three hotel business models a degree of specialisation is required on the part of the HGM, as each manages to different priorities:

- Chain: seek and act on specialist advice, manage as part of a team, complete regular financial reporting, follow direction from line management, deliver on budget, and manage costs.
- Franchise: deliver consistency of product and service to brand standards through people and manage complex stakeholder relationships.
- Private: provide face of hotel, manage on their own, devise products and implement service standards.

In the research findings, then, a modern take on specialisation is seen at the corporate level in hotel companies. In both the chain and franchise models specialist advice and direction is provided on marketing, food and beverage operations, and significantly, the financing of the business.

The route to customer satisfaction reported in the franchise model was through delegated authority for customer care down to front line staff, exemplified by staff being empowered to make allowances and compensate dis-satisfied customers, which echoes the findings of Ogbeide *et al* (2017) found empowering front line staff to accept, process and react to complaints had a direct co-relation on customer satisfaction, loyalty and intention to recommend the hotel. These HGM's appear to recognise that employees have evolved from a resource to be exploited to an asset that needs to be nourished and developed, which supports the literature findings of Eskildsen and Nussler (2000).

Bharwani and Talib (2017) observed that the role of HGM has moved from operational to strategic leadership, concluding that HGM's are responsible for achieving longer term strategic business results, as well as their traditional role in customer service. In relation to the HGM in the private business model the findings of the research agrees. Here the HGM is required to move seamlessly from highly operational roles, including serving customers or food preparation, to investment and refurbishment decisions. Bharwani and Talib (2017) seem to be agreeing with Baum (2015), who found a blurring of managerial and operational roles in tourism is now taking hold in larger organisations as well as small businesses as has been the case in the past. This too resonates with the findings in the thesis. All HGMs, whether in the front hall or their office, are responsible for operational standards and delivery.

Career paths and transferability of HGMs

With three very different HGM role requirements in terms of activity and behaviour across the three business models there is a requirement for individual fit between the role and the person. It is suggested that there needs to be a fit between the person profile, considering both skills and personality, and the type of hotel business model. A conclusion is that management in each model will appeal to different personalities.

There is a tendency for chain hotels to grow their HGMs from within (Webster, 1994). There is a well-worn career path here, as individuals who fit with the corporate culture and are geographically mobile are able to move up the career ladder to a first HGM post and from there on to further HGM posts (Johanson et al, 2011). For career progression a chain HGM must be able to follow instructions and deliver healthy short term profits. This requires a certain temperament. These HGMs need to be able to manage relationships at head office and those managers above. Securing head office support, and support from above will aid the HGM in generating sales and immerse the HGM in the company culture. This resonates with Gunz (1989) commenting on the way in which organisations remake themselves in their own image by promoting those who fit in. There is a need for these HGMs to be highly numerate individuals, with the ability to interpret and report financial data. These career managers also be geographically mobile, spending relatively short periods in charge of hotels as they progress up the ladder.

By implication a change of HGM in the chain and franchise models would not affect the brand delivery or brand compliance.

HGMs in the private business model carry the most autonomy and are people centric; weighting the needs customers and staff above all other stakeholders. In his 1993 study,

Lee-Ross revealed HGM management activity appeared to result from the immediate demands of customers, with these HGMs being drawn into customer interactions, which could be at the expense of higher order management activity. There is a training need here on time management. This is not suggesting that HGMs move away from their people centric approach of making customers a priority, just that they learn to manage their time effectively. This could reduce their hours worked, and ensure that they are more productive with their time when in the hotel. A recommendation for these HGMs is to consider coaching, as advocated by Evered and Selman (1989), designed to empower people through a genuine partnership between manager and employees. For HGMs the prize is staff accomplishing more in line with their direction, releasing a little more creative management time for the HGMs.

Private sector HGMs lack peer support, and need to be self-reliant. This resonates with Kearney, Harrington and Kelliher (2014) who found that owner/managers in small independent hotel firms benefited from becoming a member of a network, as this facilitates learning from others. Two HGM's from the private model cited being members of the Aberdeen Hotel Association as a personal benefit, as they were able to receive both peer support in times of difficult trading, and learn from the practices of others. This supports the writing of Kearney, Harrington and Kelliher (2014), and makes sense as private HGMs are very much on their own with no head office nor peer support. This membership organisation can provide peer support and training to assist private HGMs. Which leads to the conclusion that not many HGMs in privately owned hotels could transfer to work well in a franchise or chain hotels, as the culture and style of managing is so different. These HGMs, although on their own, manage with far more decision making power and autonomy than either of their counterparts and would not be able to accept control from above.

There are ramifications for HGMs planning their own career progression and for those recruiting HGMs. HGMs operating in the private model recognise that they could not, or in fact may not want to manage in the chain model.

Movement of HGMs between the franchise model and the chain is thought likely, although the latitude and autonomy afforded to the HGM is seen to vary with the owner(s) approach. HGMs operating a brand, as a franchise or a chain, tend to be loyal to that brand. Chain HGMs, as reported, are in the main developed from within the organisation. This allows HGMs to adopt the company culture, and understand the requirements of the HGM post.

Once an HGM has taken charge of a hotel in the private sector the tenure tends to be for a longer term. These HGMs become part of the hotel and community fabric that is not seen

when managing for a brand or chain, and enjoy the autonomy given, which keeps them in post.

Career paths and transferability of HGMs need to be acknowledged at recruitment along with the importance of the Person-Environment fit. It has been shown that individual HGMs managing in the three business models have very different operating environments. It follows that there is a real need to secure the right Person-Environment (P-E) fit at recruitment. This approach embraces work by Milliman, Gatling and Bradley-Geist (2017), who found that people flourish in the work settings that are compatible with their skills, interests, values and characteristics.

Concluding statement

HGMs across the three ownership/business models are managing in different ways. This is seen through the HGMs adapting to the varying priorities dictated by these models, which results in HGM practices to meet the priorities set.

Conclusions are thought to be timely, as previous work in this area predates the changes in ownership structure. There are now more complex business models in the UK hotel industry than has been the case in the past (Hodari and Sturman, 2014). That said, perhaps the management behaviour and practice in the simple unchanged private model reflects the findings of Tengblad (2006), who found modern managers' activity orientated towards working with subordinates in group settings and paying more attention to information giving than performing administrative duties.

This thesis acknowledges that management in hotels requires a bespoke approach, taking the discussion up to date and recognising that management practice is not as simple as just a traditional style or modern approach.

The contribution to knowledge will be considered in the following section.

7.3. Contribution to knowledge

The summary of the contribution to knowledge is considered at a theoretical and then practical level

Theoretical

1. This research provides a modern take on Taylorism. This has been found not to be an outdated theory and has resonance today. In the hotel management context it

can be seen that tasks are being broken down, with controls, requiring a degree of specialisation by HGMs across the three business models surveyed.

2. One theory does not capture HGM activity and behaviour. Hotel management is more complicated than the traditional vs. business manager debate and it is the business models that are driving the specialisation in hotel general management. Different theory applies to different management styles required across the business models.
3. Silos are being created on account of business models/ownership structure. There are differing ways of delivering hotel services/product. One size doesn't fit all. Priorities of HGMs are different, on account of the ownership/business model under which they manage. In the extreme cases: HGMs in private model have a people centric focus on customers (customer service strategies), while chain HGMs have a short term financial focus. In these two contrasting approaches one is seen to take long term community engagement focus as opposed to a short term profit focus.
4. Taking the one size doesn't fit all point, there are implications for the education system. Further and Higher Education has to acknowledge and offer specialisation in management practice across the business models. Education and training needs for a privately owned HGM is different to that for chain or franchise HGM.
5. The findings demonstrate the variety of the hotel sector, from a budget standardised offering to full luxury. Moving into Chathoth's (2016) Phase 3, technological advances allows for the growth of boutique hotels, while the findings show how important smart proprietary Revenue Management systems are for affiliated chain and franchise hotels.
6. Conclusions address the lack of research that fully appraises the influence of context (as identified by Akrivos, Ladkin and Reklitis 2007). The varying business models under which the HGM has to manage is seen as the significant influence on HGM behaviour and activity.
7. Methodologically, this study has illustrated the effectiveness of a qualitative approach in gaining views of respondents and providing rich description and enabling a detailed understanding of what HGMs do.

Practical

1. HGM behaviour and activity is found to be shaped by the business model and ownership structure under which the manager is employed. HGMs across the three models investigated are required to carry out very different roles.
2. Success is measured differently. In the chain and franchise models there is the need (and ability through centralised purchasing) to generate higher gross profits, and for these sales and profits figures to be reported constantly up the line. Private sector HGMs are more people centric with success tied up with: long term sustainability, serving the community, and providing a personal service. Here the HGM is synonymous with the hotel. In contrast measuring HGM effectiveness on franchise inspections revolves around how the hotel is meeting the brand operating standards.
3. Accepting that hotel general management is not homogeneous and on fact driven by the business model/ownership style, then hotel organisations can develop their own organisation-specific (private/franchise/chain) competency framework for HGMs.
4. Accepting that hotel general management is not homogeneous, and driven by the business model/ownership style, for HGM recruitment the findings aid the generation of the right Person—Environment (P-E) fit.
5. Educationalists and trainers could use the findings as inputs in designing curricula and pedagogical interventions to meet the industry's future needs with regards to specialist senior management development.
6. The differing approaches to customers and customer care is identified. This falls to HGM in private ownership, delegated to front line staff in franchise, and through management/supervisor hierarchy in chains. Each approach needs appropriate support from HR and training.

Claims to originality

1. New insight is gained into HGM behaviour and activity. The thesis identifies the business model/ownership structure as the primary driver of HGM behaviour and activity.
2. These findings make a synthesis that has not been done before, distillation of management behaviour and activity being driven by business model.

3. The term HGM, although used throughout the industry, has different meaning and very different roles across the three business models studied.

Innovative/distinctive aspects of the thesis

1. Taking aspects of classical theory, Taylorism, and showing relevance to hotel management in 21st Century.
2. A conclusion that HGMs are not being de-skilled, they are in fact being required to specialise, driven by the particular influence present in the business models under which they manage.
3. The discovery that the business model/ownership is the primary driver of HGM practice, and the creation of a model (figure 6) that illustrates the influences and forces at work.

7.4. Research and applied implications of the research

Looking forward, growth opportunities for hotel chains are likely to be more challenging, as a one-size-fits-all approach will give way to a more unique or bespoke experience (Yeoman, Oskam, Postma, 2016; Richard, 2017). Franchising is more popular in the economy or middle market while management contracts are more popular in the luxury market (Cho, 2004).

Luck and Lancaster (2013) comment on the lack of real differentiation across hotels of all star rating, as the core hotel product is essentially the same. Rahimi and Kozak (2017) suggest the only true way to differentiate a hotel offering is through the people delivering the service. Even in the budget sector these authors found staff friendliness the most frequently mentioned aspect of customer satisfaction. Daghfous and Barkhi (2009) earlier work supports this view, stating that customer service is recognised as one of the main ways in which a hotel can differentiate itself from competitors.

All of the HGMs interviewed report contrasting relationships with customers, the most simplistic conclusion being that franchise and chain managers may know key clients, while the private HGMs view many customers as friends.

A modern competitive strategy based on customer relationship management can be seen to be attractive. The HGM that gets this strategy right will build relationships with customers to secure and manage long term loyalty and return business, as a route to increased

profitability (Wang and Feng, 2012). For chain and franchise hotels this is likely to be through their front line staff. This is recognised by Ariffin and Ha, (2015), stating that in a market environment where there are competitive pressures, hospitality managers realise that the acquisition and retention of high performing employees is a key to delivery of service quality. For HGMs in the private ownership such a modern competitive strategy based on customer relationship management is likely to be led by the HGM, reflecting his/her personality.

The contemporary HGM is confronted with the problem of choosing the ideal mix of sales channels for his/her hotel, in order to maximise RM, with a limited amount of time, resources and information. Bulgarian HGMs see being part of a chain advantageous in dealing with these contemporary challenges, finding support with: coordinated personnel training, a common reservation system, economies of scale and centralised management of bookings (Ivanova and Ivanov, 2015). On the specific challenge of maximising accommodation sales and conversion to profit it is thought that chains have an advantage over the private/independent properties with central sales support and technological help through smart RM systems (Ivanov and Ivanova, 2016). The research found that chain and franchise HGMs were heavily reliant on their smart RM systems. This provides a contrast with SME hotels, which are probably the most under-automated segment of the international travel industry (Buhalis, 2003), with private/independent hoteliers reluctant to implement ICTs. According to Schegg and Scaglione (2014), more than half of Swiss hotels managed their rates and availabilities manually on OTAs in 2011.

However, Richard (2017), in considering survival strategies for hotels concluded that for all the technology available (mobile apps, online booking, intelligent hotels) a hotel, or more accurately the HGM, must not lose sight of what differentiates the hotel from competitors and that is the people that work in it. While Information Technology in business processes gives organisations the ability to provide a personalised service at a reasonable cost (Buhalis and Law, 2008), there is still the reported desire for human interaction, which is often the critical reason for loyalty in the industry. Chieh-Heng (2017). This fits with the people orientation reported by HGMs in the private model, who repeatedly emphasised their focus on the customer.

In line with Baum's (2015) more recent work on Human Resource Development in tourism, there is an implied need for support to be provided to HGMs in the private model, as they struggle to cope with a wide managerial responsibility and no peer support. Kearney, Harrington and Kelliher (2014) found owner/managers in small independent hotel firms benefited from joining a member network, as this allowed them to learn about management

practice in other firms. Membership organisations like the Aberdeen Hotel Association can support HGMs in the private model through: peer support, informing them on regional trading, offer training opportunities, and providing learning opportunities from fellow HGMs.

Designations that fit with contemporary management practice in hotels

Having investigated what contemporary HGM practice looks like, and discussed the business model as the primary driver of HGM activity, there is a need to update the models of HGM profiles and styles. Traditional and modern/business profiles are thought now outdated and simplistic. Hall's (1993) model is attractive, describing in the old and new souls of enterprise many of the features found as management practice for HGMs. However, the first priority of profit in the old model isn't mutually exclusive to the first priority of the new soul, which is customer satisfaction.

McKenney (2016) suggests competitive advantage by a chain is sought through pushing decision making back to the HGM, counteracting the de-skilling that has been reported in the past. However, HGMs at Marriott, if the most recent move changes are fully implemented, are seen to be doing the direct opposite. Marriott appears to be embracing aspects of Taylorism and Hall's old soul of enterprise, with: profit as the first priority, assets are viewed as things (hotel property), thinkers and doers are separated (Property Managers from Cluster Manager), organisations being controlled by hierarchies and functional departments separated (control from above, and sales and accounts being hotel examples). There are tensions across the models of management found here, and none accurately describe the range of management practice across the three business models.

The case for considering titles that more accurately reflect what HGMs do is now made. HGMs in some chain and franchise should hold the title of Hotel Brand Manager. Considering the current complex ownership and management contracts found in the chain sector the title Hotel Property Manager is thought to be appropriate in some instances. For HGMs in private model retaining the title Hotel General Managers seems fitting.

7.5. Research limitations

The research has been conducted in a geographically constrained area of North-East Scotland. This is recognised as limiting on how far the findings can be extrapolated. Hotel chains exist internationally, this study being geographically confined is seen as a limitation. A study on an international scale would overcome this limitation, however, the key outcomes are thought to be consistent across the models internationally. It is recognised that time and resources precludes an international study.

The pace of change in the hotel industry has moved on since the data was collected. The Thistle chain had a strong presence in the Aberdeen marketplace, however, on account of hotel sales these properties are now both Mercure and Jurys Inn brands. The Thistle brand, retained by the parent organisation GLH Hotels Management (UK) Ltd is now constrained to only twelve UK hotels, eleven in London and one in Poole. The brand, at one time synonymous with Scottish hotels (and at one time part of Scottish and Newcastle brewers) has disappeared from Scotland. Thistle Hotel (as was) HGMs participated in interviews as these managers were part of a chain at the time of data collection.

In considering HGM management practice in franchise models, HGMs were treated as a group that had a shared frame of reference. In the limited data sample this is borne out. However, on reflection the differing managing styles on the part of differing franchisers over their franchisees is thought likely to influence hotel management practice. Peris-Ortiz et al (2012) suggest that different approaches on the part of franchisers over franchisees have significant effects on the growth and profits of franchiser firms, implying that HGM practice will be affected too. It follows that not all franchise arrangements will be the same in license.

In common with most previous studies these results/findings are country specific and as such cannot be generalised across the global hotel industry.

7.5.1. Limitations in methodology

Knowledge, insight and a contribution to research has been generated through the researcher seeking to uncover patterns and contradictions through close examination of the data, as suggested by Veal, (2011). Veal (2011), goes on to state that “to achieve this the researcher needs to be very familiar with the data, the subjects, and the context if the research” p.238. This has been the standpoint for the data collection and analysis.

However, Schwandt (1997), warns that the “function of method is to bracket bias” p.92, and keep the object of understanding at arm’s length. Thus it is not the subjectivity of the researcher that produces knowledge, but the method. This thinking urges reflection on the advantages and disadvantages of the researcher’s familiarity with, and experience of the hotel industry.

According to Creswell (2013) the major challenges for the researcher in relation to interviewing is selecting and then gaining access to right people. Being known in the hotel sector was a clear benefit for the researcher as he was able to gain access to interviewees relatively easily. Getting interviews were aided, as identified by Gray (2014), by researcher status and being known to be trustworthy, personable and professional. Being known to

respondents allowed the researcher access to the right people, in practice the hotel general managers interviewed.

Schwandt (1998, p.221) suggests that the terms constructivism and interpretivism “*are best regarded as sensitizing concepts*” and notes that those who espouse these persuasions share a common goal, that of “*understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it.*” In order to understand the lived experience of others, then, the researcher must interpret it. This necessitates clarifying both the process of meaning making and how meanings are embodied in the words and/or actions of social actors.

In embracing this approach the researcher is thought to be well suited to the task. Having worked in the hotel industry and held a number of HGM positions, the required ability to interpret the data and understand the meaning embodied in the words and/or actions of the HGM subjects is fulfilled. It has to be acknowledged that this knowledge/understanding/empathy with the HGM means the researcher can shape and inform what is seen during the primary data collection.

However, on account of this familiarity the subject area and some of the interviewees, there is potential for interviewer bias. Creswell (2013) and Oppenheim (1992) suggest ways in which bias can occur:

- Poor maintenance of rapport with respondent
- Departures from the interviewing instructions
- Altering factual questions
- Rephrasing of attitude questions
- Biased probes
- Asking questions out of sequence
- Biased recording of verbatim answers

The use of the constructed survey instrument, based on Hales (1986) five questions for interviews helped address five of these concerns, and ensured consistency in questioning. The rapport between interviewee and respondent (first concern), was overcome on account of the shared interest in hotel management, and in most cases the researcher being known aided interview rapport, facilitating an enthusiasm for answers throughout the interviews. Participants were given control to steer conversation, and this allowed uninhibited conversations.

Having knowledge of the industry and terminology used by hoteliers (booking systems and gross profits for example) meant that the rapport was maintained during the interview, and few clarification questions being required. However, on reflection, there was the potential for an aspect of group-think (Janis, 1972). The danger is that the researcher and the interviewee share a viewpoint and this limits the data being given through deeper probing. In this worst case scenario the interviewer would use his familiarity with and experience of the industry to interpret interviewee discussions on behalf of the interviewee.

In the grounded theory research paradigm, theories, and models as generated in the thesis are grounded in real empirical primary data rather than being governed by traditional methodologies and theories (Gray, 2014). Veal, 2011, states that the researcher needs to be very familiar with the subjects and context as “the process is a complex and personal one”, (p.238). In this regard the researcher was well placed to gather the data. However, Veal (2011) also states that the researcher should approach the data with no pre-formed notions in mind, seeking to uncover patterns and contradictions through examination of the data. There is, thus, a challenge inherent in this approach: how to reach an understanding of the lived experience of the subject through an interpretation which is true to that experience rather than one imposed by the researcher’s conscious or unconscious structures and values.

The researcher being a previous HGM could be seen as a disadvantage if indeed preconceived notions were brought to the data. This was not the case, as merely by being part of the industry and an HGM for a number of years meant that there was both an understanding of the issues, as well as some learned behaviour on hotel management.

7.6. Recommendations for future research

Writers in the 1980’s identified two styles of HGMs: traditional and modern/business (Guerrier, 1987; Gamble et al, 1994). The traditional style owed much to managers having worked their way up through the ranks, while the modern/business style owed much to being educated in management and higher education courses. These style profiles didn’t address the contextual issue of ownership and the contemporary hotel business models, perhaps because this wasn’t such an issue at the time. Guerrier (1987) was right when she stated that HGMs remained specialists on account of “the relationship top management have with unit management” p.130. However, the passage of time has found her conclusion that hotels can be bought and sold but they will be still be run in the traditional manner, to be inaccurate.

This research has found that the varying business models adopted by owners is the primary driver of hotel general management practice. Regardless of the business model hotel management activity and behaviour has also been found to be shaped by the technological age. HGMs need to be able to manage Revenue Management in all the contemporary forms: on-line bookings through the hotel web site, OTAs, Facebook and other social media. Johnson and Dobni (2016) found managers on average spending 43.1% of their deskwork on e-mail (10.4% of total work time), leading to the suggestion that Mintzberg's (1973) propositions are re-thought in favour of a more contemporary description of managerial work that incorporates the roles and functions of information and communication technologies.

Worrall, Mather and Cooper, (2016) found that culture change initiatives have been broadly damaging for managers, requiring managers to work faster and longer hours in an atmosphere of fear. These authors found managers more accountable for performing work over which they felt they had little control. In this thesis HGMs in chain and franchise business models carry the ultimate responsibility for sales and profits, while marketing decisions and operational standards are set remotely, and largely outwith their control. Valuable research could be undertaken by taking an HR perspective and testing the Worrall, Mather and Cooper (2016) findings in the hotel sector, with the dynamics uncovered in the thesis for chain and franchise HGMs factored in.

It is accepted that this study had a regional bias and data collection from a geographically constrained area. Despite the mix of international and local operators the geographic spread of the data collection is a limiting factor. Future research needs to address this limiting factor by undertaking data collection across more geographically diverse locations. Extending the data collection and analysis to other UK and other regional hotels is a recommendation to capture the UK national situation. In light of work being done in the Far East on culture and hotel management, a comparative study from the Far East would be most interesting.

A follow on linked survey could be undertaken to survey owners and franchisors across a number of franchise agreements and brands. The value of this work would be to establish what they sought from their HGMs and look at their relationships with their HGMs. Likewise linked research is suggested into variation across hotel brands. A measure of the relative constraints in terms of operating procedures laid down and the degree of control exerted on the individual HGM is ready for investigation. For example, comparing Reizidor against Hilton Garden Court against Moxy.

There is also a need to undertake new research prompted by the thesis. Research into the emerging role of asset managers in hotels is worthy of investigation, addressing specifically how this post impacts on hotel management is thought timely.

Going forward more information is sought on the relative influence that owners and asset managers have on property-level decisions, and where this is likely to leave the HGM. Although asset managers are seen to be of increasing importance, there needs to be further research on their effects on the HGM, and the hotel operational and financial performance. It is suggested that given the importance of the HGM's position, the way asset managers change the nature of the HGMs' management practice (if at all) would help map out the future hotel structure for hotels.

7.7. Footnote

There follows a reflection and update on hotel management development at the end of 2016. Marriott are undertaking a review of hotel management across all their UK properties. The following information is from a personal statement made by a current Marriott HGM. There is to be a change to the reporting structure across the company. The current HGM role is to be downgraded to one of Hotel Property Manager, with the title of HGM disappearing. Hotels will be organised into clusters, with a new post of cluster manager being created. Around three Hotel Property Managers will report to a cluster (area) manager. There will be changes with hotels too, an example of which is all food purchasing being through a separate company/division. The goal in terms of gross profits being 25% cost of sales.

These changes seek greater returns to owners, but in doing so take authority and responsibility away from the hotel level decision makers.

This move is seen to embrace the writing of Taylor (1911). Marriott seem to seek efficient operations through the specialisation of work and division of labour advocated in Taylorism. This most recent move aligns the Marriott thinking with Hall's (1993) old soul of enterprise where profit is first priority, assets are things, and scale economies are important.

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Appendix 1		
A summary of key managerial competencies in previous studies		
Source: adapted from Jeou-Shyan (2011)		
Managerial competencies	Sub-competencies items	Studies
Personal relationship	✓ Team work	Raybould and Wilkins (2005), Chung-Herrera et al. (2003), Kay and Russette (2000), Kriegl (2000), Kay and Moncarz (2007) and Siu (1998)
✓ Customer relationship		
Communication	✓ Oral communication	Raybould and Wilkins (2005), Chung-Herrera et al. (2003), Kay and Moncarz (2007), Brophy and Kiely (2002), Connolly and McGing (2006), Brownell (2008) and Çizel et al. (2007)
✓ Writing communication		
✓ Effective communication		
Leadership	✓ Strategic position	Chung-Herrera et al. (2003), Kay and Russette (2000), Kriegl (2000), Kay and Moncarz (2007), Siu (1998), Brophy and Kiely (2002) and Brownell (2008)
✓ Leader capability		
✓ Suitable leadership		
✓ Team build	Siu (1998), Agut et al. (2003), Brophy and Kiely (2002) and Connolly and McGing (2006)	
✓ Team spirit		
✓ Team cooperation		

Implementation	✓ Administrative	Chung-Herrera et al. (2003), Kay and Russette (2000), Brownell (2008) and Çizel et al. (2007)
✓ Efficiency		
Strategic management	✓ Strategic planning ability	Siu (1998), Brophy and Kiely (2002), Connolly and McGing (2006), Brownell (2008), Çizel et al. (2007) and Kay and Russette (2000)
✓ Organization		
✓ Decision making ability		
Analysis	✓ Conceptual and analytical	Raybould and Wilkins (2005), Chung-Herrera et al. (2003), Siu (1998), Agut et al. (2003) and Connolly and McGing (2006)
✓ Critical thinking		
✓ Strategic thinking		
✓ Commercial concern		
Problem solving	✓ Anticipate needs	Raybould and Wilkins (2005), Brophy and Kiely (2002), Connolly and McGing (2006), Brownell (2008) and Çizel et al. (2007)
✓ Identify problems		
✓ Effectively deal problems		
Human resource management	✓ Motivation	Kriegl (2000), Kay and Moncarz (2007), Agut et al. (2003), Brownell (2008) and Çizel et al. (2007)
✓ Training and developing		
✓ Managing and supervising		
✓ Recruiting and selecting		
Field management	✓ Management flexible	Kriegl (2000), Agut et al. (2003), Brophy and Kiely (2002), Jauhari (2006), Brownell (2008) and Çizel et al. (2007)

✓ Crisis management		
✓ Health and risk prevention		
✓ Service management		
✓ Customer service focus		
Expert knowledge	✓ Industrial knowledge	Chung-Herrera et al. (2003), Kay and Russette (2000), Kriegl (2000), Siu (1998), Agut et al. (2003) and Çizel et al. (2007)
✓ Commercial management		
✓ Accommodation management		
✓ Food management		
✓ Tourism services		
Financial management	✓ Controlling costs	Kay and Moncarz (2007), Agut et al. (2003), Brophy and Kiely (2002), Jauhari (2006), Connolly and McGing (2006) and Çizel et al. (2007)
✓ Managing cash flow		
✓ Planning and budgeting		
✓ Financial analysis		
✓ Financial leveraging		
✓ Revenue management		
Marketing	✓ Marketing analysis	Kay and Moncarz (2007), Agut et al. (2003), Jauhari (2006) and Çizel et al. (2007)
✓ Market position		
✓ Business marketing		
Culture	✓ International viewpoint	Kriegl (2000), Jauhari (2006) and Brownell (2008)
✓ Integrating local culture		
✓ Appreciating different cultures		
Self-management	✓ Regulating stress	Raybould and Wilkins (2005), Chung-Herrera et al. (2003),

		Kriegl (2000), Connolly and McGing (2006), Brownell (2008) and Çizel et al. (2007)
✓ Pursuing self-development		
✓ Challenging oneself		
✓ Managing emotion		
Attitude	✓ Strong industry interest	Kriegl (2000), Siu (1998), Brophy & Kiely (2002), Jauhari (2006), Brownell (2008 A) and Çizel et al. (2007)
✓ Achievements		
✓ Self-realization		
✓ Devoting to work		
✓ Positive being		
Foreign language	✓ Foreign language communicative ability	Agut et al. (2003), Kay and Moncarz (2007), Connolly and McGing (2006) and Çizel et al. (2007)
✓ Foreign language reading ability		
✓ Foreign language writing ability Jauhari (2006)		
Kay and Russette (2000), Kriegl (2000) and		

Appendix 2

Interview pro-forma guide

Interview Questions _____ Date: _____

Section A

Background information on individual

Interview question	
Age Range (20's, 30's, 40's 50's 60's)	
Family background in hotel work	
Educational attainments	
Number of years in post as HGM	
Number of HGM posts held	

Section B

Picking up on Hale's 1986 work (as seen on first page of Methodology).

1. *Then substantive elements of managerial work (what do managers do?).*
2. *The distribution of managers' time between work elements (how do managers work?).*
3. *Interactions: with whom managers work (with whom do managers work?)*
4. *Informal elements of managerial work (what else do managers do?)*
5. *Themes which pervade managerial work (what qualities does managerial work have?)*

Interview question	Insight sought into the role of the HGM
<p>Reflecting on a normal day or today as a HGM, talk me through your morning routine from arrival until now (giving an example of how spent 3-4 hours of work)</p>	<p>Substantive elements of managerial work</p>
<p>Who do you work most closely with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In hotel • Outside hotel 	<p>Interactions: with whom managers work</p> <p>And who manages them?</p>
<p>To what extent is there a need for you to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • present in the hotel and • operationally involved <p>Discuss with reference to:</p> <p>Functions and weddings</p> <p>Duty management rotas</p> <p>Food service and bar service</p>	<p>Themes which pervade managerial work (what qualities does managerial work have)</p> <p>(This will bring out their approach, procedural or more relational or even functional)</p>
<p>Who deputises (post, e.g. Assistant Manager) in your absence?</p> <p>With a complaint, at what level do you need to become involved, can this be handled in your absence?</p>	

What level of authority in terms of allowances on guest bill do others have?	
<p>Where do you get support/direction (from the head office) on: Marketing, reservations, menus/purchasing, wage rates? Also Human Resources, Health and Safety, IT.</p> <p>Who supports you, and</p> <p>How is support provided?</p>	<p>Extent of head office support in terms of chain and franchise.</p> <p>Check on autonomy.</p> <p>Understanding of where support does come from in terms of the independent hotels.</p> <p>Style/culture of the organisation</p> <p>Probe on the how</p>
<p>Looking to the future of your hotel; what future changes do you foresee?</p> <p>Do think you can influence these at an operational or strategic level??</p>	<p>Themes which pervade managerial work (what qualities does managerial work have).</p> <p>Insights into the level influence individual managers have, seeking contrast: operational or strategic levels.</p>
What do you enjoy most about your job as HGM	Informal elements of managerial work (what else do managers do)
What do you enjoy least about your job as HGM	Informal elements of managerial work (what else do managers do)
How much time, in the average week, do you spend acting as host in your hotel	The distribution of managers' time between work elements (how do managers work?)
What 2 activities take up most of your time	The distribution of managers' time between work elements (how do managers work?)
Drawing on my hotel days, there were 3 levels of budget: Fixtures	Level of authority and responsibility

<p>and Fittings, Maintenance and Capital.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk me through the level of budget authority you have on Fixtures and Fittings (e.g. crockery, corridor decoration, furniture) • Talk me through input and system of requesting and approval of capital projects (e.g. Bedroom refurbishment, new kitchen equipment, new bedroom wing, conference suite) 	
<p>Critical Incident, how would you handle:</p> <p>Food critic from local paper in the restaurant has a bad experience.</p> <p>Head Chef turns up for service drunk, verbally abuses junior staff.</p>	
<p>In your current role of HGM, which are your Critical Success Factors, and how do you ensure you achieve them?</p> <p><i>Suggest: sales and meeting budget, customer satisfaction.</i></p> <p><i>Probe, to what extent can you influence these CSFs? (rate setting for bedrooms and menus devolved or central)</i></p>	<p>Probing responsibilities</p>