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Hotel pioneers' leadership styles: A case study on the founders of Oberoi Group and Soneva and Six Senses Resort and Spa

Abstract

This study aimed to demonstrate the leadership characteristics and styles of two leading hotel operators in Asia. It was based on a biographical research technique using secondary data. Content analysis was employed to identify the leadership styles and key characteristics of the selected leaders. The major discussions in this work are separated into two parts. The backgrounds and leadership styles of each hotel operator are discussed in the first part. Results indicated that Sonu Shivdasani, the founder of Soneva and Six Senses Resort and Spa, demonstrated transformational leadership style. By contrast, Mohan Singh Oberoi, the founder of Oberoi Group, exhibited transformational and charismatic leadership. Four commonly shared characteristics on how to be successful hotel leaders are discussed in the second part of the study. The identified characteristics include visionary leadership, charismatic leadership, entrepreneurial leadership and ethical leadership. The study provided supporting information and identified characteristics from the life story, personalities and professional career success of the two hotel operators. Discussions and results could improve our understanding of the styles and shared characters underlying the success of these operators, which will be specifically useful for the development of hotel leadership.

Key words: leadership; hotel founder; hotel leader; hospitality

Introduction

Asian hotel operators Oberoi, Peninsular, Mandarin Oriental and Banyan Tree are recognised as the world's best hotels (Travel and Leisure Magazine, 2014). Asian hotel brands such as Oberoi, Soneva (TripAdvisor, 2014) and Six Senses Resort and Spa (The World Travel Awards, 2010) have also received many awards for their internationally acclaimed performance. As such, Asian brands are likely to continue to grow. Behind the success of these brands, the founder as the leader is a force that drives the company's vision (Burke, 1985; Kamisan & King, 2013). Leadership in hotel organisations is one of the challenges because their nature is complex, dynamic and global (Chathoth & Olsen, 2002). Hotel brands are strengthened by the founder's vision and the leadership team's brand passion to develop the brand culture and value. Thus, the key to being a leader lies in the organisation's ability to have an impact on the hotel industry. Leaders must have the fundamental characteristics that shape them to become critical leaders and lead organisations to success.

Leadership is defined broadly as a long-term process in which all actions have consequences. It includes the ability to establish future visions, set directions, influence and convince followers to perform well and pursue common goals (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Burke, 1985; Kamisan & King, 2013, Rowley & Ulrich, 2012a). Numerous approaches or styles to leadership studies are based on different assumptions and theories. Leadership might be classified by the combinations of personalities, beliefs

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and organisational cultures that encourage styles that fit the organisations. Many scholars have studied extensively popular theories, such as The Great Man theory, situational leadership, participative leadership, servant leadership, charismatic leadership, transformational leadership and transactional leadership, among others. Moreover, some researchers utilise other theories related to leadership from psychological, managerial and behavioural studies such as Lewin's leadership style and The Blake Mouton managerial grid.

The study of leadership is the most popular interest among management studies, particularly at the micro level in the context of employees and managers (i.e. Baczek, 2013; Zaleznik, 1989, Zopiatis & Constanti, 2012) and theory-based approaches (i.e. Antonakis, Fenley & Liechit, 2011; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; House & Howell, 1992). Therefore, most recent articles have focused on business and human resource. By contrast, articles on tourism and hospitality leadership are focused mainly on academic leadership (i.e. Kalargyrou, 2009; Zhao and Ritchie, 2007). Zhao and Ritchie (2007) reported that 57 tourism researchers performed leadership studies between 1985 and 2004; each of them published approximately 11 articles in two decades, with a serious interest in academic leadership. Rare discussions could be found on leaders from the industry that encountered various challenges, failure and success and had initiated many practices to the industry. As such, the current study is motivated to seek new insights from industry leaders. Ladkin and Weber (2011) interviewed 10 industry leaders and highlighted the key components of highly respective leaders: business knowledge, communication and self-reflection as specific skills. The results showed determination, open-mindedness and creating excellent relations with others were the essential personal characteristics of leaders. Ladkin and Weber (2011) concentrated on the leaders in Hong Kong and not on founders of successful hotel brands. Prior studies had demonstrated that successful leaders had shared some key characteristics such as people-oriented skills. Revealing the ideal characteristics is beneficial for organisations to focus on training and development of future leaders and leadership management.

Nevertheless, leadership studies of top-tier leaders as founders of hotels and hospitality organisations are still in the early stage and the focus of leadership is predominantly on Western settings. Few discourses have tackled the issues of founders' leadership styles and characteristics, particularly hotel founders in Asia. This case also increases the interest in the current study. Substantial attention must be paid to discovering their distinctive visions to introduce innovative premises in the hotel industry in the past with present successes in addition to their leadership styles. Therefore, this study attempted to highlight the leadership characteristics of hotel leaders and founders of brands to gain further insights into their leadership characteristics and styles. Following this approach, two successful founders from Asian-leading hotel operators – Mohan Singh Oberoi and Sonu Shivdasani – were selected for analysis.

Leadership theories
The Great Man theory

The Great Man theory, which is one of the classic leadership theories, introduced the notion that 'leaders were born, not made'; some people have innate qualities that only great people possess (Borgatta, Bales & Couch, 1954; Organ, 1996). Organ (1996) determined that people could not develop talents unless they had already gained an intrinsic sense and later developed to be effective. Another term similar to The Great Man theory is *charisma* because it can be defined as talent as a gift not accessible to everybody (Antonakis et al., 2011; Organ, 1996). However, this type of leadership, *charismatic leadership,* contained other meanings and characteristics apart from gift and being a part of transformational leadership (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Den Hartong et al., 1999).

Borgatta et al. (1954) also tested the assumption of The Great Man theory by observing an individual's behaviour in group interaction. Their fieldwork concluded that a group with a great man had a high rate of group performance, such as making suggestions and reaching agreements, positive social-emotional behaviour and interpersonal relationships within a group. Therefore, group performance, productivity and satisfaction of group members increased simultaneously. Zaleznik (1989) indicated that leaders differed from others in terms of motivation, personal history, how they thought and acted, the conception of work, sense of self and relations with others. Therefore, his results imply great men possessed these abilities.

Bennis and Nanus (1985) argued using The Great Man was anchored on the presumption that leadership could be learned and had little relationship to a natural gift. They also proposed four common abilities of leaders consisting of management of attention, meaning, trust and self. Management of attention is the ability to translate a vision into actions and sustain it. Management of meaning is composed of communications that relied on the use of analogy and metaphors including emotion, trust, optimism and hope. Management of trust can be defined as the emotional bond between leaders and followers. Lastly, self-management included self-knowledge, taking risks, commitment, challenge and, most essentially, learning.

According to previous studies, the talents of great men influenced people in groups. The various abilities of great men might enable them to improve their leadership in different circumstances. However, a similar goal of transformational leadership is set to advance to another level of motivating followers through the strength of a leader's vision and personality.

Transactional and transformational leadership

Scholars had focused extensively on transactional and transformational leadership. Transactional leadership is concerned about the high structural organization, leaders having high authority to command, make decisions and control followers through rules, punishments, and rewards (Kamisan & King, 2013; Zopiatis & Constanti, 2012). Transactional leaders defined the goals that followers needed to achieve, recommended how they would complete their tasks and provided feedback on the results (Gill et al., 2009)

According to Zopiatis and Constanti (2012), transactional leaders have lower involvement with followers in comparison with transformational leaders, and their relationship with followers depended on the exchange of rewards. This type of leader characteristically monitored the followers and relied heavily on rules to minimise mistakes. Zopiatis and Constanti (2012) further claimed that transformational leadership had many characteristics related to followers. This type of leader motivated subordinates and other people around them by clearly communicating a shared vision of the future and clear goals and directions. Typically, they were self-aware, authentic, emphatic and humble, and inspired their teams and expected the best from everyone. Zopiatis and Constanti (2012) suggested that transformational leadership was positively associated with extraversion, openness and conscientiousness. Gill et al. (2009) also stated that this leadership style encouraged open communication with subordinates that strengthened relationships. Another characteristic of transformational leaders suggested by McLaughlin (2001) was visionary leadership. They dreamed of a wonderful vision and articulated it with the great inspirations in words and by transforming it into actions; they were social innovators and possessed the talent to think strategically. She demonstrated some dimensions of visionary leaders such as commitment to core values, clear vision, relationship building and innovativeness.

As a part of transformational leadership, Antonakis et al. (2011) tested whether people could be taught to behave charismatically. The results indicated training significantly affected the rating of leader

charisma. They stated that charismatic leadership was 'an emotional interaction that leaders had with followers and that the "gift" was due in part to the leader's personal characteristics and the behaviour the leader employed' (p.375). Charismatic leaders influenced followers via verbal and nonverbal communication, emotional involvement and rich information (Antonakis et al., 2011). House and Howell (1992; p.87) suggested that charismatic leaders had high self-confidence, high verbal ability, high need for influence or power and exceptionally strong convictions in the moral correctness of their beliefs. This leadership style seemed to enable very effective persuasion, and stories or anecdotes were adopted frequently as a tool to motivate people by simplifying followers' recall and memory. However, charismatic leadership characteristics might emerge and be effective in some organisations and cultures but not in other societies (Den Hartog, 1999).

In summary, leadership theories demonstrated many characteristics and some features of which overlapped with other styles. Nowadays, leadership literature is more likely to emphasise transformational and transactional leadership, which contributed elements of other theories as investigated by earlier studies. The Great Man theory, for instance, has been associated with charismatic leadership in the contemporary context because inborn talents and personal development had combinations that underlined transformational leadership. Thus, these theories were utilised in this study, which had no single line to divide leadership into one category. Instead, this study looked primarily at leaders' personalities and visions to analyse their leadership characteristics and enhance the elements of leadership styles based on evidence from biographies and business concentrations.

Leadership in tourism and hospitality

The dominant study area in tourism and hospitality is on academic leadership and workforce development because of the competency needed in managerial and operational levels. However, knowledge of investigating the founders of hospitality organisations is lacking. Their socio-cultural environment and prior experiences with their families and careers appeared to be essential in shaping their way of thinking and decision-making. Several previous studies have highlighted the importance of ideal characteristics.

The work of Ladkin and Weber (2011) was one of few studies that specified the required leadership skills of the leaders in Asia. The results indicated the key attributes of leadership skills needed included business knowledge, determination, team support, open-minded/sense of curiosity, self-reflection/ admit failures, communication, respected and likeable, and sense of humour. Ladkin and Weber (2011) highlighted that people orientation was an important focus of becoming respected leaders as well as the adaption of the leadership towards the changing trends and innovation technology that organisations are facing in the current competitive environment.

The importance of social influence in the early upbringing to work career path has been mentioned in tourism and hospitality studies. To illustrate, Sinclair (2007) indicated that leaders had the ideal heroic characteristic, social construction, which was delivered from their personalities and throughout their careers. Those shared components revealed the essential keys of being the top leaders. Furthermore, Sinclair's view implied that the impact of an individual's background and upbringing upon the leadership set each individual thought and personalities. The current study also continues to investigate these components via their life stories. Sinclair and Lips-Wiersma (2008) added constructive ideas to be reflective about leadership; hence, scholars should look at the leader and their leadership as a form of being (with ourselves and others). The authors further explained about a form of being was 'a way of thinking and acting that awakens and mobilises people to find new, freer and more meaningful ways of seeing, working and living' (p.212). However, people faced various incidents through their lives; the difficulty to seek some major influences on developing leadership was a major constraint.

Life stories could demonstrate the shaping of characters of the good leaders, but not all people could nurture in the same situations which scholars had to pay attention to. Those leaders initiated the good practice to be learned, but they were not the prototypes to all circumstances.

In short, the works would have seen leadership as nurtured by the social and cultural phenomenon that shaped the way of thinking, managing, dealing with situations or building the core personality of a leader. However, these ideal components benefit to the learning process of others and demonstrate as a path to develop leadership. Each industry has different characteristics. The leadership of hospitality founders is still unrevealed which inspired the current study into an investigation.

Methodology

Two leaders from the hotel industry were selected to study their leadership styles and characteristics: the founder of Soneva Group and Six Senses Resort and Spa (Six Senses Resort and Spa recently operated by Pegasus Capital Advisors in 2012), *Sonu Shivdasani*, and the founder of Oberoi Hotels, *Mohan Singh Oberoi*. The backgrounds of the two leaders are presented in Table 1. Both Asian hotel operators are successful industry leaders.

Table 1
The background of leaders

	Sonu Shivdasani	Mohan Singh Oberoi
Date of birth	1965	15 August 1898 - 3 May 2002
Birthplace	England	Punjab in India (now is a part of Pakistan)
Age	49	103
Nationality	British–Indian	Indian
Education	England, Switzerland Oxford University (MA in English Literature)	India Due to lack of finances, he stopped halfway through his bachelor's degree in order to work in his uncle's factory
First job	Worked with his elder brother to manage their family businesses from Geneva	A shoe factory & a hotel clerk in India
Partner's ethnicity	Swedish	Indian
Parent's background	Indian merchant (traded in Nigeria and had offices in London and Geneva)	A contractor in Peshawar

To identify their leadership, this study employed a qualitative technique using biographical research which involved researching a substantial part of these individuals' lives (Veal, 2011: p.249). This method was generally reinforced by various types of interviews (Roberts, 2002). The implication of using a biographical approach might extend to other secondary sources as a snapshot through interviews might not be adequate and the researcher should emphasise an individual's life course, the placement within a nexus of social connection and historical events (Miller & Brewer, 2003). Due to the time limitation, this study collected data from secondary sources. These included published books, scholarly articles, reports and interviews from published online materials such as magazines, newspapers and websites. Secondary data required careful consideration of which available data could be used (Veal, 2011). To ensure the validity of websites, the author used the data from official business websites presented in English and excluded personal blogs and personal comments. Content analysis was then used to identify and analyse the key characteristics and leadership styles which are the focus of the study. Due to the author interpreting data from leaders' biographies and business visions, this paper was presented in a partly narrative style.

The background of leaders
Rai Bahadur Mohan Singh Oberoi

Mohan Singh Oberoi (M.S. Oberoi) was the founder of Oberoi Hotels. He was born on 15th August 1898 and passed away on 3rd May 2002 at the age of 103. He is called a pioneer in luxury hotels, especially in South Asia (The New York Times, 2002). He is also the first Indian to run the largest and finest hotel chain in India (The Oberoi Group, 2014). His young life was very difficult due to the death of his father when he was six months old, and he also abandoned his study to work in a shoe factory because of lack of financial support (Rediff India Abroad, 2005). Unfortunately, the factory was closed. Hence, he started work as a front desk clerk on a low wage at the Cecil Hotel instead. Two years later, he assisted Cecil's manager, Mr Clarke, to purchase The Carlton Hotel. In 1934, M.S. Oberoi was offered the opportunity because of Clarke's retirement. His first property was built by pawning his wife's jewellery and using all his resources to purchase the hotel (Sikh Encyclopedia, 2014; The Oberoi Group, 2014). He gained very rich hotel operation experience from this property (The Oberoi Group, 2014). In addition, The Oberoi Group presently owns Oberoi Cecil which was the first place during the founder's employment to be shaped by the young M.S. Oberoi (The Oberoi Group, 2014). Today, the Oberoi group is a leading international luxury hotel chain managing approximately 30 hotels and five luxury cruisers.

Sonu Shivdasani

Sonu Shivdasani is the founder and CEO of Soneva Group, and the founder and former CEO of Six Senses Resort and Spa. He is British with Indian roots who grew up and was educated in England at Oxford University and Eton College (The Economic Times, 2011). In 1990, he and his wife, Eva, leased an island in the Maldives. They opened their first resort, Soneva Fushi, in 1995 which became the Maldives' first luxury resort and spa. This resort introduced the creation of the Six Senses group spotlighting the core purpose '*to create innovative and enriching experiences in a sustainable environment*' (Bodeker & Cohen, 2008, p.xx), by being dedicated to the preservation of the environment through sustainable operations, guided by overarching goals and values (Six Senses Hotels Resorts Spas, 2013). The brand had a portfolio of 26 resorts and 41 spas (The Economic Times, 2011). He created a pioneering vision for green tourism through the concept of barefoot and intelligent luxury which cares for the environment (Lipman et al., 2012). In June 2012, the Six Senses brand and management operations were purchased by Pegasus Capital Advisors.

Leadership analysis and discussion
Leadership characteristics of Mohan Singh Oberoi

M.S. Oberoi's biography is one of the finest biographical works. It serves as an inspiration behind the narrative story of Oberoi Group and is great learning for people working across the difficult scenario of the hotel industry which throws up many challenges. Success and fortune did not come easy for him: all came from his hard work, enthusiasm and learning everything from the bottom line. These lessons could characterise his leadership. First, his vision for the hotel industry was futuristic, but he succeeded after all. He diversified into the upscale segment which nobody could foresee together with the innovative idea and approach of converting old historical buildings into hotels which were unique to hotel development in India at that time (Chathoth & Chon, 2006).

Second, M.S. Oberoi was a leader in action. He led by examples and had a sense of humanity. This character was supported by the story of how he kept his eyes on the detail in his work as a bottom

line staff member until he received many words of appreciation from his mentor (Chathoth & Chon, 2006). He also encouraged his employees to reach a level of perfection in their routine work with attention to detail, dedication and sincerity while inspiring them at work. He expected work to be done perfectly which was a characteristic of transformational leaders as reflected in the quote (Chathoth & Chon, 2006):

"Oberoi expected his employees to achieve perfection in their day-to-day work with an eye for detail."

From the company vision (Chathoth & Chon, 2006), M.S. Oberoi seemed to accept changes and encouraged decision-making at all levels, team players, thereby creating pride of ownership. He believed that people were nurtured through permanent learning and skill improvement. M.S. Oberoi always demonstrated a component of humanity. He cared for people with a human touch by remembering the names of hundreds of employees and even details about their children (NDTV, 2014; Ramanarayan & Rao, 2010). Empowering employees and impressing people are the tools to manage a hotel because the industry heavily relies on human resources who operate together to offer an excellent service. These tactics may be effective for leaders.

Thirdly, as a self-inspired and highly self-disciplined hotel operator, M.S. Oberoi was a quick learner and shouldered many additional responsibilities along with the job (Iloveindia.com, 2014). Moreover, he concentrated on his work by putting in great effort to get things done perfectly (Rediff Indian Aboard, 2005). To some extent, M.S. Oberoi was emotional yet sensible, as reflected from his speeches which showed his beliefs in destiny to achieve success as 'luck', 'God', 'fortune' and 'opportunity' together with his challenge to improve himself (Rediff Indian Aboard, 2005).

Leadership characteristics of Sonu Shivdasani

According to his profile, he came from a strong business background (his family operated a multinational trading company). The implicit knowledge and experience he absorbed from his parents and family's business shaped his foresight and entrepreneurship skill. Firstly, he had a future vision and an innovative concept. He created Soneva group and Six Senses Resort and Spa with the concept of intelligent luxury tourism; he focuses on sustainability where ownership was created among employees and host communities with the philosophy of SLOW LIFE (Amarasinghe, 2011). With inspiration and personal values from his Swedish wife, the organisation was driven by green philosophy (The Telegraph, 2010). His belief in the old days when the brand was launched seemed too ambitious. From the interview with Business Today (Amarasinghe, 2011), Shivdasani anticipated that people would become sick of their busy lives and require a natural setting and privacy. The cluster of guests he targeted was quality tourists, not because of the high-end segment but the guests who visited the resorts were already environmentally minded (Lipman et al., 2012). Furthermore, his eyes captured a perfect setting, even if it was a remote location (The Maldives), and he could convert it into a treasured area for his property. The green philosophy had made a big impact on the growth of sustainability as well as adding value to communities. Locals were given job opportunities, basic sanitation such as clean water (Lipman et al., 2012) and education about ecological tourism (The Telegraph, 2010).

Secondly, the organisation also had a line of responsibility for each position. To illustrate, he took charge of resort concepts and concentrated on the development and architecture of the building; his wife, Eva, a creative director, took care of details such as interiors, fabrics, and furnishing for the resorts (The Telegraph, 2010). He also believed in the great working team as his interview script repeated that the team they had created was a great inspiration to break the next barrier (Amarasinghe, 2011).

Thirdly, maintaining values, organisation culture and standards to keep a strong core business was intelligent and competent. Shivdasani seemed to run everything based on his original philosophy to avoid future conflicts. While many hotel operators expanded their brands via management contracts or joint ventures to increase their revenue and reputation, monetary transactions were not everything to him. As a reputable luxury brand, he had many chances to expand his resort brands which could increase assets with a higher reputation. He once said, 'we did not want to subcontract that element, we wanted to do it ourselves' (Amarasinghe, 2011) and 'we will never be big, but we aim to always be best wherever we operate' (Private Island News, 2012).

Analysis and discussion

Regarding the differences in generation, education, and past professional and family background, Shivadasani had a primary background related to business to support his entrepreneurship and fulfil his vision. By contrast, M.S. Oberoi learnt his entrepreneurship skills through his experience from all the jobs he worked in. According to leadership study, both demonstrated transformational leadership and some transactional leadership regarding which M.S. Oberoi obviously exhibits charismatic leadership.

On leadership theory, Shivdasani emphasised a shared vision among employees, work attitude, a sense of ownership by calling them 'hosts' instead of employees; he expected the hosts to be casual and relaxed in their workplaces and provided a new standard of employee accommodation (i.e. pool, spa service, nice rooms and canteens for hosts) (Smith & Milligan, 2011). These were the noticeable components of transformational style; however, he still integrated a small measure of the transactional approach. Some dialogues stated about rewarding employees based on individual performance (Amarasinghe, 2011). However, given a supporting reason, rewards helped in creating a sense of ownership and encouraged participation. Moreover, Shivdasani believed that a military-style approach towards management and hierarchical systems worked well in his resorts (Smith & Milligan, 2011). Thus, even though Shivdasani displayed the characteristics of transactional leaders, he still strongly indicated his professional personality of flexibility and informal style of leadership such as being an approachable leader, who dressed informally and interacted naturally with guests (Smith & Milligan, 2011). Furthermore, his objectives were based on an employee focus with rewards for individual performance to encourage self-development. Organisational structure also can enable employees to have clear views of their jobs and responsibilities, but organisational culture was open to being shared and create a sense of ownership. Thus, Shivdasani chose the transformational style as the approach of transformational leaders is to utilise followers' emotional drivers and listen to employees' voices to achieve results (Zopiatis & Constanti, 2012)

> *'Being healthy is our company's forte and staying healthy is an integral part of the company's ethos.'*
> Shivdasani (The Telegraph, 2010)

M.S. Oberoi had many characteristics associated with charismatic leadership. For instance, he was likely to encourage people through storytelling. Antonakis et al. (2011) noted that charismatic leaders utilise their abilities to motivate people around them by using stories and anecdotes. Moreover, M.S. Oberoi always mentioned the balance of his visions and employees' achievements to target the same goal which was attached to transformational leadership. The work, life and well-being of employees were mainly emphasised through the company vision as well. People were the major element of the hospitality business as his son mentioned when talking about his father (NDTV, 2014). This claim supported the study of House and Howell (1992) which concerned the effect of leaders on followers because of emotional attachment to the leaders. With respect for and mutual trust in leaders, they are given meaningful work in the organisations.

"He (M.S. Oberoi) always said people are the most important things, you can make hotels around the world but you cannot have the right people, you never succeed. He knew a lot about people, he knew people by name, even he went to the kitchen and even a junior chef's name. He was a people man"

Prithvi Raj Singh Oberoi (M.S. Oberoi's son)

To discuss further the leadership styles of the two leaders, several themes have been observed based on secondary data that are observed to contribute to outstanding leadership.

Visionary leadership

The first construct in relation to leaders in this case study is visionary leadership. Visionary leadership is the ability of leaders to build new creative ideas with imagination and insight and to move people towards a new vision of shared dreams (McLaughlin, 2001). In this context, Shivdasani was challeng-ing people with his intelligent luxury and sustainability philosophy. His philosophy in the late 19th century seemed impossible regarding which he said, 'dare to try new things'; however, he has been called recently a pioneer of intelligent luxury without any doubt about the validity of his vision (Sanghvi, 2010). As a founder of Six Senses, he introduced many new concepts of luxury resorts such as 'No News, No Shoes', real eco-friendly resorts, building the resort for the 21st century with natural and privacy concerns; he even brought the first pool villa and on-site spa to the Maldives (Smith & Milligan, 2011).

Similarly, M.S. Oberoi was an example of how leaders faced difficult situations and overcame them with their distinguished visions; this formed his reputation. For instance, M.S Oberoi had run a hotel during a cholera epidemic to serve the military for which afterwards he was awarded the title 'Rai Bahadur' by the Indian government (Rediff India Aboard, 2005). Moreover, his vision to convert run-down hotels and ancient buildings such as palaces into luxury hotels and set up a hotel quality standard which no one had thought about was in recognition of India's hospitality industry. As a pioneer, M.S. Oberoi was the first employer to provide work for women in Indian hospitality and created the standards of employment in industry (Chathoth & Chon, 2006).

Both leaders had good communication skills and were active listeners. Even though these creative ideas were difficult and ambitious – one was an intelligent luxury with a sustainability focus, and another was luxury hotels during the changes and crisis – both leaders verbalised their visions and goals to their team members whom they honourably mentioned their supports whenever these leaders gave interviews. Visionaries always involve others in reaching their milestones and help the team members meet their personal goals. According to Den Hartog et al. (1999), visioning and communicating the vision were important features which transformational leaders should clearly demonstrate and communicate correctly to pursue the same directions.

Charismatic leadership

Visionary leaders also have charisma. The notion of charisma is a personal talent of leadership that people are born with, but they can learn and cultivate it. Charisma is a natural attraction that draws people to the leader and the leader's enthusiasm. In this context, both leaders share several charismatic leadership styles through narrative stories and verbal and nonverbal communications.

M.S. Oberoi was described as a leader with inspiration and who retained the human touch with their employees. As Oberoi always thought about the difficulties in his childhood days, he exhibited empathy, humanity and inspiration. These personal characteristics led him to encourage people through stories and people were touched by his sincere feelings. Theoretically, charismatic leadership required high

verbal ability and strong convictions in the moral correctness of their beliefs (House & Howell, 1992). Furthermore, M.S. Oberoi demonstrated an ability to learn everything from his jobs and decided to take advantage of all the opportunities he was offered. This supported the statement of Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus (cited in Burke, 1985) that the essential combination to identify an effective leader was his/her desires to learn which supported transformational/charismatic leadership. However, it overlaps with The Great Man theory as he grew up in an ordinary family, but he obtained the ability to foresee the business. Organ (1996) might answer this ambiguous point that humans who possessed innate talents could be nurtured and further developed. This claim became a good balance between The Great Man theory and charismatic leadership. Thus, M.S Oberoi would be placed into the gap of innate talents nurturing through his experience.

Similarly, Shivdasani also had a talent of charismatic leadership as he influenced people to believe things that were not feasible in the old days by his strong purpose to respect the environment and that people would require natural places. Abilities to communicate well, to share dreams and to motivate people to follow the same goals were the obvious combinations of charismatic leadership. Thus, charismatic leadership is highlighted as an ideal leader through behaviour, visionary, inspiration ability, verbal and nonverbal communication and high morale which create confidence in the leaders for whom followers have high respect.

Entrepreneurial leadership

Entrepreneurial leadership is a subjective term which cannot be restricted to a single definition. It includes managerial skill, decision-making or individuals who introduce some new concerns in the economy. However, an entrepreneur is an individual who undertakes the risk involved to run a business. The hotel business is a high-risk enterprise with global business and trends. Both leaders got through the difficulties and crises of their business at the beginning of the hotel. Both hoteliers faced risks from different perspectives.

M.S. Oberoi took on all the risks when he purchased the Clarke hotel from his mentor by pawning his wife's jewellery and all his assets. He and further leased the hotel in Kollkata which had shut down due to the outbreak of Cholera with a quick decision. Thus, M.S. Oberoi risked everything he had. Aside from financial risks, he took the risk of providing jobs for women in India's hospitality industry despite the Indian economy and community not being liberal. Some statements supporting this is as follows.

> 'Acceptance meant that I would have to mortgage my assets and pawn my wife's jewellery in order to raise the necessary funds. However, I did not hesitate long.'

> '…People were afraid to visit Calcutta (Kollkata), I happened to see the advertisement appointing the liquidator and immediately decided to take over the hotel if I could get in on a low leasehold.'
>
> M.S. Oberoi (Rediff India Aboard, 2005)

Shivdasani had little experience about building a hotel along with his impossible project at that time. Hence, he failed in many unsuccessful auctions to lease an island from the Maldives government. However, he pursued his goal and became the man who introduced intelligent luxury in the hotel industry (Sanghvi, 2010). Shivdasani seemed to be a risk-taking leader who took cautious steps towards a goal. Shivdasani might prefer taking the direction with minimal risk. For example, his mother had concerns over his first project's loan and invited a professional to be his consultant even though he refused later because of an unparalleled proposal (Sanghvi, 2010). Moreover, he calculated risks with caution in numbers and balanced his business philosophy with his consideration for cost savings for sustainability consumption in resorts and return on investment (ROI) (Lipman et al., 2012).

'Sonu is a fantastic visionary and really wanted to create a product and level of service that was second to none. He was incredibly bold and very courageous to start a venture which he knew very little about.'

Alasdair Junor
One of the first general managers of Soneva Fushi
(Smith & Milligan, 2011)

In this case, successful leaders are risk takers who have been through many struggles but are not afraid of failure. Entrepreneurial leaders are often successful because they are calculating and able to make the best decisions in even the worst cases. As the adage goes, 'nothing ventured, nothing gained.'

Ethical leadership

Leadership characteristics and organisational culture support the view that Oberoi and Shivdasani introduced their business philosophy strongly related to moral issues. Both demonstrated their concerns for the community and the environment. Shivdasani had strong inspiration to balance natural resources and humans who required a more natural touch with a real feeling of luxury. He developed resorts with zero carbon emissions and generated all their own power. Moreover, his organisation extended help to the communities, such as building hospitals and schools and employing locals with relevant experience and providing them with training (Smith & Milligan, 2011). Partially from the Oberoi group's vision (Chathoth & Chon, 2006), the organisation used natural products and recycled items to ensure the proper use of natural resources and provided opportunities for employment within communities.

Trust and integrity are part of relationship building among employees and partners. In this case, relationships matter more than technical expertise. M.S. Oberoi received help from his uncle and colleagues when he was starting his business (Rediff India Aboard, 2005). He has remained grateful and expressed this gratitude throughout his narrative. Therefore, when he set up new hotels, M.S. Oberoi invited his previous colleagues to his new business. With a healthy relationship in the past, he received cooperation from his team in realising his dream.

"I took over the proprietorship of Clarkes Hotel with the help of a kind uncle who had stood by me in the past"
M.S. Oberoi (Rediff India Aboard, 2005)

Shivdasani encountered difficulties obtaining a bank loan for his first property in the Maldives. With his background being from a business family, he received assistance from his mother and sister on his first project. Moreover, the initial team was also the driver of the organisation. With mutual trust, they made things possible and enjoyed working together. These examples imply that trust and integrity are essential elements of being a leader.

These leaders prove that relationships are built on trust and respect. Hence, a tight relationship with a team will support healthy leaders. Many of these relationships are forged through extended family ties, in education or early in careers. Relationships with government officials and agencies can be especially crucial (Rowley & Ulrich, 2012b). Furthermore, an emphatic leader has the advantage of seeing things from an employee's perspective, which comes from the healthy relationship between both sides.

Conclusion

Leaders of successful organisations have a strong impact on business within the hotel industry. Their leadership styles are fundamental keys that blend with the organisation's vision, culture and management. This study demonstrates some shared elements of successful leaders that exhibit different actions. This

paper focused only on two leaders with different philosophies whose hotels are positioned in different segments in the industry. Shivdasani introduced the concept of having concern for the environment and future guests' needs to the hotel industry. By contrast, M.S. Oberoi was the father of the Indian hotel industry who put in the effort at every step of his life and kept his eyes on the hotel business with different models and demonstrated the idea of converting traditional properties into hotels. Although these leaders were from different backgrounds and had different business philosophies, they exhibited characteristics that aligned with transformational leadership styles as combined with other traits. Both exemplify visionary leadership and M.S. Oberoi exhibited supportive stories of charismatic leadership, whereas Shivdasani displayed entrepreneurial and ethical leadership. However, they also have switching styles based on different circumstances. Leadership is not 'one size fits all'; leaders must adapt their characteristics to fit the situations and people around them to reach the organisation's goals. They also maintain the leadership styles they are familiar with.

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