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BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Identifying Management Competencies

Of

Hotel Owner-Managers & General Managers

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Go raibh míle maith agaibh, Justin and Zaza.

Abstract

The objective of this research was to investigate the concept of competencies, explore and identify the management competencies of hotel owner-managers and general managers in the hospitality industry in the Republic of Ireland. In other words, this research explored how hotel owner-managers and general managers identified, interpreted and made sense of their notion of managerial competencies in a complex work environment. The research was set within the context of the Irish hospitality and tourism industry, specifically within the hotel sector which has experienced a socio-economic crisis and periods of significant change. Hotels in the Republic of Ireland play a key role in its economic and cultural life, as Ireland has earned an international reputation for welcoming visitors from across the globe.

This study drew on a social constructionism ontology: an interpretative epistemology with a theoretical perspective that framed the methodology using qualitative data analysis and interpretation. Qualitative data, with its emphasis on 'people's lived experience are well suited for locating the meanings they place on events, processes and structures of their lives, and for connecting these meanings to the social world around the' (Miles & Huberman, 1994:10). The data was collected from interviews with twelve hotel owners and general managers in the Republic of Ireland. Three interdependent themes including managing hospitality services in hotels, staff, and language of emotion emerged. The thematic analysis was analysed using Weick's sensemaking framework to garner meanings that are socially constructed through their lived experience of work. These three themes were woven together across two broad lines of enquiry:

1   How hotel owner-managers and general managers identified and used their qualities and the language of emotion together with skills and knowledge to manage employees to deliver hospitality services internally in hotels punctuated by a complex external business environment.

2   How hoteliers made sense of self-identity and occupational identities in their efforts to become competent hotel owner-managers and general managers in the hospitality industry in Ireland.

The findings reveal evidence pointing towards a social constructionist process (Berger & Luckmann 1966) through which these hoteliers constructed their realities of clusters of management competencies using a combination of learned skills and knowledge underpinned by qualities and emotions. It examined these competency clusters of qualities such as honesty, integrity, respect, a positive attitude, intrinsic care, and intuition whilst the role of emotions such as care, empathy and support were used to build relationships as key skills in managing employees and customers alike. Alongside these, clusters of skills included communication, financial and cost management and technology and managing people as well as facilities management. Finally, it was argued that taken together in what constitutes competence these clusters of qualities, emotions, skills and knowledge were conceptualised that these are the building blocks for assembling a competent identity of self-fused into the occupational identity of an hotelier, be they an owner-manager or general manager.

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1   Introduction

The intention of this research project was to investigate the concept of competencies, and explore and identify hotel management competencies in the Republic of Ireland. This research examined how hotel owners and general managers identified, interpreted and made sense of their notion of managerial competencies in their business of managing hotels, and how they became competent during dynamic periods of change in that industry sector. Many western countries including the UK, USA and Continental European countries have experienced challenging economic and financial trading conditions during the recession that followed the perceived financial crash of September 2008. Managing hotels in the wake of the recession that ensued provided a context for all the interviewees where financial crisis had a profound impact in the Republic of Ireland.

Given the focus here, the debate on competencies can be traced back to the 1970s; it is a complex area of knowledge and fraught with competing schools of thought. For the past forty years the dominant debate has followed a traditionalist functionalist perspective which separated out the entities of the worker or employee and their work or employment in its explanation of competent and competencies (Sandberg, 2000:11). Document Five sets out to take another perspective whereby qualitative techniques of data collection, analysis and interpretation were used to garner the perceptions of twelve interviewees on their notion of managerial competencies. In other words, social constructionism and interpretivism guided the meaning making of the lived experiences and identity work of twelve interviewees as they interpreted how they became competent hoteliers as owner-managers and general managers. The data analysis embraced a stance of how some of the interviewees socially constructed their notion of their identity as an hotelier and how this influenced their competence as hotel owner-managers and general managers. Whilst other interviewees explained that the daily management of hotels was to achieve business objectives regarding net profitability, revenue, and costs targets which were achieved by being people focused. In other words, the business objectives were achieved by

constant identification, training and development of all employees who worked together as a team to deliver hospitable hotel services in a caring manner. Thus, staff management was constituted to have been a key management competency considered to be crucial and critical to ongoing business success but felt that it (i.e. staff management) must be repeated daily to remain competent.

1.1   Rationale of This Study: Research Aims, Objectives and Process

The objective of Document Five was to investigate the concept of competencies, explore and identify the managerial competencies of hotel owner-managers and general managers. The project explored management competencies within the context of management and leadership in the hospitality service sector. This researcher took the view that management and leadership cannot be separated: leadership is a critical and crucial aspect of management, and separating them by distinguishing leadership from management is a dubious dichotomy (Mabey & Finch-Lees 2008:29). Management and leadership are different and distinct terms: the former is concerned with handling complexity in organisational processes and execution of work; the latter is concerned with setting direction, communicating and motivating, about broad principles and emotion, and with change (Burns, 2013:128; Mabey & Lees-Finch, 2008:32). This research used the term managerial, which encompasses leading and leadership as part of the everyday functions and activities in the managing of hotels.

The research question was:

1.   What are the management competencies of hotel owner-managers and general managers?

Social constructionism informed the methodology whereby patterns and themes were used to frame the meaning-making of a number of senior industry hotel owner-managers and general managers on their notions of managerial competencies. Language was at the heart of the constructionism process, and the importance of language other than a way of describing things was used as a social resource for constructing different accounts of the world and events. Language gives expression to things that already exist within themselves including the social

negotiation of identity used to examine the notion of management competencies (Burr, 2003:14, 47; Mabey & Finch-Lees, 2008:32).

The data was collected from a series of twelve in-depth face-to-face interviews conducted with four hotel owner-managers and eight hotel general managers. These interviewees were purposively chosen from a number of hospitality business organisations because of their willingness to participate in the research and for their range of experience and knowledge of the hospitality services industry. This research was tentative in its generalisations and sought to retain the complexity of the research topic which linked social constructionism with the making of meaning. The findings were interpreted using Weick's (1995) sensemaking framework to ascertain how these interviewees socially constructed their notions of competency through identity construction of their lived experience of that work as hoteliers.

The reasons for conducting research on management competencies in the Irish hotel sector included diverse meanings of competence, on what identity creation means, the role of morals and values and the economic and financial aspects (Mabey & Finch-Lees 2008:5).

(i)   Diverse Meanings

The topic of competences and competencies was complex, influenced in part by the various writers in the debate which has resulted in competing definitions, adding to the complexity of the topic. For example, when does an employee start or cease to be competent? Taking cognisance of epistemological tensions and the fact that competences were traditionally framed in the positivist lens which was examined in Chapter Two (2:22), it proposed that there was merit in opening the debate under the phenomenological approach where our understanding of competencies cannot ignore the internal organisational context, the role of employee and their experiences of work, (Garavan *et al.,* 2009:256–257). The complexity surrounding the competing interpretations of the term competencies, in a time of unprecedented economic and technological change and uncertainty, also raises the possibility that competencies may need to be adjusted to take account of a range of contextual factors and cultural influences. As a result, competency frameworks may differ from one industry sector or organisation to the next. More specifically, instead of separating the two entities of work in hotels and workers as owner-

managers and general managers, this research sought to combine the employee as manager and their work of managing the business of hotels together, and to examine their combined contribution to competency and competency development. It was interesting to discover that all of the general managers employed by the international hotel groups were familiar with the language of competency and its purpose (to drive bottom-line results); two hotel owners MicaLHO and JoniBHO were more circumspect and unsure as to what constituted a competent manager.

(ii)   Moral

A second reason for examining management competencies was to ascertain how they were influenced by ethical or moral currency. Various examples emerged from the analysis of the empirical data of how the personal qualities and morals held by the hoteliers influenced their daily managing as they perceived it. Phrases used included, "it was the right thing to do, all employees must be treated in a fair and dignified manner, being honest, integrity is hugely important" were just some of the examples.

(iii)   Identity Creation

Identity construction is the first property of Weick's sensemaking framework that sensemaking begins with the sensemaker, identities are constituted out of the process of interaction, to shift among the interactions is to shift among definitions of self, is always in process and open to change built out of interaction and undergoing continual redefinition (Burr, 2003:124; Weick, 1995:20). Analysis of the interview transcripts showed that the twelve interviewees were doing identity construction and occupational identity in their sensemaking and interpretation of the ways that they managed hotels and what it meant to be an hotelier. In fact, the processes of identity work and identities created were examined in Chapter Four, (4.2: 81). This in turn created implications for their notions of managerial competencies as hotel owner-managers and general managers.

The interviewees explained that the delivery of hospitality services in hotels which consisted of overnight hotel accommodation, food and beverage were traditionally associated with consistent

customer service delivered with care, which was not based on a tightly focused financial model of constantly measuring the cost of that care. But in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, a new reality had dawned, forcing some of the interviewees to rethink how they managed the delivery of hospitality services. The tension between these two cues of service and costs caused all of these hoteliers' identities to be severely challenged. For some of them, their previous lived experience was not enough to cope with the avalanche of changes witnessed between 2008 and 2012. And yet in their identity re-creation, these interviewees realised that while the "people" nature of the hospitality industry remained the same, their approach to managing the business of hotels amid fundamental changes must itself change. In other words, as the demands of the business changed, their notions of becoming competent managers were subject to change as they taught others and learned themselves on a daily basis. The language of emotion played a key role throughout this research which highlighted its use as a key management competency in dealing with people regardless of the business landscape, i.e., being aware of one's own personal emotions and their use in managing others to deliver a positive hospitable experience that was augmented by emotions that arise from within.

(iv)   Financial and Economic

The functionalist tradition, with its objectivist and quantitative methodologies, has traditionally been best placed to illustrate the financial and economic benefits of competent managers (Mabey & Finch-Lees, 2008:24). Regardless of the industry sector, managers were developed and expected to deliver "bottom line results such as budgets, profit margins, revenue per room, payroll costs, and benchmark revenue results per star category" as industry norms. Demands on business owners and managers for financial returns on investment were self-evident, while every interviewee referred to the fact that competent, well-trained, skilled employees played a substantial if not overriding role in their ability and capability to deliver financial goals and results. In the Republic of Ireland the impact of the 2008 financial crisis and its fallout on business resulted in either very limited or no access to bank lending facilities in the form of short-term loans or overdraft facilities. Another implication of the financial crisis was that it reignited an emphasis on the use of quantitative management, which focused on proactively managing costs such as payroll, utilities, by tracking these closely to revenues and making necessary adjustments. Linking their identity to these ongoing financial challenges played a

substantial role in how owners and managers made sense of how they managed between the years 2008 and 2013, and the competencies that they used, learned and developed through their lived experience of managing the business of hotels during those periods of significant change. So hindsight may show that competency development of all managers in service businesses demanded that all senior employees be as financially competent as their owner-managers or general managers.

1.2   Research Context: Hospitality & Hotel Services Industry in the Republic of Ireland

Turbulence and disruption have characterised the 21st century, ranging from terrorist attacks in New York (2001) followed by London, Bali, Madrid and Mumbai, wars in Syria and Afghanistan, and the so-called Arab-spring in the Middle East. The commercial environment has changed on a global scale, with economic power moving from the USA and Europe to China and India. Startling evidence of this was the 2008 financial crisis (Burns, 2013:5). Enormous shocks to the international monetary system were precipitated by the financial crisis of 2008/9. The banking system, property boom and supposedly successful economy of the Republic of Ireland was brought to its knees in September 2008 when a number of the banks were nationalised and major financial support was negotiated between Ireland and a number of international governmental organisations such as the IMF, EU and ECB. These socio-economic and technological issues are referred to as environmental factors or external key drivers of change (Palmer, 2011; Johnson, Whittington & Scholes, 2012). The research context of Document Five was situated within the hotels and hospitality industry in the Republic of Ireland, and played a major role in this services sector. This research was conducted against a backdrop of a perceived recession that followed in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis.

The hospitality and tourism industry in the Republic of Ireland plays a significant role in Irish economic and cultural life as it welcomes and plays host to millions of visitors to the Republic of Ireland each year. The hospitality industry is quite diverse, as it encompasses a wide range of services such as hotel accommodation, food and beverage outlets, characterised by differing structures of ownership of numerous small and medium sized firms that are situated in cities, town and villages the length and breadth of the Republic of Ireland. Some hotel businesses are

open all year round whilst others are seasonal depending upon their location. Irish hotels have also developed capability in managing non-resident business in food and beverage areas for lunch and dinner as well as catering for a wide variety of family events, banquets and conferences. The hotel sector is the biggest component of the Irish hospitality sector and is heavily regulated by a legal framework that is implemented under the Tourist Traffic Acts 1939-2003. In the hotel sector alone there are 835 hotels (Fáilte Ireland 2014) of which forty five percent (45%) are independently managed by their owner or employ a general manager employing with varying levels of employee numbers. Whilst overall the Irish hospitality industry has had mixed fortunes over the past ten years, its success in part may be due to structure of ownership where many small firms have experienced prosperity and are quite entrepreneurial dynamic engines which have the potential to drive the hospitality industry into a healthy future (Morrison & Thomas, 1999:148).

Hospitality organisations operate within a volatile environment and are in a state of constant change, and the Irish tourism and hospitality industry is no different (Mullins & Dossor, 2013:469). Ireland has the added challenge of being an island off a very large island of Great Britain, off the land mass of Europe with no land access to Europe, which means all arrivals and departures must use sea or air carriers to gain access to Ireland. Irish tourism and hospitality plays a significant role in the economic and cultural life or Irish business, with preliminary estimates for 2013 at €5.57 billion euros. It is one of the largest indigenous industries in the Republic of Ireland; with total employment at 185,000 and is a substantial economic driver in every region of the country. Being largely service-based, hospitality and tourism service goods have a low import content in comparison to other exports. Because tourism is characterised by the fact that consumption takes place where the service is available and tourism activity is frequently concentrated in areas that lack an intensive industry base, it is credited with having a significant regional distributive effect (Fáilte Ireland Preliminary Estimates, 2014:2).

However, like all businesses there have been significant levels of change taking place that have positive and negative impacts. An AIB Outlook Hotels Report (Ahearne, 2012:2) examined how the 2008 financial crisis had impacted on balance sheets of the hotel industry which had resulted in a debt overhang problem. This means that the hotel industry is severely overleveraged,

currently carrying an estimated €6.7 billion euros of debt in the sector. The debt overhang has meant that after making interest payments the industry has not made sufficient earnings to re-invest in the hotel stock or make principal repayments to reduce leverage or deliver a reasonable return on investment. This debt overhang problem will also lead to underinvestment in maintenance, refurbishment, renovation and innovation that will in time negatively affect overall product and service quality, (Ahearne, 2012:3-5).

On a more upbeat note, the growth of market segmentation and technology are directly impacting on how business is conducted. Market segments have become redefined into categories such as luxury and budget that are separated by standards of physical and service matched with price. This in turn is being driven by technology and the power of marketing and branding of hotel services, and demands by consumers for consistent hotel experiences as hotel rooms become commodities. This trend has received a mixed response from the Irish hotel industry whereby the growth of international hotel groups and brands leading market segmentation has slowed considerably. The structure of hotel management-ownership, dominated by small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) with just a handful of international hotel groups that characterised the Irish tourism and hospitality industry creates ongoing opportunities that are also peppered with challenges. The increasing power of internet technology has fostered an array of online intermediaries selling all aspects of the travel package such as flights, accommodation and transport. 'The internet (web) has fundamentally changed customer notions of convenience, speed, price, product information, and service […] where over 100 million people visit a social network daily' (Kotler *et al* 2010:20). The popularity of the internet has resulted in a rash of online booking engines, social networks and web communities. Fáilte Ireland's 2014 Report (Failte Ireland, 2014) indicates that 73% of all overseas visitors who visited Ireland in 2013 used the internet to search for and plan their visit. The online wholesalers' generated fierce competition between the various accommodation providers, as guest accommodation is traded for a price especially in times of off-peak travel, (Failte Ireland 2014:1).

In Document Three, the Tourism Traffic Acts 1939–2003 legal framework that governs the development of Irish hotels was explained. It was appropriate to refer to this again in Document

Five because of its influence on the current and future development of hotels in the Republic of Ireland. The title of 'hotel' is a prescribed term under the Tourist Traffic Acts 1939–2003, and compliance with specific requirements under the legislation is required by law in order to trade and use the term hotel. The legislation governing the Registration and Renewal of Registration for Hotels 1939–2003 explains that sleeping accommodation, meals and refreshments, which shall include breakfast and dinner, must be provided. Furthermore, the Tourist Traffic Acts 1939-2003 enables an hotel to be awarded a full on-license which allows the licensee to sell alcohol to residents. These legal parameters played a key influencing role in hotels' current and future situation in terms of the type of services that they must provide regardless of their market segment, market position or consumer demand. In practice, this has meant that all hotels in Ireland must provide both breakfast and dinner, regardless of demand or commercial feasibility for such services. So, in keeping with this legal requirement and in the context of this research, all hotels in Ireland can be described as being full-service. Thereby, all hotels in the Republic of Ireland must legally provide a range of guest services including overnight accommodation, dining facilities and public toilets within one building. This is due to the legislation governing hotels being enforced rigorously, by a government-regulated team of hotel inspectors. The legislation was enacted in 1939 in order to lead the development of a fledgling hospitality and tourism industry and encourage hotel development and its legacy some sixty five years later has played a key role in the current nature and ownership structure of the Irish hotel industry.

1.3   Integration with Previous DBA Research Documents

DBA Document One mapped the research journey as it outlined how the investigation into management competencies was conducted through the production of a series of subsequent documents; Document Two focused on a review of the literatures on competencies and the context and influences of the nature of services businesses. Document Two also examined hospitality and hotels services that are influenced by four distinguishing characteristics (intangibility, inseparability, perishability, variability); most notably that of intangibility, while various elements of tangible products are used to produce the services, and inseparability whereby the customer who is part of the co-creation of the process leaves with no tangible good or goods. The nature of hotel services means that the customer has to be physically present at their point of delivery in order to purchase and consume them. These four characteristics

crucially underpin and influence their entire business management, woven into each Document One to Five. Documents Three and Four were applied pieces of research, taken as apprenticeship research reports conducted within the interpretative and realist paradigms respectively: both highlighted a number of key issues, such as the competing definitions of the words competences and competencies based on the rationalistic research tradition. Other findings included association between management competencies and management–organisation structure, the role of relationship building and team building, and management structure and employment of a human resource manager.

Document Three was an interpretative report that examined the meaning of competencies from three in-depth interviews via the interviewees' identity construction of their lived experiences of work as managers. The material examined in Document Three enabled tentative inferences to be drawn about the research questions posed in Document Two. The first of these concerned the meaning of the terms competent, competences, competencies, of which a range of interpretations were offered. From this initial empirical study it appeared that no universal language existed on the meaning of being competent or on competencies: all of the interviewees offered a varying range of meanings and interpretations. The literatures highlighted two interpretations: competent usually describing what someone needed to do to complete a job or task competently, while competencies are used to describe behavioural characteristics of how a person approached a job, role or task, i.e. employee attributes such as their ability or capability. The meanings gleaned from the interpretation of the three interviewees relate more to the behavioural competencies as attributes of themselves as employees, using such terms as creating and maintaining relationships, leading and leadership, achieving results and being performance-focused.

Document Three also examined the role that competency frameworks played in the development of business managers and owners in everyday practice of hospitality management. While there was no evidence of competency frameworks in the small hotels sector, it was discovered that one international hotel group in Ireland has developed a context-specific management competency framework. One of the interviewees who worked with an international hotel group explained that a competencies framework was used in the recruitment, training and development

of all new and existing general managers and deputy managers throughout the respective hotels. Leadership Focus was the title given to their competency framework, which highlighted seven key competencies that all managers were benchmarked against as part of their ongoing development and performance. These seven competencies were: self-management, personal accountability, planning, organising, delegating and empowering, interpersonal skills – communicating with others, and customer focus. A substantial finding for Document Three was that two of these competencies, self-management and personal accountability, cannot be taught: in other words, they are innate or intrinsic to the person.

Document Four was a structured piece of research conducted under a realist lens, using quantitative data analysis techniques, statistical packages for the social sciences (SPSS) – to investigate the hypothesis that within 3, 4 and 5 star category hotels, there were no significant associations between the variables management-ownership structure and management competencies. The primary data collection instrument was a questionnaire used to survey the total population of 883 hotels, which secured a response rate of eleven percent (11%). The analysis of the primary data regarding the management-ownership structure and management competencies of hotels in the Republic of Ireland yielded tentative results. Using secondary data, an analysis of the Fáilte Ireland Register of Hotels was conducted in an effort to examine the management-ownership structure of hotels in Ireland. It was discovered that 45% of hotels were owner-managed and 55% employed a general manager.

The disparate nature of the Irish hotel industry within the Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality sector posed challenges in terms of management development, marketing, and service quality, and marks substantial levels of competition and the ongoing sustainability of some hotel businesses. The high incidence of independent hotel ownership meant dealing with hundreds of individual owner-managers and general managers, also posed challenges for researchers in terms of getting access and securing responses to questionnaires. An analysis of the variables star category, management structure and management competencies was conducted. In the 3 star category, two associations were identified between management structure and management competencies; no significant associations were discovered in the 4 star or 5 star categories. The market structure of the Irish hotels is dominated by hotels in the 3 star category, totaling 391

hotel properties which represents 44% of the total population of hotels. The management structure of the 3 star category is almost evenly divided between 45% owner-managed and 55% employing a general manager. This category yielded very low response levels to this survey. Two competencies were found to be significantly associated with management structure within this 3 star category: organisation resource management, and building relationships and team working.

A correlation between the management structure of hotels and the employment of a human resource (HR) manager was discovered, irrespective of the fact that this is a labour-intensive industry. Overall while just over half of the respondents did not employ a full-time manager dedicated to the management of human resources, 62% of general manager (GM) managed hotels had a dedicated HR manager while 79% of owner-managed hotels did not. Another correlation between star category and the presence of a HR manager was that 61% of the 4 star and 5 star categories did employ a HR manager and 77% of respondents in the 2 star and 3 star categories did not have a dedicated person in human resource management. The disparate nature of management structure posed challenges for human resource development, specifically management development, relating to both owner-managers and general managers in the Republic of Ireland. Owner-managers of businesses tend to be very busy people, typically worked within their businesses on a daily basis, and sometimes found it personally challenging to make an investment of time and money in self-development. This point was made in one of the interviews conducted for Document Three. This interviewee explained that once they had completed their initial undergraduate degree programme, they did not feel the need to return to do any further studies. The ordinal data of the management structure and management competencies highlighted differing results of management competencies of owner-managers and general managers, but due to the low response rates these could not be validated.

Contribution to the Research

The purpose of this research is to investigate the concept of competencies, explore and identify how hotel owner-managers and general managers made sense of their notions of management competencies. The research context was set within the hotel sector in the Republic of Ireland framed amid perceived periods of dynamic change in national and international businesses. At

a macro level there are numerous reasons for the current levels complexity and uncertainty that dominated the daily lives of owners and managers within the Irish hotel industry, which is heavily regulated to maintain certain physical and service standards. The economic and financial crisis of the years between 2008 and 2013 have left an indelible mark on the managing of businesses regardless of sector, and undoubtedly filtering into the lives of all managers as they struggle to survive and cope between multiple identities. This research used social constructionism and interpretivism as the methodology to guide the data analysis and make sense of the findings. In Chapter Two, a conceptual framework mapped the literatures on managing hospitality services, competencies and sensemaking which formed a cohesive underpinning to the research. However, the conceptual framework was amended in light of the emerging findings that included literature on emotion and emotional intelligence in light of the findings of the research.

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2   Literature Review

Introduction

The chapter charts the following areas of literature, managing hospitality services, emotion, competences and competencies deemed to be mutually supportive and informative for Document Five. To augment the theoretical framework of this thesis, a further section on identity was inserted, so as to examine the role self-identity and occupational identity of hotel owner-managers and general manager and the notion of an hotelier working in the Irish hospitality and tourism industry.

2.1   Managing Hospitality Services

The hospitality, tourism and leisure sector is one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world (Walker, 2013, Kotler *et al*, 2012, Mullins & Dossor 2012). Its elements share the delivery of services and the customer-guests' impression of them (Walker, 2013:13). At a macro level, that nature of hospitality services is almost completely opposite to that of product manufacturing in terms of service/produce delivery, in that the customer has to be moved to the point of service delivery (Medlik & Ingram 2000, Kotler *et al,* 2012). Hotels provide basic needs services of overnight rest in hotel rooms and restaurants that fulfil the biological need to eat and drink. In essence, whatever the reason for purchasing these services, the most challenging aspect of managing hospitality is to create powerful impressions that have the ability to affect the human experience as customers (Lashley & Morrison, 2000, Mullins & Dossor, 2012). As a collective term, the hospitality industry may be interpreted in a number of ways, including: all forms of guest accommodation such as hotels, guesthouses, hostels, caravan and camping parks, and restaurants, pubs, takeaway food shops, licensed clubs and event management including conference and exhibition organisers. Due to the nature of the hospitality industry, in particular the hotel sector which operates 365 days a year, for twenty-four hours, seven days per week, its employees tend to work unsocial hours. Hospitality industries are in the business of providing

guest satisfaction of basic needs services at a price. Much has been written about the nature of services businesses (Cowell, 1984, Walker, 2013, Palmer, 2011). Services are deemed to have four distinguishing characteristic features; intangibility, inseparability, variability and perishability.

Intangible: When the service is purchased the guest leaves with no tangible product, but a memory of the experience.

Inseparable: Because of near-simultaneous production by the employee and consumption by the consumer as a participant in the process, such as service of food in a restaurant or check-in to an hotel room. Services are labour-intensive and site selection of hospitality services is determined by customer demands, influencing the physical location of the service.

Variable: Because the production and consumption processes take place at nearly or sometimes the same time, there is a difficulty in measuring quality of performance due to the intangible nature of services, coupled with the heterogeneous nature of customers and employees.

Perishable: Services are intangible and cannot be stored; thus they are perishable and subject to capacity restrictions (Kotler, Bowen & Makens, 2013: 9).

These four characteristics were woven together to inform management on how they achieve overall service quality in the delivery of all hotel services. Three key elements dominate the service management process, namely customers, all employees (including managers/owners) and physical location; together are inextricably linked to the service production and delivery process. At a social and cultural level, different societies require varying degrees of obligation to be hospitable, with duties and obligations on both guests and hosts. At the root of the study of hospitality as a human phenomenon is the relationship between hosts and guests. Businesses such as hotels, guesthouses, hostels and bed and breakfasts (B&Bs) are known as high-reliability businesses where the owners and management teams are responsible for varying numbers of people while they are at their most vulnerable, i.e. asleep in a guest room away from their normal place of residence. 'Hospitality creates an impression of hosting and hospitableness which prioritises guest experiences, and suggests a commitment to meeting guests needs as the key focus in essentially commercial operations. Hospitality implies a selfless commitment to the meeting of the emotional needs of guests whereas bars, hotels and restaurants imply commercial

relationships where service comes at a price and only if profitable (in principle)' (Lashley, 2008:3).

One of the major constituents of the hospitality industry, commonly referred to as the accommodation category, includes hotels, guesthouses, Bed and Breakfasts (B&B's). The food services sector includes restaurants, cafes and pubs. Hotels themselves are not a homogenous grouping but have common features regardless of management and ownership structure and size, i.e., number of guest rooms and market segment. The structure of hotel ownership ranged from independent ownership to large international hotel groups. Managers were expected to demonstrate proficiency in technical and craft areas as well as management and leadership of people in a highly competitive industry. 'It is these characteristics which collectively determine the distinctive nature of the hotel industry, which shape organisational design and structure, and largely determine managerial policies, procedures and behavior' (Guerrier & Lockwood, 1989, in Mullins & Dossor, 2013:15). Hospitality organisations are:

> 'people moulding organisations and they are concerned with human beings as the basis of the nature of work carried out. The input is customers seeking satisfaction of certain needs and the desired output is a satisfied customer, […] which entails the customer being suitably rested, refreshed and entertained. The customer is therefore a major throughput of the hotel system […] where the hotel is unusual is that the customer as the main throughput are provided with and consume services within the establishment and leave with no tangible product' (Mullins & Dossor, 2013:25).

Shepherd (2013) 'develops the idea of the nature of hospitality […] by exploring the social and emotional dimensions of the customer relationship' (Mullins & Dossor, 2013:6). Emotional warmth and security can only be provided by the people who work in an organisation. Therefore alongside the commercial and contractual relationship that exists between the organisation and the customer there is the human relationship, as 'commercial hospitality is an understanding of hospitality as a human relationship in the host guest role' (Lashley, 2008:14). It is possible to argue that hotels are high task-interdependent organisations in the delivery of multiple services under one roof, where employees interacted with each other and with each guest to ensure an experience of consistent service quality. The delivery of these services had particular consequences for such high task-interdependent micro-businesses whose staff deliver those

services, in many cases within very pressurised time frames. The delivery of hotel services within time pressure can affect service quality and the overall guest experience, because an interruption in the expectation(s) is typically expressed by an emotional reaction.

2.2 Competences and Competencies

The focus of DBA Documents Three, Four and Five has been on the topic of competence and competencies, with particular interest in management and leadership competencies. Throughout this research journey a number of issues have arisen regarding the notion of what constitutes competence, the differing spellings of the term, its multiple definitions and the complexity of competing frameworks of knowledge that are divided between the work and the worker.

The debate regarding managerial competence located two contrasting definitions from academics and practitioners in the UK and the USA. The tension between the two perspectives on what defines competent and competencies saw a divergence in the manner in which the concepts surrounding competencies were being applied (Bolden & Gosling, 2006:148). Although the concept of competence has not been in frequent use until relatively recently, the problem of identifying what constitutes competence at work is not new (Sandberg, 2000:9). It also informs the disparate nature of the debate on competencies, leading to possible gaps in the debate. The problem was that such disparate attempts to co-conceptualise management competencies have led to a frequent failure to cross-fertilise and inform practice.

The concept of managerial competency arose out of the work of David McClelland and the McBer Consultancy Group in the USA during the 1970s (Bolden & Gosling, 2006:3). The debate on competencies was popularised as a result of research carried out by the McBer Consultancy (Mabey & Finch-Lees, 2008:166; Bolden & Gosling, 2006:148; Henderson, 2011:187) whereby the terms competent and competencies continued to dominate all aspects of business and organisational management. Taylor (1911) was one of the first in modern times to address the problem, using scientifically based leadership principles whereby he elaborated his well-known time and motion studies, proposing that managers should be able to identify what constitutes workers' competence (Sandberg, 2000:10). The term competency first came to widespread managerial attention in the USA following the publication of Richard Boyatzis'

study *The Competent Manager* (1982). Boyatzis is credited with augmenting the worker-orientated debate with his 1982 publication when he described a job competency as 'an underlying characteristic of a person in that it may be a motive, trait, or skill, an aspect of one's self-image or a social role or body of knowledge that one uses which results in effective and/or superior performance in a job' (1982:82). Boyatzis argued that because job competencies are underlying characteristics, they can be said to be 'generic' and the 'capacity from the underlying characteristic that exists in a person which leads to behaviour that meets the job demands within the parameters of the organisation environment and that in turn brings results' (1982:21).

It was in 1986 that Mangham and Silver introduced the term competence to the UK debate on management development, reporting at the time that many UK organisations and managers lacked even the vocabulary to describe or define properly what was meant by competent managerial performance (Henderson, 2011:187). The approach adopted in the UK in the early 1990s was more work-orientated and typified the interest in competences that had seen the then National Council for Vocational Qualifications Authority (NCVQA) devise a whole range of programmes for skills development of employees encompassing minimum levels of competence or technical ability that related to the job of work to be completed. Competence (plural competences) relates to the ability to carry out a specific task via a predetermined sequence of steps, and it was this interpretation of competence that was described as job standards: the concept is output-or performance-based (Henderson, 2011:188). The ''UK Training Agency defined competence as actions, behaviours or outcomes in the form of results that the person should be able to demonstrate' to achieve competence in the completed task of work (Henderson, 2011:187). This task-based approach to competence centered on 'identifying activities that are central for accomplishing specific work and then transforming those activities into personal attributes, thereby generating more concrete and detailed descriptions of what constitutes competence' (Sandberg, 2000:10). The multi-method approach drew on both the worker and work approaches to competence by identifying attributes of the employee that correspond to work activities to complete a task competently.

The dominant approaches have moved on over the past hundred years from time and motion studies to job analysis, and what are described as 'the scientific principles of the rationalistic

research tradition focusing on three main approaches – worker-orientated, work-orientated and multimethod-orientated approaches within the worker-orientated approach, competence is essentially focused on the attributes possessed by employees typically represented by knowledge, skills, abilities and personal traits for effective work performance' (Sandberg, 2000:10). More critically, the way in which knowledge regarding competence and competencies was constructed came in part from the 'rationalistic approach to competencies [which] advocated a dualistic ontology splitting the phenomenon of competence into two entities, work and worker. The objectivistic epistemology implies objective, knowledge work that is beyond the workers and leads to descriptions of work that are independent of workers that accomplish them […] two independent entities prerequisite worker attributes and work activities' (Sandberg, 2000:11).

These two profound challenges underpinning the competency debate, namely differences in the spelling of the terms competence and competency, is informed in part by a traditionalist functionalist perspective which splits and separates the phenomenon of competencies between the worker and work. The term competent is work-task-focused, characteristic of the UK model, whereas competencies are generic characteristics that exist in a person, more attributable to the USA model.

It could be argued that the competencies debate of the 1980's–1990's was simply a fad in the efforts to improve the management and leadership of businesses. However, while arguments abounded on the successes and failures of combining these two complex areas, these were possibly caused by the tradition of dividing the two entities employee and employment. In other words, competence was achieved by completing a given task by following a set of steps in the proper sequence, with no regard for the ability or the attributes of the person to do so in the first place. Notwithstanding the challenges in spelling and the competing interpretations of how to achieve competency, the debate rumbled on. In recent times, the competency debate has gained momentum again through the currency of emotional and social intelligence competencies.

During the subsequent years competency-based management development was incorporated into the best-practice discourse for organisations, as competencies serve to translate

organisational strategies into individual priorities. This has enabled managers to fine-tune their development around a few key skill areas which have high salience for their own success and that of the organisation. The behaviour statements of competency incorporated into management development cover such facets as knowledge, skills and ability in the areas of leadership, problem-solving, dealing with pressure, decision-making, creativity, teamwork, entrepreneurship (Mabey & Finch-Lees, 2008:166–167). Indeed, there was lots of evidence in this research, of these competency frameworks which focused on employee attributes or qualities were mentioned by general managers of the international hotel groups.

The work that Sandberg conducted in Sweden was with Volvo car manufacturing, where the processes of product production (factory) and consumption (purchase of cars) takes place at very different locations and rarely or never interacts with each other. The services sector is completely the reverse, in that service production and consumption are inextricably linked, as highlighted earlier in this chapter. Furthermore, the service production and consumption involves co-production linking the service provider (employee) and service consumer (customer or guest). So, in effect, this researcher does not 'support the division of the phenomenon of competence as separate entities namely employee and employer as proposed by the dualistic ontology assuming that the world and the person are distinct entities' (Sandberg, 2000:11).

2.3   Emotion and Emotional Labour: The Language of Emotion

Until relatively recently, the role that emotions play in work and everyday lives has been given little attention in various literatures. Some of the reasons stem from the 'rise of scientific management and the myth of rationality where the protocol of the work world was no place for emotions coupled with a dominant belief that emotions were disruptive, and rarely viewed as constructive or contributing to enhanced performance at work' (Robbins & Judge, 2012:50). There are three terms that are closely intertwined: affect, emotions and moods. 'Affect is a generic term that covers a broad range of feelings that people experience, including both emotions and moods. Moods are less intense feelings than emotions and often, but not always, lack a contextual stimulus. Emotions are intense feelings directed at someone or something, often described as discrete, time-limited, affective responses to significant environmental changes (Robbins & Judge, 2012:50). While the literature on emotion stemmed from traditional

psychology, there is growing awareness of the role of emotions in the management and leadership of businesses.

Nash (1989) draws upon the tradition as founded by classical scholars such as Aristotle and observes that one integral basis for persuading others is the ability to express feelings or emotions and evoke corresponding ones in audiences and listeners. Emotions are a powerful rhetorical device used by managers who may apply 'two companion skills such as design and relation through the use of tropes or metaphors which can evoke images that correlate with, and thereby enhance, the emotions to be expressed or elicited' (Nash (1989) in Samra-Fredericks, 2004:1117). Emotions play a very significant role in sensemaking. Once activated, emotions are thought to coordinate thought, physiology and behaviour so that people can respond to reality in self-protective and self-enhancing ways. Basic emotions include anger, disgust, happiness, fear, sadness, surprise and pride. Pride is a very complex emotion associated with distinct, universally recognised, nonverbal expression, which is spontaneously displayed during pride experiences. Pride involves self-evaluations and the motivation to impress ourselves and others. In Ancient Greek, biblical thought condemned excessive pride or hubris, yet in Western culture pride is widely viewed as a virtue to be sought and encouraged, (McCullough *et al*. 2008 in Sheldon, 2010:55, Tracy & Robbins, in Sheldon, 2010:101).

The role of emotion was repeatedly mentioned throughout the empirical research in terms of the part that emotions play in co-creating the hospitality experience where the role of people, and the ongoing experience of service delivery is dependent upon the personal interaction between staff, managers and customers (Mullins & Dossor 2013:xv). Although all jobs place some burden on our feelings, emotional labour occurs only in jobs that require personal contact with the public and the production of a state of mind such as hope, desire, happiness or fear in others. Employees in hospitality and tourism are expected to display positive and pleasant emotions, more specifically they are expected to be happy, jolly and cheerful (Mullins & Dossor, 2013:51, 139). Hochschild's research in 1983 described the way in which some jobs and careers required a display of certain emotions, especially those in the services industries where customer care was inextricably linked with making people feel good. But whilst the work on emotional labour by Hochschild was profoundly influential, it focused a negative strain and influence of emotion

work, and missed the bigger picture, maybe in part due to the fact that the link between emotion work or emotional labour has come to be understood in a positive light versus the traditional model of an expectation of employers to be nice regardless of how one feels. Because Westerners experience greater satisfaction when emotional expression matches inner feelings, employees typically feel more satisfied when they offer what they believe to be an authentic emotional expression, i.e., that emotion arises from within or inside and that displays of emotion should match what one really feels (Holstein & Gubrium, 2008:521-522).

2.3.1   Emotional Intelligence and Social Intelligence

The competency debate has shifted direction in recent times, focusing on the emotional development of self, described as emotional intelligence. Alongside emotional intelligence – working on self-management and control of emotions is social intelligence, i.e. putting emotional intelligence to work (so to speak), when managing others through effective social awareness and relationship management. Much has been written on the topic of emotional intelligence as one's ability to perceive, use, understand and manage emotions in order to monitor one's own and others' feelings and to use this information to guide one's own thinking and action (Salovey & Grewal, 1990 & Mayer & Salovey 1997 in Sheldon, 2010:124). The literature has commented extensively on the role and importance of emotional intelligence in leadership development. 'Emotions really are the engine in which the vehicle of leadership performance, and the skills associated with using emotions are indispensable to achieving outstanding success' (Coffey & Murray, 2010:vii). The emotional capital model of emotional intelligence is a well-researched model that was developed with a specific focus on identifying the competencies that characterise effective leaders. It contains ten specific emotional intelligence competencies: self-awareness, self-confidence, self-reliance, self-actualisation, self-control, flexibility, optimism and resilience, relationship skills and assertiveness (Newman, 2007:11).

According to Thorndike (1920), who first proposed the concept of social intelligence (SI), 'it shows itself abundantly in the nursery, on the playground, in barracks and factories and salesrooms, but it eludes the formal standardised conditions of the testing laboratory' (Goleman, 2006:82–84). While the key aspects of emotional intelligence related directly to the awareness

and management of self, Goleman's model of social intelligence expands this 'self-awareness and self-management to social awareness – what we sense about others and social facility – what we do with that awareness', when relating to and managing others, be they employees, colleagues or customers. 'Social awareness refers to a spectrum that runs from instantaneously sensing another inner state, to understanding their feelings and thoughts to 'getting' complicated social situations' (Goleman, 2006:84). The role and influence of emotional intelligence and social intelligence as evidenced in the research were examined in the data analysis and findings.

A greater degree of emotional intelligence is required by managers so that they can understand how people work and their likely reactions to change. Managers and leaders will also benefit from having the humility to accept that they are not always the ones with the best or most appropriate ideas. At this stage, one might ask, have some of the hoteliers in Ireland reached this juncture already? A report entitled Management Futures 2018 (Chartered Management Institute 2008) proposed a ten-year strategy on the future world of work and management. Changing expectations of work and the impact of new technologies will require managers and leaders to develop a range of skills that focus on emotional and spiritual intelligence, judgement and the ability to stimulate creative thinking to improve productivity as they will be working with a very diverse workforce (Mullins & Dossor, 2013:225). It could be argued that this 2018 projection has arrived in 2013 and is currently the world of work in the Republic of Ireland as we make sense of and interpret it already.

2.4 Sensemaking & Identity Work

Part of the methodology that guided and supported the analysis and interpretation of the data collected for this thesis was Weick's (1995) sensemaking framework, consisting of seven properties summarised under the acronym SIR COPE (social context, identity, retrospect, reliance on cues, ongoing experience, updated plausibility and enactment). The hoteliers interviewed for this research used words such as "care, show respect, be honest, as well as being able to read and use a profit and loss account", that represent the situation which is present in moments of sensemaking, their realities of those moments of sensemaking are mixtures of SIR COPE' (Weick, 2010:544). Each interviewee engaged in various forms of identity work, as they respectively crafted a narrative of self-identity interspersed with their notion of their

occupational identity as an owner-manager or general manager as well as an hotelier. The processes of identity work of hoteliers' as owner-managers or general managers in creating identities were also examined. In other words, the identities created have significant implications for their notions of competence. It was the constructionist lens using language to make sense of individual realities that created opportunities and posed challenges for understanding competencies thereby:

> 'making the task more messy, complex and unpredictable as competency is constituted by the meaning work takes on for the manager in her or her lived experience, and not reducible to a set of objective standards' (Mabey & Finch-Lees, 2008:226).

Observations on Literatures - Managing Hospitality, Competencies and Identity Work

The literature on hospitality services has been influenced by a rationalistic functionalist approach whereby much of the theorising has focused on an attribute model which separates each into independent component parts. That is, by common consent the customer is central to the concept of hospitality. The industry is about being hospitable, which leads to the notions of respect and co-creation, with the customer contributing to the design and nature of the experience. Compared with most business organisations, 'the hotel is unusual in that customers as the main throughput are provided with and consume services within the establishment, and leave with no tangible product' (Mullins & Dossor, 2013:34). Yet, while the literature reflects the individual component parts of managing hospitality services of people as the major throughput, there is little evidence of the daily managing of these situations. In other words, the nature of managing hospitality services is constantly ongoing and socially interactive so that each experience is different, whilst the fundamentals of the outcomes are the same; a good night's rest and quality food served in the restaurant. The metaphor, that one is only as good as your last cup of coffee comes to mind here, i.e. confirming that the giving and receiving of hotel experiences starts and stops each time a guest comes and leaves, regardless of what they consume and pay for.

The idea that there is a disconnect between the literature of the hospitality industry and its management in relation to how "all people" were managed and treated is worth highlighting.

While the literature that highlights the outputs model of hospitality management is at one in relation to the achievement of financial results, there is major variance regarding how this is achieved. Much of the literature on hospitality management has followed that generic model of separating out the job of managing into discrete functions such as planning, leading, organising or control, tasks and roles. 'The hospitality manager in order for them to carry out the process of management and execution of work requires them to possess certain attributes and skills […] a combination of technical competence, social and human skills, and conceptual ability' (Mullins & Dossor, 2013:215).

The literature continues to use the functionalist model of management, which divides the job of management into discrete bundles of mutually exclusive activities as examined earlier, and yet the actual doing of managing on a daily basis and how managers manage does not happen in a linear fashion. The reality of managing the business of hotels is in part about managing people to achieve results – the rhetorical term "results" can be applied to the achievement of financial objectives as much as satisfied guests on departure, regardless of their purchase and overall experience. But achieving results given the nature of hospitality is about how these results are achieved which in turn is about the ongoing development of teams of employees that must take place on a daily basis which is an aspect that is missing from the literature. Another notable absence for the various literatures on hospitality and hotel management is the role played by personal qualities as a cluster of competencies that informs how managers interact and manage their employees and all people.

A significant portion of the literature on management tended to focus on the term management as a noun, typically influenced by the perspective of those authors' view on what constituted reality and the creation of knowledge. In 1991, Mangham & Pye wrote *The Doing of Managing*, a title carefully chosen to reflect the active, purposive, deliberate and continuing effort consistently shown by those managers that they had interviewed during research they conducted during the years 1987 to 1989. From this, they had developed the metaphor of *organising as explaining*, as a way of characterising the practice of the managers interviewed that reflected how practitioners spent the greater part of their time explaining their organising and endeavoring

to limit the range of responses to their explanations, hence shaping meaning attributed to their practice (Mangham & Pye, 1991:29).

It can be argued that the current debate on the notion of competence is work-job title focused, while competencies referred to an attribute model associated with characteristics demonstrated by workers-employees. The problem was that such disparate attempts to co-conceptualise management competencies have led to a failure to cross-fertilise and inform practice. This thesis proposed another route to understanding managerial competencies in the hotel services industry, using social constructionism and an interpretivist lens which stipulated that 'the person and world are inextricably linked through persons' lived experience of the world' (Berger & Luckmann, 1966:40), positing that management competencies are based on the combined hotel owner-managers and general managers sensemaking of that work of hotel management in their daily doing of managing the business of hotels. In actual fact, when the transcripts were viewed closely enough, both owner-managers and general managers described in different ways their notions of clusters of competencies and how they became and remain competent.

While the general managers were well versed in their notion of competency, there was also evidence of the importance of coaching and developing their staff, by using every day experiences as learning opportunities to develop competencies respectively in individual hotel employees and in teams. The nature of the interviews enabled the qualities, feelings, intuitions and meanings of the managers' own notion of managing to emerge, as they used stories and metaphors to illustrate their lived experience of hotel work spanning many years. The level of economic, financial and technological changes imposed on businesses between 2008 and 2013 created ample opportunity for learning how to cope through lived experience of these new realities. There is a dearth in the literature on competences and competencies with regard to potential links between qualities and emotions as they pertain to the debate. The presence of qualities linked to emotions emerged as the critical link between self-identity and identity work.

2.5   Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework was developed which mapped three key concepts of the literatures together; managing hospitality services, competencies and the language of emotion surrounded by the theoretical frame of sensemaking as depicted in the Figure 2.1. This conceptual framework set out a number of categories such as hospitality services, competencies, and sensemaking, which are labels that are put on intellectual bins containing many discrete events and behaviours, (Miles & Huberman, 1994:18). This conceptual framework attempted to highlight the relationships between these three categories; managing hospitality services in hotels illustrated in this Venn diagram in visual form where the overlapping commonality was competencies. This conceptual framework was built upon the earlier work of Lashley & Morrison (2000:4) which depicted the various domains of hospitality activities.

This framework aided the process of how the empirical data for this was collected and analysed underlying theoretical framework of sensemaking, that aided the formulation the research question on this complex topic of competencies and defined the case(s) i.e. hotel owner-managers and general managers in the bounded context of the hotel sector in the Republic of Ireland. Figure 2.1 also graphically displayed how the conceptual framework was amended to include Emotion & Emotional Intelligence as another important intellectual bin because it emerged as a significant feature of the data analysis and findings.

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

Relationships

Sensemaking

Sensemaking

Emotion

Sensemaking

Sensemakin

Managing

Hotels

Hospitality Services

People

Figure 5.1   Model of Management Competencies Framework

- Clusters of Knowledge Competencies

- Clusters of Qualities Competencies

Knowledge   **Qualities**

Skills   **Emotions**

- Clusters of Skills Competencies

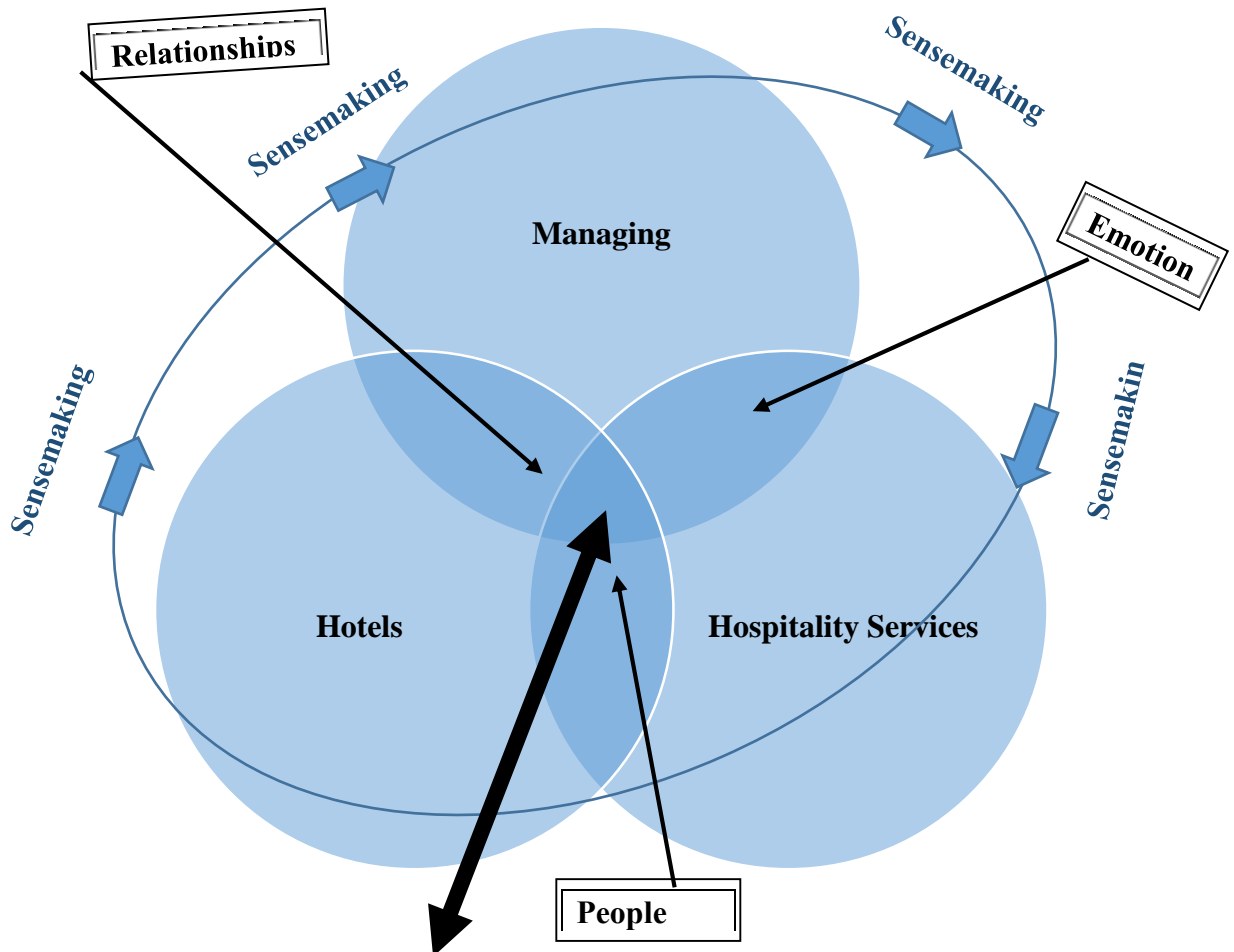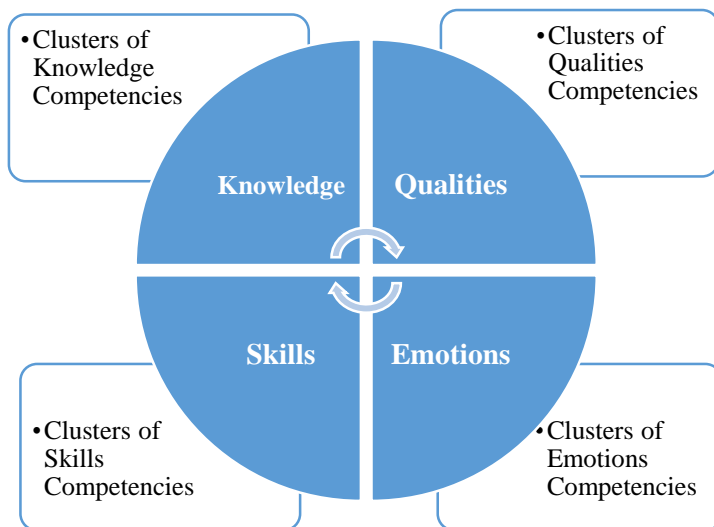- Clusters of Emotions Competencies

Contribution to the Research

The literature on hospitality services, competences and competencies were examined in the context of how they pertained to hotel management and managing hotels, as well as the theoretical framework of sensemaking are depicted in the conceptual framework Figure 2.1. Some aspects of the various approaches used to examine hospitality management which fragmented the management role of one person, be they an owner or general manager, rather than representing it as an integrated whole, i.e., the whole team of employees working together. Equally, the focus on past performance of the noun management versus that nature of managing that is always ongoing, focused on the current and future requirements had implications for competencies of managing. Furthermore, the universalistic and generic concept of competencies that assumes a common set of capabilities regardless of the nature of the situation, individuals or task is rather limited and mechanistic, and the way in which competencies tend to emphasise measurable behaviours and outcomes to the exclusion of more subtle qualities, interactions and situational factors were worth noting (Bolden & Gosling, 2007; Sandberg, 2000; Mabey & Finch-Lees, 2008). Chapter Three provided the research methodology that guided the collection and analysis of the empirical data, and examined how the Weick's sensemaking framework was used to interpret the findings as they emerged.

3   Research Methodology and Methods

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter of Document Five was to outline the methodology of this thesis, which guided the methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation that were used. Document Five explored how hotel owner-managers and general managers identified, interpreted and made sense of management competencies through their interpretation of managing hotels from their lived experience of that work. Much consideration was given to the methodology in the process and design of Document Five, i.e. the choice and use of particular methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation and linking these to the desired outcomes of meaning-making and identity construction. Rigour in the process of data collection, reduction, analysis and interpretation was achieved through the 'systematic, powerful displays of patterns and themes [that] used an iterative process toward their generation and use' (Miles & Huberman, 1994:11).

3.1   Research Methodology

The philosophy underpinning the research methodology of this thesis was 'the net that contains this researcher's ontological, epistemological and methodological premises may be termed a paradigm or interpretative framework, a basic set of beliefs that guide action' (Guba, 1990a:17; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013:26). This research was undertaken in the business world of hotels, whereby the use of language, metaphors, and the figures of speech used by the interviewees in constructing their accounts and their meaning-making of management competencies was examined.

Drawing on Crotty's scaffolding metaphor, a constructionist epistemology and interpretivist theoretical perspective guided the methodology in the research design, which used qualitative methods to collect and analyse the data (2003:2). This methodological scaffold was used to demonstrate how the objectives of this thesis were achieved. The procedures for inquiry

encompassing research methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation were crucial and critical to the achievement of the research objectives (Creswell, 2014:197).

Social constructionism focused on the firm belief that there was in practice neither objective reality nor objective truth: reality is constructed, and while physical reality exists, it is not accessible to human endeavour; 'constructionism is about reality and relationships […] meanings do not exist before a mind engages them. This means that what people perceive as reality is not the reality but what they constructed through experiences and interpretations […] the construction of reality is an active process of creating a world. The reality people experience in everyday life is a constructed reality, their reality, based on interpretation' (Sarantakos, 2013:37–38).

The social constructionism philosophy of socially constructed realities informed by an interpretative approach guided the research methodology. So, in line with constructionists the focus of the study was on explaining the nature of the variation or the source of the patterns the interviewees sought to describe, using many approaches to secure insight and understanding. 'As language and thought are inseparable providing the basis for thought, language is at the heart of the construction process, is a bag of labels and its job is to give expression to things that already exist within themselves' (Burr, 2003:47). While there is no substitute for the researcher's familiarity with the data set or set of sources, the use of multiple stories was better, leveraging the human motives that often underlie social patterns.

The interpretive epistemology 'is a framework that looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life world of business and management research' (Crotty, 2003:67). The different traditions of qualitative research have resulted in a diversity of perspectives on in-depth interviewing, in particular debates about how knowledge is constructed in the interview or is a pre-existing phenomenon, and how active or passive the role of the interviewer should be. There was a metaphor that came to mind when conducting the interviews: that of the miner and the traveler. The miner metaphor sees knowledge as given; it is understood as buried metal and the interviewer is the miner who unearths the valuable metal. The traveler metaphor reminds us of the constructionist research model, in which knowledge is co-created

and negotiated between the interviewee and the interviewer. This interviewer acted as a traveler who journeyed with the interviewees, whose stories were developed as the traveler interpreted, asked questions that led the subjects to tell their own stories of their lived world, and conversed with them in conversation as wandering together (Kvale, 1996:4, in Ritchie & Lewis, 2003:139).

Bearing in mind that the analysis of qualitative research typically produces a 'rich, unwieldy and often tangled pile of data' (Bryman, 2012:390), it was critical to chart the iterative process in order to return tentative conclusions in answering the research question with trustworthiness and authenticity. The other reason for mapping out the detailed steps of analysis was to ensure that this researcher was not accused of completing 'an esoteric process shrouded in intellectual mystery or to appear haphazard with discovery falling from the evidence somehow by chance'. The objective was to 'sift, label and reduce the qualitative data alongside the intellectual processes involved in generating findings from the evidence collected' (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003:199–200).

Language, metaphors and interpretative repertoires arising from each of the interviewees enabled the patterns of communication to be identified, which in turn assisted and guided the identification of themes. Language is bound to be of importance for the social researcher because 'it's the means by which we ask questions, and secure answers' (Bryman, 2012:522). But also 'Language is both the medium through which, as well as the context within which, these fundamental processes of identity are forged. Words and the meaning we attach to them are the fabric of life [...] are central to the processes of weaving, shaping and influencing' (Tietze *et al*., 2003:8). Equally, 'the way we define something is by what it supposedly is in itself – not by its relationship, instead we could have been told something which connects: that all communication necessitates context, and without context there is no meaning' (Bateson, 1978:13).

Metaphors transferring meaning 'are figures of speech that link two previously related subject domains […] they create new conceptual bridges and entail the possibility of seeing the world anew and can yield deeper insights into organisational meaning making' (Tietze *et al*., 2003:47). By providing mental pictures metaphors can play an important part in determining how we

construct language and thoughts to convey meaning in another way. They can communicate more powerfully, convey emotions and throw new light on familiar concepts. Metaphorical language plays an important part in the way different players construe the organisation and its environment that can equally convey so many meanings (Mabey & Lees-Finch, 2008:11–12), as examined in analysis of the data in Chapter Four and again in Chapter Five.

Interpretative repertoires are building blocks that were used in the constructive versions of actions, events and the role of people in the hotel business. These interpretative repertoires were broadly discernible clusters of terms, descriptions and figures of speech used as a culturally shared toolkit of resources. Like the archaeologist who uses interpretative repertoires by inferring the past existence of a particular type of instances of widely used chisel or spear by observing a number of different instances in which it appears to have been used (Burr, 2002:59–60). These thick descriptions set up and made possible interpretation, binding them together by detailing the context, evokes emotionality, self-feelings, the nature of social relationships and inserts history into experience by establishing the significance of that experience, where the voices, actions and meanings of interacting individuals are heard (Patton, 2002:503; Denzin, 1989b:83). There were many instances of thick descriptions evidenced in the stories and metaphors used in the data analysis and interpretation.

This research used an inductive approach to develop explications and explanations of managerial competencies in the context of hospitality through the collection of raw data from hotel owner-managers and general managers managing their businesses of hotels at a time of a socio-environmental crisis in the Republic of Ireland. 'The main purpose of an inductive approach is to build new theory, its empirical focus is on collecting data from the real world of business as a resource to be used in developing theories or explanations', […] 'because it is rooted in a philosophical view of the world that emphasizes social construction, perceptions, meanings and subjectivity as important in understanding and the development of knowledge', (Brotherton, 2008:16, Saunders *et al*., 2007:119). This inductive process underpinned all of the data analysis, data reduction and data interpretation activities, whereby 'meanings emerging […] have to be tested for their plausibility, their sturdiness, their 'confirmability' – that is, their

validity' (Miles & Huberman, 1994:11). The confirmability of the hoteliers' meanings of managerial competencies were examined in the findings Chapter Five and again in Chapter Six.

3.2   Research Methods: Data Collection, Reduction, Analysis and Interpretation

This section examined how the research methods of data collection and analysis were implemented. Due to the fact that qualitative data is normally transient and understood only within context, the collection of background data, known as contextualisation (Collis & Hussey, 2009:143) was conducted earlier under the empirical work completed in Documents Three and Four and the business context in Chapter One. The business world of hospitality and tourism is vast; one of the biggest industries in the world, and so developing the contextual framework aided the collection and interpretation of the data for this thesis. Earlier in this Chapter a number of issues surrounding qualitative data collection were discussed and 'the study design decisions can be seen in a real sense analytic, a sort of anticipatory data reduction […] they permit and support later analysis: they prefigure analytic moves as tighter designs are a wise course, they provide clarity and focus for beginning researchers' (Miles & Huberman, 1994:17). In this case something was known conceptually about the phenomenon of competencies and management, but when these two concepts were combined conflicts in the debate were highlighted. It was decided to use sampling parameters such as settings, actors, events and processes to bound, focus and organise the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994:30).

Preparation for the Collection of Raw Data: Sampling

One of the most significant issues to be considered when designing this thesis project was the type and number of people to be interviewed bearing in mind that the participants are a heterogeneous group of hotel owner-managers and general managers. There are 835 hotels in the Republic of Ireland (Fáilte Ireland Tourism Facts, 2014) which represents the total population of hotels divided into categories by star classification, as illustrated in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Total Population of Hotels in the Republic of Ireland

Classification	Premises	Beds
5*	34	3,776
4*	272	25,434
3*	366	25,011
2*	131	2,700
1*	32	441
Total	**835**	**57,362**

Source: Failte Ireland 2014

Purposive sampling of sites to select the participants, either owner-managers or general managers was used under three headings; typical, extreme and heterogeneous, (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003) as illustrated in Table 3.2. A total number of fifty potential participants both owner-managers and general managers, were selected from the total population of hotels. These fifty potential participants were identified under the three purposive sampling headings within the hotels star classification system using the variables management-ownership structure and luxury and budget market segments detailed in Table 3.3. The objective of this exercise was to identify both hotel owner-managers and general managers in various hotel organisational structures who would agree to participate in an audio-recorded interview for this research.

Table 3.2: Purposive Sampling of Cases for Interview

Purposive sample	Reasons for use	Underlying premise
Typical case	Sample illustrative and considered representative, albeit not statistically	Sample typical of the population
Extreme	Sample consisting of unusual or special participants will enable finding out the most	Findings from extreme cases will be relevant in understanding or explaining more typical cases
Heterogeneous	Sample has diverse characteristics to provide maximum variation in data collected	Patterns that emerge are likely to be of particular interest and value in representing key themes

Participants were sought from both luxury and budget categories in differing organisational structures including international hotel groups and independent ownership, in an effort to seek well-informed perspectives from each contrasting dimension. The hotels were divided into two categories of luxury and budget based on the hotel star classification system. Luxury hotels are hotels in the four star and five star categories offering luxury-quality amenities and services, and are a full service hotel managed under an international hotel group or by independent owner-manager. The budget hotel category covers a wider range of hotels within the one star, two star and three star categories, where the total number of 366 three star hotels dominated. Twelve respondents agreed to participate in an audio-recorded research meeting as depicted in Table 3.3. Each of the twelve respondents were employed in varying senior management roles in the hotel industry with careers that spanned between time periods of twenty to forty years.

Table 3.3 Sample of Participants for Interview

Hotel Classification	Total Number of Hotels	Purposive Samples of potential participants for interview	Numbers of candidates who agreed to be interviewed
Luxury 5*	34	8 x GM	2 General Managers
Luxury 4*	272	20 (10 x OM) (10 x GM)	5 (2 Owner-Managers) (3 General Managers)
Budget 3*	366	28 (10 x OM) (18 x GM)	5 (2 Owner-Managers) (3 General Managers)
Budget 2*	131	N/A	N/A
Budget 1*	32	N/A	N/A
*Total	835	50	12

*Source: Fáilte Ireland Tourism Facts 2014

Luxury Hotels: the majority of five star hotels in the Republic of Ireland are managed by international hotel groups. This researcher made contact with the general managers in a total of eight five star hotels, by a combination of letter, email and telephone. Two respondents (MariLHM & ArinLHM) agreed to be interviewed and have the interview conversation audio recorded. In the case of the four star hotels, the majority of hotels employ a general manager

regardless of ownership structure. This researcher made contact with general managers in twenty hotels in the four star category by a combination of letter and email broken down evenly by ownership and management structure, i.e., ten hotels positioned within international hotel groups and ten hotels within independent private ownership. Five candidates agreed to be interviewed, PamoLHO as CEO of an international hotel group represented a heterogeneous sample whilst MicaLHO as owner-manager represented what could be deemed the extreme sample. The other three candidates ConaLHM worked as a general manager within an international hotel group, whilst GeriLHM and NicaLHM worked as general managers in hotels within independent ownership.

Budget Hotels: There are a combined total 529 hotels in the budget category that consists of one star, two star and three star classifications. In the case of this budget category it was decided that hotels in the three star classification would be targeted for the purposes of this research for a number of reasons, including:

1. The majority of three star hotels are open during the winter months when the data collection was conducted.

2. The three star category represents the greatest number of hotels, whose management structure is equally divided between owner-managed and international hotel groups.

3. The majority of hotels in the one star and star categories are seasonal, which means that getting in contact with owner-managers proved rather difficult to say the least.

This researcher contacted a total of twenty hotels in this budget category, by a combination of letter and email seeking their participation in this research. These twenty hotels were broken down by structure of ownership and management, whereby ten hotels with owner-manager and the remaining ten hotels employing a general manager. This resulted in two owner-managers JoniBHO and JoelBHO agreeing to participate. HeliBHM was employed as a general manager within an international hotel group whilst ChrisBHM and PoilBHM were employed general managers respectively within independent ownership.

Table 3.4: Matrix: Purposive Samples of Participants

Interviewee	Reasons for use	Underlying premise
MariLHM (typical)	GM: Hotel Group Luxury 5 star	190 rooms, restaurant, bar, coffee lounge, conference, banqueting
AdinLHM (typical)	GM: Independent Luxury 5 star	37 rooms, Michelin star restaurant
PamoLHO (heterogeneous)	CEO: Hotel Group Budget 3 & Luxury 4 star	10,000 rooms, hotels restaurants, bars, conference, banqueting, leisure
Cona (typical)	GM: Hotel Group Luxury 4 star	300 rooms, restaurant, bar, leisure, conference
NicaLHM (typical)	GM: Independent Luxury 4 star	113 rooms, 2 restaurants, 2 bars, conference, banqueting, leisure
MicaLHO (extreme)	Owner: Independent Luxury 4 star	23 rooms, restaurant
GeriLHM (typical)	GM: Independent Luxury 4 star	116 rooms, restaurant, bar
HeliBHM (typical)	GM: Hotel Group Budget 3 star	155 rooms, restaurant
PoilBHM (typical)	GM: Independent Budget 3 star	67 rooms, restaurant, bar, meeting rooms
CrisBHM (typical)	GM: Independent Budget 3 star	40 rooms, bar/restaurant
JoelBHO (typical)	Owner: Independent Budget 3 star	50 rooms, restaurant, coffee shop, bar, meeting rooms
JoniBHO (typical)	Owner: Independent Budget 3 star	167 rooms, restaurant, bar

3.2.2   Topic Guide

The design of fieldwork materials in qualitative research was an important stage in this study that required careful planning in terms of the overall shape of the data collection and the materials that will be needed (Maxwell, (2005) in Richie & Lewis, 2014:148). It was decided to develop and use a topic guide because it emphasised the focus on the topics of the questions,

acted as an 'aide-memoire of what should be explored and ensured a degree of consistency in data collection whilst still allowing flexibility to pursue the detail that is salient to each individual participant, (Ritchie & Lewis, 2014: 149). This topic guide identified the key issues to be explored, provided flexible direction to the fieldwork process of managing what is an unpredictable social condition, and to ensure consistency in the scope and direction of the interview questions. It also proved invaluable in terms of limiting and delimiting the nature and flow of the interview questions so as to ensure that the discussion followed a kind of organised progression in terms of capturing the interviewees' notions on management competencies.

A topic guide was used for all interview-meetings, to explain the nature and reasons for this study, and eased the participants into the interview, helping them to understand the discursive, conversational style of data collection and provide context to the research (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003:112-115). Data collection was expected to be less structured in an exploratory study as the key objective was to understand how these hoteliers' conceptions and values emerged through their speech and narrative. The interview involved the use of probing questions of the participants' individual experiences of hotel work, alongside a set of issues that needed to be covered, while allowing the participants to move on to other areas spontaneously (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003:111).

Topic Guide: Introductions were made between this researcher and the participant. This researcher stated the purpose and objective of the research and also explained the procedure regarding the participant information and consent form.

Opening Questions: This researcher used easy opening questions one and two which focused on the topic of competent as it related to career development of the participant.

1   Competent - What does the term competent mean to you?

        What makes you competent?

2   Critical moments in the development of your career to-date?

        Tell me more about that?

The core part of the interview questions three to five focused on the key topic of competent and competencies in the management of hospitality services in hotels.

3   What are the key competencies of managing today's in a challenging business context?

4   Tell me the last time that you recruited a member of the management team?

Do you use job specifications and person specifications?

Any other documents to find the appropriate candidate? How do you select – tell me about that process?

5   In your view what makes a competent assistant manager?

Can they go on to become an owner-manager or general manager – tell me the last time you came across these characters?

The closing questions six and seven focused on continuing professional development and looking to the future.

6   Educational programmes, tell me how do you keep up-to-date?

How do you manage CPD, your continuing professional development?

7   So looking forward, what are your thoughts on your future?

3.2.2   Data Collection Methods: Interviews

The purpose of these interviews was to explore understandings and opinions of selected participants who were asked questions to find out what they do, feel or think: it was about exploring data around understandings, opinions, what people remember doing, attitudes, dealings (Collis & Hussey, 2009:144). These face-to-face interviews were conducted and audio recorded and were transcribed verbatim immediately afterwards. These interviews were conducted with general managers and owner-managers within the 3, 4 and 5 star categories to explore with hoteliers on what it takes to be deemed competent. Open and probing questions

were asked in response to what the interviewee said, to secure greater understanding. The quality and flow of the interview questions was the 'starting point for meaningful analysis in order that the data can be challenged, extended, supported and linked in order to reveal its full use' (Bazeley, 2009:7).

'The context of the situation can influence the meanings of words […] verbal communication does not operate in a vacuum, the art of communication always takes place in a situation or context' (Stanton, 2003:4). Getting access to all of the interviewees did not prove too difficult. In this instance, this researcher sought to meet business owners and managers within the Irish hotel industry, because of their executive seniority in hotel organisations and capability to discuss the topic of management competencies. For the most part, all appointments that were scheduled went according to plan. In a couple of cases some interviewees were not available to meet with the researcher, but the rescheduled meetings were completed on a second or third attempt. Nearly all interviews were conducted in their place of work, i.e. in an hotel with one exception which was conducted in the corporate head offices of the international hotel group.

Twelve interviews were conducted between October 2012 and February 2013. Eleven of the interviews were tape recorded; in one instance the tape recorder malfunctioned at the beginning of the interview, and the researcher took notes during the meeting. Then when the meeting was concluded the researcher used the recorder when fixed to recall the various comments and responses given by the interviewee during the meeting, based on the structure and context of the written notes. Each interview lasted between sixty and ninety minutes, and was transcribed using the term case denoted in alphabetical order to protect the interviewee's identity and comply with ethical considerations. Back-up copies were made and a master copy of all the transcripts was stored securely for safekeeping, as Patton (2002:442) 'reminds us about the wisdom of an ounce of prevention'. Typed transcriptions were filed, separated by ownership structure and market segment (luxury or budget).

Each interview was given a label to denote the file that contained the transcription of the interview, field notes on the hotel organisation and personal observations about the organisation and the actual interview. The twelve interviews were divided as follows: seven were conducted

in the luxury category and the remaining five in the budget sector. Each file was labeled with a pseudonym LHM, i.e., MatiLHM where LH is a luxury hotel and M represents the title of manager or a pseudonym BHO where BH represents budget hotels and O represents the title of owner, i.e., JoelBHO.

3.2.2   Data Analysis: Data Reduction – Organising and Preparing Data for Analysis

The twelve interview transcripts produced a total of sixty five thousand words. Re-reading the raw data enabled this researcher to investigate the whole data and augmented the process of developing explanations linking philosophy with the making of meaning, using the framework of 'description-analysis-interpretation' (Wolcott, 1994:7) as part of the systematic process of data analysis.

In writing up each of the transcripts, Wolcott's guidance on how to organise the data for analysis was adopted, because 'qualitative researchers need to be good storytellers and are expected to be able to build their cases […] grounding their reflections in observed experience' (Wolcott, 1994:17). Data analysis was a challenging and exciting stage of the qualitative research process, requiring a mix of creativity and systematic searching, a blend of inspiration and diligent detection (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003:199). Because of the richness and thickness of the raw data, a series of steps were taken to analyse it, which commenced with a process of data reduction. Patterns emerged as part of the data reduction process whereby a pattern usually referred to a descriptive finding, which formed part of the inductive analysis through this researcher's interactions with the data. A theme takes on a more categorical form, (Patton, 2002:453).

Rich, detailed and concrete description of people and places using thick descriptions takes the reader into the setting being described, that enabled interpretations about meanings and significance to be drawn (Patton, 2002:437–438). Field notes of each interview were completed using Miles & Huberman's (1994) four aspects model (Creswell, 2014:189). This process was completed for all twelve (12) meetings and the audio-tape of each interview was replayed to ensure that any missing details were then inserted into the original transcripts so as to ensure comprehensiveness.

A summary of the field notes under the four aspects model are examined below:

1. The setting (where the physical location for the research took place),
2. The actors (who will be interviewed),
3. The events (observations of the interview),
4. The process (background on the interview process within the setting).

Setting: Eight interviews with GeriLHM, NikaLHM, MariLHM, ConaLHM, PoilBHM and HeliBHM, and owners JoniBHO, JoelBHO, were conducted in their respective hotels. The interview with PamoLHO was conducted at the corporate head offices of an international hotel group and the remaining three interviews with ArinLHM at a sister hotel, CrisBHM in a city centre hotel, and MicaLHO at a local towncentre hotel beside his own place of work. All of the interviewees managed full-service hotels which at a minimum provide guest rooms, food and beverage facilities whilst in addition a number of hotels also provide conference, banqueting and leisure amenities.

Actors: The twelve interviewees consisted of two females and ten males, as shown in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5: Interviewees' Education and Background

Gender	Males: 10	Females: 2
Interviewees	GM: 2 females 6 males	Owners: 4 males
Education	**GM's: Total = 8** 2 Females: 1 Degree holder 1 Hotel trained 6 Males: All degree graduates	**Owners: Total = 4** Males: 2: Hotel degrees 1: Accountant 1: Geologist

Experience	**GM's: (No. of Interviewees)**
	Females: 25 years (1)
	              20 years (1)
	Males: 25 years: (6)
	              30 years: (2)
		Owners (No of Interviewees.)
		Males:
		25 years (1)
		30 years (2)
		40 years (1)

GeriLHM had twenty-six years' hotel experience of which she spent twenty years working for international hotel groups in Russia, Middle East, London and Dublin in both luxury and budget sectors. At the time of the interview she worked for a private limited company as a general hotel

manager of a luxury hotel with one hundred and sixteen rooms, restaurant, bar and conference facilities.

ArinLHM had twenty-five years' hotel experience employed by both international hotel groups and independent hotel companies based in the USA, London and Dublin in various managerial roles, all in the luxury market segment. ArinLHM worked as a general manager for the past fifteen years with independent private hotel companies in the Republic of Ireland. At interview he managed a luxury hotel with thirty-nine guest rooms with a Michelin star restaurant.

NikaLHM had twenty-five years' hotel experience, having worked with international hotel groups in the UK and returned to Ireland to work in his current position as Director-GM of an independent luxury hotel. At the time of the interview he held his current position for the past ten years at an hotel with one hundred and thirteen rooms, two restaurants, two bars, extensive conference and banqueting facilities and a health and leisure club.

ConaLHM had thirty years' experience, having worked with international hotel groups in London and Dublin, in both budget and luxury market segments. At interview he was currently employed as general manager of a luxury hotel which is part an international hotel group with three hundred rooms, restaurant, bar, conference facilities and leisure centre.

PoilBHM had thirty-five years' hotel experience. He commenced his career with an international hotel group, working in various cities throughout Europe and has worked as a general manager for the past twenty years. He is currently sixteen years in his current GM position with an independent private hotel company that has sixty-seven rooms, bar, restaurant and meeting rooms.

MicaLHO is the owner-manager of a small luxury hotel with twenty-three rooms and restaurant for the past twenty-one years; that he co-managed with his wife. He had thirty-six years' experience, having commenced his hotel management career with an international hotel group.

HeliBHM had twenty years' experience in various roles in the hotel business. HeliBHM developed her career with international hotel groups in the UK. She returned to Ireland to her current position as general manager of an hotel in the budget market segment that is part of an international hotel group. At interview, HeliBHM held her current general management position for eight years.

CrisBHM had twenty-five years' experience in various roles in management with both international hotel groups and independent hotels in city locations right across Europe. He had been a general manager for the past ten years.

PamoLHO had spent forty-one years working with international hotel groups in both luxury and budget market segments, with hotels located in the UK, USA and Ireland. He worked as hotel general manager with a number of international hotel groups for twenty years. PamoLHO has held the position of CEO of various international hotel groups for the past fifteen years and at the time of interview is seven years in his current position.

JoelBHO is owner-manager of a diversified private company which included an hotel that he has personally managed since he acquired it in 1992. His hotel has fifty guest bedrooms, coffee shop, restaurant, bar, and extensive banqueting and conference facilities.

JoniBHO is the owner-manager of a city centre hotel that he took over from his parents in 1998, that operates in the budget market segment with one hundred and sixty-seven bedrooms, restaurant, bar and meeting rooms.

Events: All interviews were audio recorded. This caused initial levels of unease and nervousness at the beginning of the meeting to a small number of the interviewees which was overcome once the discussion began. All interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and followed a semi-structured pathway where the discussion covered a range of both macro and micro level topics influenced by the interviewee's length of service and working experience. In one case the interviewee "broke down" when describing the "pain" experienced from the September 2008 banking crisis in Ireland. The language used was strong and dramatic, and pretty vulgar in a

couple of cases. Equally there were lots of laughs and an array of metaphors that peppered each of the transcripts.

Process: All of the interviews were conducted in a fast-paced professional manner, in various locations throughout the Republic of Ireland, within the lobby area of the hotel or in dedicated office-meeting rooms. Tea, coffee, mineral water and biscuits were served in all cases. The warming-up period of the discussion was short; indeed the majority of the hoteliers were interested in the exact reason and rationale of the research. They used language and metaphors to construct meaning from their lived experience of work as a manager or owner, using stories to highlight a point or illustrate their notion of competency in the doing of managing. In a number of cases, interviewees struggled with the concept of competence, illuminating the complexity of the topic. Different responses including the role of emotion, especially care, attitude, ability to cope, empathy, communication, financial acumen, focus on technology, were given.

3.2.3 Data Analysis: Data Display – Patterns of Communication and Themes

The social constructionist paradigm assumes a relativist ontology understanding that there are multiple realities, a subjectivist epistemology (interviewee and researcher co-create understandings), and a naturalistic setting within the natural world (workplace of a hotel/corporate head office). The process of seeking to explain how:

> 'the social analyst moves from data to argument, how to transform a collection of facts into a plausible story […] a letter represents a social fact; and is chronologically depicted by alphabetical order a, b, c d, e…, n for these ordered facts to result in a story, they have to be combined in a narrative' (White, 1987:92).

In this matrix of facts, the capital letters represented events or facts that were in some way privileged over others. The data reduction process used White's (1987) letter system in the initial analysis to identify and establish patterns of communication and language.

The earlier work on descriptive narrative and patterns of communication and language started to inform emerging themes from across all 12 interviews. 'Thematic analysis is a process used

for coding qualitative information where a theme is a pattern found in the information that at a minimum describes and organises possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon' (Boyatzis, 1998: vi–vii). Ryan & Bernard's (2003) framework of repetitions, indigenous typologies or categories were used to identify themes (Bryman, 2012:580). The role of language and metaphors also played a key part in this iterative process whereby manifest-content analysis and latent-content analysis were then used to interrogate the initial themes for their meaning (Boyatzis, 1998:16). The transcripts were examined again using repetitions, which were topics that occurred again and again, while indigenous typologies or categories included local expressions that were either unfamiliar or used in an unfamiliar way. Many of these indigenous typologies were reflected in the metaphors which have been extracted from the interviews. Themes were generated inductively from the patterns of communication and language. Examples of this include; the theme of employees, their use of language of emotion such as care and support, and in telling their stories of how they managed certain events illustrated a sense of how they used personal qualities and emotions to interact and manage employees. Qualities such as moral order, honesty and tell the truth were highlighted by the interviewees.

Repetitions: The task of identifying repetitions from the patterns of communication and language dominated the context of the discussions and informed some of the themes. This final job of coding the transcripts enabled the iterative work of reviewing the research question(s) and matching respective responses in order to ascertain the language used pertaining to each theme or category. In the identification of the three themes, clustering of repetitions was used by grouping categories and concepts together that had similar characteristics or terms used by the interviewees. This clustering tactic was applied to all four aspects of the descriptive narrative, actors, settings, events and processes used in the purposive selection of interviewees, and to the four patterns of communication, to identify themes. 'Clustering and counting tactics were used to isolate themes, patterns or terms that were repeated throughout the transcripts' (Miles & Huberman, 1994:253).

Indigenous typologies or categories: Typologies are classification systems made up of categories that divide up some aspect of the world into parts. There were indigenous typologies

or categories of terms used throughout all of the interviews: labels such as the structure of ownership or luxury/budget market segments. One of the key typologies identified in the patterns of communication was the use of the term "people". But on closer scrutiny, the recurrence of the term "staff" and consistent reference to staff as a key part of the doing of managing on a daily basis highlighted its importance as a theme. Another term was "hospitality services" and how hospitality is or should be demonstrated to customers such as caring for stressed and tired guests, creating emotions of happiness and enjoyment. The repetition of a category, for example "the bottom line by using your P&L as your bible", was a typical example of an interpretative repertoire that hoteliers used to construct their meaning on how to make it all profitable. In other words, the job of managing the business of hotels was to ensure that the objective to secure a weekly, monthly and annual net profit was achieved. The initial themes emerged at the manifest level, directly observable from the data using repetitions or categories. Latent-content analysis was then used in an effort to ascertain the underlying meaning of the phenomenon.

3.2.4   Data Interpretation: Sensemaking

Interpretation involves going beyond the data and attaching significance to the themes and making sense of the findings, offering explanations, considering meanings and otherwise imposing order on an unruly but surely patterned world. Weick's Sensemaking Framework (Weick, 1995) was used to interpret the themes, patterns, metaphors and life stories in identity creation and to construct meanings on managerial competencies of hoteliers. 'Emotion and arousal are at the core of sensemaking and how positive and negative felt emotions differently influence sensemaking. While arousal stimulates sensemaking, the automatic activity triggered can also consume cognitive capacity, as attention is taken away from the task in hand and refocused on the interrupting event and on the automatic activation itself, resulting is a reduction in the number of cues that can be processed from the central activity underway at the time of the interruption' (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010:566).

The term "emotion(s)" emerged inductively as a pattern and theme. Emotion plays a crucial role in social constructionism and underpins one of Weick's sensemaking properties – that sensemaking is ongoing (Weick 1995). Research across a variety of fields suggests that such

events trigger four processes in sequence – attention to the event unfolds, causing people to react emotionally in varying ways enabling them make sense or seek explanations and having made sense of events, people adapt to them. Equally people are motivated to recover from negative emotional events and the kind of sensemaking they engage in often involves coping, psychological defenses and rationalisation (Wilson & Gilbert, 2005, in Sheldon, 2010:186–187). People believe major traumas will have a more enduring emotional impact than minor ones will. Because people are more strongly motivated to make sense of major traumas than minor ones, however, the pain of minor traumas can sometimes last longer than that of serious ones.

The seven properties or boundaries of sensemaking are referred to as characteristics about the ways people generate what they interpreted. The concept of sensemaking highlighted the action, activity and creating that lays down the traces that were interpreted and then reinterpreted. Sensemaking is understood as invention and interpretation understood as discovery can be complementary (Weick, 1995:18). The fact that sensemaking differs from interpretation has a critical influence for the interpreting of themes for one reason: sensemaking is an ongoing activity and process; it never starts or stops, whereas interpretation typically is a method that focuses on an outcome, and the object to be interpreted is evident – the ways people generate what they interpret. Identity is:

> "an implicitly social concept, i.e., it is you that is doing the identifying, and the identity you confer has more to do with your purposes than the nature of the thing itself, in other words socially bestowed identities rather than essences of the person" Burr (2003:106).

Sensemaking is the process of social construction that occurs when discrepant cues interrupt individuals' ongoing activity, and involves the retrospective development of plausible meanings to rationalise what people are doing. Central to the development of plausible meanings is the bracketing of cues from the environment and the interpretation of those cues based on salient frames. Although sensemaking is triggered by any interruption to ongoing activity, crisis and change are conditions that, because of the degree of disruption they incur, offer particularly powerful occasions for sensemaking (Weick, 2010:551-552). The seven properties of Weick's sensemaking framework were used (Weick, 1995:19)

1.   Grounded in identity construction – sensemaking begins with the sensemaker and yet while the term "sensemaker" is singular, no individual ever acts like a single sensemaker.

Identities are constructed out of the process of interaction, thus the sensemaker is an ongoing puzzle undergoing continual redefinition (Weick, 1995:20).

2.   Sensemaking occurs retrospectively where the idea of sensemaking derives from meaningful lived experience – 'lived' is stated in the past tense to capture the reality that people can know what they are doing only after they have done it. The important point is that retrospective sensemaking is an activity in which many possible meanings may need to be synthesised, because many different projects are under way at the time the reflection takes place (Weick, 1995:24–27).

3.   Enactive of sensible environments – refers to the activity of 'making' which is sense, using the word 'enactment' to preserve the fact that in organisational life people often produce part of the environment they face. Legislators and managers construct reality through authoritative acts such as enacting laws, take undefined space, time, and action, and draw lines to establish categories that create new features of the environment that did not exist before (Weick, 1995:30–31).

4.   Sensemaking is a social process, a constant substrate that shapes interpretations and interpreting, where conduct is contingent on the presence of others, whether physically present or absent (Weick 1995:39).

5.   Sensemaking never starts or stops, it is constantly ongoing. To understand sensemaking is to be sensitive to the ways in which people chop moments out of continuous flows and extract cues from these moments, (Weick, 1995:43).

6.   Focused on and by extracted cues: Sensemaking tends to be swift, which means we are more likely to see products rather than process. Extracted cues are simple, familiar structures that are seeds from which people develop a larger sense of what may be occurring. The word seed is used as a metaphor for a person's intention to say something (Weick, 1995:49–50).

7.   Driven by plausibility rather than accuracy, sensemaking is about plausibility, pragmatics, coherence, reasonableness, creation, invention and instrumentality. The strength of sensemaking as a perspective derives from the fact that it does not rely on accuracy and its model is not objective perception (Weick, 1995:57).

3.3   Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues in research command increased attention today. The ethical considerations that needed to be anticipated were extensive and are reflected throughout the research process (Creswell, 2014:92). 'In value-free social science, codes of ethics for professional and academic associations are the conventional format for moral principles. […] who place emphasis on four guidelines for directing an inductive science of means towards majoritarian ends' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2012:134). This researcher adopted Creswell's' suggestion of addressing various ethical issues as they related to the different phases of the inquiry prior to beginning the study such as:

(1)   Beginning this study.

(2)   Collecting the data.

(3)   Analysing the data.

(4)   Reporting, Sharing and Storing of Data.

(1)   Beginning this study DBA Document Five (5) (Documents Three (3)/Four (4))

In the first instance, ethical approval was sought and secured for the completion of DBA Documents Three (3) and Four (4) under NTU's Code of Ethics by submitting Form A which was reviewed and countersigned by one of the DBA programme leaders. Before the commencement of Document Five (5) commonly referred to as year 3, this researcher completed Form B, signed it and submitted it to NTU England where it was countersigned by a supervisor/programme leader. In this instance, the responsibility for ensuring that the proposed research adhered to good ethical standards lay with this student.

(2)   Collecting the Data: Participant Information & Informed Consent Form

The data collection stage involved face-to-face interviews. The researcher contacted a number of possible interviewees by letter or email, and explained the purpose of the study to avoid any

deception in as much as possible. 'The Mill and Weber tradition insists that research subjects have the right to be informed about the nature and consequences of experiments in which they are involved' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2012:134). The introductory letter or email also advised each possible interviewee that this researcher wished to audio record the interview.

(3)   Analysing the data - Privacy & Confidentiality

Is it possible to achieve absolute privacy and confidentiality? 'People's identity and research locations must be protected with all personal data to be concealed or secured, to be made public only behind a shield of anonymity' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2012:135). But therein ironically lays a dichotomy! What is a definition of a shield of anonymity? Each interviewee signed two copies of the participant information and informed consent forms and retained one signed copy that was then inserted into an envelope and given to each hotelier for their records. The twelve signed copies were filed in a locked safe in the office of the researcher. In the participant information and informed consent forms the interviewees were advised in writing that the only person writing and reading the transcriptions of the audio recorded interview was this author and respective DBA supervisors. Achieving watertight confidentiality can prove almost impossible but at least it is critical to do all that is possible to ensure that 'no one deserves harm as a result of insensitive research practices', (Denzin & Lincoln, 2012:134). Equally challenging within the realm of research ethics was the achievement of accuracy – commonly referred to as a cardinal principle of social science (Denzin & Lincoln, 2012:136). For the purposes of the collection and analysis of this empirical research each interviewee was referred by first names as pseudonyms, followed by LH = luxury hotel or BH = budget hotel, and O represented owner and M represented manager, e.g., PamoLHO, ConaLHM, JoelBHO and HeliBHM.

(4)   Reporting, Sharing and Storing of Data

Staying close to the data also demanded the provision of an accurate account of the information provided by each interviewee. This researcher was also cognisant of other 'ethical issues in reporting the research such as suppressing, falsifying or inventing findings', (Creswell, 2014:99). Equally the data was not shared with others or any information that would harm participants disclosed in any cases. The raw data of all interviews including audio recordings

and transcripts will be held securely for five years and will then be discarded, (Sieber, (1998) in Creswell, 2014:100).

Contribution to the Research

The traditional approach to the investigation of competencies has been dualistic in nature that highlights competences as tasks to be completed in doing a particular job and competencies or attributes as behaviours or characteristics of the person in how they approach their work. The research methodology and methods used an interpretivist lens in which to conduct and analyse the research findings. Sensemaking and identity work were used to interpret the findings on the hoteliers' notions of management competencies. Social constructionism replaced the self-contained, pre-social and unitary individual, with a fragmented and changing, socially produced phenomenon through the use of language and thought to examine the hoteliers' construction of social reality and construction of their identity work to locate meanings of managerial competencies (Burr, 2003, Mabey & Finch-Lees, 2008). It could be argued that the hoteliers used the in-depth interviews to explore in safety the assumptions they held on the nature of hospitality in the Republic of Ireland, their self-identity, and occupational identity as hotel owner-managers or general managers. Chapter Four presented the data analysis divided into two sections. Section 4.1 explored three broad themes as they emerged, followed by Section 4.2 which examined the processes of identity work and identities created.

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4 Data Analysis

Introduction

This chapter charts how the data from twelve in-depth interviews conducted with owners and general managers of hotels in the Republic of Ireland were analysed. The purpose of this chapter was to examine the process of how the findings emerged. The objective of the data analysis was to see pattern recognition in seemingly random information, as the qualitative data reduction process and sense-making effort took the data from the interviews and attempted to identify core consistencies and meanings (Boyatzis 1998:7; Patton 2002:453). The process of how the findings emerged was an iterative one, whereby patterns identified in the raw data were merged into three themes as examined in Section 4.1. A further process of analysis on the three themes was conducted using Weick's sensemaking framework in an effort to examine the processes of identity construction and identities created as presented in Section 4.2. Taken together, the three themes were examined in an ordered fashion to reflect competencies whilst the interviewees simultaneously made sense of competence through their construction of self-identity and occupational identity.

A range of topics and issues pertinent to context and nature the Irish hospitality and tourism industry were discussed by the interviewees. Some of these topics included the perceived strengths of Irish hospitality and tourism, the varied perceptions on the constituents of hospitality and the changed ownership and management structure of hotels in the Republic of Ireland. Simultaneously, interviewees highlighted issues such as the economic, financial and technological forces driving change, the key role of employees with the how the language of emotion used to managing staff to deliver hospitable services in their respective hotels. These topics and issues were examined in the context of a number of emerging themes, included; managing hospitality services in hotels in the Republic of Ireland, the key role of employees with the language of emotion used in managing staff and managing hotels through dynamically changing times. These individual themes were examined in an effort to ascertain how the twelve

interviewees used metaphors and stories to identify qualities, emotions, skills and knowledge in their daily management of hotels as they made sense of management competencies.

4.1   The Process of Data Analysis – Themes

The process of data analysis was broken down into two interdependent steps of data reduction to display themes, and identity work to make the hidden obvious in order to construct and interpret their notions of competencies (Patton, 2002:480). The data reduction process used patterns of communication as broad descriptive findings that noted recurring topics and issues from the transcripts. Language that provides the framework for thinking, its metaphors, and the use of interpretative repertoires were used to conduct this data reduction process to produce descriptive patterns. These broad patterns concerned the nature of the hotel and hospitality industry, where people are the throughput in their consumption of overnight accommodation and food services, which were always subject to dynamic and changing circumstances. The language of hotels, the nature of hospitality, the role of employees and customers, and emotions were all used as a culturally shared toolkit, a social resource to socially construct meaning; such toolkits shape the way we see things and give us a definitive view of the world (Moses & Knutsen, 2012:185–193; Burr, 2003:45; Patton, 2002:97). These broad descriptive patterns were examined which enabled three categories of themes to emerge;

managing hospitality services in hotels in the Republic of Ireland, the key role of employees and the language of emotion used in managing staff and managing hotels through dynamically changing times.

These three themes were set within the context of the hospitality services industry in the Republic of Ireland, which has undergone substantial and profound changes in the past fifteen years. All interviewees described the ongoing challenges posed by the onset of the recession and rapidly changing trends in information and online technologies. These three themes were examined individually in an effort to ascertain how the hoteliers used metaphors and figures of speech to convey meaning, which enabled a them to identity range of key skills, qualities, emotion and knowledge to emerge that, furnished their notions of competent management. The discussion commenced with a focus on the managing hospitality services in hotels in the Republic of Ireland, managing hotels through dynamically changing times, followed by the role

of employees and the language of emotion used in managing staff. It was in the telling of their stories of experiences and events at work that these interviewees shared meanings to aid the forming of knowledge on their notions of management competencies. Finally, combining their key skills, qualities, emotion and knowledge, a further analysis was conducted to ascertain how these building blocks were used for assembling an identity as a hotel owner-manager or general manager.

Theme 1:   Managing Hospitality Services in Hotels in the Republic of Ireland

At the outset, there was a significant level of awareness among all interviewees of the importance of the hospitality and tourism industry to the economy of the Republic of Ireland. This was borne out by the interviewee's knowledge of the nature and importance of hospitality in how they worked closely with all of their employees to manage and deliver their notion of hospitable services in their hotels, to different types of corporate customers and international visitors.

A number of topics, such as the nature of hospitality services and the influence of Tourist Traffic Acts on the hotel and hospitality industry in the Republic of Ireland, were examined in Chapters One and Two that provided context to this thesis. The nature of services are heavily influenced by two interdependent characteristics, inseparability and intangibility. Customers and employees interacted together in the delivery of the service experiences are thus not separated during that process. Furthermore, compared with most business organisations, the hotel is unusual in that customers as the main throughput are provided with and consume services within the establishment, and leave with no tangible product (Mullins & Dossor, 2010). This in turn means that hotel services are subject to the changing nature of the demands of customers whom they serve on a daily basis – a point that was repeatedly mentioned by each interviewee. Building on this key point, each mentioned the importance of the nature of customer service interaction and how it must underpin each and every customer experience, regardless of nationality or purpose of visit. There was also reference to the importance welcoming visitors from all over the world, given the dimension of Ireland's location as an island that necessitated the customer's use of air or sea transport. A number of interviewees expressed their use of the language of

emotion such as displaying empathy with the efforts of customers who traveled to the Republic of Ireland for both business and leisure.

There were contrasted perspectives and contributions on the nature and importance of hospitality in relation to which employees were best placed to lead and deliver that notion of an hospitable experience to all visitors. These perspectives ranged from the role of people and the nature of hotel ownership to who should be involved in the delivery of the notion of those hospitable experiences, vocalised particularly by MicaLHO and PamoLHO. The reputation of Ireland and the intrinsic ability of Irish people to be welcoming and friendly to all visitors, especially international tourists, were emphasised. MicaLHO was very clear about the importance and actual presence of native Irish people in frontline positions in the hospitability and tourism industry. He used the role of people, the pace of life, the place of Ireland and the colour green as metaphors and figures of speech to transfer meaning as he expressed his perception of Irish hospitality and tourism quite vociferously:

> *"...they think about Ireland they think about nothing else but the people. I believe what Irish tourism should be about. There are three P's, there is the people, there is the place and there is the pace and it galls me that an American, French, Dutch, German or an Australian tourist comes to Ireland and spends 10 days staying in Irish hotels and guesthouses and do not meet too many Irish people…"*

MicaLHO used this example to illustrate the combination of his business knowledge of the importance of Irish tourism: that when visitors come to Ireland they meet and interact with native Irish people in order that they experience his notion of Irish hospitality. Meanwhile ArinLHM, PoilBHM and CrisBHM shared a similar notion on the importance of hospitality underpinning the delivery of all hotel services with MicaLHO, but were not as forthright in their perspectives on the specific nationality of employees in front-line positions. Their perceived notion of how hospitality was delivered was founded upon having the "right front-line employees" who interacted with customers on a daily basis to deliver all hotel service experiences in a hospitable manner. But the dynamics of managing between the ever increasing costs of doing business and constant pressure to achieve net profits, i.e. to deliver profitable revenue targets by reducing labour costs, posed a major threat to the actual provision of an hospitable service experience. Apart from capital repayments, labour costs were the biggest

single cost factor, and seeking reduction in employee numbers threatened the perceived quality of those hotel services.

PoilBHM focused his perception on the continuing importance of the independent ownership and management of hotels within the Irish hospitality and tourism industry whereby he explained:

> "...Ah I wouldn't have thought budget sector was growing exponentially. I think it's actually the time for independents again. I think customers are looking for an intrinsic kind of hotel that reflects where they are. I think in the Irish market the brands have retreated, they came in about 10–15 years ago and now if you look at those brands the vast majority that are not Irish brands have retreated. The Irish brands have continued to grow, they tend to be at the budget end, and they tend to be location driven..."

PoilBHM has managed the same city centre hotel for the past sixteen years. His shared a similar sentiment with MicaLHO on the perceived strength of a high incidence of independent hotel ownership in Ireland. He combined the role that characteristic has played in the provision of an intrinsic experience to visitors as a key part of the success of Irish hospitality and tourism over the past eighty years. Linked to this perceived strength was their notion that an intrinsic experience of hospitality is better served by a range of local independently owned hotels versus a conglomerate of international hotel groups.

ArinLHM shared his notion on hospitality, which was much more profound as it generalised on the role of emotion and behavior between employees and guests alike:

> "...I have a philosophy of a system that I use on hospitality that I use throughout the hotel, it's about behaviour, making sure that guests are looked after, the importance of care, about the relationships with customers, trade partners, also in relationships with staff especially frontline staff and how we must treat them at all times ..."

He described his "philosophy of a system I use on hospitality", when he narrated this short story of how he developed and built relationships with the local villagers, as he guided the reopening of an 80 year old hotel property into a luxury five star hotel. But here we see his perception of how he implemented this notion of building relationships together with team demonstrated

through behaviour by how he communicated and welcomed the local villagers through a pre-opening day event to preview this luxury hotel before its official launch with a cup of tea and coffee:

> *"...We prepared this event for about 60 locals which we expected. I invited the locals by advising the post office that all were welcome for a tea/coffee to have a preview of the refurbished House. So whilst we prepared for 60 people, 600 locals turned up, bearing in mind that the village only has one pub, one restaurant, a local pottery shop, and post office. My reason for investing in the local community is back to my philosophy of a genuine interest and care of people in the offering of traditional hospitality, whilst we are not the local pub and we never want to be as the ground floor area of the hotel is too small, prices are slightly higher, it was to create a positive WOW factor ..."*

He highlighted the importance of using daily communication to build positive relationships between managers and employees, to show and enable them to deliver hospitable experiences that he fostered in their daily training and development. He explained:

> *"...We here are selling good food, nice wines, a pleasant atmosphere, decent sized bedrooms and operate this management system able to deliver that consistently..."*

Theme 2:   The Key Role of Employees with the Language of Emotion used in Managing Staff

Earlier the interviewees' perceived notion of Irish hospitality and what that actually meant for both customers and hotel managers was examined. All twelve hoteliers highlighted the role of customers, superiors, managers, employees and key others in their managing the business of hotels. The interviewees constantly referred to the key role of all employees in their hotels who interact daily with customers in the delivery of hotel services of overnight accommodation, food and drink. The important point here was that it was the combination of hotel services of food and rest together with the nature of the how hospitable the employee–customer interaction was perceived to be in the delivery of that experience which was crucial to the nature of hospitality. So how employees demonstrate hospitality to customers was illustrated through their use of the language of emotion, terms such as care and empathy were used to explain their notion of "hospitable". In actual fact, one key term "care" within the language of emotion repeatedly used.

Interviewees such as GeriLHM, ArinLHM, NikaLHM and MariLHM explained how they enabled their employees to demonstrate that care to customers by in turn showing care and giving support to their staff in the doing of their work to deliver hospitable services. More specifically the interviewees spoke about how they demonstrated their care and respect for all employees but especially for those who are operating in the frontline positions, i.e. constantly interacting with customers. Furthermore, they used the language of emotion to engage and interact with staff on a daily basis through their use of stories and explanations of various situations. A number of the interviewees also referred to how they used qualities such as "moral order, practiced honesty by telling the truth no matter how tough it was and developed trust" in their interactions with employees.

The following short story was told by MicaLHO. This story epitomised the thrust of this entire research project. During the interview, he recalled his experience of a morning's work as a duty manager. The subsequent analysis revealed how he skillfully used interpretative repertories as a linguistic resource to frame the value of that experience, as well as undertake the building blocks of identity work. The story examined how MicaLHO managed a number of situations regarding employees and hotel operations together on a busy morning, which included the dismissal of a drunken night porter, assisting with wash-up operations in the kitchen and negotiating the interaction with a rude guest that resulted in a tearful receptionist. He used his emotional intelligence to display empathy for the receptionist but also to support the wash-up operations so that the restaurant did not run out of clean supplies of crockery and cutlery. Furthermore, he displayed his ability to build relevant relationships with all staff directly and indirectly during that morning's work. He demonstrated that these events occur with guests and that the manner in which he managed them modeled the behaviour that the receptionist could emulate and develop.

Story:

> "...I will never forget I was a duty manager once upon a time and I probably embellished the story going back over 30 years of Great Southern in Eyre Square at 7am in the morning on duty very first thing, night porter as drunk as a skunk ah I had to fire him, he took a swipe at me and he actually hit me but I got him fired, half an hour later the lady for the wash-up didn't turn in and we were hanging for breakfast, conferences were all coming in at the same time ok, is the restaurant ok, Paddy is head waiter he is fine,

he can look after that, but we are not going anywhere unless the cups and saucers are washed and so in I went. Mr. DM into the wash-up and maybe I don't know at 10.30am or 11am there was an issue with the bar, I can't remember what it was, a guest checking out insulted one of our receptionists, she was in floods of tears. I ended up marrying her actually so had to sort that out. I had to say to the guest we are sorry we got it wrong but you don't have the right to speak to anyone like that in this hotel. And an hour later I am on the platform at Galway railway station that backed onto the Galway Great Southern Hotel walking along the platform to welcome President Childers. At 23 or 24 this old fellow did all of that – tell me what training have you got that prepares you for that? ..."

He recalled the various events and processes of his experience in an effort to convey the meaning in his "doing of managing" hotel business operations (Mangham & Pye 1991:1). This story illustrated the interdependence and interrelatedness of how he managed that morning's work, moving between practical tasks of hotel operations, customer service and employee issues.

This story was also used to illustrate and highlight how an hotel duty manager used multi-tasking in the doing of managing what he deemed competent management by using his skills, knowledge and emotion in managing people on that particular morning. These tasks included his skill at disciplining the night porter for being drunk on duty by demonstrating a combination of emotion and personal qualities that it was unsafe to have an intoxicated employee in the hotel. He then proceeded to use his skills to take the place of the steward in the wash-up of crockery, cutlery etc., (who did report for work that morning) but more importantly to demonstrate empathy with his fellow kitchen and restaurant employees to prevent a backlog occurring in the wash-up. He then demonstrated a combination of skill, knowledge and emotional intelligence to meet and deal with a customer who had made a complaint at reception. MicaLHO apologised to the customer but during their conversation he explained that there it was unacceptable to be rude to an employee. He then went to console the employee who was upset but at this stage the receptionist had witnessed how MicaLHO had managed the situation. He used this story to highlight how he demonstrated competence that in the doing of managing (Mangham & Pye, 1991:1) by juggling together his skills, emotions, and qualities whilst managing in the complex environment that characterised hotel operations. To sum it all up, it was possible to conceptualise that these were resources and building blocks that MicaLHO used to enable a competent identity to emerge.

PamoLHO, MicaLHO, PoilBHM, GeriLHM and ArinLHM used their individual references to the Irish hospitality industry in their efforts to give context to why people are so important and how they manage the various human interactions in their hotels. At a macro level, these interviewees referred to their work experience which enabled their development of knowledge of the meaning of hospitality demonstrated within an hotel environment and how that informed their competent management of hotels.

PamoLHO, MicaLHO, ConaLHM, NikaLHM, GeriLHM, ArinLHM, HeliBHM, CrisBHM and MariLHM explained how they used terms from the language of emotion towards all staff, which was a critical part of the hotel environment if customers were to receive and experience care during service delivery. In other words, these interviewees explained that the manner in which they managed and interacted with employees by showing care to them on a daily basis was necessary if in turn hotel guests were to experience caring, hospitable services at their hotels. This was particularly highlighted in the management of their interactions with frontline employees. All employees regardless of title used emotional labour as a part of self in their customer interactions during the performance and delivery of hotel services, be it welcoming a guest to stay overnight, handling luggage, sharing information about the locality or in the service of food and beverages. PamoLHO went much further by stating that:

> *"...general managers must be intrinsically care in order to be able to show care for all others and to develop skills in having a customer focus, being an effective communicator, being competent in developing teams and fostering collaborative working by constantly building relationships ..."*

PamoLHO placed substantial emphasis on the general manager being a role model for assistant managers and staff alike. He expected all general managers to be able to demonstrate that quality of care for themselves and for others, and use that quality of care as an emotion to underpin the work of managing people in hotels alongside the development of skills in finance, revenue and technology. As far as PamoLHO was concerned, all general managers must demonstrate their ability and capability to care as part of their innate characteristics which cannot be taught to the level that he expected, so that caring for others, both customers and employees, underpinned the

delivery of a hospitable experience every time. Moreover, general managers must be able to identify future employees and managers who in turn can demonstrate that care for themselves and for all others regardless of their work title in any hotel that was part of this particular international hotel group.

In a sense PamoLHO shared his understanding that the combination of a wide range of financial, IT skills and knowledge about managing people underpinned with the language of emotion and personal values and qualities were what he deemed to enable competence in the managing of hotels. He specifically highlighted the fact that general managers must show and demonstrate that they "intrinsically care"; in other words, to be able to care for others cannot be taught. All other financial and human resource skills can be learned, but being able to demonstrate care will underpin how they interact, communicate and work with employees. ConaLHM summed up his notion of a competent manager:

> "...A general manager is very much like a football manager, you are only as good as your last match ..."

PamoLHO, ConaLHM, GeriLHM, PoilBHM, MatiLHM, HeliBHM, JoelBHO and NikaLHM each highlighted the importance of developing managers and employees constantly, as part of the process of improving competence in their employees and in themselves. In other words, the relational web spun through the interaction between all employees, created and managed by the manager or owner, was a crucial part of being a competent manager.

ConaLHM, ArinLHM, GeriLHM, CrisBHM and HeliBHM each explained how they used language of emotion in their managing of employees in a number of ways. When ConaLHM was managing recent employee redundancies he displayed care and empathy for those five employees in working closely with the human resource manager to find them alternative employment in other hotels that were part of this international hotel group. NikaLHM, ArinLHM, GeriLHM, NikaLHM and HeliBHM specifically mentioned that they supported and showed care to front-line employees during busy service periods, being personally present to assist them with customers. Supporting employees also meant making sure they had the tools to

do the job, meaning computer systems in working order, alongside the provision of on-going training and development.

During the interview PoilBHM explained that he was planning a major refurbishment of the hotels guest bedrooms and an overhaul of service standards throughout all areas at his hotel. He highlighted the importance of employees and the responsibility that hoteliers had to those employees to ensure that they have the technical skills to do their jobs. He explained how he developed assistant managers:

> *"...Our job is to create hotels as places where both staff and customers enjoy the experience. In so doing we develop ambassadors. Ah it's a very busy hotel where you are expected to be able move up and move down gears pretty instantaneously because this business is pretty unplanned. They are going to be much more financially astute, on very fast curve for promotion people will notice very quickly those who seem to understand the business in a very holistic way and finance is a key part of that. We can all be good social workers and we can all know what a good sandwich and a cup of coffee is, but how do you know to make a profit out of that activity? ..."*

On the other hand, ArinLHM used the interview to explain how he steered the re-opening and re-launch of a new luxury hotel in 2008. The building of relationships was a cornerstone in his "philosophy of a system used in hospitality", bearing in mind that perceptions of a hospitable experience were socially constructed, which varied from one customer to another. His perception, woven together by his philosophy of hospitality through his on-going ability to make people (customers) happy with experiences of his hotel, was founded on the importance of relationships demonstrated between his fellow managers and employees worked together and behaved by showing care and support for each other and to all guests alike. He highlighted the importance of welcoming former guests back to the hotel who as children or young adults would have stayed with their parents, as a key part of the re-launch strategy. ArinLHM also highlighted the importance of building relationships with people, such as a peer group of hoteliers in various locations in Ireland who manage similar five star hotels, who share a similar notion of the philosophy of hospitality. ArinLHM explained that he "shared similar values with this peer group of hoteliers". An example of this was how they worked closely together to refer employees who were seeking new opportunities for employment or promotion.

CrisBHM summed up the importance of employees as a fundamental part of becoming a competent manager. He explicitly stated his notion of competence was woven between his employees and himself as he explained that a competent manager creates the environment in which their competent staff engage:

> *"...I can't look like a competent manager, I can't run a competent hotel unless I make sure my staff are competent; you need competent staff to be a competent manager. I was made to look incompetent by the environment around me ..."*

He used two short stories from his work experience in managing hotels in London and Dublin to illustrate the key role that all employees played in creating what he perceived to be a competent environment. In London when he was employed as an assistant manager, the lack of physical equipment and layout of the room service department, alongside the refusal of senior management to support the proposed changes, stifled his efforts to make changes. However, in the second story, to augment his notion of creating a competent environment, as a GM he set about making changes in rostering of staff against forecasted sales by implementing an on-going training and development plan for all supervisors. CrisBHM explained:

> *"... This was pure basic restaurant operations when I went in there and said right, these changes from next week. For next week's meeting I am going to sit down with all of you and have a chat about the business and writing the forecasts and writing your rosters, and you will write those rosters based on the forecasts; I will sit with each of you and write the roster. It took them three months and suddenly they realised that this is kind of easier because we know. I can't run a hotel and expect people to work without sharing information with them, so I will start doing more training. And they set up a buddy system that worked very well. So information sharing went on, the restaurant managers went on writing rosters that made sense ..."*

Managing Employees - Identification, Development, & Promotion

The importance of and challenges in the identification and recruitment of new staff and their subsequent training, development and performance were mentioned by all twelve interviewees. Each interviewee referred to the fact that they worked hard in making sure that when recruiting new staff, they identified potential employees with a positive attitude, had the ability to smile, and not just people who were skilled in the technical aspects of that respective position be it in reception, food and beverage services or guest accommodation services. Furthermore, using

their own intuition and emotional intelligence they sought to identify similar qualities and emotions of care and empathy in potential recruits. ConaLHM explained that hotel management was about ensuring that the expectations of the hotel's guests for hospitality services were delivered by a highly trained and welcoming hotel team in their cumulative ability to deliver those services profitably. Results had to be repeated daily, weekly and monthly, and the development of teams and continuity of the delivery of service expectations each time were crucial to achieving these on-going results. PamoLHO, ConaLHM, MariLHM and HeliBHM shared a similar notion of managerial competence by their ability to identify potential employees whose shared personal values that were aligned to the hotel organisation. Various examples of the language of emotion were used to illustrate this. PamoLHO said that managers must "intrinsically care"; while ConaLHM, and MariLHM expected that all employees must demonstrate the quality of a "positive attitude" and HeliBHM explained that: "… there is no room for no; no room for it's not my job …"

GeriLHM told a short story of how she recently recruited an executive head chef to join her management team. She explained how she managed the process of his recruitment:

> *"… For me, this gentleman he likes to talk a lot which is wonderful and he described how he operates, so particularly from a management aspect first of all he was describing that but more particularly I guess from his food knowledge and his food preparation and his passion for food, I actually didn't need to see his food and I didn't ask see his CV, and we didn't really talk about his specific experiences in particular establishments I just knew by listening to him, his passion for food, his expertise came across in terms of how he would prepare dishes but his absolute pride in the dishes that he would put up, so that came across very strongly, so I had a couple of long conversations with him; as I said he did most of the talking and I could interpret from him, his passion that is firstly. But secondly, it's also important that for a chef, his food cost and payroll controls are also critically important so therefore he was able to demonstrate to me again. So that passion for food and then to have the financial acumen as well …"*

Both MariLHM and ConaLHM spoke about the importance of acknowledging that each staff member is an individual, which required a different management style. MariLHM gave an example of how he managed the recruitment process:

> *"... The real trick was to mould, shape and develop individuals into teams who then go on to bigger and better things. Definitely no room for no; I would interview every single member of staff, I would sit down with them, as the food and beverage manager would come to me and say I have met this person last week or yesterday. I just want ten minutes of your time, to sit them down and we are talking. They are wondering why am I meeting with the GM. I am applying for a server job, it's important for me to meet you and important for you to meet me, what I outline is a bit of what my own expectations are, a bit about the company culture is what we are trying to do here, the type of person we are looking for, someone who can fit into our team and culture and somebody that can interact with our guests, not afraid to speak to our customers ..."*

ConaLHM explained how he used the language of emotion and qualities to identify potential employees:

> *"... that they have fire in the belly to achieve and to get things done, who are self-driven and demonstrate a positive good attitude who want to progress, everything else will kick in. Treat others like you would like to be treated. The one man that I adore was my former general manager and he was responsible for the development of myself and many of my colleagues. The environment that you create is one of support, development and trust of staff and managers; they know what they have to do, let them get on and do it. My job is grooming people and sending them out into the rest of the hotel group. It's the flagship of this hotel group, and we are expected to produce managers and send them out there ..."*

PoilBHM focused on the importance of how he identified potential managers with qualities such as demonstrating initiative and being trustful. The term bright is rhetorical as it refers to academic intelligence but also to a quality that referred to being alert:

> *"... so we need managers to be more forward looking, that they challenge themselves, that they challenge those around them in a positive way to see things from other people's perspective, particularly in this business from the customer perspective what competitors might be. I would tell you and try to see if you were my type of person and I would tell you what that was. Someone who is able to work on their own, being independent, and someone whom I thought I could trust, someone who I thought was bright ..."*

Theme 3:   Managing Hotels through Dynamically Changing Times

All twelve interviewees discussed various aspects of the on-going type and impact of changes that had occurred at a national and international level. Two particular forces of change

dominated the interviews to a greater or lesser extent: firstly the on-going impact of the ongoing economic recession that followed the 2008 crisis, and secondly the increasing importance of technology and social media on the hotel trade. Thick descriptions and colourful metaphors were used to highlight these various crises and events as they unfolded. These interviewees explained their subsequent actions taken to manage the impact on their hotel businesses, employees and themselves. The 2008 banking crisis and the subsequent recession were discussed at length by PamoLHO, MicaLHO, JoniBHO, MariLHM, ConaLHM, GeriLHM, NikaLHM, CrisBHM, PoilBHM and ArinLHM. Each explained how they have used a range of skills and knowledge to manage, while trying to show care and empathy for staff and being honest in their daily communications with employees as the process of organisational restructuring and redundancies took place. This period of major change also set the scene for each of the interviewees to illustrate the performative nature of managing aspects of the planning and forecasting of *"finance, payroll, costings, and generating profitable sales revenue"*. In other words, while the financial challenges occupied their left hand in managing the business of hotels, their right hand was dominated by the performative nature of managing staff and customers with whom they interacted on a daily basis at work as owners or managers.

There were specific contributions on the fallout from the 2008 financial crisis from PamoLHO, MariLHM, NikaLHM, JoniBHO, and CrisBHM as they saw it. PamoLHO summed up the business challenges posed by the past five years in how the effects of recession and the unavailability of business credit had thwarted the development of their business model for growth and expansion since 2008. As CEO of an international hotel group PamoLHO explained that their planned growth strategy of hotel development and acquisition and expansion into the UK just before the 2008 financial crisis occurred:

> *"... back in the 1980's you could do debt and you could get access to borrowings, it was expensive but you could get access to it. Also the entire world were not in the recession as the challenges are much wider and influential this time round. Unlike today when you want to make improvements to your hotel business you have to have the cash to do so because it is almost nigh to impossible to get access to loans [...] so each week they [general managers] do a forecasted cash flow management budget in advance, as in what is the projected cash and then they match payroll costs on a weekly basis, they then know their cash position at a given time in the future ..."*

In working closely with his senior management team, PamoLHO explained how he used his skills and knowledge from his work experience to manage through this dynamic situation. He explained that they undertook two key actions to protect the company's cash flows: firstly they decided to develop a Hotel Management Contract Services unit using the combined knowledge of managing hotels of this international hotel group by planning and organising the internal human and financial resources together. This strategic thinking enabled PamoLHO and his executive management team to place tender bids with the National Asset Management Agency to secure the operation of management contracts on hotels that had been put into receivership by various financial institutions. Secondly, each hotel general manager was responsible for the close monitoring and management to protect cash flows at their individual hotels. Due to the on-going reduction in sales and revenues, they implemented plans to manage weekly forecasts by mapping revenue and payroll costs together. In conjunction with their IT manager they developed a computer program that forecasted levels of income and costs together, so that immediate adjustments were made to revenues and payroll costs on a daily basis, and updated to the financial control unit within head office. PamoLHO used these two examples of his skills and knowledge to implement a plan to protect the revenue streams and cash flow position of this international hotel group in his notion of competent management.

ConaLHM compared the aftermath of the September 2008 financial crisis to other major world events using some metaphors to communicate meaning:

> *"… it was like everyone knows where they were when 9/11 happened or you know when Princess Diana died. I think everybody knows what they were doing when the recession hit. Over here, I remember it was in November 2008 it was like someone turned off the light switch it was like overnight it went from boom to bust literally overnight …"*

He explained that he only had five redundancies in the immediate aftermath of the 2008 crash and how he worked closely with the hotel's manager of human resources to find alternative employment at other hotels in the group for those five employees. ConaLHM explained how this international hotel group managed their financial control whereby targets on revenues and payroll costs were set and tightly monitored for discrepancies in achieving budgets. He coined

a metaphor to sum up how he micro-managed net profits on a daily basis in the immediate weeks and months of late 2008, and throughout 2009 and 2010. He summed it up:

> *"... So if there was a faux pas you could be lucky to lose a whole year in one month, that's what it's like ..."*

To prevent the "loss a whole year in one month", ConaLHM explained that the daily micro management was practiced to ensure profitability was achieved by monitoring and controlling costs in line with revenues, and taking corrective action on a daily basis. If this was not done, it could result in an annual net loss in one month. MariLHM used two similes to illustrate the speed of the downturn of September 2008:

> *"... It dropped like a stone from about September 2008. It was like somebody just turned off a tap and the business just plummeted, we lost 30% of our business in three months, and it continued to fall where we had 2–3 crappy years ..."*

He explained the initial impact of this perceived crisis and then how he managed between 2009 and 2011 where he used the opportunity to restructure the hotel organisation:

> *"... it wasn't as result of the recession that we took that decision. I suppose historically we had a unionised hotel so we had a lot of demarcation, duplication of roles, and job roles that still existed but were obsolete; there was about 22 stand-alone positions that we identified in the business that going forward we don't need this role so we made the position redundant. On top of that we had a voluntary pitch of that so 30 other team members took the voluntary redundancy, so all in all we had 52 redundancies out of a total staff of 200 at the time ..."*

MariLHM and NikaLHM found themselves in similar situations when hotel revenues plummeted in early 2009 that resulted in organisational restructuring: NikaLHM was forced into making redundancies while MariLHM used the fall in revenues to implement a reduction to "the fixed rigid payroll cost that we were carrying". Here MariLHM displayed empathy, using his skills to communicate personally with employees on a daily, weekly and monthly basis in an effort to allay some of their fear during the period of organisational restructuring and redundancies. He explained:

"...A lot of it for me, it was through the dark and through the troubled times communication was critical, we communicated with the team weekly, daily particularly during the restructuring times. There was so much fear out there that people didn't know what was going on; the one thing is that I have always being very upfront with them sharing everything with the team – for me communication is critical. Honesty, I believe in being honest, integrity is hugely important, you know, lead by example, if you are asking someone to do something that you must be willing to do it yourself in as much as possible. It was not easy particularly when we were going through the whole redundancy process. I took the decision that I was going to sit down with all the 22 individuals to deliver that bad news because it was the honourable thing to do rather than have somebody else do it ..."

MariLHM displayed qualities of honesty to demonstrate his integrity as he worked through the reorganisation process alongside dealing with the effects of the dramatic fall in hotel revenues. He personally managed the communication of the redundancy process with the 22 employees in positions with long service that were identified as compulsory redundancies. Then he personally managed the communication with a further 30 employees who had taken up the offer of voluntary redundancy. MariLHM used personal qualities of honesty and displayed a level of empathy by meeting each individual who was facing either compulsory or voluntary redundancy.

NikaLHM spoke about how hotel revenues had started to fall after the 2008 crash, and the quote below is peppered with the language of emotion as he recalled how he tried to manage through it:

"... and then it was a case of almost in January-February 2009 looking at the forward bookings at thinking 'Jesus' there is nothing coming in here, what's going on, it was like dropping off a cliff, it was that quick. And suddenly you were looking at months where previously there was a certain level and it was like it's not happening and you know we hadn't adjusted our fixed base in terms of manning and so on. We were really facing difficult times but it was a case of having get out there and drum up business, so having to become really sales focused and then again when it still wasn't coming in, we need to cut costs where we could, and manage the banks, manage cash flows and so on, it was incredibly tough to be honest, and that's one way of putting it ..."

As a result of the severe downturn in revenues in 2008, he personally managed the communication and implementation of a compulsory redundancy process of fifty employees in

2009. NikaLHM describes the emotional toll of the 2008 financial crisis on all of the hotel's employees, especially when the issue of redundancies became real, and explained that the reorganisation did not take place as quickly as was needed at the time. He displayed personal qualities of honesty in protecting the front of house areas so as not to reduce or indeed negate the impact of service quality to customers in the restaurants, bars, reception and porterage departments:

> *"...Redundancies, yes, maybe to be honest, maybe not as quickly as we needed to do them because I suppose here with the hotel, you know the family has one direct owner at the moment, there was a lot of long-term service staff, we would have had PAs here at the time, we would have had a lot of long-term people so it was a case of seeing who we could live with and without who was essential to the business, and I suppose one of the most important things was to make sure that front of house, because here at the hotel there would have been a certain level of service and it's not easy to change that, you know it's in the culture, you know it's deeply embedded ..."*

In a sense, NikaLHM and the hotel owner found themselves in a situation that they had never experienced before, in trying to cope with the competing demands of a compulsory redundancy programme of fifty long-service employees and mounting pressure from the banks. This was illustrated by the repeated use of the language of emotion on managing these two issues:

> *"... So yeah it was a huge adjustment and you know you had combined with a team a lot of long-time people, a lot of it boiled down to communication both by the owner and I with the team and trying to get commitment, buy-in. Initially probably shocks and redundancies, that was the hardest part, I mean we had a PA for 37 years' service and you know she didn't want to do any other role in the hotel. So it was very hard, very hard for the owner. But I think it was all down to regular communication with managers, week to week stuff and trying to meet with the pressure from banks and so on. Yeah, I think a lot of it was just planning, communication, taking action, making sure that it actually happened as soon as the decision was made ..."*

NikaLHM used various terms of the language of emotion to illustrate of how he perceived he had coped and managed through this challenging time, using skill at making decisions while displaying substantial personal qualities of resilience in balancing the demands of various stakeholders;

"... it was essential for you to do another adjustment and another adjustment then to pressure from the banks, they did not want to give any more monies, sales weren't performing, you were trying to cope and survive, you had to, trying to satisfying suppliers, pushing them out a bit further and yeah it was very difficult, very, very stressful, you had to try and rise above it and keep facing it ..."

As an owner-manager, JoniBHO displayed a combination of personal qualities, emotion and skill to deal with the sudden fall of fifty per cent in revenues that occurred in early 2009. In his efforts to reduce fixed costs against a backdrop of falling revenues, he used his skills and knowledge by making a decision to reduce salary levels in order to prevent wide-scale redundancies. He personally communicated this decision with each employee, explaining the process of how the salary reductions were implemented and showed empathy with employees by reducing his own salary also:

"...there was no reduction for employees earning €8.65 per hour, employees earning salaries up to €25,000 per annum were reduced by 5%, salaries of €30,000 were reduced by 10% and all other salaries over €35,000 were reduced by 25% including myself. We eventually had to make three employees redundant as a result of the 2008 financial crisis ..."

JoniBHO used his personal qualities of loyalty and respect in making that decision to reduce salary levels in order to prevent further job losses. He showed empathy with all of those employees by personally taking a pay-cut, and protected the wage levels of those earning the minimum wage at his hotel.

CrisBHM explained the importance of taking decisions in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis. When hotel revenues started to fall very quickly, he used his skill and knowledge to implement two decisions: closely managing room prices and the redundancy of five employees. He explained how he shared the reasons for the redundancies with all employees and personally managed individual communication with each of the five people that lost their jobs. He continued to work closely with his hotel receptionists to make decisions in developing a room pricing strategy to deal with the downturn in business:

"... To be honest, I am probably going to start at a very funny place, but the first place to start is someone who is able to make a decision. Actually make a decision, because

that's what we spend most of our time, making decisions. Ah, see it through and be able to move away from it and realise you have done it etc. …"

CrisBHM used his skills by actively managing prices to generate overnight accommodation business and compete locally. This was underpinned by his personal quality of being honest as he communicated directly with all employees the reasons for the immediate implementation of the five redundancies in order to protect the jobs of the remaining fifteen employees.

Information & Communication Technology in Hospitality

The changing nature and impact of technology and social media was highlighted by all twelve interviewees but summed up by MicaLHO in his emotional response, "I hate it; you can hate it and ignore it but do so at your peril". In other words, MicaLHO was honest in his emotional reaction to how he perceived the role of social media, but was knowledgeable enough to understand that its use is a key aspect of the changing role and importance of technology in business. Both PamoLHO and GeriLHM used Ryanair as an analogy to illustrate their notions of the rate and pace of change taking place within the hotel sector, but focusing on differing aspects of the airline's business model. GeriLHM repeatedly mentioned the on-going challenges of achieving profits and the increasing role of the internet:

> *"… that things will never be the same again, not in my lifetime. These economic times will be a constant struggle and it's no harm. But I think also the business is changing, you just have to look at Ryanair, definitely the twos and threes will just become automated…"*

PamoLHO stipulated that he expected all general managers to be competent in technology. He was very specific about his meaning of technology, breaking it down between hardware and software. PamoLHO focused his discussion around technology systems that all general managers must have skills in. There were three key areas: daily use of in-house forecasting software for revenue and payroll costs, how online distribution channels must be managed to drive rooms and conference, and daily monitoring and interaction with social media.

HeliBHM explained in great detail how technology was used to implement the organisation's Win Card control system of performance management using three headings: guest, team and

shareholder. NikaLHM, MicaLHO, ConaLHM, MariLHM, CrisBHM, JoelBHO and HeliBHM each mentioned the increasing impact of technology and social media on their managing of revenues online and the in-house technology systems that were needed to support all hotel operations. NikaLHM, MicaLHO, ConaLHM, MariLHM, CrisBHM and JoelBHO explained how they have embraced social media in a positive manner to be able to engage with existing guests and trade partners alike, alongside its capability to reach out to potential customers. Each of these interviewees mentioned the investment in on-going training and development in social media for themselves and indeed for all relevant employees.

JoelBHO was much more circumspect about social media, and shared a similar emotional reaction to MicaLHO. JoelBHO explained how he managed TripAdvisor by working closely with his reception team as he explained:

> *"… I hate TripAdvisor.com with a passion by the way, it works against you so you have work against it, do you know what I mean? We don't respond to TripAdvisor.com as a policy, we don't repay …"*

4.2   The Processes of Identity Construction and Identities Created

The processes of identity examined the concept of self together with the occupational identity of each interviewee in a further analysis of the data. The process of identities created were examined in an effort to ascertain how the interviewees made sense of what constitutes competent management, in the context and nature of managing hospitality services in hotels, in the Republic of Ireland. Furthermore, the processes of identity construction sought to understand how these twelve interviewees became competent in their management of people to deliver hospitable services in hotels. Ultimately this section has sought to explore how these interviewees fused qualities and emotions as part of self-identity, together with the skills and knowledge of their occupational identity to develop their perspective on management competencies.

In order to locate meaning of their notions of competencies, a further process of sensemaking was conducted on the combined themes of managing hospitality services in hotels, managing

employees using the language of emotions and managing hotels in dynamically changing times, together with interviewees' perceptions of how they managed hotels. In other words, explications were developed of these twelve hoteliers' sensemaking by making what is hidden obvious through combining their qualities and emotional intelligence with learned skills and knowledge gained over many years work experience that has thus enabled them to build a sense of what it was to be competent in their context.

It could be argued that each of these interviewees wove a sense of their self-identity and professional managerial identity/occupational identity together as they respectively tried to make sense of the relationship between their work and what sort of person they were. In effect they were doing identity work, part of the process of sensemaking, in their on-going attempts to develop and 'maintain a concept of self that is always in process, neither pre-given when we are born, nor does it become fixed in the process of growing up', (Watson, 1994:59). In other words, our identity of self is always emerging or becoming, 'it is part of the continuous process through which we come to terms with our changing world through a process of shaping our selves', (Watson, 1994:59). It could be argued that the processes of identity work and identities created was an iterative one. Each respective interviewee used various mechanisms to create identities such as an individual person, as an Irish person, alongside their occupational identity as business owner, employer, as an hotel general manager and as an hotelier in the process of identity construction.

PamoLHO, MicaLHO and PoilBHM highlighted the context and nature of hotel management in the Irish hospitality and tourism on the island of Ireland, and used stories to describe the impacts of the 2008 financial crisis. Both PamoLHO and MicaLHO examined the roles of hotels in the Irish hospitality and tourism industry. The former focused on the key constituents of Irish tourism as people, place and pace, whilst the latter focused on the role that hotels played in numerous aspects of Irish life and the changing nature of the occupational identity of an hotel general manager. PoilBHM highlighted the important role of independent hotels in Irish hospitality. He linked four factors together "location, warmth of friendliness, quality of product and value for money" in that order in terms of how customers chose hotels.

In terms of the general managers, MariLHM, ConaLHM and HeliBHM highlighted various aspects of their career development, while employed in international hotel groups, as they made sense of their notion of management competencies as general managers. Whilst each of these interviewees created insight into their sense of self-identity, each also described aspects of their occupational-identity as they performed it within various international hotel corporations.

The remainder of the interviewees NikaLHM, GerLHM, ArinLHM, and ChrisBHM were respectively employed as general managers within private limited companies in hotel properties, of varying room capacity (ranging from 40 – 150 guest rooms) and food and beverage operations. Each used stories of events from the ongoing recession and past career experiences to create an occupational-identity as well as exposing elements of their notion of self-identity. All of the twelve interviewees described former colleagues as influential role models with whom they had worked over the course of their respective careers to-date.

PamoLHO referred to his work experience in the hotel industry, which spanned forty one years to illuminate his sensemaking of what he constituted as competent managers and competent management. PamoLHO and MicaLHO used various stories of events to illustrate the complexities of managing hotel services in Ireland, dealing with residential and non-residential guests alike. Both PamoLHO and MicaLHO referred to the challenges of managing hotels amidst the major changes that took place during the past forty years on the island of Ireland. PamoLHO used of the term "asset" as a metaphor to refer to the physical hotel building and all of its contents. The term "asset" referred to the wide range of hospitality services provided by hotel employees to residential and non-residential guests as part of identity creation of an hotel. PamoLHO explained:

> *"…The hotel industry, […] you can move airplanes, you cannot move the asset, many of our competitors provide budget as they provide rooms, with little or no food service, meetings, events or bar. We sit very much in that mid-scale service place by providing extensive food, beverage, conferences, and weddings. Irish customers like full service, and so do our visitors, as some of the brands in Ireland failed to manage local custom …"*

PamoLHO constructed various occupational identities including his current role as a CEO and employer and formerly as an hotel general manager within various international hotel groups. Firstly, using a metaphor:

"… my philosophy is simple, develop the people and they will develop the asset…"

PamoLHO constantly highlighted the importance of developing people especially general managers as a key part of his role as CEO. We also got a glimpse of how he managed in more recent times, specifically in the wake of the 2008 financial crash. The analysis suggested that he worked closely with the senior executive management team, to protect the company's cashflow position and the jobs of employees. He achieved this in two specific ways that occurred simultaneously. The first was to protect the cashflows of existing hotels in the hotel group, which was achieved by skills development in revenue and costs forecasting for all general managers and financial controllers, to ensure their daily monitoring of costs and revenues. The second was to grow the overall cashflow position at corporate level by developing new sources of fee income through the implementation of management contracts on hotels with distressed bank debt.

Notably too, in his role as a non-executive director, PamoLHO commented on the occupational identity work of independent hotel owners-managers. Here, he constructed the identities of owner-managers who did not have vital information on their respective hotel finances, as he explained:

> *"…I am concerned about their (independent owner-managers) long-term future, because when we have gone into some of these hotel properties, I was absolutely shocked at how poorly managed their finances were, especially in relation to the amount of financial information that was readily available such as cash-flows even when dealing with banks, no profit and loss accounts available…"*

PamoLHO used two international hotel groups as the work canvas to illustrate and compare the occupational identities of hotel general managers over the intervening period of twenty four years between 1989 and 2013. He shared a story to compare the occupational identity of himself

as a general manager in 1989, with that of an hotel general manager in 2013. PamoLHO explained:

> *"... In 1989 I had just been appointed GM and there was an hotel manager already in situ. We were the perfect partnership, where he was a superb mein-host maître d'hôtel type of manager, front man while I was much more focused on the issues such as yield and revenue management back then. The current general manager is no longer in the hotel business but in the business of hotels, and must be good at both…"*

He recollected the type of person that this particular traditional hotelier-hotel manager was and who focused on managing people, whilst the general manager looked after the management of all financial aspects of the hotel in 1989. PamoLHO also highlighted the significant shift in the occupational identity of an hotel manager between 1989 and 2013. He created the occupational identity of hotel general managers in 2013 by weaving together the mein-hoist hotel manager of 1989 together with the current day business manager who focused on revenue and costs. He explained:

> *"…A good GM is someone who is mid-way between an introvert and an extrovert. Someone who has got charisma who is nice, a nice person intrinsically. All hotels live or die on the success or failure of the GM: if the GM succeeds they will; if they don't they won't. A competent general manager is an all-rounder, someone who has a presence and are strong out front, intrinsically cares about themselves and about people. The GM must be an efficient and effective leader that makes sure the property operates in four key areas, competent at cost management, revenue management, technology and technology leadership, and development of people…"*

In this statement, the occupational identity of an hotel general manager is underpinned by a combination of qualities such as charisma, intrinsically caring and an ability to demonstrate care to others, fellow hotel managers, employees and customers alike. PamoLHO used a metaphor of "an all-rounder" to describe a competent hotel general manager. PamoLHO used the language of emotion (in the term care) to describe the individual identity of the person as a hotel general manager, but also occupationally they must be competent in four key areas of costs, revenues, technology and development of people. He combined that individual identity with the occupational identity in his sensemaking of a competent general manager. He then linked the intrinsic care quality to the language of emotion, by being able to care for oneself and for all

others. It could be argued that this use of the language of emotion, "intrinsically cares" meant that senior executives must be able to demonstrate care as an innate quality. He believed that if each GM demonstrated that care from within themselves, the skills of financial management, technology and sales development could be learned. It could be argued that PamoLHO linked the intrinsic quality of being able to care for others as a cornerstone in the combined self-identity and occupational identity of hotel general managers.

The perception of the occupational identity of general manager being bound with the person who is employed as a GM is linked to the success of the hotel asset being founded on the success of the general manager. PamoLHO again used another metaphor "it's a constant challenge to get good people and so we grow our own" to demonstrate the need to mould the identity of the person into the occupational identity of an hotel general manager. We got a glimpse of this in how PamoLHO identified and recruited potential general managers, and controlled who actually was developed as he explained:

> *"…All of our GMs are home-grown so to speak. Each of the chosen candidates could be from any specialty or operations and cannot not simply apply, and this development programme spans two years. So at any one time there were 6 to 12 people coming through all the time. All new appointments are given 6 months to prove their competency in each of these areas and the company then grew and developed their own, and you could not become a GM of an hotel without completing the 2 year GMDP programme, you could not open a new hotel after completing that programme, you had to run an existing hotel first as a GM, before you could open a new hotel as a GM …"*

In a further analysis of occupational identity work PamoLHO illustrated the challenges faced by some general managers when they moved back to Ireland from the larger international hotel corporations throughout the world to the smaller Irish hotel groups. Ireland was one of the few countries in the world where its hotels are part of the social fabric of Irish national culture, in their service of residential and non-residential guests simultaneously. Earlier in this section, PamoLHO alluded to the differing contexts and nature of how Irish hotels served residential and non-residential guests at the same time, and that this posed challenges for some hotel general managers. He explained that:

"...Sometimes when having worked within internationally branded hotel management systems, when they leave they find it difficult to adapt to the smaller hotel companies, especially for their entrepreneurial, decision-making skills levels are challenged and have to retrain these executives again. Hotels in Ireland need general managers purely because of the island situation that will develop local business as they (hotels) are a key part of the social cultural fabric of Ireland and must be fostered accordingly. Irish customers like full service hotels and one of the reasons that the brands failed in Ireland because they did not recognise and accept local business in many cases their hotels were not structurally designed for events either…"

MicaLHO (independent hotel owner-manager) gave some insights into his self-identity and proceeded to weave together his notion of self into his occupational identity. Indeed, the whole interview could be described as one of identity work, whereby MicaLHO used the meeting to explore the meaning of competent management as an owner-manager. He shared stories and metaphors from a thirty year career, as he partnered multiple identities together in his sensemaking of being a competent hotel owner-manager. In the very first moments of the interview, MicaLHO commenced the process of identity work when he shared his notion of what type of person he was. In fact, it could be argued that showing care to others formed the cornerstone in his perception of hospitality and was crucial to his perceived notion of an hotelier as an owner-manager:

"… I am not an owner, I am not a manager, I am a caring human being who has a guest in my country and in my home and in my orbit that I am going to do whatever I have to do to satisfy them – to get them back on a level keel. I can cheer him up, and I can help him and that's what it's all about because I am a good reader of people …"

MicaLHO charted the identity of the hotel management profession in the 1970's as he commenced his studies in catering college:

"...hotel management at that time was the poor relation, it was perceived not as an academic profession as such, really more I suppose as an elevated craft position rather than a professional managerial position. Interestingly, following managers of that era and of that time, they arrived into their senior managerial positions via the craft end of the business, […] and had a pretty good overall grasp, and if the truth be known the whole economical aspects of it and the whole financials attached to running a big multifaceted business was probably the bit they had to harness in coming to terms with it…"

At the beginning of the interview, MicaLHO shared the story of his parents and grandparents who owned and managed seasonal hotels in different locations throughout Ireland. He remembered a saying that his grandfather used in relation to the meaning of commitment, and recounted this short legend story to highlight the importance of commitment as an owner-manager:

> *"...I remember my grandfather well, he used to say a yard of your own counter is better than a mile of someone else's. I am infinitely more committed to this hotel than I could pay someone to do the same job. I think psychologically an owner will tend to go that bit further and I don't think it is for personal, sorry I don't think it's for commercial reasons or greed reasons. I believe their name is associated with it – so it's a question of commitment. Remember the old yarn about the Irish Breakfast and the bacon, egg and sausage. You the chicken has passing interest in it because chickens just giving an egg but the pig has a total commitment to it because he is giving the rasher and sausage, that's total commitment where the chicken is passing interest..."*

Like PamoLHO, MicaLHO described his perception of the nature of the Irish hospitality and tourism industry as providing context to how he managed his own small luxury hotel:

> *"...You know we sort of say that our place to me is a classic mom and pop hospitality driven operation that represents what I believe Irish Tourism is all about. I always say there are three P's in Irish Tourism – people, pace, and place, and it galls me that tourists from all over the world come to Ireland for ten days staying in Irish hotels and guesthouses and not meet too many Irish people. I think that is wrong. I believe that history has shown that our strengths has always being our people, our unique ability to welcome people, to make people feel like old friends that you only met less than a half an hour ago and most importantly of all to send them home laden down with very very happy memories..."*

This is one typical illustration of how MicaLHO weaved his sense of self-identity as a caring and welcoming person into his occupational identity as an Irish hotelier who is passionate about the constituents of hospitality including guest accommodation, excellent food and wines. It could be said that he conveyed a particular occupational identity as an Irish hotelier who used a quality of being an intrinsically caring person to demonstrate that care and empathy to all hotel guests. His notion of competence is certainly shaped within his self-identity as a person which

is at one with his occupational identity as an hotelier. He perceived his notion of self through the qualities of care, commitment, and dignity which underpinned himself as a person and informed how he interacted and behaved in a caring manner towards guests and employees alike, and was also very much bound up with being an hotel owner. MicaLHO explained:

> "...I have fired one person in twenty one years which I am very proud of because I believe you can't take someone's dignity from them by saying listen you are not suitable, get out of here..."

JoniBHO, was the owner of an hotel business in the centre of large city in Ireland. He shared some glimpses of self-identity as an individual human being, together with the occupational identity as a business owner and employer. Unlike all of the other interviewees, JoniBHO gave some insight into how he as a person has struggled in recent years, in understanding and coming to terms with personal loss of close family members and long-service employees between 2004 and 2008. JoniBHO constantly highlighted the importance of people especially family members and key employees. He explained how he managed through a personal breakdown between 2008 and 2009, and made sense of the positive and negative impacts of personal loss on self-identity.

He commenced the process of identity construction by describing the influence of his parents on him as a young person growing up in Dublin, Ireland. Like MicaLHO, he recalled the ongoing influence of his parents, from when they first started their hotel business in 1955 with four guest rooms and how hard they had worked to expand it during the intervening years between 1955 and 2008. His parents valued education and so ensured that he and his four siblings received third-level education and qualifications. JoniBHO studied accounting and finance while his younger brother studied hotel management. JoniBHO alluded to his self-identity as a young person whereby when he was a student he always worked as, "… there was no such thing as weekends off..." He conveyed a sense of the occupational identities created by his late parents as they worked together in their small hotel. JoniBHO recalled how his Mother interacted with guests whilst his Father focused on the maintenance issues through their small hotel. He explained:

> "...my Mother welcomed guests, dealt with front of house issues and Dad fixed and mended the plumbing and electrics, building repairs..."

Between 2004 and 2008 JoniBHO employed a general manager at his hotel. However, JoniBHO recalled the reasons for his decision to make that same general manager redundant in February 2008. He was unhappy with the "ethos" used by the general manager towards employees and customers alike, one that was different to how he perceived it should be. JoniBHO continued the story of what happened in the intervening months that included the financial crisis of 2008. He became very emotional as he recalled the period between September 2008 and March 2009, when he recovered from a personal breakdown and was unable to work. He outlined what happened:

> "...I lost control of my own hotel and it was going in a direction, there was an ethos here, where staff were not being treated well. Where that care of staff, and respect for the guest wasn't there and I knew I had to take back control. So effectively I took back control in February 2008, and I made the then GM redundant. And suddenly I found myself managing the business in a way that I had never done before. [...] On a personal level this hit in October 2008, because of my financial training and because of the business that I am in and seeing everything that was going on, I could see exactly where this was going to go and I just crashed completely. [...] the fact of what probably extenuated my challenge was I think my senior marketing person left after 20 years' service, my financial controller took time off, so I was left and couldn't cope with the dynamic, you know with my solidity I could not cope..."

JoniBHO described how he got professional help and took six months off to recover and explained the profound impact on his self:

> "...yes against that backdrop of you know, I suppose my own experiences has left me with a greater understanding of people, of staff, of the vulnerabilities of life and I think if you harness that properly you know it makes you better. But unfortunately people of this world are left very isolated, you have to have human regard. Dignity is absolutely crucial, you staff, your customers or guests, your suppliers, you cannot screw a supplier into the ground, you cannot put a customer down..."

In this statement, JoniBHO used two metaphors to explain how his recovery period augmented his understanding of how he related to all people. The second metaphor referred to how one must treat suppliers fairly, "screwing into the ground" referred to their negative and poor treatment. Finally, JoniBHO explained that during mid-2009 when hotel revenues plummeted by fifty (50) per cent he took the decision to negotiate salary reductions with all employees

including his own, to prevent wide-scale redundancies. He displayed empathy with employees by taking a personal salary reduction of twenty-five per cent.

JoelBHO used his interview to chart how he managed people to achieve business objectives in his diversified private limited company, which he created over the past twenty years. As a business owner and strategist, as an employer and people manager, JoelBHO examined his notion of management competencies, whereby he weaved together a number of these aforementioned occupational identities with glimpses of self-identity. His perception of his self-identity was closely aligned to one occupational identity as an entrepreneur. But equally, JoelBHO charted how he learned to manage people as a key part of his occupational identity in his diversified business. In other words, the entire interview illustrated his views about managing people, from coping with the loss of his son, through to identifying, training, and performance managing employees as he made sense of his notion of competent management: JoelBHO explained:

> *"...I am the registered owner, licensee, all that sort of thing I am a facilitator as well, driver, energiser, strategist, [...]. We have maybe twenty properties around here, residential and retail units and they are all managed out of here as well. I am the driving force behind the hotel business, whilst my wife and brother manage the more day to day issues and all that sort of stuff. In terms of our staff, Jesus I am not chasing them around. We have a model which wasn't planned, it evolved, we opened here with 11 people, right, and 20 years ago, the skillsets coming here they developed that they evolved themselves. They became more experienced with more training here, there and all that stuff; some people came in and brought other skills in that we didn't have and we were able to copy and learn from and all that sort of stuff and it, it grew organically, happened itself. We performance manage all the time, our focus is on becoming leaner by using preventative maintenance and we communicate daily alongside demanding that you must constantly adapt to your environment ..."*

In an effort to transfer meaning, JoelBHO demonstrated his adaptive decision-making through the facilities management metaphor, referring to the maintenance team making sure that all of the physical facilities of the hotel remained in good working order. But this metaphor also possibly related to "being able to adapt to the environment you are in". In other words, when JoelBHO spoke about being able to adapt and be flexible in order to manage change, he linked managing change as part of everyday business through continuous improvement as he worked

to create the environment of the hotel as it created him. His expectations of his team were high, while he praised staff in housekeeping, for example:

> *"...we have some great people up there, we really do, but we don't suffer fools either…"*

In fact, JoelBHO also explained the impact of the loss of his son and how he coped with this personal tragedy, by using the inspiration of his late son to manage the hotel's work experience programme. Ironically, in this example JoelBHO used a short poignant story of how he had used his late son's work experience to improve all student internships at his hotel. He explained:

> *"...My young lad got work experience in my architects office for a week when he was in transition year, it was the worse week he ever had, he was put in a corner and given a book, […] I swore to myself that I would develop a formal programme of 5 days or 10-days work experience internship and we did that. Each student spends a day in each department, we actually invest. But they have to be seriously interested and I need to see them and I want to know that they want it, when they come and are expected to learn, ask questions. They do interesting things such as watching the security cameras, lodging money in the bank, etc. We approach it in the same way as the people that work here.…"*

JoelBHO ascribed part of his self-identity to the way in which he interacted with people in general, weaving self-identity into that as an hotel business owner. Like MicaLHO, JoelBHO spoke about his ability to "read people and am self-taught". In fact he sought out employees who had no formal training in hospitality but have ability, like himself, to "have a swagger about them, a positive attitude and are interested in learning". We also got a glimpse of the importance of qualities such as his sense of integrity, fairness and the capacity to admit mistakes, which are a key part of his self-identity and how these qualities and interpersonal sensitivity are used when managing the incompatibility of various aspects of the hotel business. Trust is the key anchor of JoelBHO's system of integrity, in how he managed employees and in turn, his influence on their management of guests:

> *"...we have a very healthy mix of business and we don't tell everyone that we do other things because some businesses do not mix well or are compatible with other things because we do hens and stags. We would not take two older American visitors on a Saturday night because we are full of hens and stags. You are better leaving the room empty. My front desk girls have authority to deal and negotiate, and deal with issues, I don't need everything coming across my desk, right, and they do that and they do it in*

the same style I would, watching me long enough and they are here long enough and so on ..."

JoelBHO used qualities of honesty and fairness in dealing with guest issues, and not mixing different types of customers who may have conflicting demand. Throughout the interview, JoelBHO spoke extensively on the process of constructing an occupation identity linked into how he has learned to manage employees:

> *"... On the HR stuff, we would be very good. I would have studied HR an awful lot myself with IBEC, I have their big book, now there is one. I would write that book now and we know what you can do and what you cannot do. But you cannot be confrontational: it's always a carrot, never a stick. In terms of performance do I bring you in for a performance appraisal once a year? No. I bring you in 10 times per year, right. Why would you do once a year and its setting people up? Are you waiting for someone to say, you didn't do this and you didn't do that, and then there is a blow-out and so on. It's continuous assessment and it's not a formal assessment, it is assessment. My bar staff up there, maybe have got an issue and we will deal with it on the day. Our employee files have absolutely everything documented and problems that we have had on that day etc. It's not the negatives; it's the positives as well. OK, if there are changes in terms of wages increases or decreases, changes in work everything is noted, working here has to be a positive experience. We always say that happy people make people happy..."*

MariLHM, ConaLHM and HeliBHM were employed as hotel general managers in international hotels groups. Whilst MariLHM and ConaLHM were in the luxury hotel category, HeliBHM worked in a budget hotel. These three general managers shared similarities in their construction of occupational identity, as management of employees was crucial to the success of their job as an hotel general managers. Whilst MariLHM and ConaLHM discussed the influenced of corporate head office on their roles as general managers, HeliBHM recounted the influence of the performance management system office on her occupational identity and the challenges therein of working within this highly controlled environment as an hotel general manager.

MariLHM managed a luxury hotel that was owned by, and part of an international hotel group. In an extensive interview he shared a range of stories of recent events which can be seen to form the basis of his personal identity work, fused into his occupational identity as a general manager. Peppered with metaphors, he illustrated his notion of a competent general manager through how he has developed a combination of skills and knowledge (gained from work experience) which

were underpinned by qualities of honesty, integrity and emotions to manage people – employees and customers alike. In other words, his notion of competent management was founded upon strong personal qualities of integrity and honesty which he used to manage people through differing work situations, whilst combining aspects of self-identity when performing his occupational identity.

MariLHM examined the impacts of the economic recession on the hotel business in general, and how he managed through these challenging trading times. He was very reflective about his notion of hospitality services in hotels, whereby "every day is a different day". In this iterative process of identity work, MariLHM recounted the onset of the 2008 financial crisis that occurred in the latter half of the year, and he displayed a positive emotion of being gracious in making sense of a crisis retrospectively:

> *"…You know what? We were fine up until Sept 2008, actually in the overall scheme of things 2008 was a great year for us. It was my first year here. Thank God it was because you know what if it was a bad year, we wouldn't be where we are now because we have had two-three crappy years since that…"*

In effect he was able to utilise his notion of a positive disposition of self which helped him to cope with the business challenges of the subsequent years. MatiLHM also used two strong metaphors to highlight the enormous impacts of the 2008 financial crisis in Ireland as it became global news:

> *"…The whole thing had a snowball effect, […] what you had out there in the marketplace was the perception that Ireland was, hotels in Ireland were up for grabs, as in you can dictate the rate. So the corporates came in hammering us on rate you know, the tour operators, all of these guys smelt blood…"*

PamoLHO, JoelBHO and MatiLHM all shared a similar focus on the importance of developing employees as a key part of their occupational identities. In the first instance, MatiLHM told the story of how he managed a substantive change initiative at the hotel recently in his sensemaking of management competence. He illustrated how he managed the implementation of a redundancy programme of fifty employees, many with long service employment records, that was followed immediately with a re-organisation of the formal work structures at the hotel.

There are aspects of his self-identity as a person that he intertwined into his occupational identity as a manager, illuminated by his emphasis on how he manages his own emotions and used personal qualities of being calm, honest, having a sense of integrity to underpin how he behaves towards his employees. MariLHM used personal qualities of honesty and integrity as he showed empathy by communicating continuously with all employees to allay fears during the restructuring process and coping with substantial reduction in sales activity at the hotel. Furthermore, he especially focused on the fifty two employees who left their employment through redundancy. He personally managed the initial compulsory redundancy meetings process of twenty-two employees and the subsequent voluntary redundancy of the remaining thirty staff members. In the process of identity work MariLHM highlighted the point about leading by example. Examples of these include, meeting each employee and communicating the bad news on redundancy, sharing relevant information constantly, eating in the canteen with employees, and ensuring that the flat structure of the hotel work organisation enabled constant two way communication between management and employees. MariLHM's notion of a competent manager was how one developed and used skills, personal qualities and emotional intelligence to interact and manage employees, as summed up in this utterance:

> *"...my own philosophy is this team are happy the rest should be happy, the hard part is keeping that, yes every day is different in this business, [...] you know, lead by example, if you are asking someone to do something that you must be willing to do it yourself in as much as possible..."*

MariLHM shared further insights into how he created a happy team and placed huge emphasis on recruitment to continue that philosophy, of how he fused self-identity into his concept of occupational identity when identifying potential employees, when he commented:

> *"...we place huge emphasis on recruitment. I meet every single interviewee, it's important for us to meet each other. I outline what my expectations are, a bit about the company culture in what we are trying to do here, we are looking for someone to fit into our team and culture, who can interact with guests and not afraid to speak to customers. Its' gotta be the right person. If I have a question mark over somebody I will go back to the guys and say I am not sure. You want to hire that person, that's your call but keep a close eye just to ensure they fit in. We can't have them as chinks in our armour..."*

MariLHM explained that managing hotels competently as all about developing people as he explained:

> *"...I like general management on a bigger scale. It's nice being king of the castle. In a way to be able to mould and shape, I like building teams, developing teams, developing people who have going on to bigger and better things. Get great personal satisfaction helping people along the way…"*

ConaLHM worked for an international hotel group located in a large city He was general manager of a very busy hotel operation that was constructed ten years ago. He mapped the development of this hotel over that ten years, as he described it as 'a hole in the ground' when he arrived to that particular location. ConaLHM saw his job as one of producing financial results in the form of revenue and profit targets, which are only produced through the on-going training and development of all employees. At the beginning of the interview he commenced the process of constructing the occupational identity of a general manager and how his perception of self as a person underpinned that occupational identity:

> *"…You are judged on your results whatever it is and you are judged as a general manager, if you think of what you are employed to do. You are employed to produce certain financial results, that's it bottom line and it is the bottom line, but the industry has changed a lot […] you are now judged on building a team for example my last three deputy managers are now general managers, my former sales and marketing manager is a director in the company and the HR director came from here, and that was not because of me personally. It's because of the environment you try and create one of support and development that's very important…"*

It could be argued that ConaLHM's perception of competent management was heavily influenced by the context of the environment in his hotel, one that he has created during the past ten years where people are developed over their careers. He commented on how he has developed as a person and as a manager, by fusing together parts of self-identity with occupational identity work as he made sense of management competencies. ConaLHM described his hotel as a "breeding ground for grooming managers and sending them out into the company". He alluded to the positive influence of a former general manager with whom he worked and what he had learned about the occupational identity of an hotel general manager from this former colleague. Beginning with self-identity, he explained:

> *"…Trust, you trust people first of all, you are the person that put them in that position, when I arrived to this place it was a hole in the ground so over eight years I developed my team and have built up that team. The one man that I adore was my former general manager and he was responsible for the development of myself and many of my colleagues. Developing people, developing trust, he was a role model, who had a significant impact on my own style, […] treat others like you would like to be treated. It's about the work environment that you create should be one of support, development and trust of staff and managers, that's very important; they know what they have to do, let them get on and do it. I have been developing managers and sending them out into the group, we are a breeding ground developing people…"*

ConaLHM shared similar views with PamoLHO on how the job of hotel management had changed in a number of ways during the past thirty years. He contrasted his perception of the occupational identity of hotel management in 1983 to that in 2013:

> *"…Remember when I joined in 1983, 30 years ago, it was very much that you know. I had seen the old school of management was where you know figures, figures and results, keeping people in the dark especially young managers. When I was a young manager you were given keys and a bleep and that was it. You would never even meet the general manager. You were like a glorified key holder back then, you were never shown anything. […]. working 70 hours per week, doing split shifts and using Mr. and Mrs. in the title of how one addressed the general manager at that time. The business has changed from one of fear to respect. It has become a more human industry in the sense that you are judged on building a team, developing people, motivating people into the industry, bringing in young blood and developing people into different roles. You are there for consultation, keeping an eye on things, support people, help people, develop people. Of course we make mistakes, all part of life and you learn from the mistakes, […] that leads to a happy environment. It's very very key to have a good team, have people who enjoy coming into work and don't have to worry about things…"*

ConaLHM's notion of competency as an hotel general manager was woven into two interdependent parts, the skills learned of how to "achieve results" underpinned by personal qualities and emotional intelligence which augmented his skills of managing people to achieve those results. It could be argued that ConaLHM's occupational identity was underpinned, though his use of a metaphor "personality and spots" by parts of self-identity and the ongoing work of managing one's behaviour in how he reacted to others. He explained:

"…You are born with your personality, you can't change your spots but you can change your behaviour and how you react to challenges…"

HeliBHM used the majority of the interview to discuss her current role as a general manager in a performance managed international hotel group. Whilst she shared some glimpses of what she was like as a person in her construction of self-identity, she mapped how her occupational identity as a general manager had developed over the past twenty years. In her process of identity construction, she explained how her perception of self, influenced and impacted on how she managed others. Simultaneously, HeliBHM charted the identity of the international hotel group in how it used three core groups of people - team, guest and shareholder to form the cornerstones for their performance management control systems to achieve its business objectives. HeliBHM used the identities of team, guest and shareholder whom individually and cumulatively formed the basis of how she managed and made sense of competent management. HeliBHM illustrated how this international hotel group used the win-card traffic light colour system of green, amber and orange to describe how the results of various performance measures were tracked on the three interdependent identities of team, guest and shareholder:

"…it's made up of a number of areas we believe in team, guest and shareholder, so it's broken down into these three areas. We operate what is called a red, amber and green system, so if you stay within your target you are green, if you go 2% up above your target you are amber and go way above your target you are red…"

As far as HeliBHM was concerned her notion of competent management was her ability to manage her team to achieve a green win-card result across each of the areas; team, guest and shareholder. She alluded to the ongoing challenges of this work environment and was critical of the various control measures and mechanisms in terms of the challenges they posed to her current occupational identity as a general manager within this international hotel group:

"…We have more measures, we have more challenges you know in terms of us as GMs than anyone else that is out there, they have so set in stone you know what's going on. Once you achieve that we operate what is called a red, amber and green system so if you stay within your target you are green. This means that looking across 700 hotels the executives can look down on the win card and see where there are concerns in a particular site with regards to team turnover, and with regards to Your Say etc. …"

HeliBHM illustrated how this win-card traffic light system was use to manage her overall performance as an hotel general manager under the individual identities of team, guest and shareholder.

Team

HeliBHM outlined a number of issues under this heading of team, which focused on a wide range of performance measures and used in all aspects of employee recruitment and development. In this, she was doing identity work on all employees, managers and staff alike in terms of how this international hotel group managed and interacted with its employees. She highlighted the crucial key role that managers and employees played in the delivery of hospitality services in these hotels. She explained that the employee recruitment was on-going, using a metaphor, "we are always planning ahead, we never get to the situation of just employing arms and legs". She sought employees who demonstrated a positive attitude, and highlighted the importance of the presence this quality of all potential employees to her senior managers. However, in her process of identity construction of potential employees, it could be argued that HeliBHM diagnosed a tension between the occupational identity of future employees and company expectations in the following comment:

> *"…every single person who works at this hotel company each day knows exactly what is expected of them, how they operate, this is the brand, this is how we do what we do it, there is no grey. […] this is how we do it and this is how we are going to train you to do it, we ask you to put your personal spin on it. We don't want robots, we ask you to put your personal spin on it by how you say it, whether you say this first or that first it doesn't matter as long in the course of the conversation you get this across…"*

On the performance management of teams of employees, HeliBHM explained the two key barometers that were used by this international hotel group:

> *"…So in terms of team turnover you are allowed to have this level of team turnover within your building. We also have Your Say, so twice per year a survey is sent out to every single team member who are ask a series of 24 questions including; about themselves, their development, tools to do their jobs?, how competent is their own manager is?, is there good communication?, how do we believe where the guest sits?, are we getting the best from them? For each individual site they want a minimum of 80% of the team in each site engaged…"*

HeliBHM highlighted how the bi-annual 'Your Say Employee Survey' results were communicated through the ratings on the traffic light performance management control system:

> *"...so in each of the sites the team fill in this survey anonymously, and are expected to achieve a target of 80% of team members who are engaged, that is team members who are developed, feel empowered, fully understand their roles that they are in charge of, being part of something feel they have the respect of their management, so feel engaged from the minute they walk in their door as opposed to walking in the door, doing a job and walking home…"*

Guest

The next element in the identity work was how guests are a key focus of this hotel group. In the first instance, this hotel organisation used a number of checks to ascertain how customer care services were managed across the entire hotel group. HeliBHM explained:

> *"…There is the Net Recommend Guest survey that gets sent out to 30% of guests who stay with us, who booked online and who provide us with an email address. They get asked a series of questions including how clean was your bathroom, the service you received on arrival, were the team courteous, is there anyone you would highlight as a great team member, how was your food…'*

HeliBHM proceeded to describe the annual internal quality audit that was conducted at each hotel as part of the guest experience:

> *"…where somebody from head office will come and stay, have dinner, breakfast and then come down by 10am the next morning, announce themselves and literally rip the place apart. They will check 8 guest bedrooms to the point where they are on the floor looking for hairs. They will check all our paperwork, documentation, they literally go through the place with a fine toothcomb. We have to understand our brand, to protect the brand…"*

Shareholder

Under the heading of shareholder, each hotel was measured by targets achieved on net profits, costs and sales revenue mapped against the previous financial trading year. HeliBHM finished the interview with her interpretation of what a competent hotel general manager is:

"...understanding the challenge that has prevented them from getting their green win card and put their plans and measures in place to fix it to get the all green win card…"

NicaLHM, GeriLHM, Arin LHM, PoilBHM, and CrisBHM worked as hotel general managers in privately owned independent hotel companies. In each of their accounts, these five general managers were influenced by their work context in a different manner to their colleagues based in hotels that were part of an international hotel group. As described in the three previous accounts, MariLHM, ConaLHM and HeliBHM focused on their management of largely three groups of stakeholders – employees, customers and personnel from their head office. However, the metaphor that PoilBHM used to illuminate how he perceived the management of independent hotels as "independent hotels have to plough their own furrow". One of the key differences that existed between general managers based in independent hotels and international hotel groups was how interviewees, such as NicaLHM, GeriLHM, Arin LHM, PoilBHM, and CrisBHM were ultimately accountable for the source and variety of all revenues derived from both residential and non-residential customers alike. The impact of this specific difference was examined in the occupational identity work of each of these general managers.

NicaLHM worked as a general manager of a family owned independent four star hotel. The hotel was developed within an historic Georgian house which comprised of multiple food and beverage operations including restaurants, bars, extensive conference and banqueting facilities, one hundred and thirteen guest rooms and a leisure centre. This hotel has traded for the past forty years, located on its own landscaped grounds with multiple car parking facilities situated on the edge of a large city in Ireland.

This interview with NicaLHM was dominated by his construction of his occupational identity as an hotelier-general manager within the culture of this well-established luxury hotel whilst simultaneously doing self-identity work. He used stories of events to examine the qualities and emotions that he used to manage employees in all aspects of hotel management. He shared a glimpse of how he managed as a director-general manager, positioned in this hotel organisation between the current hotel owner (whose late father set up this hotel business) and her son who recently joined the hotel team. At the beginning of the interview, NicaLHM set about to create

the occupational identity of this luxury hotel which employed one hundred and fifty staff. He explained:

> *"...we have a wonderful front of house lounge that is busy all day long, serving food and beverages including morning coffee, afternoon tea, lunches and evening meals. This hotel, I see more resort maybe with a golf course, the beauty of this business is that it's quite diverse, in that you have corporates/conference and family gatherings during the week and then it switches to families/weddings, large leisure centre gatherings at the weekend – a strong mix of business..."*

NicaLHM used a series of stories of events to illustrate how he created his occupational identity as an hotelier-general manager and his notion of self-identity underpinned the other and vice versa. One of the most recent events highlighted by NicaLHM came from the impacts of the 2008 financial crisis which had devastating consequences for all concerned in varying ways at this luxury hotel. He described the major challenge he faced when dealing with multiple competing issues which included rapidly falling hotel revenues, pressure from banks and suppliers and the inevitable consequences of reducing payroll costs by enforced compulsory redundancies. Many of those employees who roles were identified as redundant had long service records of employment.

He weaved his self-identity and occupational identity of a director cum general manager together as he described how he used qualities, emotions and personal learning to cope with the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis between 2009 and 2012. NicaLHM stated: "that it was incredibly tough and stressful to be very honest", and compared the sudden fall in hotel revenues in early 2009 to "falling off a cliff, it was that quick". He explained that his immediate reaction was to show empathy with employees, as he joined the hotel sales team and completed sales calls. However, the competing demands of various stakeholders such as banks and suppliers made him quickly realise that the fall in revenues was not going to right itself quickly, and so NicaLHM was forced to cut costs. He admitted that the decision to implement the compulsory redundancy programme of fifty employees was not taken quickly enough with the benefit of hindsight. He explained that this was largely due to the loyalty of the hotel owner to the long-service employees, but in a number of cases they were not willing to take on other work: "it was a case of seeing who we could live with and without, who was essential to the business".

NicaLHM explained how he personally communicated constantly with all employees, something he learned to be crucial when steering the hotel and its employees through the challenging trading times of the years from 2009 to 2012. He explained:

> *"...we had regular engagement with employees through regular meetings – morning meetings, weekly operations meetings, monthly management and quarterly team meetings with staff. A philosophy of continual improvement using the externally accredited programme to support that initiative…"*

This is an example of identity work whereby NicaLHM and the hotels sole owner battled between loyalties to long-service dedicated employees who were seen as part of this family hotel business, with the harsh reality of enforced redundancies on those same staff members. In late 2009, NicaLHM took on a short professional development programme with other general managers in the Irish hotel industry. He quickly realised that his peers taking the course were "in the same boat", admitting that:

> *"…I think I felt very isolated because even though we say we are part of a group with the hotels in New York, we are stand-alone property. So it made me realise that everyone was in the same boat, everyone was having the same issues, and some people maybe had different solutions to problems, and they were shared solutions…"*

He highlighted the importance of certain qualities, such as staying calm, which should be part of self-identity. Indeed, it could be argued that he was also doing occupational identity work on future hotel general managers. He blended the quality of being calm as part of self-identity with being innovative and communicative as crucial to the occupational identity of an hotel general manager in this explanation:

> *"… You've got to be innovative, you have got to communicate well etc., etc. and then trying to rise above it. Another trait that is important is for a manager is to come across as extremely calm, because it would be very easy particularly in the last couple of years to run around roaring and shouting and losing the head, so the analogy is nice is the calm on the top but underneath there is a lot going on, with the team stay calm without losing the run of yourself …"*

GeriLHM's management career spanned twenty five years where she has worked in different hotel organisational structures both in Ireland and overseas. She used the interview to illustrate her perspective of the occupational identity of an hotel general manager charting how it had changed in that intervening quarter of a century. Together with PamoLHO, JoelBHO, MatiLHM and ConaLHM she highlighted the importance of ongoing employee recruitment and development. However, GeriLHM differed with ConaLHM in her comparison of the occupational identity of hotel management, where she focused on the changes in the quality of service given to customers whilst he highlighted the focus on profits through people development. She used stories of having worked in differing international hotel organisations to illuminate her occupational identity.

During the hour-long interview, GeriLHM highlighted the dynamics that were driving changes throughout the hotel industry, and how that had ultimately impacted on the occupational identity of hotel general managers. She used the interview to contrast her perspective of the changes that have occurred in the occupational identity of an hotel general manager in the 1980's to that of her current role in 2013. These changes included such key issues as rising costs, the ongoing influence of technology, and the changed expectations of customers since she commenced her occupational career in hotel management. GeriLHM also compared and contrasted the occupational identity of a general manager within differing organisational structures, i.e. working in an international hotel group and working within a private limited company with one hotel. She shared her concerns about the changing nature and identity of the hotel business, whereby the focus on customer care was being replaced by a heightened focus on profitability.

At doing identity work, GeriLHM discussed the corporate structure of international hotel groups with whom she worked for past twenty years between 1990 and 2010. Like ConaLHM, she praised these hotel organisations as her former employers had aided her development as a young manager. GeriLHM illustrated her notion of competency in hotel management was founded by:

> "…These hotel organisations were very structured, organised, disciplined, they know what they are about, they provided very good training, were a very good foundation and practical experience, had great leadership too, […] great development for me, every step of the way I has very good teachers so hence a broad range of experience…"

In contrast, GeriLHM shared some insight of her current position as general manager of an independent hotel. To begin with, she described how the businesses in that large town co-operated together to develop business links:

> "...now I must say I am very impressed with this town, it has a very strong Chamber of Commerce marketing group, who have brought the town together in terms of driving business into it as a whole because everyone benefits. They focus on advertising campaigns on radio and TV. Here, this hotel was very futuristic at that time, designed with an awful lot of glass, where rooms business is 70% and food is 30% of overall turnover. Based in the towncentre, with car parking. The type of clientele is commercial, that is corporate during the week and leisure on the weekend. Now leisure, I would never have seen the leisure activity that we have here, guests are checking in to have a good time, they are very relaxed, coming with their suitcases with lots of evening wear..."

GeriLHM linked her notion of competency as clusters of qualities which included intuition, being driven, intrinsically care and being honest, that underpinned her skills cluster of how she managed people, finances, revenues and costs to achieve profitability. These skills of managing people to take care of customers illuminated GeriLHM's self-identity as she explained:

> "...I would like to think that I am a relatively good motivator of staff. Financial acumen as well, you have got to be completely commercially focused, and sometimes because you have to take really take tough decisions..."

In wrestling with her self-identity, GeriLHM spoke about being passionate about customer care and service which she learned from her parents' business. She explained, "I love what I do, I love the business, it's in my DNA". This statement is a reference to when GeriLHM was growing up and worked at home in her parents B&B business, where she helped her late mother to serve breakfast and cleaned guest bedrooms. GeriLHM explained in great detail how the hotel business and hotel management had changed utterly, predominately driven by growth in technology and increased demands for profitability that in turn impacted on the occupational identities of hoteliers who were customer service focused. Given this dynamism in hotel management, GeriLHM explained her notion of competency as twofold, firstly aligned with the traditional hotel manager who focused on staff development and customer service, to the current

hotel general manager with a continued business focus on the financials in terms of revenues, costs and profits. GeriLHM combined qualities of commitment, "always wanting to do good for the business, being patient, passionate", with displaying her emotional intelligence and that being too passionate could be a positive as well as a negative. GeriLHM explained:

> *"...Now I always treat my job as if it is my own business, and sometimes that's not a good thing. I become too passionate, too strong about it. My colleagues around me based at different levels of the organisation would be seeing it in their levels and therefore wouldn't have the same push as I do, then my expectations would be a lot higher ..."*

Similar to JoniBHO and JoelBHO, ArinLHM, engaged in a process of creating and building self-identity in how he managed people. He referred to "a philosophy about a system that I use on hospitality" used to underpin his occupational identity of an hotel general manager. Peppered with stories, ArinLHM illuminated the type of person he was and how he strived to continuously build relationships with various stakeholders in the management of a small luxury hotel in southern Ireland. Whilst he was cognisant of the objectives of his occupational identity as an hotel general manager, ArinLHM clearly articulated his sense of self-identity, weaving the latter into the former. A cornerstone of his self-identity is that of building relationships with people, one which is founded on trust, together with showing care to all employees and guests alike. ArinLHM narrated this short story to explain how he went about developing business links and growing sales for his small hotel. He used the 80 year trading history of the hotel to welcome back past guests who had stayed there, as well as the pre-opening event of welcoming 600 residents from the local small village and surrounding areas for a complimentary cup of tea or coffee. ArinLHM was keenly aware of the challenge he had on his hands, of managing the transformation between the old hotel into a small luxury hotel by ensuring that he and his team got accepted into that small community. ArinLHM recently developed a similar small luxury sister hotel in Dublin city centre, with whom he works closely to drive business between the two small hotel operations.

ArinLHM referred to, "a philosophy about a system that I use on hospitality" and he explained this system and how he used it in managing this luxury hotel, and weaved the building of relationships as a key anchor in his identity work to achieve this. He used the term philosophy as a metaphor to illustrate his perception of the term hospitable and its constituent parts. He

used his philosophy of "hospitality" as a system to deliver same, bearing in mind that perceptions of an hospitable experience are socially constructed and vary from one customer to another. His philosophy was being able to bring together and manage the physical and human elements, woven together into a system founded on building relationships constituted his notion of competent management.

He used his most recent experience of working through the renovation of an eighty year old hotel to illuminate his perception of his vision of hospitality in a luxury five star hotel. That vision consisted of specific physical standards of quality which must be present in food, beverages, and guest accommodation and which are delivered by caring and welcoming employees. As far as ArinLHM was concerned hotel service experiences must be happy and memorable. In order to make hotel service experiences happy and memorable, the physical constituents of food and accommodation must be accompanied by welcoming and caring employees who could create happy memories and good experience for all guests. ArinLHM perceived himself as a conduit or lynchpin in constantly building relationships by demonstrating care and empathy to employees and customers in the delivery of hotel service experiences each and every time. And it was his behaviour towards people that was the cornerstone of his self-identity and indeed his occupational identity as an hotel general manager.

Indeed, he argued that as a person he was constantly building relationships with customers and staff, especially front-line employees' and acted as a role model for all his employees to do the same. ArinLHM actively encouraged his employees to build relationships between themselves and with their customers. He gave an example of this, when recently the hotel concierge noticed a guest had arrived at the hotel for lunch with a flat tyre on his car. While the guest was having lunch, the hotel concierge travelled to a local garage and got the flat type repaired so that the guest was able to continue on his journey.

ArinLHM's notion of competency clusters revolved, around how he used skills in finance, technology, alongside developing emotional intelligence skills in all his employees. His perception of his competency was bound up in his self-identity woven together with his philosophy of hospitality through his on-going ability to make people (customers) happy with

experiences of his hotel. This was founded on how he behaved, in showing care and support for employees and guests alike. To his mind, his identity was also bound up by his use of the language of emotion, of care and showing care in how he carried out in the delivery of hospitality. ArinLHM's self-identity was illuminated by his on-going reference to his role in building relationships with fellow general managers who were his peer group. He explained that he worked closely together with this peer group to identify and refer employees who were seeking opportunities for new employment or promotion to each other.

ArinLHM and his restaurant team were recently accredited with their first Michelin star for food and service standards. It could argued that he has developed his own skills in financial management, forecasting and business planning and ensured similar skills training for his key employees. However, his self-identity was created by his philosophy towards hospitality, of weaving a relational web bound by care and empathy towards customers and fellow employees alike.

The interview with PoilBHM was a continual process of identity creation in his sensemaking of management competencies. He referred to the context of Irish hospitality, and alluded to the changed nature of hotel design and the potential positive and negative impacts of overly modern hotels. PoilBHM was also doing self-identity work as a person. In his opening statement, he linked competence to the skills to do the job as part of occupational identity but immediately linked aspects of self, as he explained:

> *"...competence having skills to do the job but also competence goes towards someone realising that the skills they have continuously need to be improved..."*

PoilBHM has managed the same city centre hotel for the past sixteen years. In order for hotel services to be hospitable they must be delivered by happy employees a perspective that PoilBHM shared with ArinLHM, MariLHM, MicaLHO and GeriLHM. In a holistic was PoilBHM described the notion of the business of managing hotels, which was having the ability to balance the delivery of hospitality services with making a profit and develop managers like himself in the process. He discussed the impacts of the 2008 financial crisis and the macro level changes that have taken place within Irish hospitality and tourism.

PoilBHM examined the identity of some hotels buildings in Ireland, where he questioned the potential impacts of structural changes in their physical design and layout with this comment:

> *"...Irish customers are still quite discerning. I am not sure would a whole load of Ibis hotels around Ireland – would they work? I think the vast majority of customers are looking for an intrinsic kind of hotels that reflects where they are. [...], we like full service hotels, like the Swiss, we don't like overly modern hotels in terms of IKEA, where you sleep on the floor and be grateful. The other reason is that when we go to an hotel we expect the hotel to be better than at home..."*

Here he used as series of metaphors together to illustrate his future plans for the redevelopment of the independent hotel that he managed:

> *"...Independent hotels have to plough their own furrow I suppose in a way I can't do what everyone else is doing that if I do I am just the same as everybody else, So I can't behave like them all if I do I am in trouble, and because if I am bland and I am not going to be bland otherwise I will be in trouble. My plan is to add some service levels back into this hotel that would have existed before or maybe not here. We had to cut back and now we want to restore more luxury into some aspects of the hotel especially in the guest bedrooms. We want to raise the overall standards of this hotel both in terms of finishing fabric but obviously the quality of employees and competent managers..."*

PoilBHM referred to the autonomy of working within an independent hotel, and explained how he has managed change. He compared his situation to the potential challenge of being a general manager within an international hotel group. He used some metaphors as he explained:

> *"...you can manage change much faster because you are not shackled by having to report in on it or to wait for the corporate instruction, there is a file that says this there is collective intellect that indicates some of what we do and some of which we continue to guess what we do largely..."*

He also spoke about how he sought qualities of initiative, intuition and independent-mindedness in potential managers. In identifying managers, he used more metaphors to highlight qualities and skills of managing people as a key foundation stone in his occupational identity for working in an independent hotel. We get a glimpse of PoilBHM doing self-identity work by this comment:

> *"... ok if most people like themselves and someone that comes in front of you, are like you, you are likely to like them because they are likely to be like you, same with management I have told you, you know that I am quite independent, do my own thing, don't really follow manuals, not really a corporate governance guy, don't really work for brands and then you put someone in front of me who has got all of that and they need to be programmed, they are not going to do well here, I can't programme people. I am not going to programme people. When recruiting I seek my type of person who are able to work on their own, independent minded, who could be trusted and was bright. We don't let passengers on the bus, We must develop people, their financial skills to assist their holistic understanding of hotel management because we can all be good social workers and we can all know what a good sandwich and a cup of coffee is but how do you know to make a profit out of that activity?..."*

It could be argued that this was a real example of where identity construction is always on-going and never fixed (Weick 1995). As PoilBHM reflected back over thirty years work experience as an hotel general manager, he used personal qualities of trust, honesty, and intuition to recruit his latest additions to his management team at the hotel. He used a positive expressed emotion of pride and sought to be a role model to develop that emotion in all of his employees. His self-identity is fused into his occupational identity as an independent hotelier who is not afraid to speak his mind about the nature of Irish hospitality as he perceived it and how hotel managers must be developed and managed in order to maintain that intrinsic attribute of hospitality. This also mandated PoilBHM to develop other managers to have the ability to challenge themselves and those around them in anticipating, recognising and managing change.

In this interview, CrisBHM charted how he has developed his occupational identity in hotel management during the past twenty-two years, working in both international hotel groups and with small independent hotels. Within this, he shared glimpses of his concept of self as a person:

> *"...who fosters little gambles, make decisions, is comfortable with delegating and trust, be true to yourself and don't second guess yourself and keep learning..."*

CrisBHM described how he had managed a number of small and medium size hotels in the Republic of Ireland over the past fifteen years between 1998 and 2013, in recollecting his

sensemaking of his occupational identity as an hotel general manager has developed during that intervening period of time. He explained:

> *"...my philosophy has changed over those 15 years, my hotelkeeping used to be very day to day, I would have been very worried, very concentrated on the little detail and I discovered as I got older that I did not picture in things that got better and better and better. That meant I had to trust others, such as coming us with an idea bringing the project to life and letting the others make it happen, then coming back to see did that happen and see why not. Becoming a GM was the greatest thing in becoming a competent manager because you are given and have the ability and given the scope to make decisions [...] Yeah, I think it's a competence of being able to rein yourself in. [...]. That's probably how my management style has changed and I will admit for some people especially the junior management or staff or whatever, they don't always get that, you are of looking at the big picture, as in why are you not in here with your hands dirty? ..."*

He recounted a number of examples from management positions in various hotels as he wove occupational identity and self-identity in that process. However, he pre-empted these stories by explaining how important his core values of honesty and trust were, in selling hotel services and making sure that these services are always underpinned with physical standards and service quality that were delivered in a competent manner. CrisBHM explained:

> *"...understand your product, understand its position in the marketplace, and don't oversell it ever, because you will just end up with disappointed clients. Don't promise anything you can't deliver, but when you can deliver, do so at the best of your ability. To agree that there is a standard, let's agree that there is a standard that you are competent in delivering that standard..."*

It was at this juncture that he summed up his notion of competence which he shared with ArinLHM, in clarifying the term "behaviour", as he explained:

> *"... I can't look like a competent manager. I can't run a competent hotel unless I make sure my staff are competent. You need competent staff to be a competent manager. That each employee must be comfortable in their role at what they are doing to be competent in their role ..."*

CrisBHM proposed that becoming a competent manager meant using a range of skills that drove the completion of three interdependent key tasks in hotel management, firstly, being able to identify, recruit and train staff, together with the ability to set the physical quality and operational

service standards for the delivery of all hotel services and thirdly to ensure that the ongoing daily managing of those employees to deliver those hotel services in an hospitable manner. It could be argued that CrisBHM was doing identity work on his employees when he weaved aspects of their self-identity in the form of qualities into their occupational identity as he explained:

> *"…to create competent environment and that means competent staff having the technical skills, together with a bit of cop-on, positive attitude and being comfortable in their role. Competence is all about behaviour…"*

Contribution to the Research

The nature of the hospitality in the hotel industry in the Republic of Ireland was explored, with varying perspectives offered by the interviewees on the importance of the role of people in the hospitality services in the hotel industry. Each of the twelve interviewees shared a range of perspectives on the levels of dynamic changes, not least the negative impacts of the recent financial crisis, on their industry. The on-going changes in technology and social media were highlighted, with colourful metaphors used to illustrate the vital importance of Facebook and TripAdvisor.com in building and managing relationships with customers, suppliers and trade partners.

As far as these twelve interviewees were concerned, the nature of hospitality was underpinned by the profound role of all employees played in the delivery of hospitable customer experiences in their respective hotels. Even amidst perceived changes in the business world, these hoteliers identified and used a variety of qualities and emotional intelligence to which they deemed critical in their skills of managing people and to competently manage their hotels in the changing times. Further analysis of the data was conducted in an effort to illustrate the processes of identity work and the identities created. In Chapter Five are examined the findings across two broad lines of enquiry in an effort to ascertain how the competency clusters of skills, knowledge, together with qualities and emotions enabled a competent identity to emerge.

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5 Findings

This thesis has sought to investigate the concept of competences and competencies. Its intention was to explore how hotel owners and general managers identified, interpreted and made sense of their notion of managerial competencies in a complex work environment. The research setting was situated within the hotel industry in the Republic of Ireland, which delivered hotel services of guest accommodation, food and beverage to resident and non-residential customers in an hospitable environment. This study made a number of findings from an analysis of the empirical data and a review of the secondary data which included:

1. How these hotel owner-managers and general managers made sense of the nature of Irish hospitality services together with their notion of being hospitable in a complex environment together which they used to underpin their management of the provision of basic needs of overnight guest accommodation, food and beverage provided in a commercial setting.

2. How these hotel owner-managers and general managers used language, metaphors, and stories to illustrate how they identified and used their skills and knowledge together with qualities and emotions as clusters of competencies to be competent hoteliers in that complex and disruptive environment.

3. How all interviewees highlighted the role and use of the language of emotion in their management of people was pervasive at all levels. In fact, hotel owner-managers and general managers deemed the use of emotion to build relationships was a key management competency of hospitality services in hotels in the Republic of Ireland.

4. How these hotel owner-managers and general managers used the language of emotion as a key resource to build self-identity and occupational identity as caring hotelier even in times of disruptive change.

5. Whilst Hochschild's (1983) work on emotional labour focused a negative strain and influence of emotion work, this research focused on the positive aspects of emotional labour and counteracted that notion in a commercial environment.

6. This research study also identified a dearth in the literature on competences and competencies with regard to the role of clusters of qualities and the language of emotion as they pertain to the debate.

Chapter Five explored how these hoteliers built their sense of competency clusters of qualities, emotions, skills and knowledge to become competent owner-managers and general managers. These competency clusters were examined across two broad lines of enquiry:

5.1 How hotel owner-managers and general managers identified and used their qualities and the language of emotion together with skills and knowledge to manage employees to deliver hospitality services internally in hotels constantly punctured by a complex external business environment to make sense of management competencies.

5.2 How hoteliers made sense of self-identity and occupational identities in their efforts to become competent hotel owner-managers and general managers in the hospitality industry in Ireland.

5.1 How hotel owner-managers and general managers identified and used their qualities and the language of emotion together with skills and knowledge to manage employees to deliver hospitality services internally in hotels constantly punctured by a complex external business environment.

In the first instance, these hotel owner-managers and general managers made sense of the nature of the Irish hospitality in the Republic of Ireland in a commercial setting whilst simultaneously identified the fundamental and pivotal role that their employees played in the delivery of those hospitality services in a complex environment. Furthermore, each interviewee described how

the characteristics of services influenced the management of hospitality services and highlighted the profound complexity of two key drivers of change, specifically the 2008 financial crisis that caused the current recession and the role of information and communication technology.

There were various contributions by all twelve interviewees in respect of their notions of the nature of hospitality, together with their perceptions of the constituent parts of how they managed the delivery of hospitality services in their respective hotels. The complexities of the nature of hospitality was explained by each hotelier in terms of what constituted an hospitable experience in their hotel businesses. A number of interviewees such as PamoLHO and MicaLHO also highlighted the implications of being an island nation on the hospitality industry, whereby all access necessitated the use air or sea transport. They offered contrasting perspectives on the nature hospitality specifically on what actually constituted a hospitable experience, how that hospitable experience was delivered and how they managed that dimension of hotel services in a commercial environment. Probably ArinLHM best summed up his notion of hospitality which formed the basis of hotels services, "I have a philosophy about a system that I use on hospitality". Indeed, it could be argued that all interviewees set out in various ways to explain their individual philosophies of what constituted hospitality in their management of hotel service delivery in a commercial setting.

The second finding from this study was how hotel owner-managers and general managers used language, metaphors, and stories to illustrate how they identified and used their skills and knowledge together with qualities and emotions as clusters of competencies to be competent hoteliers in that complex competitive environment. Hospitality services in hotels were typically delivered on two levels, firstly the provision of basic needs in the form of tangible aspects of food, beverage and a night's sleep underpinned by the nature of how these basic needs were delivered through the employee–customer interactions. While each interviewee referred to the tangible aspects in terms of the importance of physical quality standards, equal focus was given to the second-level intangible aspects of the nature of hospitality, i.e., the warmth of welcome and friendliness and customer-employee interactions. The nature of this second level intangible aspect of hospitality that made the experience a memorable and happy one as delivered by their employees was explored and highlighted by MicaLHO, PoilBHM, CrisBHM, GerLHM and

ArinLHM. In fact it could be argued that all interviewees perceived the quality of customer-staff interactions as critically profound to the success or otherwise of their hotels. All interviewees used various terms to describe their notion of hospitable, such as combined use of qualities; care and positive attitude together with emotions such as empathy and care were used to describe how they interacted and managed their interactions with all employees. Taken together a number of qualities such as positive attitude and care were identified as underpinning the behaviour that enabled hospitable interactions between employees and customers. In turn, these twelve hoteliers perceived that it was their use of these qualities and emotions, used in their skillset of managing employees that were necessary in their subsequent interactions with guests to ensure that hotel services were also hospitable experiences.

At the outset, all of the interviewees used various terms and metaphors to highlight how they set about creating their notion of a hospitable environment in the delivery of hotel services, as they managed the complex internal and external business contexts. Metaphors and analogies were used together to illustrate particular qualities and the language of emotion to transfer meaning, and to illustrate how together with their employees they co-created a hospitable environment. Each of these interviewees were employed within a particular hotel context, influenced by location, market segment (luxury or budget), total number of hotel bedrooms and the structure of ownership. All of these factors, together with their past experience, played a fundamental role in how these interviewees perceived themselves, how they managed their employees and were managed. These factors provided the context for these hoteliers as they themselves developed their skills and knowledge from work experience, supported by their individual qualities and the language of emotion used in managing people. In other words, it was their combined use of qualities, emotional intelligence, skills and knowledge of managing people, which they deemed were the key constituents of managing hospitality services in hotels.

In effect, some of these hoteliers were influenced by the size and structure of their organisation as they wove together a web of stories and metaphors to illustrate how they delivered their respective and individual notions of hospitality to guests consistently, through their identification, training and development of the "right" employees. The context of hotel ownership was made up of international hotel groups or independent organisations which played

a highly influential role in the skills and knowledge development of all employees regardless of seniority or rank. In the case of this research, the respective corporate head offices of the international hotel groups were responsible for setting the corporate strategy group plan, objectives and targets across a wide range of areas such as revenues, profitability, costs management, technology and employee development. On the other hand, each independent hotel owner-manager or general manager was responsible for the setting and development of their own respective business objectives, strategy and plan. The implication of the organisational context was examined to see how all twelve owner-managers and general managers developed their respective skills and knowledge through their lived experience of hotel work regardless of their structure of ownership. This was done bearing in mind that MicaLHO-hotel owner-manager, and ArinLHM, NikaLHM, GeriLHM, CrisBHM and PoilBHM – all general managers in independent hotel companies, made reference to their previous experience of having worked as general managers with international hotel group organisations at some point in their career. Regardless of the context of their current work – with an international hotel group or an independent hotel – all of the interviewees agreed that the management of employees was foremost in their combined efforts to provide those services.

In the first instance, there were sharp variances between the interviewees' perceptions in how they managed staff and interacted with guests as hotel managers or otherwise which ultimately influenced how they operated in that role. Whilst some interviewees used the metaphor "being out front" which referred to the importance of their physical presence in meeting, greeting and interacting with guests, and working alongside their fellow employees at busy service times in hotel operations. Interviewees such as ConaLHM, NikaLHM, ArinLHM, MicaLHO, GeriLHM and PoilBHM perceived their role as being "out front", while PamoLHO, JoelBHO, JoniBHO, MariLHM, CrisBHM and HeliBHM saw themselves as working "behind the scenes". Being "behind the scenes" meant working away from front-line operations of service delivery, as they focused on key employees in developing systems, setting objectives, and the training and development of all staff. How these individual hoteliers perceived their role, either "being present out front or working behind the scenes", influenced how they played that role which ultimately impacted on how they managed and what they deemed as competent management. At this juncture, it is worthwhile to point out that the structure of the hotel organisation or the

nature of ownership was not a defining factor, in whether these interviewees focused on being out front or working behind the scenes. Regardless, it can be argued that whilst some interviewees such as MicaLHO and ArinLHM were actively involved in the frontline delivery of hospitality services to guests all other hoteliers argued that it was their job to ensure that their employees had a positive and caring attitude that formed the key foundation stone of all customer-staff interactions.

For example, ArinLHM and MicaLHO emphasised the quality of care that should be present in all employee-customer interactions and with colleagues alike. ArinLHM managed the reopening of a small luxury hotel on the south coast of Ireland whose customer base was a mixture of international tourists and domestic visitors. His perspective included the importance of being hospitable and that was demonstrated through the care and empathy shown to customers through staff interactions, be it on the telephone, at reception or during the service of food and beverage or sorting out a problem. ArinLHM used his knowledge of the constituents of hospitality as he combined the tangible physical standards and intangible relationship-building elements through the careful choice of employees. ArinLHM highlighted the importance of the quality of a positive caring attitude in all employees and their respective ability to demonstrate care and empathy in building relationships with customers.

In his effort to make sense of his notion of competence in his context as an owner-manager MicaLHO highlighted the use of his intrinsic personal quality of being a caring human, being able to demonstrate care to stressed guests as well as showing dignity and respect to all his employees. He focused on qualities of care, respect and dignity which guided his interactions with guests and employees alike in the creation of an hospitable environment. He commented that he had only had to "sack one employee in twenty-one years", which he used to highlight his respect for his staff, many of whom had long-term service employment records. It could be argued that MicaLHO and his team were passionate about hospitality as demonstrated by how they welcomed customers, in his own words he stated "we welcome tired and stressed guests, I listen and read the emotions of people".

Each of the twelve hoteliers highlighted the role of people such as customers, superiors, managers and employees in their managing of the business of hotels that delivered services on a twenty-four hour basis, 365 days per year. However, a crucial part of the second finding was actually how these hoteliers identified, recruited and managed employees with whom they worked, to provide these hospitality services in their hotels as commercial settings. It could be described as managing a tale of two halves, which represented employees and customers, as these hoteliers perceived themselves as conduits that facilitated their combined managing to produce service experiences. This must be part of the hotel environment as "people create their environments and in turn those environments create them" (Weick, 1995:34). The challenges associated with the identification and recruitment of new staff and their subsequent training, development and performance were examined by all twelve interviewees. Each of them referred to the fact that they worked hard in making sure that when recruiting potential employees, they hired people who shared their values, using the language of emotion such as care, ability to smile, and not just those who were technically competent.

In identifying and recruiting new employees, ArinLHM worked closely with a peer group of hotel managers throughout the Republic of Ireland to identify and source potential candidates and refer existing employees to each other. He repeatedly commented on the importance of behaviour, and explained how he modeled that behaviour through showing care and supporting front-line employees, acting as a type of role model for his employees. ArinLHM's personal qualities included commitment and "always wanting to do good for the business". He focused on his ongoing skills development in financial analysis and food cost forecasting to augment making business decisions, while ensuring that those skills were augmented in his key employees.

MicaLHO and PamoLHO shared a similar belief with regard to the importance of possessing the intrinsic quality of care, and being to be able to use that quality to demonstrate that emotion to all others – be they customers, fellow colleagues or employees. ArinLHM, NikaLHM, GeriLHM, PoilBHM and CrisBHM each used the language of emotion of being able to show care and empathy to employees and customers alike. ConaLHM, MariLHM, HeliBHM and JoelBHO highlighted the importance of a positive attitude as a critical quality that they sought

in all potential employees. These specific interviewees linked the presence of the quality of a positive caring attitude to being the "right employee", whereby its presence underpinned and impacted on how each respective staff member behaved towards fellow employees and guests alike.

The difference between the international hotel groups and independents hotel companies was specifically focused on who was accountable and responsible for the strategic direction and business success or otherwise of these hotels. The size of the corporate management structure was influenced by the total number of hotels and room capacity. The head office senior management team worked closely with hotel general managers, and together they set corporate goals and objectives in relation to every single aspect of their hotel businesses. At the time of interview, PamoLHO, MariLHM, ConaLHM and HeliBHM were employed with international hotels groups and worked within the standards laid down by them.

PamoLHO stated that each GM had to possess the intrinsic personal quality of care and then be able to demonstrate that language of emotion of care for all others, employees and customers alike in a commercial environment. In fact it could be argued that PamoLHO used the quality of care and being able to demonstrate care to others through the language of emotion as necessary in the delivery of hospitable services. Each general manager had to be able to achieve objectives of financial targets on profitability, revenues and costs. Alongside the presence of that intrinsic quality and ability to use it, came the equal requirement of demonstrating skills in all aspects of finance and costs, sales and revenue generation, all underpinned by their use of technology and social media. All of these elements he deemed necessary to be competent management. PamoLHO alluded to the fact that:

> *"… It's still very difficult to get people to work as effective GMs. The challenges of being a hotel general manager today are phenomenal, one of them being where revenues have collapsed and the costs, payroll, energy, and of course, taxation have remained pretty static or increased but certainly not reduced. Yet the banks are not in a position to lend in any shape or form to the hotel industry and so development is very difficult …"*

He used a combination of intrinsic qualities such as personal strength, care, charisma and being nice together with the language of emotion to demonstrate care to all people, especially

customers and employees. Once general managers could demonstrate that personal quality of caring about themselves, he believed that they will in turn, be able to show care for all people, be they fellow managers, employees or customers. It was PamoLHO's view that managers who demonstrated that they intrinsically cared, also possessed the ability to demonstrate that care for people in the delivery of hospitable services in hotels. He constantly illustrated how his organisation focused on identifying potential managers who were intrinsically caring people and had the capability to demonstrate that emotion to others. The programme for skills training and development of managers also focused on all the technical aspects of hotelkeeping such as financial management, utility, energy and payroll costs management, and how to protect cash flow.

ConaLHM, MariLHM and HeliBHM managed hotels within the organisational structure of international hotel groups. Each of them alluded to the fact that developing skills in key employees was critical, matched with ensuring that they had particular qualities, were able to demonstrate emotions to others and underpinned by their knowledge was key to their future as managers. They shared their perspectives on how they perceived their role as general managers, in achieving targets, but also how those objectives were achieved by developing people and ultimately how they managed on a daily basis while being cognisant of the overall corporate strategy of the hotel group. Each of these three interviewees explained how they used qualities and the language of emotion to identify potential employees, especially future managers. Various examples of the language of emotion were used to illustrate this. MariLHM ensured that he met all new potential recruits regardless of entry level, and expected that all employees demonstrate a "positive attitude, be able to smile and communicate". HeliBHM also spoke about the importance of employees having a positive attitude quality: "there is no room for no, there is no room for it's not my job, and I hate that". Furthermore, ConaLHM, MariLHM and HeliBHM explained how, having identified and recruited employees, they go about creating and managing a hospitable hotel environment that is supportive to all employees – a metaphor with numerous meanings in providing ongoing training, development and promotion of employees.

ConaLHM ensured that all new employees knew exactly the context and nature of the hotel and its expectations of them as employees, as communicated at interview and within the first week

and month of employment. ConaLHM's notion of competency was made up of qualities of trust, drive, commitment and a positive attitude which were demonstrated in the language of emotion of behaviour together with his skills whereby he marries the expectations of the hotel's guests for hospitality services with the ongoing training and development of the entire hotel teams to deliver those services profitably. ConaLHM sought out the quality of drive using the metaphor "fire in the belly". He highlighted the importance of behaviour and how it could be changed through learning, using the analogy "whilst we are all born with our spots which we cannot change, we can change our behaviour and how we react to things". He explained that skills were needed to achieve financial results which had to be repeated daily, weekly and monthly, but their achievement totally depended on the ongoing development of teams of employees and the continuity of delivery of service expectations each time. ConaLHM saw himself and his job as one and the same, using a metaphor:

> *"… My job is to identify the successful ingredients for a very successful team. I then set about creating an environment that is one of support, development and trust of staff and managers, they know what they have to do, let them get on and do it …"*

He highlighted the importance of guests being made to feel "welcome and receive good service". He used the language of emotion: being able to welcome customers, to show care and empathy in the delivery of the hospitable service experience of accommodation, food, and beverage, whatever the occasion. As far as each of these interviewees were concerned, competence was about having the personal qualities of intrinsically caring, and in turn being able to demonstrate the use of the emotion of care to build relationships directly with guests and with employees. Moreover, it could be argued that these hoteliers felt that competence was also about being a role model, in knowing how to use those qualities and emotions towards employees, to support them to develop their skills in the reproduction of that notion of a hospitable experience each and every time.

MariLHM's perception of his role as a general manager was of one who, "works behind the scenes. I had a lot of success in developing people, developing teams – everything is measured". He referred to qualities such as trust, integrity and honesty as well as the use of a facial

expression in the form of a smile as a way of showing a welcome to guests. MariLHM met all potential new employees before final contracts were issued in order to assess their suitability to work as part of a team at a luxury hotel, and to assess certain qualities, specifically positive attitude, and whether prospective employees were able to demonstrate care towards guests and colleagues. He demonstrated how he used his tacit knowledge to implement a major programme of change in the aftermath the 2008 downturn, whereby he introduced and personally managed a major redundancy and reorganisation programme of the hotel's employees. He showed his ability to visualise the end result in a new organisational structure and set out to achieve it, by using a combination of qualities of honesty and integrity alongside personal communication skills to personally interact and manage the redundancy process. Alongside this, he worked closely with his management team to develop a new organisational structure at the hotel and then set about its implementation by meeting all new employees. He achieved the end result because the overall quality of all hotel services went up, because he personally managed the process by planning, controlling and making decisions.

HeliBHM displayed her tacit knowledge of how she made sense of the performance management control system that was driven by online technology and used throughout this particular international hotel organisation. She explained how she developed her own skills and worked closely in developing similar skills in all her key employees, on how to comply with the daily requirements of hotel service operations in order to achieve certain targets and results, and "stay on green in the colour coded traffic light control system of performance management under three headings employee, guest and shareholder". She also referred to the importance of qualities such as having a positive attitude, and being honest. She developed her management team to be accountable for their decision-making in recruiting new employees because:

> *"…I have developed trust in them, and it's important that I demonstrate that trust in them on an ongoing basis, they know what they have to do, let them get on and do it…"*

HeliBHM used an expressed emotion, "I will kill them", as of a metaphor when speaking about the importance of customer care, especially when there were lapses in that care. It could be argued that she was passionate about the customer care shown to guests, which for the most part was reported in the form of complaints. Ultimately, HeliBHM demonstrated a personal quality

of being driven and committed to achieving objectives, as she has achieved her annual targets that have enabled her and her team to win in-company awards in recent times. She demonstrated empathy for fellow GM's throughout this large international hotel group, and was not happy with the way in which they were struggling and not getting the help or support they needed from head office to achieve their green win card. She used a metaphor to highlight this by explaining "that we get a bad egg into the hotel and that can be the ruination of us". Her reference to a "bad egg" meant an employee who was deemed unsuitable because they had a bad attitude and were unhelpful towards guests and colleagues. The term "ruination" referred to the effects and impacts that one employee with a bad attitude and who was not carefully managed could have, which ultimately fed back negatively into the performance management win card system.

NikaLHM, GeriLHM, PoilBHM and CrisBHM each explained how they showed care to employees on a couple of levels. NikaLHM and GeriLHM referred to showing support for employees. It was considered that the term 'support' was rhetorical, i.e., physical support for these interviewees meant being physically present and working closely with employees during busy service periods of hotel operations. This, of course, was influenced by the number of hotel rooms, which in turn influences the number of employees. As general managers within independent hotels, NikaLHM, PoilBHM, GeriLHM and CrisBHM saw their role as working closely with all of their employees underpinning the delivery of hospitable services at their hotel, and together achieved results and targets on revenues, costs and profits.

NikaLHM highlighted the importance of the qualities of being calm, having a positive attitude, hardworking, honest and communicating with managers and employees daily in managing the business of hotels. He used the language of emotion in terms of showing support in working closely with employees during busy service periods at the hotel. When recruiting new employees he sought qualities such as a positive attitude, being able to smile, and tried to identify potential managers who were innovative; he used the metaphor "can bring something new to the party", meaning can implement change and make improvements in service standards and employee development. He also referred to the importance of having a positive attitude to personal learning and development. During 2009 and 2010 e undertook a personal development programme in strategic management to augment his skills and knowledge in hotelkeeping. But

he also found that the completion of the professional development course and meeting with other managers helped him cope with the aftermath of the 2008 perceived financial crisis.

PoilBHM enjoyed autonomy in managing the independent hotel where he had been for the past sixteen years, where he influenced and agreed the standards and targets to be achieved. He used some metaphors to illustrate the nature of independent hotels: "they have to plough their own furrow otherwise they will be bland". PoilBHM referred to being able to smile in showing a welcome to guests. He demonstrated his tacit knowledge of combining the tangible and intangible elements of what constituted a hospitable hotel experience, and referred to "my hotel facilities and services and then setting about the identification and development of employees", which was ongoing:

> *"... Our job is to create hotels as places where both staff and customers enjoy the experience. In so doing, we develop ambassadors who, I think they will see that they say before coming here, they never had access to financial accounts and when they go to where they are going they are going to be much more financially astute than more likely than not, which puts them on a very fast curve for promotion because people understand very quickly and people will notice very quickly those who seem to understand the business in a very holistic way. And finance is a key part of that. We can all be good social workers and we can all know what a good sandwich and a cup of coffee is, but how do you know to make a profit out of that activity? ..."*

PoilBHM explained that he was currently in the middle of planning the management of upgrading the hotel's physical facilities, which included a major refurbishment of the guest rooms accompanied by improvements in overall service levels in the bar and restaurants. He explained that the first part of that plan involved augmenting the management team by the identification of two assistant managers who would lead and manage those change programmes. PoilBHM used qualities of honesty and intuition alongside the expressed emotion of a smile to indicate levels of happiness in both staff and guests. He also used skills of decision-making in terms of managing non-performing employees through the metaphor, "we can't have passengers on the bus". In recruiting potential managers, he used his intuition to seek candidates who displayed initiative, who could demonstrate independent thinking for themselves and could be trusted, as he explained:

"… so we need managers to be more forward looking that they challenge themselves, that they challenge those around them in a positive way to see things from other people's perspective, particularly in this business from the customer perspective. With an eye over their shoulder as to what competitors might be doing also, someone who is able to work on their own, being independent, someone who does not require me to sit on their back and ride them around all day making sure they did what I asked. Someone whom I thought I could trust, someone who I thought was bright …"

CrisBHM summed up the importance of competent employees as a fundamental part of him becoming a competent hotelier and manager. He illustrated how his experience as a manager, albeit at different levels, enabled his notion of becoming a competent manager, i.e. by being able to identify, train and develop employees on an ongoing basis. He used two short stories from London and Dublin that illustrated the key role all employees played in creating a competent hotel environment. With regard to his experience in London as an assistant manager, in his view it was the combined lack of physical equipment and layout of the room service department, alongside the "hopeless staff" and the refusal of senior management to support the proposed changes which stifled his efforts to make changes.

GeriLHM described a range of qualities including patience, honesty, intuition, trust together with financial skills, and perceived herself as a practical "working general manager" where "I treat the business like my own". She explained:

"… One has to be patient – develop patience. I think you have to be a risk taker as well as a financial understanding is really important, believe or not. And I hate to say it, it has now come to this that financial is number one, being able to run the business, being able to go through your profit and loss line by line and how can you improve it, in all aspects – the costs and sales …"

GeriLHM underpinned these qualities with a positive expressed emotion: "I love my job it is in my DNA". She combined the language of emotion by being able to show support, motivate, show empathy to all fellow managers and employees, motivate the team, interspersed with skills of managing staff to reward, train and provide them with the tools to do the job, to make the hard decisions if it was not working out, to manage non-performers. GeriLHM developed skills in aligning levels of payroll costs with forecasted revenues and making adjustments accordingly

on a weekly basis to prevent financial losses that had to be managed on a daily and weekly basis. She also mentioned the importance of building effective relationships with employees and customers alike over time that depended upon the ongoing daily building of trust between the parties.

As owner-managers, both JoniBHO and JoelBHO referred to the importance of qualities such as showing dignity and respect for all people. JoniBHO displayed a real degree of honesty as he explained why and how he was unable to cope in late September 2008 and took a break from work and sought help. When he returned to work in March 2009, he implemented a number of change initiatives including the negotiation of salary reductions and employee redundancies in his efforts to reduce operational costs. He also took the decision to change the hotels trading name, and explained how he sought the advice of his siblings, thereby displaying respect for them even though they were no longer involved in the hotel business. JoniBHO explained his skills development in business training as an accountant, but had gained extensive knowledge through his work experience as a business owner. He also spoke about the skills and knowledge developed as he negotiated and managed a buyout of his brother from the hotel business in 1999.

On the other hand, JoelBHO used most of the interview to explain how he managed employees within a diversified business portfolio which comprised of commercial, retail and hotel properties. He marvelled at the evolvement of the diversified business model that he had created during the past twenty-one years between 1992 and 2013, commenting:

> *"… It's organic. It has evolved; nothing was planned, but we have some great staff here since we started in 1992. We have learned along the way and don't be fooled we have also made mistakes along the way…"*

JoelBHO described the possession of positive attitude, being hungry (used as a metaphor for being eager, self-driven), enthusiasm, being interested in self-learning, and being able to admit mistakes as key qualities and skills for all employees. These qualities are illustrated in how he has learned his skills of recruiting and managing people over the past twenty-two years. He gave an example of one situation where:

> *"… We had a girl in here, and you just know by her demeanour, she doesn't have a bit of spark in her for two minutes. I took her on for other reasons, family background, tough circumstances, she was going nowhere …"*

He explained that he had studied the Irish Business & Employers' Confederation (IBEC) manual on employee management and had produced an employee handbook that was continuously updated and emailed to each employee. He used a number of metaphors to illustrate how he identified and recruited employees, and reinforced his interest in self-motivated people. He described a recent incident when he interviewed a graduate: she had a "swagger about her", in other words an air of self-confidence and genuine interest in coming to work and learn at his hotel. He also explained that:

> *"… We don't suffer fools nor make it easy at interview; we put people through their paces and get them to tell us why we should employ them …"*

JoelBHO used a metaphor to sum up how he managed his daily interactions with staff, "it's always a carrot, never a stick; you can't be confrontational with staff." He explained how he fostered skills development of all employees regardless of where they are employed in the hotel, and encouraged multi-tasking of jobs where possible. He monitored the weekly payroll to ensure fairness to all, as weekly wages were the single biggest cost item. JoelBHO also conducts informal performance management meetings with each employee ten times per year, again illustrating his quality of fairness in how he managed his business and his employees.

The economic crisis of 2008-2013 provided further context for the narrative of how each interviewee used stories, metaphors and examples of how they coped, managed and survived through a number of differing situations which included collapsed revenue streams, and fixed costs in the aftermath of the perceived financial crisis. Some interviewees referred to past experiences of working in various types of hotel organisations, of how they developed their skills and knowledge of similar events such as the 1980's recession, and the fallout of the tragic events of 9/11/2001. Furthermore, many of these interviewees implemented changes to their hotel structure in the form of employee redundancies and shared how they used qualities and emotional intelligence to manage their organisational restructuring through these dynamic periods of change.

In all cases, the impact of the 2008 financial crisis caused trading revenues to drop by up to fifty percent between 2009 and 2012. Inevitably, this resulted in wide-scale redundancies and closures of many hotel properties, increased levels of debt on long-term loans, referred to as debt overhang, and operating net losses for numerous businesses. There was an array of metaphors, analogies and stories used to illustrate how the impact of the 2008 financial crisis was felt and acted upon as the months passed. Indeed, there was much humour also among interviewees in speaking about how the economy of the Republic of Ireland had gone from boom to bust practically overnight. An example of this was best summed up by MicaLHO who used the term "baby" as a metaphor for the importance of service quality and the notion of being hospitable in Irish hospitality had almost been destroyed by the economic growth of period between 2000 and 2007 as he exclaimed:

> *"...Through that sort of semi-lunacy of the Celtic Tiger period we came damn close to throwing the baby out with the bathwater, this economic boom was semi-lunacy..."*

As business owners, PamoLHO, JoniBHO and MicaLHO spoke about how they managed from late 2008 to 2011, albeit from very different perspectives on the current recession and how it continued to cause major issues for the survival of the hotel business on this island of Ireland. They referred to how they developed competence in coping through recession and explained that this recession was different to other challenging trading times as they perceived it. All three had to renegotiate their levels of bank borrowings in order for their hotel business to remain trading. Both PamoLHO and JoniBHO highlighted the importance of developing competence in micro-managing revenues, costs and cashflows on a daily basis, within differing organisational structures.

As the CEO of an international hotel company, PamoLHO managed the impacts of the 2008 financial crisis on two levels. He demonstrated significant levels of competence in financial management in terms of how he approached two significant problems: lack of access to capital funding for business development and expansion and to working capital. Firstly, he decided to control the outflows of cashflow by forecasting revenues to costs. Together with his general managers, they developed skills that mapped and tracked all hotel costs, especially payroll to

forecasted revenues on a weekly basis in order to control costs and manage levels of cash-flow. IT programmes were developed for these two financial forecasting models. Each hotel general manager and financial controller attended a number of training programmes to develop competence in its implementation of these skills.

Secondly, at a more strategic level, PamoLHO demonstrated competence in leading through that difficult period of fundamental change and coping with ambiguity by refocusing the corporate strategy from one of acquiring hotels to negotiating and operating management contracts in an effort to keep the business of this hotel organisation sustainable. Together with his executive team he set about recruiting general managers, some of whom he had work with previously. He also focused on the continuous development of the existing team of hotel general managers to take on these new hotel management contracts.

As an owner-manager the impact of the recession was borne personally by MicaLHO to a large extent. He did not implement any employee redundancies at his hotel between 2008 and 2012, even though there was a downturn in business. However, he restructured his bank borrowings which had increased from €300,000 in 2008 to €700,000. He showed empathy to his employees who were employed at his seasonal hotel by not making any redundancies during the downturn. He took one hundred percent of the financial losses by accumulating increased levels of bank debt.

As an owner-manager, JoniBHO recounted how he had managed the transfer of ownership of the family hotel business and negotiated the refinancing of the buyout in 1999. He then set about the implementation of a strategic plan to complete the major refurbishment of the hotel between 2004 and 2007 which was completed just before the financial crash of 2008. In the immediate aftermath of the financial crisis, he took sick leave between September 2008 and March 2009. When he returned to work, hotel revenues had dropped by fifty percent, so in his notion of what he deemed competent management he negotiated reductions in all salaries including his own in order to prevent wide-scale redundancies. It could be considered that he demonstrated competence by the decisions taken such as the reduction in salary levels including his own underpinned by the quality to protect the hotel business and maintain levels of employment, and

the redundancy of four employees in 2009. Equally he made every effort to protect his employees from losing their jobs as well as demonstrating empathy by taking a pay cut of 25%, similar to all employees who earned in excess of €35,000 per annum.

To reduce payroll costs, four other interviewees CrisBHM, ConaLHM, MariLHM and NikaLHM completed redundancy programmes at their hotels. Each demonstrated their interpersonal sensitivity as they sensed the emotional impact of letting employees go, as this was the most difficult activity of the financial crisis as they personally managed the redundancy process from start to finish. Each explained the various ways that they managed, using qualities such as honesty and moral order alongside showing care and empathy in their daily communications with staff, as they personally led and managed the organisational restructuring and redundancies. This period of major change also set the scene for each of the interviewees to illustrate the performative nature of managing aspects of planning and forecasting when hotel revenues had collapsed between 2009 and 2011, while fixed and variable costs had remained static. An example of this empathy as demonstrated by ConaLHM was where he used his planning skills to source and organise employment for five staff members who were being made redundant at other hotels within this international hotel company.

MariLHM, NikaLHM, and CrisBHM explained how they used skills and knowledge acquired from their past lived experience to cope, survive and manage the impacts in the aftermath of the financial crisis. Each of these interviewees discussed how they closely managed costs and costs reduction, as well as sales generation in their efforts to control financial inflows and expenditure. They also explained how they used their initiative to implement a range of changes throughout their hotel organisations, such as "introduction of new technology systems, employee redundancies, restructuring of the hotel organisation, continuous improvement programmes and ongoing staff training and development". All these interviewees worked closely with their own management teams to plan over the longer term, while their teams of employees focused on the day-to-day hotel operations that fed into the bigger picture.

MariLHM and NikaLHM used their strategic planning skills in restructuring their hotel organisations alongside implementing a programme of continuous improvement, underpinned

by ongoing skills training and development. These two general managers took the tough decision to reduce payroll costs through the implementation of large-scale redundancies that they personally negotiated at their respective hotels, which was followed by a plan of continuous improvement in the ongoing training and development of existing employees. Both MariLHM and NikaLHM explained that they personally managed all the communication and negotiation of the redundancy programme, by meeting each individual staff member who was being made redundant. They used a combination of qualities such as telling the truth "as the right thing to do" as they personally communicated the bad news, thus showing a level of respect for each employee. They also demonstrated their use of the language of emotion by showing their empathy to all employees as they recognised the fear and shock that permeated their hotel organisations, by personally managing each redundancy meeting. Moreover, they had to focus on communicating with the remainder of their hotel employees who were equally fearful for their jobs, and both did this using the implementation of a continuous development programme and skills improvement for all employees.

But while both general managers were forced to reduce payroll costs, MariLHM also used the recession to identify obsolete job roles and long-service employees for redundancy and made critical and profound structural changes to the organisation chart at his hotel. He used his skills and knowledge to plan and organise the targeted redundancies, the majority of which were held by:

> "...high-cost roles that were obsolete held by employees who were members of trade unions, who had become highly demarcated and very slow to change..."

It could be argued that his commitment to hotelkeeping and hospitality was enabled by the financial crisis which resulted in a 30% loss of revenue to implement the plan of redundancies and deal with the issue of demarcation that could be so detrimental to the delivery of service quality in a five star hotel. MariLHM used his conceptual skills to visualise the structure of the hotel reorganisation after the redundancy process was completed. During the interview, MariLHM admitted that he was naturally fearful of the potential damage that the loss of such a large number of experienced long-service employees would cause to overall service quality at the hotel. Therefore, in order to counteract this, he used his initiative and communication to implement a continuous training and development programme to explain the new hotel

organisation structure to the various teams within the hotel departments and to allay the fears felt by all remaining employees regarding their new roles and job titles. MariLHM explained that he worked tirelessly for two years between 2009 and 2010 with his management team to manage the impacts of the employee changes, alongside managing service quality standards at their hotel. Whilst all the hard work had paid off, one could never get complacent. He commented:

> *"… There was much improved team working and it reduced the fear factor, so much so that service quality actually went up as everything is measured here …"*

Together with the hotel's owner, NikaLHM admitted that he was forced to implement the redundancy of fifty employees, many with long service experience, from mid-2009. He explained how he communicated daily, sharing all relevant trading information and used his initiative in a number of ways to work through the challenging trading years of 2009–2011 to reduce the fear factor of all hotel employees. MariLHM displayed empathy when he took the unusual step of supporting his sales team by doing sales calls in both Ireland and the UK, in an effort to improve business. He admitted that his decision-making on the implementation of the employee redundancies was not fast enough, whilst the hotel was under constant pressure from the banks and suppliers.

Again using his initiative, he returned to college to complete a professional development programme, which, he explained, helped him to cope during 2009 and 2010 because he was interacting with other general managers: "we started off with 20 of my peers and it made me realise very quickly that everyone was in the same boat". As soon as the redundancy process was completed, NikaLHM took the decision to implement a continuous improvement programme that was externally accredited by Fáilte Ireland.

MariLHM and NikaLHM explained that they focused on the structural context of managing their hotel in the midst of a financial crisis and its aftermath, by being able to visualise a changed situation in the reorganisation of work before and after the redundancy process. Their specific management competencies were demonstrated by aligning the changed structural and cultural context that they found themselves in. They used their knowledge to personally manage the

reorganisation process (including the redundancies) "to reduce the fear that was out there", by visualising the changed situation and managing the new structure by redeveloping teams and maintaining service quality and standards.

In late 2008, CrisBHM spoke about how he worked closely with key employees to make decisions in developing a pricing strategy to reduce room rates in order to deal with the downturn in business at the independent hotel where he was employed as general manager. But in the subsequent months, the overall financial situation did not improve and hotel revenues continued to fall. In his efforts to reduce payroll costs, he negotiated a single-digit percentage reduction in gross salary with each employee in his initial attempts to minimise the number of redundancies. But eventually he implemented five redundancies at the hotel and personally managed the redundancy process, as well as constantly communicating and sharing information with hotel employees during that challenging period. He explained that the implementation of the redundancies followed the "last in, first out" system, which was tough on all concerned as he was removing five employees out of a team of twenty-five. He used his ability to make decisions on costs by implementing redundancies and by growing revenue through room pricing, and followed through on these decisions by using his personal values of honesty and open communication with all employees.

JoniBHO explained how he set out to implement a plan to reduce fixed costs, and the highest cost area was payroll. He also set about negotiating single and double digit percentage reduction in salaries in his attempt to minimise the number of redundancies at his hotel. JoniBHO explained:

> *"... There was no reduction for employees earning €8.65 per hour. Employees earning salaries up to €25,000 per annum were reduced by 5%, salaries of €30,000 were reduced by 10% and all other salaries over €35,000 were reduced by 25%, including myself. We eventually had to make three employees redundant as a result of the 2008 financial crisis ..."*

In a slightly different scenario, ArinLHM reopened an independent small luxury hotel in late 2008, just as Ireland was about to experience one of its worst periods of recession. Likewise, he quickly realised that he and all of his key employees would need help in terms of developing

analytical skills in all aspects of business decision-making. He engaged the services of a financial consultant with whom he worked closely throughout 2009. Together with the financial consultant, ArinLHM and his team worked for a period of twelve months in learning skills and putting new knowledge into practice by managing pricing in all aspects of business decision-making, marketing, sales and use of social media. This ongoing skills training and development of ArinLHM and his key employees fundamentally changed the way in which they use data analysis, which resulted in the hotel returning a net profit within its first year of trading after the reopening. Financial skills were underpinned by the care and empathy as demonstrated by ArinLHM in creating and building the relational web between local customers, national and international visitors, employees and himself, in his notion of what he deemed competent management.

Fundamentally, this was how ArinLHM managed through these tough trading years between 2008 and 2012, using qualities of commitment, the language of emotion such as care and empathy, and developing the skill base in financial decisions. His interpretation of how he managed a fine balancing act between the consistent delivery of hospitable services at his hotel and annual profitable results was one of competent management. Every member of staff analysed how they dealt with business, how they brought it in and what they brought in, from a profitability perspective, instead of looking back on a set of monthly accounts: there was little that could be done when the month was over.

Another aspect of the external environment driving change related to the increased impact of information and communications technology (ICT) in the operations of hotel services, and specifically how these hoteliers developed skills and knowledge in their use of technology and social media. This finding highlighted how the emergence of technology and social media was used by these hoteliers to augment their ability to build relationships with existing guests and develop relations with potential customers and employees. Each interviewee referred to the various roles of technology and social media in the delivery of hotel services and how this augmented their efforts to communicate with customers. There were numerous aspects in how information and communication technology (ICT) continued to play a key role in the managing of hospitality services in hotels that emerged from the interviews. The use of ICT in hotels broke

down into two interdependent parts, which consisted of the internal computer systems that were used for the daily managing of all aspects of internal hotel operations, and the online media used for business transactions of guest room sales and customer relationship management. They referred to the increasing use of technology, including hardware, software, internet and social media, with the resulting impact on their business: online media drove pricing, changes in segmentation as augmented by online social media, and third party selling. Each owner manager and general manager explained in differing ways how they approached the increased use of technology, sharing some personal perspectives on their own interaction with technology, whilst managing the ongoing training and development of all managers and employees. PamoLHO vocalised his perspective on the importance of technology management, as all general manager continued to lead the ongoing development of IT skills in all employees because:

> *"... the sales model has changed dramatically where historically most hotels secured a reasonable portion of their business directly via leisure or corporate bookings, i.e. where the intending guest goes directly to the hotel's website and books directly, but today that is not the case whereby the customer no longer goes to the hotel's website but decides on location first, the best price and with this model where they stay is immaterial and is hit with some of the large online sales distribution channels such as hotels.com, Ryanair.com. They decide that they want to travel, location, best price and before they book, they check TripAdvisor.com and Facebook.com for customer feedback. That in itself is a major challenge because it attracts both social media at opposite ends of the scale, ends of an extreme and the role and power of TripAdvisor.com. So trying to get a balanced judgement and decision in the middle is the issue ..."*

He highlighted technology competency as a key part of the skillset. PamoLHO explained that he put together a cross-functional team of hotel general managers, the financial controller, IT manager and a software developer with the cumulative aim of developing a forecasting model that tracked and mapped revenue with payroll costs in each department of each hotel. Other interviewees explained that they had always used information technology in the management of their hotel services businesses for many years and could not survive without it. They all highlighted how e-commerce and online trading had impacted on their hotel businesses, which had necessitated ongoing skills training and development for all staff regardless of their internal department.

ConaLHM, MariLHM and HeliBHM, who worked in international hotels groups, highlighted their daily management of and interaction with information technology alongside the ever-increasing demands that ICT placed on them as managers. Issues included the use of internal systems to capture data and conduct transaction analysis, as well as managing online booking channels that drove ninety percent of room revenue. Social Media was another aspect of IT technology that was identified by a number of interviewees. Social media was used to achieve a number of objectives including the use of Facebook as a virtual asset in building relationships with existing guests and targeting special prices and time-dependent offers to existing and potential customers. There was a strong awareness of the influence of social media, with varying reactions to it. All of the hoteliers mentioned the TripAdvisor.com website which enabled guests to leave both positive and negative comments of their experiences, which caused a certain amount of ill-ease as illustrated by the array of metaphors. There were two hoteliers, MikaLHO and JoelLHO who expressed negative emotions of "hate" for social media. Referring to TripAdvisor.com MicaLHO stated, "I hate it but ignore it at your peril", meaning that social media was here to stay, while expressing a negative emotion in how he perceived it.

5.2   Hoteliers making sense of self-identity and occupational identities in their efforts to become competent hotel owner-managers and general manager in the hospitality industry in Ireland.

This second line of enquiry explored how these twelve hotel owner-managers and general managers made sense of their concept of self-identity together with occupational identity work. It sought to examine how these twelve interviewees made sense of their notion of competent management as they did identity work, whereby they constructed self-identity and occupational identity as owner-managers and general managers. Then they created and fused identities of self and occupational identity together whereby some socially constructed the identity of an hotelier whilst others generalised on how they managed on a daily basis. Ultimately, these interviewees engaged in the process of identity work, whereby they engaged in identity building to prove

highly particular competencies that they used as a key resource to augment their sensemaking of competent management.

Their multiple level identity work was constructed amidst complex internal and external business environments against a backdrop of a country that prided itself on the manner in how people are welcomed to its shores from across the globe.

The context of the Irish hotel industry was influenced by many factors notably the external forces of a changed economic and technological environment. Furthermore, hotels in the Republic of Ireland were mandated to comply with the legal framework as set down by 1939 Tourist Traffic Acts which governed hotelkeeping. The nature of the hotel business and its management had at its core the provision of hospitality services, which for the most part involved the provision of basic needs. Indeed, it is this unique combination of the provision of basic needs in the form of a guest room to sleep in and restaurants for food consumption, with the customer(s) presenting themselves to hotels that distinguished hotels from any other business in the hospitality industry (Mullins & Dossor 2013). Equally all twelve interviewees agreed on the nature of hospitality services provided at their hotels must be hospitable. It operated on two levels, that of with sleeping accommodation, food and beverage provided by caring employees as demonstrated through their interactions with residential and non-residential customers for numerous reasons such as holidays, business travel and family events. Regardless of the reasons, all interviewees agreed that both management and employees together played a profound interdependent role in the delivery of those hospitality services within their hotels which ultimately impacted on their commercial success or failure, regardless of location or structure of ownership. As far as these twelve interviewees were concerned, it was the nature of the relationships between their employees, themselves and guests that proved to be a defining point in the delivery of hospitable services in their hotel organisations albeit for commercial reasons.

All interviewees set about to make connections between themselves, the human side of their enterprises and the physical environment of an hotel building and actually connected them together. Each gave some inkling as to the type of people they were interspersed through their

accounts of how they managed their hotels on a daily basis. Each of these owner-managers and general managers in the process of speaking were doing identity work. In other words, while each interviewee answered questions and tried to make sense of how they managed hotels, they were also made sense of themselves of who they are and what they are (Watson, 1994:58). In Chapter Four, the identity each of the twelve interviewees was examined in an effort to explore what type of people they perceived themselves to be, and how that notion of self, interacted with and formed part of their occupational identity work. Alongside this perception of self, each gave some insights into their notion of the nature of hospitality and the potential identity of an hotelier, i.e. a key assumption encapsulated in the concept of managing a hotel was that, 'what a person's work means to them was a key influence on how they perform it' (Watson, 1994:59). The perceived notion of the meaning of an hotelier, either as an hotel owner or hotel general manager, was referred to many times by a number of the interviewees. They shared their individual perceptions of the nature of hospitability as it underpinned the extensive range of hotel services delivered to residential and non-residential customers in a commercial environment on the island of Ireland. Simultaneously, all interviewees were critically aware of the unique nature of Irish hospitality and tourism that provided context in how they in turn set about managing their hotels and the hotels' services. Moreover, their individual perceptions influenced how they saw themselves as people, as employers, either as hotel general owner-managers or general managers as engaged in sensemaking to construct identity as a particular type of hotelier. In turn, there was a definite link between their individual perceptions of the nature of hospitality and how they managed hotel services, which played a major role in their notion of becoming competent in managing hotels in the Republic of Ireland. As hoteliers they were doing identity work and their perceptions of the nature of hospitality that underpinned hotel services influenced how they perceived themselves as individuals and in turn how they carried out that work as hotel owner-managers or general managers.

This line of enquiry sought to explore the possible link between the identity work of these twelve interviewees as owner-managers or general managers and their socially constructed notion of their occupational identity of an hotelier, owner, employer and general manager in the context within which that work took place. They shared similar identities as hotel owner-managers and general managers whilst employed in the varied contexts of small and large hotels, in

independent or hotel group ownership structures. Each of these interviewees constructed self-identity by how they identified and used a combination of qualities and emotions together with skills developed through their work experience to manage their employees. In the first instance, these interviewees identified and referred to various qualities such as integrity, trust, a person of their word, moral order, patience, being calm, listen, intuition to convey self-identity as individuals that formed the cornerstone of how they managed others.

Simultaneously, in their socially constructed notion of what is meant to be an hotelier, each of these interviewees used various terms in constructing an occupational identity as a caring manager by how they behaved towards their staff and customers alike.

MicaLHO, GeriLHM, ArinLHM, NikaLHM, ConaLHM and PoilBHM focused on how they perceived themselves as caring managers in managing hotel services that are hospitable and how they played their role by personally interacting with customers and employees on a daily basis. GerLHM summed it up when she stated: "we are working general managers, supporting employees in service delivery during busy periods, using our intuition to see if customers and staff are happy".

In presenting the evidence, MicaLHO, GeriLHM, ArinLHM, NikaLHM, ConaLHM and PoilBHM saw themselves as hoteliers, being "an all-rounder, out front interacting with and meeting guests and employees on a daily basis", whereas PamoLHO, CrisBHM, MariLHM, HeliBHM and JoelBHO saw themselves managing in a particular commercial environment that was people-focused, and as "strategists, working behind the scenes". On the other hand, JoniBHO appeared to struggle on a number of fronts, evidenced in part by his personal breakdown in September 2008 after he lost three key managers at his hotel between June and August, followed by being able to visualise the impact of the unfolding banking crisis as he understood it from his training and experience as an accountant with a major consulting firm.

All of them agreed that it was critical to show support to employees and assist them in service delivery, especially at busy times. Indeed, PoilBHM summed up identity work as an hotelier when he described himself as an ambassador, creating ambassadors. He used the term

"ambassador" as a metaphor for what his notion of an hotelier was, whereby he saw his role as representing his hotel to existing and potential customers, but also in creating new ambassadors in the form of assistant managers who would continue and develop into that role.

Each interviewee repeated the term "care" as part of the language of emotion that underpinned how they managed themselves and others – employees and customers alike. All twelve hoteliers were very clear about what business they were in, i.e., providing basic needs of sleep and food for customers away from home founded on hospitable employee-guest interactions, albeit with varying degrees of emphasis and focus on achieving other business objectives in respect of cost management and achieving profitability. This research was littered with examples where each of these interviewees perceived themselves as hoteliers and how they have lived out that perception of self, by combining that notion of self with their occupational work in hospitality management. MicaLHO referred to himself as "a caring human being who welcomes stressed guests and gets them back on a level keel, am a good reader of people" while GeriLHM expressed a positive emotion of "I love the business of making people happy, to see people enjoying themselves and then to see my staff achieving budget, our bottom line". According to PoilBHM, "Our job is to create hotels as places where both staff and customers enjoy the experience". In doing identity work he weaved together the tangible elements of hotels and people with the intangible aspects of warmth of welcome, ability to smile and quality of the service interaction between staff and customers. MicaLHO, GeriLHM and PoilBHM expressed a positive emotion of "I love what I do" that highlighted their emotional attachment to their notion of what it meant to them to be a hotelier and informed how they identified, recruited and managed others by using their skills underpinned by a combination of qualities and the language of emotion. It could be argued therefore that these clusters of qualities and emotions with learned skills and development of tacit and explicit knowledge formed the building blocks for assembling one's competent identity.

In making sense of these building blocks to assemble a competent identity, it is possible to argue that these interviewees tried to marry their notion of self in terms of qualities and emotions with occupational identity work of learned skills and the knowledge of hotelkeeping acquired through their lived experience of that work. As far as all these interviewees were concerned, becoming

competent was about working from the inside out, i.e. using their own clusters of qualities and emotions to inform how they managed others. Regardless of how they perceived themselves in their roles of "being present out-front by interacting with guests and staff or working behind the scenes", these interviewees used their own qualities and emotions to identify and recruit the "right employees" and then set about developing their skills and knowledge in all aspects of the production and delivery of hotel services in a hospitable manner. It was their combining of self-identity and their notion of occupational identity work, that constituted competent management that was ongoing and always in process.

Contribution to the Research

The findings of this research revealed that the twelve interviewees highlighted and made sense of their notions of management competencies in hotel management. During the analysis of the data, three themes emerged notably, managing hospitality services in hotels, the key role of employees and the use of the language of emotion in managing staff, and managing hotels through dynamically changing times. These three themes were placed in order of importance garnered from the language used by the interviewees to reflect competencies clusters as they emerged. Simultaneously, a further process of analysis was conducted for two reasons, the first necessitated the merging of the three themes into two lines of enquiry so that a more indepth analysis to the competency clusters was completed. This resulted in the identification of competency clusters of qualities, emotions, skills and knowledge that emerged and were deemed crucial to this investigation on management competencies of hotel owner-managers and general managers in various hotel organisational structures. The second reason focused on the role of sensemaking, whereby whilst the interviewees made sense of management competencies they were also constructing self-identity and occupational identity. In other words, these interviewees engaged in the processes of identity building to convey self-identity and occupational identity, and ultimately to prove highly particular competencies of those combined identities. A cycle matrix in Figure 5.1 Model of Competencies Framework was used to show the relationship between the four clusters of competencies in a cyclical progression. The four clusters of qualities competencies qualities, clusters of emotions competencies, clusters of skills competencies and clusters of knowledge competencies as depicted in each of the four quadrants corresponded to a wedge or pie shape, and appeared in a rectangular shape to the side of the wedge or pie shape.

This cycle matrix was inserted into the amended conceptual framework Figure 2.1:

Figure 5.1 Model of Management Competencies Framework
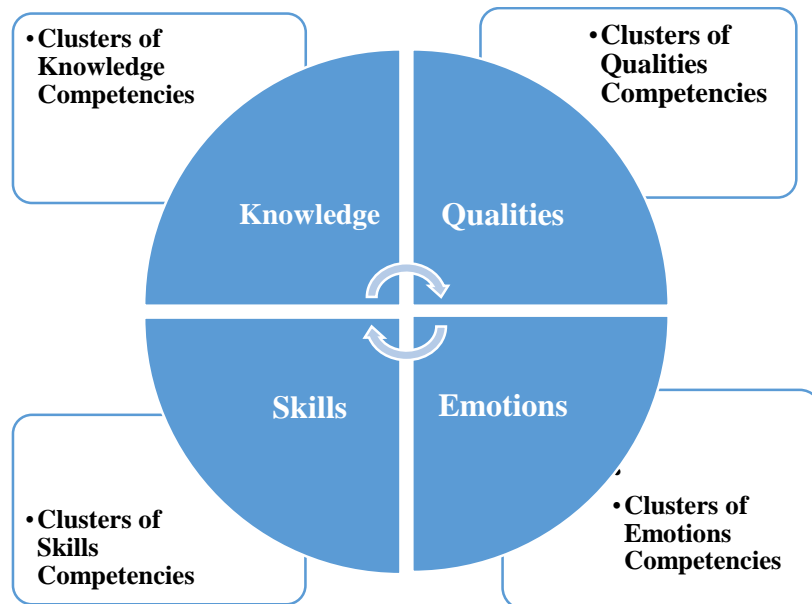
The clusters of qualities competencies were grouped together which they deemed were core building blocks of and pertinent to competent management of hospitality services in hotels. Specifically these clusters of qualities competencies and clusters of emotions and emotional intelligence competencies were highlighted as used in managing employees in the delivery of hospitable services. The interviewees named particular qualities were clustered together which included:

- Have and display a positive attitude.
- Be passionate, have innate drive, and be committed.
- Have and show patience, be calm, be resilience, always be hopeful.
- Practice honesty, be intrinsically care, and always tell the truth, practice integrity, and show respect and dignity to all people regardless.
- Be able to smile and practice smiling.

- Be independent minded, use one's intuition, show initiative and be innovativeness.

All interviewees made various reference to emotion, more specifically to terms within the language of emotion that they used in their daily managing of people especially staff members. These interviewees also linked some of the cluster of qualities competencies to the language of emotion. In other words, some qualities must be present innately in order to be able to demonstrate certain aspects of positive emotions and emotional intelligence. These cluster of Emotions Competencies included:

- Be able to demonstrate care and show empathy for others.
- Develop the ability to recognise others emotions and use these in the management of people.
- Be able to show support to fellow employees by being physically present in helping with customer service, solve problems and make decisions.
- Be happy and enjoy work; be able to smile to demonstrate a welcome for customers and colleagues alike.

This third cluster of skills competencies related directly to the context and nature of the work of hotel management activities in that particular complex environment. The interviewees agreed that this cluster of skills competencies included:

- Learn and develop skills in all aspects of financial matters including revenue and sales management, planning, forecasting and management of all costs both fixed and variable,
- Develop and learn the technical skills of facilities management of the hotel building management system and entire contents.
- Develop skills in the use of all aspects of technology such as hardware, software, internet, operating systems.
- Communicate and share information, decision-making, planning, organising, controlling
- Use qualities and emotional intelligence in the management of people.
- Develop own skills in strategy planning and financial management and work closely with the hotels management team.
- Develop the emotions, skills and knowledge of all employees constantly into and throughout the different department of the hotel.

The fourth set of clusters of knowledge competencies was devised from the wide range of stories of events that these interviewees used to illustrate how they developed knowledge that they deemed to be illustrative of competent management. Each interviewee referred to how the progression of their careers had augmented their individual levels of knowledge development in all aspects of hotel management after they had completed their studies at university or catering college. Knowledge was developed through skills training and practical learning from their work experience in the combined management of employees and hospitality services together in hotels from on-the-job learning within various organisational contexts. Knowledge was also augmented by their continual personal development garnered through off the job course programme work. In this fourth set of clusters of knowledge competencies, facets of knowledge was divided between explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge.

This fourth level of clusters of explicit knowledge competencies was linked to clusters of skills competencies in how these interviewees acquired, created, shared and used knowledge through their respective hotel organisations. The first stage in knowledge development was dependent upon the skills training and on-the-job learning received by the interviewees that enabled them as managers to learn how to follow clear instructions in the completion a whole range of tasks in managing people and all the intricate aspects of the nature of hospitality management. All of the interviewees referred to how their career development was about knowledge acquirement and how they shared and used that learning in everyday management. The second stage of knowledge competencies was relatively tacit evidenced in part by the cumulative training and learning developed from clusters of explicit knowledge, and then used in a whole range of differing ways. The identification of clusters of tacit knowledge competencies focused on how these owner-managers and general managers leveraged individual expertise and know-how in a wide variety of ways, most evidenced in part by their ability to identify and recruit potential employees that proved key staff members to their respective organisations. It could be argued that clusters of tacit knowledge competencies were influence by the disruptive context of the nature of the hospitality industry. In examination of clusters of tacit knowledge competencies such as

- Being able to identify the constituent parts of the tangible and intangible elements of hospitality and create hotel organisational structures to deliver both aspects in a commercial environment.

- Being able to identify the importance of using the language of emotion to build relationships with all peoples in hospitality management, more succinctly to then ensure that all employees were able to recognise the value of relationships in their managing of customers, fellow employee colleagues, suppliers etc.

- Using tacit knowledge: to manage in the aftermath of a financial crisis PamoLHO developed a strategy to reduce all operating costs in hotels and generated new sources of income to protect cash flows.

- Use technology and social media for relationship building with customers.

- Being able use an hotel profit and loss account on a monthly basis and make adjustments throughout the various departments of the hotels operations.

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6   Conclusions and Reflections

This research sought to make sense of the notions of management competencies from the data analysis of twelve interviews that were conducted with hotel owner-managers and general managers in the Republic of Ireland. Throughout Document Five the complexities of nature of the term competences and competencies were explored. This was due in part to the differing spellings used and to the dualistic nature of previous research conducted which focused on the attributes of the person or the tasks of the job, i.e., 'two independent entities prerequisite worker attributes and work activities' (Sandberg, 2000:11).

The conclusions drawn from the research were that:

1   These hotel owner-managers and general managers made sense of the nature of Irish hospitality in a commercial setting and examined how they managed hospitable services delivery in their hotel businesses in a commercial environment, in their sensemaking of competent management within that context. Furthermore, the impact of 2008 financial crisis was palpable in their efforts to remain in business and protect the jobs of their employees.

2   These hoteliers used a range of key skills and knowledge combined with qualities and the emotions they used to build relationships, which made their hotel organisations function and enabled their concept of competence to emerge. A more in-depth account of these interviewees presented four clusters of their *qualities* and *emotions* together with key *skills* combined with *knowledge* learned from their lived experience of work in terms of how they furnished their notions' of competencies and enabled them to be competent in a complex environment. Critical and significant was their use of language, metaphors and stories in their meaning making of how they made sense of these facets of qualities and emotions which underpinned their skills and knowledge as complex clusters of competencies.

3   These hoteliers identified and repeatedly highlighted the importance of the language of emotion used in building relationships which was pervasive at all levels. Each used powerful metaphors to illuminate their positive use of emotions in terms of how they connected with all people (employees, customers, guests, or suppliers alike) to deliver their respective notion of hospitable services in hotels. In fact, a key competency of hotel management was the ability to use emotion to build relationships and deemed crucial to their success as hotel owner-managers and general managers. This point counteracted the work on emotional labour by Hochschild's (1983) which focused a negative strain and influence of emotion work.

4   As these hoteliers made sense of complex clusters of competencies, they were not only sensemaking but were also constructing a self-identity and occupational identity together as a particular type of owner-manager or general manager. Taken together in terms of what constituted competence, we could conceptualise that these clusters of competencies were the resources or building blocks for assembling a competent identity. In other words, these interviewees engaged in identity building to prove highly particular competencies in a complex environment of hotel ownership and management within the hospitality industry.

5   Much of the prevailing literature on competencies focused on clusters of emotional intelligence, social intelligence, behavioural and cognitive clusters of competencies (Boyatzis, 2009). Meanwhile, the literature on competences focused on the tasks aspects of work that needed to complete a job in a competent manner. This researcher concluded that a definition of competent management combined clusters of qualities and emotions that underpinned self-identity and were then woven into occupational identity as constructed from clusters of skills competencies and clusters of knowledge competencies. This proposed definition counteracted the previous literature thinking on competencies, which focused on behaviour whilst competences related to job tasks. There is merit in merging both of these perspectives together.

Chapter One set out the plan and rationale as to how this thesis investigated the concept of competences and competencies. The complexities and challenges surrounding the terms "competent" and "competencies" were highlighted in Chapter Two. It could be argued that the complexities of the phenomenon were in part due to the differing spellings used, i.e. competence

and competency. Secondly, most of the research conducted to date has used a dualist lens, i.e. attributes of the person or the task items to complete a job (Boyatzis, 1982; QCF-NVQ, 2014). Chapter Two also examined the concepts of hospitality services and emotion-emotional intelligence and a conceptual framework that attempted to show the relationships between these concepts in a visual form. The research methodology and methods were the focus of Chapter Three. The research methodology used a constructionist ontology and interpretive lens, which stipulated that the person and world are inextricably linked through a person's lived experience of that world, i.e. that hotel owner-managers and general managers made sense of management competencies based on their lived experience of hotel management work (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from twelve interviewees which consisted of three owner-managers, one Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who was a shareholder, and eight general managers.

In Chapter Four the analysis of the data charted the emergence of three themes: managing hospitality services in hotels in the Republic of Ireland, the key role of employees and the language of emotion used in managing staff and managing hotels through dynamically changing times. For the purposes of this research, the nature of that work was heavily influenced by the context and structure of an hotel organisation, either within an international hotel group or an independent hotel company. The researcher completed a further analysis of the twelve transcripts of the interview data which explored the processes of identity work and identities created. Sense-making is the process of social construction that occurs when discrepant cues interrupt individuals' ongoing activity, and involves the retrospective development of plausible meanings to rationalise what people are doing (Weick 1995). The processes of identity work and identities created examined how each of the twelve interviewees engaged in self-identity construction and occupational identity work simultaneously, in an effort to interpret how these hotel owner-managers and general managers made sense of their notion of a competent manager and competent self as being the same person. The study sought to explore if there was any separation between the self-identity of the person and the occupational identity of an hotel owner-manager or general manager. Sensemaking was integrated across the themes of how hoteliers used the language of emotion to manage staff in their respective hotels even during changing times. These themes were woven together with identity work using language,

metaphors and interpretative metaphors in an effort to explore how these interviewees made sense of what constituted competence. Furthermore, the notion of an hotelier was examined in terms of how the interviewees perceived themselves to be an hotelier, as constructed from their lived experience of work within the various hotel environments and organisational structures.

From the earlier discussions in Chapter Five, the proposition for this research was framed around two broad lines of enquiry which enabled conclusions to be drawn. These two lines of enquiry were summarised individually to ascertain how the findings and conclusions emerged.

6.1.   Hoteliers identified and used their qualities and the language of emotion together with skills and knowledge to manage employees to deliver hospitality services internally in hotels constantly punctured by a complex external business environment.

Firstly, the findings revealed how the interviewees made sense of their perceived notion of the nature of hospitality and being hospitable in a commercial environment. Simultaneously, the interviewees made sense of how they managed hospitable services in their hotel businesses and in their cumulative sensemaking of competent management. These interviewees identified and used qualities and the language of emotion which underpinned their learned skills and knowledge as clusters of competencies in managing hospitable hotel experiences in a complex environment. It was a perspective that emphasised the importance of personal qualities such as honesty, integrity, having respect, being patient, listening, having a positive attitude and intrinsic care. The hoteliers considered the possession of these qualities necessary, which they used in their interactions with employees and bridged the moral aspect of the executive process explicitly in their use of qualities as codes of conduct, to guide what they deemed competent behaviour. Furthermore, the findings revealed that the quality of being intrinsically caring must be present innately, and used to demonstrate emotion when relating to and interacting with others, by being able to show care, empathy and support for others including customers, fellow colleagues or employees. In turn these hoteliers used these qualities and the language of emotion to make sense of their notion of hospitality and set about to demonstrate how they used facets of skills, qualities, the language of emotion and knowledge to manage staff in their delivery of hospitable hotel service experiences. These hoteliers identified qualities of being intrinsically

caring together with the language of emotion in order to be able demonstrate empathy, support and care for others, and to make sense of the nature of hospitality as they perceived it. It could be argued that these hoteliers perception of hospitality was founded on two levels, the first being the provision of basic needs in terms of rest and food and the second being the nature of service interaction between customer and employee in the delivery of those basic needs services. It was the nature of the concept of hospitality as explored by all of interviewees, and how they perceived it that drove everything else these hoteliers did and how they did it.

It could be argued that the genuine expressions of emotion as expressed by each of these hoteliers matched their inner feelings which gave rise to what they perceived as an authentic emotional expression (Holstein & Gubrium, 2008:521-522), may go some way to explain the nature of the hospitable welcome that is legendry characteristic of Irish hospitality and tourism. These hoteliers linked the quality of a positive caring attitude, with an ability to demonstrate these qualities through the language of emotion of showing care, empathy, and an ability to build relationships with all others as a key cornerstone in the production and delivery of an hospitable service experience. Their making sense of the nature of the tangible and intangible elements of hospitality (how it underpinned the delivery of hotel services which were intangible, that is, the consumer purchased that service as memory or an experience in the presence of the hotel employee, and departed with no tangible product), and together with all employees managed that intangible service experience through their interactions with guests to become competent hotel owner-managers and general managers in that context.

The second finding within this line of enquiry revealed how each of these hoteliers made sense of the importance of all hotel employees in their delivery of hospitable services in the hotel industry, and therefore this sensemaking was founded on these interviewees' perceived use of competency clusters of qualities and emotions in the identification and management of those employees. All interviewees were in total agreement about the importance of employees, and the perceived role that they played in the delivery of hotel services; there were differences in how people were identified, recruited and developed. There were differing perspectives on actually how these individual hoteliers went about the identification, recruitment and development of employees. A majority of interviewees shared the perception that the

identification of potential employees was a critical activity and an ongoing challenge. While some perceived their role in the final selection of employees was paramount, others adopted a hands-off approach, stating that it was the responsibility of the relevant department head to make the final recruitment decision. Each interviewee used language, metaphors and stories to explore how they used a combination skills and knowledge underpinned by qualities of intuition and positive attitude to identify, recruit, train, promote employees and manage leavers.

This small scale exploratory study conducted with twelve hoteliers who provided some insights into how the different hotel ownership structures influenced their management and leadership of a particular hotel. International hotel groups were characterised by highly systemised work structures which enabled a number of general managers (MariLHM, ConaLHM, HeliBHM) to performance-manage all aspects of hotelkeeping, in order to achieve profits and develop a hotel culture that was consistent with the brand values of the organisation. Hotel management competence in these situations was about mining those managers and employees who shared these qualities of being able to care and of developing trust in others. In other words, the competency was the ability to identify those potential employees who shared those qualities, recruited and developed them to work as part of the team. Each interviewee spoke at length about the importance of their staff and the role they played, especially their management, colleagues and other key team members. This was highlighted the fact that managerial competencies were developed daily through the managing of their interactions and relationships with their employees. Whilst there was unanimous agreement that they used qualities such as being able to identify a positive attitude in all potential candidates, some also sought to ascertain the quality of being intrinsically caring. In other cases, some interviewees used qualities such as their intuition to identify similar qualities in potential employees such as drive, positive attitude, and being intrinsically caring.

It emerged that the identification, actual presence and ongoing development of all of their employees was a critical set of competencies for each of the interviewees. In other words, one must be exceptionally competent in managing and developing employees in order to be and remain in the business of managing hotels. The business of managing hotels necessitated owner-managers and general managers to be competent managers as they developed a relational web

that wove the management of hotel employees together in their delivery of hospitable services to all hotel guests in a commercial environment.

There were mixed emphases in their perception of the importance of training and development, either for self or for their employees. While all general managers and two hotel owners shared the notion of becoming competent was linked with their ability to train and develop people into teams at their respective hotels, this perception was not shared by the remaining two owners (MicaLHO, JoniBHO). It emerged that the latter two owners did not perceive themselves to be in any way responsible for staff development, as far as they were concerned that was part of on the job learning.

In managing employees the perception of the importance of the presence of an intrinsic care quality was not shared by all interviewees; however they all agreed that the presence of a positive attitude quality in all employees was fundamental to being able to show care and attention to customers and fellow colleagues in hotels. A number of the hoteliers highlighted the fact that you could not be confrontational with employees, using the metaphor its' "always a carrot, never a stick, being a role model to employees" as one of the best ways to demonstrate integrity of how to show care for customers and fellow employees alike. In the delivery of the service there was an aspect of human interaction in each service encounter so management had to do all in their ability to support, care, show empathy and not be confrontational in order to maintain the emotional stability of employees. Furthermore, the interviewees used metaphors to display emotional intelligence in differing situations, for example, to sense the emotions of their employees, show empathy to and support for employees especially during busy service periods within their hotel operations. Equally, these hoteliers used their emotional intelligence in reading the emotions of customers as they highlighted the importance of making customer experiences happy and enjoyable. All of the hoteliers explained how they worked closely with their hotel staff to create that happy and enjoyable environment in their hotels whilst being commercially focused.

These twelve hotel owners and hotel general managers deemed themselves to be competent in a time of unprecedented economic change as they perceived it. The context and the role played

by small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in tourism and hospitality in the Republic of Ireland is substantial, with a high percentage of independent owner-managed hotels in the three, four and five star categories. The economic boom that characterised the years 2000 to 2007, together with the onset of the perceived 2008 financial crisis which led to current recession, and how these events impacted upon the lives of the interviewees was examined. The findings reveal that while all were unanimous in their sensemaking of the financial crisis in late 2008 and its fallout, individuals differed and contrasted in how they responded. While all agreed on the significance of the financial crisis, there were similarities and sharp differences in their perceptions of that crisis and this in turn influenced how they managed their respective perceptions of crisis as it impacted on their respective businesses. Whilst they all shared a similar notion of the depth and significance of the economic crisis, sharp differences emerged in how they responded and managed their hotels organisations through 2009 and 2010.

One such perspective was that the Irish hotel industry was carrying a debt of between €6 and €7 billion euros, while it was only capable of handling gearing of between €2 and €3 billion. Another perspective highlighted the unfairness of having to trade against so-called NAMA hotels, which made no capital repayments. Another perspective was the near impossibility of getting access to bank lending for working capital, and each hotel business had to be managed from cash-flow. A number of interviewees shared the perspective that the 2008 crisis caused a sharp fall in hotel revenues from both leisure and corporate clients. This, further coupled with a price war on rooms, had forced a major focus on achieving net profits, so much so that revenue forecasting matched to payroll costs had to be managed on a daily/weekly basis, otherwise a whole year's revenue could be lost in a month. In fact, two hotel owners highlighted the importance of managing payroll costs on a weekly basis. Others perceived the crisis as the result of the country's failure to manage the boom between 2000 and 2007, and Ireland now faced an identity crisis, having lost its financial sovereignty to the EU.

On the one hand, the majority took immediate action using their skills and knowledge to manage a significant drop in hotel revenues by implementing significant cost cutting measures and protecting cashflows. At the other extreme, one hotelier made no changes what-so-ever which

resulted in a trebling of the long-term debt, whilst another suffered a negative emotional reaction in the form of a personal breakdown and was out of work for six months.

These interviewees used stories explained how they used a range of qualities and emotions, and learned skills, which enabled them to manage the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis. This finding indicated that whilst these hoteliers perceived a deep awareness that the 2008 financial crisis caused significant changes, their socially constructed response was to reflect a degree of protectiveness towards their hotel businesses and employees as they used their qualities and emotions to manage the fear and shock felt by their staff members. Their recollection of the occurrence of the perceived economic downturn was described "like someone turning off a tap and falling off a cliff it, was that quick". The key finding specifically related to how these twelve interviewees actually managed employees throughout this tumultuous period between 2008 and 2012. Examples of qualities used included being honest, tell the truth, the role of moral order and kept communicating with staff to allay fear, as well as an empathy shown throughout the significant employee redundancies that they managed between 2009 and 2010.

One international hotel organisation responded in two ways to protect cashflows. The initial action was where the general managers learned and developed additional skills in respect of their micro-managing of daily cashflows. They did this by a combination of actions using their learned skills in strictly monitoring all costs and by mapping forecasted revenues and payrolls costs on a daily basis and tracking variances where they occurred by taking corrective action. The corporate IT department developed an online forecasting model that each of the general managers and their hotel financial controller learned to use, so as to track all of this information on a daily basis, and then updated the results centrally to head office. In the case of five other hoteliers, they made decisions to reduce payroll costs by the implementation of employee redundancies. In two instances, where the hoteliers made a significant number of employees with long-term service experience redundant, they matched this with a programme of continuous improvement in skills training and development that underpinned the re-organisation of hotel employees and their job titles. Three other hoteliers also implemented a smaller number of employee redundancy programmes at their hotels. In one of these cases, the owner-manager

negotiated reduction in pay levels including his own, in order to protect overall employment levels at his hotel which ultimately resulted in three employee redundancies.

All of the interviewees highlighted the use of qualities together with the language of emotion to illustrate how they used their skills as they personally managed their perceptions of this crisis period with all employees. In all cases, constant personal communications with all employees on fast evolving situations were delivered with honesty and integrity, because of the fear and uncertainty that permeated their hotel organisations. The five hoteliers (MariLHM, ConaLHM, NikaLHM, CrisBHM, JoniBHO) personally communicated with each individual employee whose position were being made redundant. Qualities such as honesty, telling the truth and moral order and showing empathy were highlighted by their personal interaction in meeting each employee. In one case, the hotelier demonstrated empathy by securing employment positions in other hotels within the group for the five employee who were made redundant.

The increased role and impact of information and communication technologies were highlighted as another key driver of change. The management of information and communication technology divided into two specific interdependent activities, namely the internal systems that housed the creation and development of management information through transaction processing/data capture/communication mechanisms. The second being the online distribution channels that drove e-commerce together with the management of social media including Facebook, Twitter and TripAdvisor.com. There were varying perceived reactions with colourful metaphors and expressed negative emotions to the development of online social media. The majority perceived the use of social media as a necessary part of doing business, whereby skills development of employees augmented their knowledge development of this new online media for communicating with existing guests and building relationships with potential customers. All interviewees displayed a significant perception in the changing nature of online technology-ecommerce and the changing nature of social media. All of these hoteliers saw this new virtual world as one that enabled them to build relationships with existing and potential guests, which was a cornerstone to the nature of hospitality, and which enabled personal interactions with customers. In other words, their perceived use of social media was founded on their notion of

how it had augmented their combined ability and capacity to build and manage the relational nature of the hospitality services in their respective hotels.

Whilst some of the interviewees explained that Facebook and Twitter were used for business generation and customer relationship management, it was the TripAdvisor.com platform (a major online live forum for customer feedback – positive and negative) that garnered perceived emotional reactions. Two of the hoteliers expressed the negative emotion of hate towards TripAdvisor.com but in their wisdom acknowledged that they had developed skills in themselves and their respective employees to proactively manage it "as it worked against you so you have to work against it or ignore it at your peril". In other words, TripAdvisor.com was here to stay, while some of the interviewees perceived it as a threat to their hotel businesses as it allowed guests to rate their experiences of their visits. Whilst the majority of the interviewees perceived the social media TripAdvisor.com website as another aspect of technology that had to be managed, the emotional reaction of two owner-managers was interesting. Even though TripAdvisor.com award hotels for their positive customer service management, these two owner-managers did not share that perception of this social media site. But in their combined wisdom these two owner-managers had developed skills themselves and in team members on how to manage TripAdvisor.com and realised that ignoring did not make good business sense either.

6.2   Hoteliers made sense of self-identity and occupational identity in their efforts to become competent hotel owner-managers and general managers to deliver hospitality services in hotels.

These interviewees shared insights into what type of people they were and how their personal qualities influenced how they managed themselves and how they related to, interacted with and managed staff, by describing how they managed hotels on a daily basis. All of these interviewees realised that they could not manage hotels alone, but were figuratively joined at the hip to their fellow employees in the delivery of hospitality services. At this juncture, the role of occupational identity work of the person as a manager or owner emerged: that identity was shaped by how

they saw themselves as individuals i.e., self-identity impacted on how they managed themselves and related to others.

The socially constructed notion of the identity of an hotelier supported by a strong cultural underpinning in their ability to welcome people and show care towards all customers emerged as a finding. Each of these interviewees demonstrated in various ways, through their identity work as professional hoteliers, a competency to tolerate ambiguity and to keep going regardless of how tough it was. Their combined competency of independent mindedness, sense of autonomy and ability to tolerate ambiguity in fast-paced changing circumstances may have been supported in part by the strong notion of a sense of national identity, and possibly explained why so many hotels are within independent ownership in the Republic of Ireland. It could be argued that the expertise these interviewees had built up over their working lives underpinned their occupational identity work and notions of competence was largely tacit. In terms of their notion of self-identity, as how they perceived themselves as human, where all interviewees agreed about their use of qualities such as honesty, integrity, respect, patience and intrinsic care and a moral code that governed how they interacted with employees, and indeed the many publics that they encountered during their work.

It could be argued that the perceived importance of self-identity was interwoven with occupational identity work, whereby these hoteliers shared the perception that part of competency clusters of qualities and intrinsic emotions came from within, were not separate from the self but gained through their lived experience of work and influenced by background, the context and the structure of their organisation. However, significant diversity emerged in how these interviewees constructed their notion of how that occupational identity work formed and interweaved with their notion of competence whilst seeing themselves as hoteliers regardless of their position of hotel owner or hotel general manager, whereas others perceived themselves in a commercial environment of hospitality that was people-focused.

Regarding the interviewees' identity work and their perceived notions of being an hotelier, some presented themselves as the kind of hotelier that focused themselves and their employees on looking after hotel guests in a caring manner, whilst others perceived themselves in a particular

commercial environment that was people-focused. Some interviewees socially constructed the identity of an hotelier and what constituted competence, whilst others generalised part of what they did on a daily basis as competence through managing and developing employees. In constructing their meaning of management competences and competencies, these interviewees relied on the management of subjective interpretations by shaping the thinking of others rather than being defined by them. They shared a fundamental understanding that being competent in managing the business of hotels meant making sure that the services they sold to customers in the form of the provision of basic needs in overnight accommodation, food and beverage were delivered in such a way that met the expectations of their customers at a profit. What differed was how these interviewees perceived themselves as competent owner-managers or general managers to ensure that the delivery of those services were hospitable at all times, i.e. what it took to develop themselves, and how they identified and managed key employees around them.

The notion of identity work as an hotelier played a key role in the ability of an owner or general manager to become competent. Self-identity and identity work were fused with a perceived national identity in terms of what it meant to work in, manage and lead a hotel in the hospitality industry in the Republic of Ireland. It's what we do well, its intrinsic to the natural fabric of who we are as a people, which made a significant contribution to the ongoing economic success of the Irish hospitality and tourism industry for the past fifty years. Year on year figures display the success in financial terms. Some interviewees demonstrated an emotional attachment to their notion as an hotelier. They also alluded to the curious nature of the Irish people and their ability to relate and interact with people, which fed into their notion of showing care and an ability to "have the banter" with the guest. Their notion of the occupational identity of an hotelier, regardless of their work title of owner or manager, in some cases had been seriously challenged, with implications for management competencies. For example GerLHM described the potential conflict that had emerged in being a competent hotelier and how she had continued to adjust to these challenges. Traditionally as an hotel general manager she together with her teams delivered hospitable guest experiences of hospitality services, going forward she must also be concerned with profitability, revenue generation, team development and building, and technological proficiency. MicaLHO used a combined metaphor to illuminate these ongoing

challenges, "we nearly threw the baby out with the bathwater", the term "baby" was a reference to welcoming and caring for guests, whilst the "bathwater" symbolized change.

This added up to those cumulative core capabilities that shaped the thinking of their guests in terms of being competent hoteliers, owner-managers or general managers alike. In their capability to influence and shape the thinking of others, these interviewees illustrated that competency was constructed as a tripartite triangle, i.e. first and foremost it is part of identity, which is demonstrated in one's ability to complete a task and the outcome of that task; secondly, how one behaved in managing one's own behaviour, and thirdly, how one used one's own identity and behaved towards others. This is what constituted competence in the managing of hotel services.

6.3   Contribution to Knowledge and Implications for Practice

This research explored how hotel owners and general managers identified, interpreted and made sense of their notion of managerial competencies in a complex work environment. It employed an interpretivist approach to make sense of management competencies. The findings revealed evidence pointing towards a social constructionist process (Berger & Luckmann 1966) through which these hoteliers constructed their realities of clusters of management competencies using a combination of learned skills and develop knowledge underpinned by qualities and emotions.

The contribution of this research to practice was to foster a less positivistic view of how hotel owner-managers and general managers were competent, and with a constructionist perspective suggested that management competencies were always in a state of becoming or emergent. In other words, these hoteliers used a combination of skills and knowledge underpinned with their personal qualities and language of emotion in what they deemed as socially constructed clusters of competencies.

The contribution of these findings to knowledge building was how these hotel owner-managers and general managers made sense of their notion of hospitable and set about to manage the delivery of hospitality services in commercial hotel environments in their combined

sensemaking of competent management. The contribution of these findings to knowledge building identified four clusters of qualities, emotional intelligence, skills and knowledge competencies, depicted in a competency framework on Figure 5.1:142.

The contribution of these findings to knowledge building was how these hoteliers then used a range of qualities; being calm, honesty, integrity, intrinsically caring, intuition, patient, and with displayed emotional intelligence of care and empathy, in managing their interactions with people both employees and customers to demonstrate their notion of being hospitable in their management of hospitality services in hotels. These interviewees deemed their use of these qualities and emotions-emotional intelligence as key skills in how they managed employees and became competent owner-managers and general managers. Furthermore, combined with key skills in technical areas such as finance, technology and facilities management, these interviewees learned explicit knowledge and developed tacit knowledge that was repeated every day to become a competent manager. Their notion of these four clusters of competencies were activated every day in their managing of hotels, and in a sense were always emergent.

The contribution to knowledge and practice highlighted the fact that it was possible to create an hospitable environment within a commercial hotel setting. This contribution was tentative because of the nature of this small scale exploratory study, and would benefit greatly from further research.

The contribution of this research to knowledge within hotel management was the contribution to the understanding of how clusters of competencies could be constructed and how these managers perceived themselves to have coped and survived in the face of significant disruptive change. The data collection for this empirical research was conducted in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis which caused profound levels of change to the working lives of these hoteliers and their employees. The current recession that resulted from the financial crisis has left indelible marks on the sensemaking of these hotel owners and general managers, most probably in a way that would remain with them for the rest of their working lives. The financial focus of managing the business of hotels will remain paramount in their minds; competencies in all aspects of costs analysis and revenue management and how they are achieved will always be

crucial. How they perceived their role as hotel owner-manages or general managers, regardless of the current business situation or perceived business crisis, influenced their notion of what constitutes competent management. In other words, the finding revealed that these hoteliers perceived their skills and knowledge underpinned with personal qualities and the language of emotion as clusters of competencies with little discrepancies amongst their perceptions. These hoteliers identified and used facets of qualities including; coping, hopefulness, honesty, moral order combined with an empathy and interpersonal sensitivity to recognise employee emotions of shock and fear as they managed their hotels amidst this financial crisis. A number of the interviewees used qualities and emotions as key skills in managing employees through extensive redundancy programmes and change initiatives. Furthermore contribution to knowledge and practice can be also seen in the context of the business turnaround and improving situation whereby the Irish hotel and hospitality industry was currently experiencing increased visitor numbers since 2013 (Fáilte Ireland 2014).

The contribution to knowledge and practice of these findings in a more generalised manner could be defended notwithstanding the research was conducted through an interpretive lens. Whilst generalisation from interpretative research can be problematic (Guba and Lincoln 1994, Denzin 1983), generalisation from an interpretivist research has been shown to be viable such as Hammersley (1990) who presented strong arguments in support of this contention. Notwithstanding the recommendation that further research be carried out, the observations and findings of this research could be applied to a wider context to inform the management competencies in other sectors of the hospitality and tourism industry.

The contribution to individual and organisational practice highlighted the influence and possible relationship between the interviewees' concept of self as individuals and their occupational identities, and the unmistakable connectedness between them and the resultant implications of this contribution to the competency debate.

6.4 Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

This research project sought to make sense of hoteliers' notions of management competencies in the complex environment of hospitality and hotel management, and was exploratory in nature and was one of the first of its kind conducted in the Republic of Ireland. Its limitation was recognised in that it was a small scale investigation with twelve hoteliers, whereby its findings were tentative in nature and could not be generalised.

A further limitation of this research related to the fact that the purposive sample used for the data collection did not include hotels in the one star and two star category, but only hotels in the three, four and five star categories.

A third limitation of this research related to the context dependent nature of the primary data which was only collected from hotel owner-managers and hotel general managers. No other sector within the hospitality industry was included in this research.

A fourth limitation of this research related to the potential sources of variation in the conception and perception of management competence, identity work and self-identity. The limitation lay in the fact that some of the interviewees such as MicaLHO, GeriLHM, and PoilBHM perceived blurred lines between their self-identity and occupational identity others including PamoLHO, JoniBHO, and JoelBHO conceived more distinctiveness between self and occupational identity.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further research is recommended using qualitative methods of data collection such as participant observation and ethnography which would help deepen the initial understandings that have emerged from the research.

Another recommendation is that more research was needed to identify other conceptions of work in hospitality and tourism management, so as to enrich our understanding of management competencies of work more generally.

Further research into the relationship between self-identity, occupational identity and management competencies would be beneficial to knowledge and practice through a more detailed consideration of the influence, of self-identity and occupational identity on management competencies.

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8.   Appendices

Appendix 8.1:
Topic Guide for Interviews with Hotel Owner-Managers & General Managers 2012-2013

Setting the scene….this is a short interview to ascertain and unearth from an hotel owner manager or general manager on the meaning of the word competent.

But before we start, as mentioned in our earlier communications in accordance with ethical procedures I have here for you a **Participant Information and Consent Form.**

Please read it and if you are happy to proceed, kindly sign both copies and keep one copy for yourself.

1   Competent - What does the term competent mean to you?

What makes you competent?

Critical moments in the development of your career to-date?

2   What does the term competent mean to you?

Tell me more about that?

3   What are the key competencies of managing today's hotel in a challenging business context?

4   Tell me the last time that you recruited a member of the management team?

Do you use job specifications and person specifications?

Any other documents to find the appropriate candidate? How do you select – tell me about that process?

5   **In your view what makes a competent assistant manager?**

Can they go on to become an owner-manager or general manager – tell me the last time you came across these characters?

6   **Educational programme, tell me how do you keep up-to-date?**
How do you manage CPD, your continuing professional development?

7   **So looking forward, what are your thoughts on your future?**

Appendix 8.2   Participant Information and Consent Form

I Catherine O'Reilly am a researcher at the Nottingham Trent University Business School, Nottingham, England, conducting research into "Managerial Competencies in Hospitality Management, Republic of Ireland".

To do this I need to interview owner-managers and general managers of hotels and I would like to tape-record these too. However, if during the interview you are not comfortable with this then, please let me know, and I will stop recording.

Participation is voluntary and is appreciated. If you have any questions before, during and after the interview, then just ask. You will need to sign the attached consent form, and a copy of this form will be given to you for your personal records.

The data collected will be treated anonymously and transcribed by the researcher. All personal names and company names will be changed in the transcription and the research Document data analysis. Only the researcher and her supervisors will have access to the tapes and transcripts of the interviews.

Each participant also has the right to withdraw from this research project after the interview without having to give any reasons for withdrawing. However there is a time limit since once analysis begins it will be difficult to do so hence you can withdraw up to the date of February 28th 2013. If you wish to do so please contact me in writing by email. Under these circumstances, the data provided will not be considered and will be deleted and destroyed.

Thank you

_____
Catherine O'Reilly
Research Student
Nottingham Trent University
Nottingham, England

I can be contacted by email: catherinemoreilly@gmail.com Mob: 087 259 2814

My supervisors are:
Professor Dalvir Samra-Fredericks (dalvir.samra-fredericks@ntu.ac) and
Professor Conrad Lashley (conradlashley@aol.com)

Consent Agreement

I have read and understand the nature of my involvement and voluntarily consent to participate in this study. In completing this form, I certify that I am 18 years of age or older.

I shall be given a copy of this consent form to keep in my possession.

_____

Participants Name   Date:

I certify that I have presented the above information to the participant.

_____

Catherine O'Reilly   Date:

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9.   Figures

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10.   Tables