An Investigation into

Employee Empowerment

In Four Star Hotels

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ABSTRACT

This research is an investigation of employee empowerment in the four star hotel industry. The study is based on a two tiered approach. The first component consists of an in-depth literary review and analysis. This includes a thorough examination academic work in the area of employee empowerment. From this review the researcher identifies categories and measurement tools for empowerment. The second component of the research involves an analysis of three four star hotels. This primary research provides an insightful and distinctive way of analysing employee empowerment in practice. Each organisational example is systematically set out in a consistent manner with distinct sections. This conformity was essential in ensuring that the results was presented in an objective and unbiased manner.

The review of literature establishes notion of empowerment is plagued by conceptual ambiguities, inconsistency and a lack of persuasive supporting substantiation that there is no universal definition of empowerment. Nevertheless, the understanding that is gained from the research is that empowerment entails some additional employee autonomy. The results of the primary research echo this as there is no single industry accepted definition of the concept. Moreover findings highlight that the concept is defined within the parameters of individual organisations. Each organisation investigated had a different view and policy towards the empowerment of frontline employees. The level of autonomy experienced by employees varied between participating hotels from full discretion over tasks to ridged job descriptions. Additionally, the findings highlight a correlation between employee seniority and the level of empowerment in hierarchical structures. Finally the research uncovers the managerial motives behind the different empowerment strategies in each organisation.
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to investigate the level of employee empowerment among customer contact employees in the four star hotel industry. The motivation for research in this area arose from two sources. Firstly the researcher’s active interest in human resource management and secondly the researcher’s experiences as a customer contact employee in the accommodation industry.

In order to achieve a thorough investigation, the study aims to present a critical analysis of the existing literature employee empowerment. To enhance the relevancy of this literature review, the researcher, where possible, has used recent academic works sourced from respected peer reviewed journals. The findings of the author’s primary research will add weight to the academic literature and will allow for the researcher to form more credible conclusions to the research questions.

It should be noted that, unlike other similar studies into empowerment (Cacioppe, 1998; Hales and Klidas 1998; Lashley 1999, 2000), this research was not conducted over an elongated period of time. This was a deliberate decision by the researcher as the study is an attempt to adequately investigate employee empowerment in the four star hotel industry at this time. Therefore it attempts to take a snapshot of the present industry’s practices.
1.2 Research Questions

Based on the literature review in Chapter Two, the researcher derived four research questions. The proposed research questions, which are discussed in greater detail in Section 3.1 of Chapter 3, are as follows:

**RQ1.** To what degree are front line employees, in participating hotels, empowered?

**RQ2.** What is the managerial motive behind employee empowerment in each individual hotel?

**RQ3.** What are the differences between managerial perceptions of empowerment and employees' perception of empowerment in each participating hotel?

**RQ4.** What are the similarities and differences towards empowerment between participating hotels?
1.3 Research Methodology

The research methodology involved a two-pronged approach. The first step consisted of an in-depth analysis and comparison of the existing literature on employee empowerment. The study of the extensive academic works presented a vast amount of diverse information that required further examination and classification. To simplify this process, a focus was placed on identifying the core factors of employee empowerment. This information was then employed to formulate headings in order to add structure to the literature review. Under these headings a comparative analysis of relevant academic work was performed to examine the extent to which the findings of the individual authors converged or deviated from one another. This allowed the researcher to gain a greater knowledge of the subject area whilst further refining the research questions.

The second component of the research methodology involved an analysis of primary research. The analysis of this research was based both qualitative and quantitative data recovered from three four star hotels in the Dublin area. For each of the hotel, the information was gathered through questionnaires distributed amongst customer contact employees and an in-depth interview with a member of management. After extracting information from all participating hotels the results were analysed. SPSS statistical analysing program was used to analyse the questionnaire and Yin's (2004) pattern matching and explanation building was used to analyse the interviews. The results were there compared and contrasted under the research questions designed on the back of the researcher's extensive literature review.
1.4 Organisation of the Thesis

Chapter two Literature Review

An in-depth analysis of prior literature which exists concerning the topic employee empowerment forms the content of the second chapter. The review involves a comparative analysis to examine the definition of the concept, the motivation behind its implementation and the levels of empowerment. This review will reveal satisfactory information relating to the research questions identified and award the reader with a greater knowledge of the topic.

Chapter three Research Methodology

This chapter begins with an in depth examination of the research questions which are central to this thesis. The research methodology adopted to answer these research questions shapes the remainder of this section.

Chapter four Results and Analyses

This chapter outlines and summarise the results of the primary research in order to answer the research questions. It is based primarily on analysis of questionnaires and in-depth interviews contained in appendices.

Chapter five Conclusions and Recommendations

The final chapter outlines the main conclusions of the research. Implications for policy and practice are highlighted in the form of recommendations. A discussion for areas of future research is also included

Bibliography

Appendices
LITERATURE REVIEW

2 Introduction to Employee Empowerment

Today's global business environment is one of immense change, increasing knowledge and rapid technological advances (Coleman, 1996; Eylon, 1998; Shapiro, 2000; Jarrar and Zairi, 2002; Melhem 2004; Dimitriades 2005). Intense competition means that any competitive advantage held by an organisation is a temporary in nature (Coleman 1996). The hotel industry has become global, with national and international competitors competing across a host of domestic fronts, resulting in increased levels of competition (Claver et al. 2006). Customers have become increasingly demanding, with the focus becoming broader than price (Claver et al. 2006). This increase in competitiveness has resulted in the quality of a service developing into a key factor for hospitality organisations (Costa, 2004).

Managerial concern regarding employee empowerment in the hospitality industry has generally been connected with a need to gain competitive advantage through an enhancement in service quality (Lashley 1995a). Human resource management strategies that engage employees on an emotional level within the service transaction, in particular front-line employees, therefore have become more important in recent years (Lashley 1999; Jarrar and Zairi, 2002). Research suggests that employee empowerment has the potential to solve problems such as poor customer service, unproductive operations and employee commitment (Bowen and Lawler, 1995; Cacioppe, 1998; Shapiro 2000; Lee et al. 2006). Although there is widespread agreement among theorists that employee empowerment is a worthwhile objective, a review of literature shows that there is far more success in creating a field for academic study than establishing a link with practical application (Nykodym et al. 1994; Melhem, 2004). There also appears to be little understanding, firstly of how the empowerment process itself can be developed within an organisation and secondly, of the conditions required for its success in organisations (Eylon 1998; Melhem, 2004; Dimitriades 2005).
2.1 How Empowerment Developed

The debate of whether employee empowerment is an effective tool of organisational growth is not a new concept (Cacioppe 1998; Collins 1998, 1999; Dainty et al. 2002; Pardo del Val and Lloyd, 2003; Cooney, 2004). In the 1940’s and 1950’s early findings by American academics indicated that great potential existed for enhancing job performance and satisfaction through the use of employee participation/empowerment schemes (Nykodym et al. 1994). However, despite these results, US managers did not feel the need to change their management methods (Nykodym et al. 1994).

It was during World War 2, when Japanese professors came to the USA to study the literature published on participation, that changes were initiated in managements’ attitudes to the concept of empowerment (Nykodym et al. 1994). Sears was one of the first companies to introduce programs for measuring worker and supervisor reactions to human relation policies as well as various different aspects of their job (Nykodym et al. 1994). Soon other companies introduced similar surveys and began exchanging ideas with one another (Nykodym et al. 1994).

In the 1960’s and 1970’s employee participation programs were on the increase in the United States. However, it was clear by the 1980’s that the Japanese management style had well surpassed that used in the USA (Nykodym et al. 1994 Wilkinson, 1998). The Japanese were competing much more effectively than America since they placed a huge emphasis on human relations (Nykodym et al. 1994, Collins, D. 1996). Consequently, the argument for employee participation/empowerment became much stronger (Nykodym et al. 1994; Wilkinson, 1998).

Today participative management is on the increase since the contemporary customer and modern day business environment requires ‘fast, flexible responses’ (Coleman 1996). Pasmore (1994) found that organisations are now being designed on holographic properties, that is, the organisation as a whole is made of small individual parts, with
each part being as important as the organisation itself (cited in Coleman 1996). The service sector in particular involves an exceptional conglomerate of unique characteristics which managers, employees and customers have to tackle (Heskett et al. 1990). Taking the above factors into consideration, advocates of empowerment view it as essential to empower front line employees in order to provide high levels of customer satisfaction (Lashley 1995a; Melhem 2004; Lee et al. 2006).
2.2 Definition of Empowerment

In reviewing existing literature, it has become clear that attempting to define the concept of empowerment is burdened with ‘evasions, ambiguities and disagreements’ (Hales and Klidas, 1998) and fails to reflect the true complexity of the philosophy (Lashley, 1995a). In particular there is little agreement as to whom and where the concept should be applied (Hales and Klidas, 1998; Dainty et al. 2002; Cooney, 2004) as well as to how the level of empowerment within an organisation should be measured (Wilkinson, 1998; Pardo del Val and Lloyd, 2003).

A sufficient definition of empowerment, beyond that of the most basic, is hard to find. Conger and Kanungo’s much quoted definition of empowerment, “a process of enhancing feelings of self-efficacy among organizational members through the identification of conditions that foster powerlessness and through their removal by both formal organizational practices and informal techniques of providing efficiency information”, (Conger and Kanungo, 1988, p. 471) appears both repetitive and ambiguous (Hales and Klidas, 1998) although it does reflect Bowen and Lawler’s definition as it addresses employee discretion of task related activities (Bowen and Lawler, 1992)

Some theorists refer to employees gaining greater responsibility for decision making, and then having the proportionate power to make those decisions (Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Vogt and Murrell 1990; Hales and Klidas 1998). This power should not be lost from elsewhere (Conger and Kanungo, 1988). It should simply be gained (Conger and Kanungo, 1988) or shared (Scott and Jaffe, 1993 cited in Hales and Klidas 1998). The power relationship between managers and employees is a complex interactive practice. The concept of empowerment increases employees’ power though working with others (Vogt and Murrell 1990).
Therefore it is believed that until employees feel that the power has been shared, empowerment will not be achieved (Greasley et al. 2005). This echoes Pardo del Val and Lloyd’s (2003) conclusion that empowerment is a ‘management style’, allowing for collaboration between management and employees in the decision making process.

In contrast, other theorists, including Pickard (1993), Peters (1989) and Waterman (1988) (cited in Hales and Klidas 1998), take into account the nature of power and ‘cocktails of control’ (Collins, 1996) recognising empowerment as a transfer of the power to make decisions from one to another, which possibly goes in tandem with downsizing or flattening of an organisation’s structure (Adler 1993; Cook, 1994; Lashley, 1995a; Claydon and Doyle, 1996; Denham et al. 1997, Neumark and Cappelli 1999).

During their research Vogt and Murrell (1990) found that many approaches to employee empowerment stem from a position of control and do not allow for individual or group development. Their findings suggest the most successful implementation of empowerment initiatives occur when the focal point concentrates on the release of human potential coupled with personal and organisational development. The key difference with this definition of empowerment is the understanding that total power can be shaped and expanded when people are allowed greater freedom of decision making unlike previously discussed approaches, which assume power is shared (Scott and Jaffe, 1993 cited in Hales and Klidas 1998) or transferred from one to another.

This notion resonates greatly in a more recent argument from Randolph and Sashkin (2002). They suggest that empowerment involves identifying the power employees have in their armour of useful knowledge, personal experiences and internal motivation. Once recognised they should be utilised and released into the organisation so that the organisation may benefit from its employees (Randolph and Sashkin, 2002). It is also thought that employee empowerment allows customer contact employees to exercise...
discretion in uncovering and providing for customers' individual service needs (Lee et al. 2006).
2.3 Definition of a Service

A service can be defined as "an activity or benefit offered by one party to another that is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything" (Kotler and Armstrong 1996). This definition is more clearly illustrated on the tangibility-intangibility spectrum or the product service continuum (PSC) a four star hotel is categorised a service intensive good (Gronroos 2007; Lovelock 1996)

![The product service continuum adapted for this research from Gronroos 2007; Lovelock 1996](image)

Moreover, Lovelock (1996) highlights that the customers' main interest lies in the outcome and the way in which the service is delivered, since these factors are integral to how a customer perceives a service. Customers do not wish to familiarise themselves with problems associated with service; their concern is with receiving the level of service they expect (Jones 1996). To this extent, services are seen by consumers as an experiment that involves a performance (Berry and Parasuraman 1991).
2.3.1 Unique characteristics of a service

There are four unique characteristics of a service: intangibility; heterogeneity, perishability and inseparability (Kotler and Armstrong 1996). In his research Lashley (2000) found that intangibility, heterogeneity and the degree of standardisation/customisation cause specific difficulties for service organisations over manufacturing organisations due to their position on the PSC (Lashley, 2000). However, different service organisations use different bundles of these service characteristics (Lashley, 2000). Operational management techniques, marketing and front line employee management must be altered accordingly as there is no single best ‘fit’ (Bowen and Lawler, 1992; Lashley, 2000; Dainty et al. 2002; Jarrar and Zairi, 2002).

2.3.1.1 Adding tangibility to intangible

The majority of hospitality firms satisfy their customers’ needs through an amalgamation of tangibles and intangibles. Many attempts to ascertain a competitive advantage are in the intangibles (Lashley, 1995a). In fact, it is thought that ‘intangibles are the defining feature of services’ (Cowell, 1984 cited in Lashley 1999, pp 184), in the case of accommodation service providers. Enhancing service quality and the intangible aspects of the consumer purchase is the primary objective of empowerment (Lashley, 1999). However, it is important to note that not all organisations are in the same position (Lashley, 1995a). In some markets, customers place varying values on the intangible elements. This can even vary within the same organisation (Lashley, 1995a). Most major hospitality operators market their services through a brand or series of brands (Lashley, 1995a). Each represents a set of attributes with which customers identify and repeat purchase (Lashley, 1995a). From the population chosen for this research the brand attributes relate to the service delivery and are to be found largely in the intangibles (Lashley, 1995a). Many luxury hotels aspire to satisfy their customer needs, “whatever they are” (Lashley, 1995a).
Satisfaction gained by the consumer from the tangibles has shown to increase with price; however the rate of satisfaction gained from intangible elements has a steeper increase (Lashley, 1999). Balmer and Baum (1993) found this particularly important for the accommodation markets. Lashley (1999) goes on to state that organisations which need to concentrate more on the intangible aspects of the customer purchase must ensure their employees 'actively participate in service definition and delivery' (Lashley, 1999, pp 184)

2.3.1.2 Heterogeneity

According to Edvardsson (et al. 2005) there are two tiers to heterogeneity:

- Service providers and service processes tend to be heterogeneous;
- The production within a given company tends to be heterogeneous due to employee-induced variation as well as variation among customers in terms of needs and expectations.

(Edvardsson et al. 2005, pp 117)

Heterogeneity or variability affects not only customer outcomes but also the entire production process. Consistency may vary because of "service role ambiguity" (Edvardsson et al. 2005). As customers usually consume a service during the production process, or are a co-producer, it is difficult for management to monitor consistency levels (Palmer and Bejou, 1994; Edvardsson et al. 2005). Thus it is near impossible to predict levels of output and efficiency of employees (Lashley, 1999). This characteristic centres on the provider perspective as apposed to the customer and value-in-use perspective, and in this regard it is highly dependant on the heterogeneity of the service (Edvardsson et al. 2005).
2.3.1.3 Customisation v standardisation

Services can be classified in terms of their degree of customisation. Some services may be standardised through the use of technology (e.g. internet-based and telecom services) (Edvardsson et al. 2005). Vargo and Lusch, (2004) conclude interactive, labour intensive services should not be homogeneous. The degree of standardisation/customisation has been linked to the position on the PSC (section 2.3). The more service intensive a service, the more customised it becomes. A four star hotel falls into the service intensive good category (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2003). Lashley (1999) believes that no matter how Tayloristic and standardised a service organisation is, the intangible element of the service encounter demands some variety and level of employee participation. Therefore heterogeneity plays a part in contributing to customer value when they are consuming a non-standard service. (Edvardsson et al. 2005)
2.4 Definition of a Hotel

Hotel is a term that encompasses boarding houses, guesthouses, inns and bed and breakfasts. Under Irish law a hotel is defined as an establishment that;

"Provides or holds itself out as providing sleeping accommodation, food and drink for rewards for all comers without special contract ad includes every establishment registered of hotels kept under part 3 of the tourist traffic act"

(Hotel Proprietors Act, 1963)

Hotels in Ireland are classified into five classifications: 1 star, 2 star, 3 star, 4 star and 5 star. These stars are awarded by the Tourist Accommodation Management Services (TAMS). This is a 'classification' as apposed to a 'grade' meaning that the system is purely based on facilities present as appose service quality (www.failteireland.ie).

2.4.1 Empowerment in the Hotel Industry

Employee empowerment is a highly suited approach for industries where the delivery of a service includes managing customer relationships. Furthermore studies have shown that this method is extremely appropriate for high involvement businesses such as hotels. (Bowen and Lawler, 1995). Cacioppe (1998) found that due to the shift work nature and large number of employee-customer interactions of the employment, individual empowerment, rather than team based empowerment, is most apt for hotels. In the hotel industry empowerment has been viewed as a method of delegating both decision-making authority and responsibility to customer contact employees (Klidas, 2002).
2.4.2 The Role of Customer Contact Employees

Customer contact employees, or front line staff, play a vital role in the service delivery process. This thinking derives from the fact that in the majority of circumstances, services are delivered and consumed during the interaction between front line employees and customers. (Yoon et al., 2001). The higher the degree of intangibility, inseparability and heterogeneity the more imperative the customer contact employee’s role becomes (Lovelock, 1996). This is due to the high level of involvement and interaction between employee and customer required in the course of delivery of a service (Melhem, 2004). Furthermore these employees play a key role in the overall service quality (Melhem, 2004) as customers expect a basic level of employee performance. The degree of positive interpersonal contacts, helpfulness, and courteousness counts towards the customers’ evaluation of a service (Lashley, 1999). Lee (et al. 2006) concluded that customer contact employees’ attitudes and behaviour, or pro-social behaviour, have a major impact on customer satisfaction. It is argued that empowerment increases job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Bowen and Lawler, 1995; Cacioppe, 1998; Shapiro 2000; Melhem, 2004; Lee et al 2006) which in turn this has a positive effect on an employee’s pro-social behaviour (MacKenzie et al 1998; Munene, 1995 cited in Lee et al 2006). Therefore empowerment is a common tool used to increase service quality (Bowen and Lawler, 1995; Cacioppe, 1998; Shapiro 2000; Melhem, 2004; Lee et al 2006).
2.5 The Process of Empowerment.
This section provides a review of theories on each aspect of the process of empowerment within an organisation. The level of empowerment that employees experience is shaped by both the motives and what the management wish to gain from increased employee autonomy (Lashley 1999). The researcher has combined Lashley’s (1999) multi-staged model and Mariapa’s (1998) four basic components of empowerment: the degree of empowerment, the form of empowerment, the organisational level at which empowerment occurs (in this research front line employees), and effects of empowerment. By combining both these frameworks the researcher has established a sequence for this section.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 2.2** The layout of The Process of Empowerment section adapted from Lashley 1999 and Mariapa 1998 for this research
2.5.1 Managerial motives

Establishing the managerial motives for empowerment is the first step in the process of empowerment (Lashley 1999). The management process is that of a social one. Its output depends on the manager’s ability to obtain a consistent commitment from employees, to a variety of core tasks and values. In today’s environment these tasks and values centre on quality service and innovation (Collins, 1995). There are four managerial motives behind empowerment that will help an organisation identify the circumstances and context which shape the form of empowerment which is most suitable for that organisation (Lashley, 1995a).

- **Empowerment Through Involvement**
  If it is manager’s prerogative to benefit from ‘employees’ experiences, ideas and suggestions’ (Lashley, 1995a), it is believed that employees are empowered through their involvement in ‘providing feedback, sharing information and making suggestions’ (Lashley, 1995a). In this instance, while managers continue to make the decisions, they take into account employees’ views.

- **Empowerment Through Participation**
  An organisation is said to be empowering its employees through participation where some of the actual decision making power is entrusted to employees. This form of empowerment is has strong ties with Bowen and Lawler’s (1992) definition of empowerment previously stated. In this regard the emphasis is on empowering employees with the power to make decisions which are traditionally at the realm of management (Lashley, 1995a).
- **Empowerment Through Commitment**

  Efforts to achieve greater commitment are strongly connected with employee empowerment and overlaps with the aforementioned motives. By empowering employees through a greater commitment to the organisation's missions and goals, it is thought that, they take more responsibility for their own performance (Lashley, 1995a). Utilising the skills and talents inherent in each employee produces more satisfied customers and greater profits (Lashley, 1995a).

- **Empowerment Through De-layering**

  This is the motive behind empowerment where an organisation wishes to flatten its structure through de-layering. Benefits include a decrease in overheads by reducing administrative cost and bringing organisations closer to customers. This leads to greater responsiveness to environmental changes such as, the ever present increasing consumer demand for quality of service (Lashley, 1995a). However this method of empowerment can be met negatively by employees when used or perceived to be used as a tool for downsizing (Dainty et al. 2002).

In conclusion empowerment has a different definition for every organisation (Lashley, 1995a; Pardo del Val and Lloyd, 2003). Therefore it is vital for organisations to clearly outline and define their motives before choosing what form of empowerment to implement in order to enable their employees to fulfil the organisations goals. (Lashley 1999; 2000)
2.5.2 Levels of Empowerment

Empowerment can be viewed on a continuum in order to establish which type of empowerment an organisation is willing and able to pursue (Cacioppe 1998). Conger and Kanungo (1988) have identified conditions that empower employees:

- **Choice:** The discretion to choose from different courses of action whilst performing their work
- **Impact:** Employee feels they are making a difference by completing tasks
- **Competence:** If employee performs a task well the competence is positively affected
- **Meaningfulness:** A sense of purpose can be provided if task is seen as worthwhile.

However, Bowen and Lawler (1992) highlight three different types of empowerment. In contrast to the earlier work of Conger and Kanungo (1988), Bowen and Lawler (1992) based their theory on a hierarchy of empowerment based on degree of involvement.

- **Suggestion Involvement**
  This type of involvement allows employees to solve problems and generate ideas on how their tasks are performed (Bowen and Lawler, 1992). It is a mechanism which promotes employees to contribute beneficial ideas for improving the organisation in which they work (Milner et al. 1995). An example of this in practice is quality circles (Bowen and Lawler, 1992). This level of involvement allows a control orientated organisation to respond to and benefit from their employees knowledge (Lashley and McGoldrick 1994)

- **Job Involvement**
  This type of involvement involves a change in the way tasks are carried out. Jobs are re-designed in order to ensure employees must use a wide range of skills and attributes to perform them. (Bowen and Lawler, 1992). This form of empowerments aims is to involve employees in aspects of service operations, without any input into the decision
making process (Lashley, 2000). McCabe and Lewis (1992) proposed two types of empowerment, 'voice' and 'choice'. Bowen and Lawler's job involvement has connotations of 'choice', in the sense of autonomy over how work is carried out (McCabe and Lewis, 1992).

- **High Involvement**
This requires movement of employee involvement from task discretion to the overall performance of the organisation. The organisation's culture and structure is the polar opposite to that of a control orientated one. Employees have the opportunity to develop skills for problem solving and business operations as well as participate in work unit management decisions. In high involvement organisations there is often profit sharing and employee ownership schemes in force. (Bowen and Lawler 1992). This high involvement approach has strong links with McCabe and Lewis (1992) theory of 'voice' autonomy as it involves participation in broader organisational decision-making.

### 2.5.2.1 Dimensions of Empowerment
Lashley and McGoldrick (1994) developed a more analytical framework for organisations to use in order to establish which form of empowerment is best suited.

- The task dimension considers the amount of discretion an employee is allowed when performing a task. This is largely based on the degree of customisation/standardisation.
- The task allocation dimension refers to the discretion allowed over work which is allocated to the employee and the sequence in which the tasks must be undertaken.
- The power dimension refers to the employee’s feeling of control autonomy and personnel power.
- The commitment dimension relates to an employee’s commitment to the organisation. Commitment is highly linked with motivation.
• The cultural dimension is important since it is the organisations that creates the context in which empowerment is fostered.

(Lashley and McGoldrick 1994)

Figure 2.3 highlights the difference in dimensions of empowerment between a mechanistic organisation and an organic organisation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Employee involvement: mechanistic production line organisation (high volume, standardised, short time, simple technology, theory X organisations)</th>
<th>Employee involvement: organic empowered organisation (personalised service, long period, complex technology, unpredictable, theory Y organisations)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task Dimension</td>
<td>Low Discretion</td>
<td>High Discretion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task Allocation</td>
<td>Limited Involvement</td>
<td>High Involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Limited to Task</td>
<td>Influences Direction of Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Financial Rewards</td>
<td>Participates in Decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Control Orientated</td>
<td>Trust Orientated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.3 Dimensions of Empowerment and Contingences (Lashley and McGoldrick, 1994, pp 31)
2.5.3 Empowerments effect on an Organisations Performance

The application of employee empowerment can be used as a solution for a number of organisational problems including absenteeism and high staff turnover (Dyer and Reeves, 1995). Much of the interest surrounding the empowerment process is generated by opposing arguments on the affect of the empowerment process on organisational performance. Empowerment advocates suggest that benefits will accrue to both individual employees as well as the organisation as a whole. However, there is little evidence of a clear link between empowerment and performance enhancement. (Dainty et al. 2002).

Many academics believe there is a positive link between empowerment and an organisation's overall performance (Wood 2000; Guthrie 2001). However, in spite of this, there is little academic research highlighting how the two factors influence each other. There are two schools of thought on root cause of the difficulty in measuring the affect empowerment. On one hand, the complication is believed to be caused by the unclear causal correlations between the two factors (Edwards and Wright 2001), while on the other hand, Woods (2000) attributes this confusion to the complexity in measuring the labour effort. Research conducted by Huselid (1995) McNabb and Whifield (1998) has shown improved financial performance in organisations that introduced empowerment schemes. This is in direct contrast to Guest (1997), who vows that there is no theoretical background linking empowerment with improved financial performance.

Dyer and Reeves (1995) found that introducing an empowerment strategy into an organisation leads to a positive affect throughout the organisation. It is a sequential process that starts with positive human resource outcomes and over time eventually leads to positive stock market outcomes

I. Human resource outcomes (i.e. absenteeism, staff turnover)

II. Organisation outcomes (i.e. greater efficiency and productivity)
III. Financial outcomes (increased returns i.e. capital employed)

IV. Stock market outcomes (increased share prices)

These findings establish a positive relationship between empowerment and performance but also highlight the need for long-term managerial commitment if any worthwhile results are to be seen.

2.5.4 Other Benefits

Empowerment has been recognised as an important facilitator for improving employee performance in the hotel industry (Sternberg 1992). It is believed to be a factor in enhancing job satisfaction (Lee et al., 1999, cited in Lee et al., 2006). However, in Lee's later research (Lee et al. 2006), job satisfaction was not found to have a significant positive effect on commitment. Lee (et al. 2006) did however conclude, echoing Dainty's (et al. 2002) findings, that employee empowerment embraced many aspects which lead to increased commitment to the organisation. Gaining employee commitment is important as there is believed to be a link between retaining long-term customer contact employees and maintaining positive client relationships (Lee et al. 2006).

Empowered employees are thought to take more responsibility for their own performance in turn producing more satisfied customers (Lashley 1996). Empowered employees can respond to customers' needs more quickly and effectively (Lee et al. 2006). Furthermore, the concept of empowerment has been directly linked with encouraging extra-role customer service (Lee et al. 2006). Table 2.1 highlights the differences between an empowered and disempowered hospitality organisation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits of Empowerment</th>
<th>Problems of Disempowerment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• More responsive service</td>
<td>• Limited authority to meet service needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Complaints dealt with quickly</td>
<td>• Complaints dealt with slowly through senior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Greater customer satisfaction</td>
<td>• High level costs in generating new customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• More repeat business</td>
<td>• Low morale and poor motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Well motivated staff</td>
<td>• High labour turnover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Improved labour stability</td>
<td>• Low productivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased productivity</td>
<td>• Low wages but high labour costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lower labour costs</td>
<td>• Low quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• High quality</td>
<td>• Low profits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• High profits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2.1 Empowerment and disempowerment in hospitality operations (Lashley, 1995a)*
2.6 The Challenges of Empowerment

Differences between employee’s perceptions and managements intentions of empowerment can lead to challenges (Conger and Kanungo 1988). This is particularly apparent if empowerment is seen purely as a tool for downsizing or flattening the structure of an organisation (Dainty et al. 2002). However Lashley (1996) found that regardless of what the intentions are behind employee empowerment schemes; there are likely to be some tensions between staff and management. By way of example employees may act negatively towards empowerment as it may be viewed as added responsibility without increased fiscal reward (Erstad 1997). Another circumstance that may prevent the benefits of empowerment being fully reached is when the strategy is viewed as an unnecessary formalisation of organisational standard decentralised decision making (Dainty et al. 2002).

Redinan and Wilkinson (2002) suggest there are four major problems with empowerment:

- Definition of the term empowerment varies between organisations and even within some organisations
- There are only a limited number of studies conducted on the difficulties that arise when implementing employee empowerment.
- As this is a relatively new organic phenomenon studying past examples is of no benefit
- There is very little focus on the conflicts within an organisation as well as the context in which empowerment takes place.

Thus badly managed empowerment programs can lead to an erosion of trust within an organisation (Robinson 1997). They can also result in scepticism regarding the managerial motivations behind the strategy (Cunningham et al. 1996). Therefore the implementation of an empowerment program and the potential benefits that may follow
must be viewed within the organisational and industrial context for which it is being considered (Dainty et al. 2002)
2.7 Factors Effecting Empowerment within an Organisation

When an organisation is implementing an empowerment programme there are some factors which must be considered as they can have an effect on the success of the venture.

2.7.1 Individual Motivation

An employee’s individual performance is the foundation upon which organisational performance is built (Torrington et al. 2005). It is therefore vital to understand the motivations that drive employees in order to achieve organisational goals.

Motivates are the drivers that start and sustain the behaviours of individuals. The physiological concept of work motivation is concentrated on escalating the direction of work related behaviours in order to positively manipulate performance output. (Robins and Coulter 2002; Thorpe and Homan 2000). There is no single universally accepted theory of motivation. They are however divided into two schools of thoughts:

- Content Theories: A purpose and depiction of factors which motivate an individual
- Process Theories: Explain how behaviour is aroused, aimed, maintained and stopped.

(Robbins and Coulter 2002; Thorpe and Homan 2000)

There is a summary of the most common motivation theories in Appendix 1.

Many of these theories are formed under the assumption that key variables are static (Brooks, 2003) however in today’s competitive environment this is not the case (Robins and Coulter 2002; Thorpe and Homan 2000). Multi-skilling, greater responsibility and autonomy all require greater levels of individual motivation (Brooks, 2003) therefore it is vital that an organisation understands what motivates their employees.
Conger and Kanungo’s (1988) research is often used as a starting point in literature on psychological empowerment, since they found that empowerment requires a motivational concept of self-worth. This theory was further developed into a cognitive model of empowerment (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990). This model defines empowerment as heightened intrinsic task motivation. There are four cognitions, which under this model, are believed to be at the foundation of employee empowerment: sense of impact; competence; meaningfulness; and choice.

2.7.2 Managerial Control and Structure

It is believed that the success of employee empowerment schemes depends greatly on the degree of managerial commitment and the constant communication of information (Randolph 1995, cited in Cacioppe, 1998; Melhem, 2004). This is because it has been found that the psychological sense of empowerment held by the employee is significantly impacted by managers (Greasley et al.2005). The dynamic relationship between managers and employees is frequently referred to as vital throughout the literature (Greasley et al.2005).

Management are responsible for creating a single vision for their organisation, which must be communicated to employees (Honold 1997; Johnson 1993). Management duties in an empowered organisation include recognising individual employees’ contributions by highlighting their efforts as important (Psoinos and Smithson, 2002).

The argument between control/compliance as a management strategy is a key differentiator among competing management theories (Hales and Klidas, 1998). A full understanding of the idea of power and control is considered to be the first stride in comprehending the concept of empowerment (Cacioppe, 1998).

When empowerment is introduced into an organisation many managers fear they are losing control when they pass on some decision making power to a subordinate, without
giving up all the associated accountability (Geroy et al., 1998; Vogt, 1997; Sternberg, 1992). Ward (1996), argues that employees must have a level of accountability for their decisions if empowerment is to be successful. Mountford (1997) discusses the need for measurement systems to monitor employee accountability. These systems and policies ought to focus observation on the employees who make decisions about productivity, profit and quality.

Therefore empowerment requires a flat, organic, flexible culture and a strong commitment from management (Potterfield 1999), (see Appendix 2 for the differences between an organic and mechanistic organisation). Thus, empowerment is successful in organisations that follow the contingency management theories (see Appendix 3 for a summary of management theories). This is clearly highlighted in Peter’s and Waterman (1982 cited in Tieman et al. 2001) theory on cultural values of an excellent organisation:

- Bias for action
- Staying Close to the customer
- Encouraging autonomy and entrepreneurship
- Encouraging productivity through people
- Hands on management
- Sticking to core expertise
- Simultaneously loosely and tightly organised

(Peter’s and Waterman 1982 cited in Tiernan et al. 2001 pp 33)

Moreover, empowerment compels many managers to redefine their role within an organisation. The emphasis must move from control and direction to trainer, coach and facilitator (Sternberg, 1992, Cacioppe, 1998). However, Greoy (1998) found that three conditions must first be met:

- Managers must gauge the capabilities of employees to execute a particular task.
• Managers must lead tactically to encourage and nurture these capabilities.

• Managers and employees must fully comprehend the structure in which tasks are to be realised.

(Sterner et al; 1998)

Sternberg (1992) concludes there is a need to move from “an attitude of distrust and control to one of trust and respect” (Sternberg, 1992). Managers must conquer fears of perceived loss of control, trepidation about employee competence and reservations pertaining to whether or not employees possess the necessary capabilities (Geroy et al., 1998). As this will lead to an understanding that empowerment involves both control and commitment, just from a different direction (Lashley, 1995a). Furthermore, managers must maintain a supervisory role to ensure employees feel empowered (Greasley et al.2005). The role of management is that of a leader and facilitator of the empowerment process (Cacioppe, 1998). According to Greasley (et al 2005) a multi-dimensional approach is required by managers if a culture of empowerment is to be fostered and maintained. Each organisation achieves this differently; therefore managers must adapt empowerment to the individual needs of their organisation (Greasley et al.2005).
2.7.3 Culture

Organisational culture is concerned with the shared assumptions, beliefs and values held by members of that organisation (Tieman et al. 2001). Although culture is not the only causal factor within an organisation, it is a key driver in how and what is achieved (Schermoehlhorn, 2002). It interlinks with every aspect of an organisation (Cole 2006).

The empowerment process can threaten many traditional views held by employees within an organisation (Cook, 1994). In order for empowerment to be successful an organisation must allow for communication and flexibility. The corporate environment must change radically in order to foster an employee’s higher level of information and authority. The process cannot exist in a vacuum and requires a culture of support (Pascual, 1995; Rothstein, 1995). There should be a movement away from the traditional hierarchical style of management (Cook, 1994).

Moreover for the empowerment process to be successful the organisation’s culture and structure must be supportive of individual employee learning, self development, risk and failure over the long term (Cook 1994). Empowerment entails managers placing a great deal of trust in employees as well as respecting their judgment (Sternberg, 1992). Trust is a crucial element of empowerment; consequently, the people that are empowered must be trusted to make decisions (Mountford, 1997; Meilhem, 2004). The concept is believed to represent a movement towards trust and commitment in an organisation (Dainty et al. 2002).

When a manager contests empowering front line employees, the resistance is normally based on the managers lack of trust in the employees ability to make the decision in question (Sternberg, 1992). Furthermore, Tschohl (1997) highlights that some managers do not have trust in the customer. They believe that customers will take unfair advantage of front line employees who are empowered to make decisions. However Geroy (Geroy et al., 1998) emphasises the need for trust and autonomy to have perimeters; systems
and policies should be developed in order to help protect both the employees and managers and prevent chaos.
2.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, employee empowerment in hospitality industry has generally been associated with a need to gain competitive advantage through an enhancement in service quality (Lashley 1995a). Managements’ reasoning for engaging employees through empowerment is to gain greater commitment, generate greater involvement in service quality and decrease employee turnover. (Bowen and Lawler, 1995; Cacioppe, 1998; Shapiro 2000; Lee et al. 2006).

As a hotel is a service intensive good on the PSC, it requires managers, employees and customers to tackle a mixture of characteristics unique to a service (Heskett et al. 1990; Lovelock 1996). It is character of the service encounter and the vital role played by front line employees that has acted as key driver behind the increased interest in the concept of empowerment within the service sector (Melhem, 2004; Yoon et al., 2001). With this in mind, supporters of empowerment feel it is necessary to empower front line employees in order to provide high levels of customer satisfaction (Lashley 1995a; Melhem 2004; Lee et al. 2006).

The review of literature has highlighted that the notion of empowerment is plagued by conceptual ambiguities, inconsistency and a lack of persuasive supporting substantiation. (Hales and Klidas, 1998; Lashley, 1995a; Redinan and Wilkinson, 2002). However it is believed that in a search for a definition of the concept, one must examine the process within each individual organisation (Hales and Klidas, 1998; Dainty et al. 2002; Redinan and Wilkinson, 2002; Cooney, 2004). Nevertheless there is little academic conformity on how to measure the level of empowerment within an organisation (Wilkinson, 1998; Pardo del Val and Lloyd, 2003).

It has become clear is that empowerment entails employee self-government and discretion. This can be achieved at two levels. Firstly at an operational level employees have a flexible job description, the power to alter the sequence of their tasks and input...
on operational decisions (Bowen and Lawler 1992; Lashley 1999, 1995a, 1995b; Lashley and McGoldrick 1994). Secondly the decision making power can extend into the realm traditionally held by management by an employee having input on organisational level decisions. (Bowen and Lawler 1992; Collins, 1995; Lashley 1999).

The level of empowerment that employees experience in an organisation is believed to be highly dependant on the managerial motives. Lashley (1999) has presented the theory that there are four managerial motives behind empowerment:

- Empowerment Through De-layering
- Empowerment Through Commitment
- Empowerment Through Participation
- Empowerment Through Involvement

In order for the empowerment process to be successful it is essential that management fully understand their motives before empowerment is implemented into the organisation. (Bowen and Lawler 1992; Collins, 1995; Lashley, 1995a; Milner et al.1995)

The levels of empowerment can be examined on a continuum (Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Cacioppe 1998). However Bowen and Lawler (1992) suggested that empowerment is better viewed as a hierarchy. Their research concluded that the levels fall under three categories;

- Suggestion Involvement
- Job Involvement
- High Involvement

The level of empowerment implemented can vary greatly between organisations and can also vary within organisations. (Pardo del Val and Lloyd, 2003; Lashley, 1995a; Collins, 1995; Bowen and Lawler 1992).
The understanding gained from the literature is that academics in the area disagree on the benefits of the process due to the unclear correlation between empowerment and organisations enhanced performance. (Dainty et al. 2002; Pardo del Val and Lloyd, 2003). However it has been found that empowerment aids in gaining employee commitment, which in turn can lead to the maintenance of long term customer relationships (Lee et al. 2006).

An organisation’s culture plays a vital role in the success of empowerment (Schermoe horn, 2002) In order to foster empowerment the culture must be one of trust and understanding. If an empowerment program is mismanaged or used as a tool for downsizing it can erode this trust (Dainty et al. 2002; Robinson 1997; Cunningham et al. 1996; Pascual, 1995; Rothstein, 1995; Cook 1994). The research has revealed that empowerment can lead to further organisational challenges if other key factors, such as individual motivations and managerial control, are not addressed. (Conger and Kanungo 1988; Lashley 1996; Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Hales and Klidas, 1998).
3. **METHODOLOGY**

3.1 **Introduction**

As Bowen and Lawler's (1992; 1995) research concluded empowerment is particularly suitable as a management strategy where the aim is to achieve a competitive advantage through superior service quality and customisation in a volatile market environment. Therefore due to the importance of these two factors in the luxury accommodation industry (Lashley 1999; 2000), it is an ideal market to conduct research into the practicalities of the concept. The overall objective of this paper is to identify, examine and compare levels of employee empowerment within luxury hotels. In order to do these four research questions were developed.

**RQ1. To what degree are front line employees, in participating hotels, empowered?**

As previously discussed in Chapter 2 there is varying degrees of employee empowerment due to the many different understandings of the concept. The objective is to establish the degree of discretion and autonomy that employees’ have over their roles and if this is dependant on their seniority. Coupled with this, the researcher also aims to ascertain if the employees hold any influence over the organisational decision making process. In other words, the purpose is to identify whether employees have ‘voice’ or ‘choice’ (McCabe and Lewis, 1992) within their organisation levels of the Dimensions of Empowerment (Lashley and McGoldrick, 1994).

**RQ2. What is the managerial motive behind employee empowerment in each individual hotel?**

The research aims to determine whether there is an existence of a managerial motive that determines the level of employee empowerment within each hotel. During the research, Lashley’s Managerial Motives (1995a) are used as a reference point in order to attempt to identify and categorise different motives within the participating organisations.
RQ3. What are the differences between managerial perceptions of empowerment and employees’ perception of empowerment in each participating hotel?

The research hopes to establish the differences between management perceptions of empowerment within each hotel and the employee’s actual perceived empowerment.

RQ4. What are the similarities and differences towards empowerment between participating hotels?

Finally research gathered from participating organisations will be examined for similarities and/or differences between managerial motivations, degree of empowerment and any other significant findings.
3.2 Population and Sampling

The first task for the researcher was to identify the target population to be investigated (Hair et al. 2003). The population for this research was all four star hotels in Dublin. Although a census would allow the results to be projected onto the defined population, it was deemed inappropriate for this study due to lack of time and resources (Cooper & Schindler 2003).

It was because of this, that the researcher considered a sample the most favourable technique. A sample is a selection of a sub-set of elements from a larger population (Churchill and Brown 2004). Therefore, the next stage was the identification of the sample frame.

After identifying the target population elements, a sampling frame was then developed. A sampling frame is a list of the sampling units from which the sample could be drawn (Cooper & Schindler 2003; Hair et al. 2003.). For this study the sample frame was defined as all hotels in Dublin County awarded 4 stars by Tourist Accommodation Management Services (TAMS).

The final stage was drawing a sample. It is a vital step of the sampling process (Hair et al. 2003). There are two sampling methods: probability; and non-probability sampling (Cooper & Schindler 2003; Hair et al. 2003; Churchill and Brown 2004).

- Probability sampling is a technique of drawing a sample where each sampling unit has a known, nonzero probability of being selected.
- Non-probability sampling is a sampling process where the probability of selection of each sampling unit is not known (Churchill and Brown 2004)

Although using the probability sampling technique, information gathered from the sample could be better assumed onto the defined population (Cooper and Schindler
2003) it was deemed inappropriate for this study as the researcher had great difficulty in acquiring organisations that were willing to participate in this study. Therefore non-probability convenience sampling was used. For reasons of confidentiality all organisations and participates will remain anonymous.

The managers of the hotels that agreed to participate in the study were first emailed a questionnaire for their staff, with instruction to distribute it, anonymously, amongst 20-25 customer contact employees of different levels. The questionnaires were then collected and analysed. Following this the results were used as a guide for an in depth interview with the managers. Table 3.1 summarises participating organisations.

Table 3.1 Break-down of Participants in the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hotel</th>
<th>Number of Employees</th>
<th>Number of Completed Questionnaires</th>
<th>Manager Interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>General manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>HR Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Assistant Manager</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3 Research Paradigm

Research paradigms are overall theoretical structures within which researchers work (Healy and Perry 2000). When choosing a research philosophy the researcher must consider the following three elements;
- Ontology: The surrounding reality
- Epistemology: How the researcher relates to said reality
- Common Methodology: The technique used by researcher to investigate said reality
(Healy and Perry, 2000).

Four basic research philosophies have been developed; critical theory, constructivism, positivism and critical realism. Researchers work within these perimeters, either explicitly or implicitly, to guide them in explaining a given phenomenon. (Healy and Perry, 2000; Sobh and Perry 2006). These philosophies are summarised in Appendix 4.

Firstly, as aspects of this reality have previously been researched, the researcher’s perceptions included some of the many views of the reality that lead to the researcher taking a constructive realism approach. These views, it is believed, deserve some contemplation before realism data collection starts (Perry et al., 1999). The researcher concurred with Miles and Huberman’s (1994, cited in Sobh and Perry, 2006) view that a initial theoretical framework about the fundamental structures and mechanisms should be expanded from the literature on the phenomenon, in the form of exploratory research, before conducting primary research.

During the exploratory research in the form of a review of existing literature, see Chapter 2, under the realism view the following key drivers were discovered throughout the literature:

I. Employee empowerment is a concept which has many definitions, and each organisation defines the theory within the parameters of said organisation.
Therefore it can be concluded the notion of empowerment does not exist with set margins.

II. It is unclear if there are any explicit advantages to the empowerment process. For academics who believe there are benefits to empowerment, the effect on an organisation’s performance is uncertain

III. The employee empowerment programs are highly dependant on individual employees’ motivations within their relationship with the organisation.

IV. Hotels and luxury accommodation service providers must strive to meet the needs of an external market (Ward, 1997) in order to stay competitive,

The researcher hence concluded an external reality exists as the concept does not exist within clearly defined boundaries. The critical realism paradigm is one that allows for an external reality (Sobh and Perry, 2006); therefore it was this paradigm that was also deemed most appropriate for the remainder of the research.
3.4 Research design

After clarifying the research problems and the research objectives, section 3.1, it is now vital that the researcher decides the most suitable research design (Cooper and Schindler 2003). The research design is a template highlighting the research methods, in order to guide data collection (Hair, et al. 2003).

There are three categories of research design; exploratory research, descriptive research and causal research (Hair et al 2003; Kumar et al 2002). These are summarised in the Appendix 5. Many academics believe that these three categories are a sequential process (Kumar et al 2002). First is exploratory research, which aids the researcher in gaining a greater understanding of the topic, helps clarify objectives and research questions. Descriptive research follows as it is used to illustrate a phenomenon or measures identified variables and their relationship. Results of this research may then lead to causal research in order to help understand why there are relationships between certain variables. (Cooper and Schindler 2003).

For this research, two research design methods were used at varying stages. Firstly, as previously mentioned, this area has previously been researched. Thus the researcher felt, through exploratory research of the existing literature the fundamental structures and mechanisms of the concept could be further explored. (Sobh and Perry, 2006). The literature review also aided further clarification of the research questions (Cooper and Schindler 2003). Following this descriptive research was conducted, in the form of quantitative and qualitative research (section 3.6), to answer the research questions. Casual research was deemed unnecessary for this research as the researcher was not investigating the relationship between variables (Hair et al 2003; Kumar et al 2002).
3.5 Research Approach

There are two chief approaches to theory development: deductive/theory testing and inductive/theory building. The approach taken by the researcher is dependant on the chosen research paradigm. The deductive method is used in the positivist paradigm and the inductive approach represents: critical theory, constructivism and realism. (Perry, 1998).

The research approach is greatly linked with the amount of knowledge ascertained by the researcher at the beginning stages of research. As previously stated, as the researcher followed the constructive realism philosophy (section 3.3) and aspects of this reality have previously been researched or experienced (Sobh and Perry, 2006). The second practical effect of following the realism approach is that it allows for the confirmation or disconfirmation of framework(s) (Sobh and Perry, 2006). Therefore the inductive approach was deemed highly appropriate by the researcher as a conclusion was drawn from available evidence (Sobh and Perry, 2006; Perry, 1998).
3.6 Research Collection Methods

The three most common research methods used collect primary research are:

- Experiments
- Observation
- Survey

(Cooper & Schindler 2003; Kumar et al. 2002; Hair et al. 2003)

Experiments were deemed unsuitable for this research for two reasons. Firstly the research did not interfere or manipulate any of the variables. Secondly the researcher had no control over the research environment and therefore could not measure the control of independent variables on dependent variables in this study. (Cooper & Schindler 2003). Observation was found to be inappropriate as it was difficult to observe individual perceptions of empowerment. Survey research method was then most appropriate for this study because it is mainly associated with descriptive research situations (Hair et al. 2003). This method also allows for both quantitative and qualitative data to be collected (Kumar et al. 2002). For this investigation, survey research involved both the collection of quantitative data, in the form of a questionnaire, and qualitative data in the form of three in-depth interviews. This triangulation approach was used in order to compare and contrast management perceptions of empowerment.

There are two forms of research; quantitative and qualitative. These are summarised in Appendix 6. There is a long out standing argument among theorists as to which form of data collection is superior (Perry, 1998). It is however widely agreed that it is highly dependant on the researcher’s paradigm as to which form is appropriate (Sobh and Perry, 2006)

Due to critical realism view of the researcher and the use of two research designs, the researcher collected both quantitative, in the form of a questionnaire, and qualitative data, in the form of interviews. Using different methods of data collection ensures triangulation; this can reinforce the legitimacy of research (Voss et al. 2002). The term
triangulation is used to describe instances when using more than one kind of data collection technique (Denzin, et al. 2000 Voss et al. 2002; Bazeley, 2004). As Sobh and Perry (2006) concluded

“The idea of triangulation assumes a single reality and thus is only appropriate within the realism paradigm and is not appropriate within constructivism or critical theory research – those two paradigms assume that there is not a single objective reality but rather multiple subjectively constructed realities that are incommensurable.”

(Sobh and Perry, 2006, pp 1202).
3.7 Questionnaire

As previously stated the researcher conducted quantitative research in the form of a questionnaire, see appendix 7. A questionnaire is defined as;

“A formalised framework consisting of a set of questions and scales designed to generate primary raw data’

(Hair et al. 2003 pp 449)

According to Voss et al. (2002) it is common practice for researchers to administer questionnaires as the have the ability to increase the efficiency of data collection as well as facilitating data to be collected from a wider sample (Voss et al. 2002). Questionnaires were chosen as they allowed the researcher to clearly define the research objective in a continuous uniform way (Branwick and Roche, 1999). Blaxter et al. (2001) believes the questionnaire is one of the most broadly used social research technique.

There is no one confirmed formula to designing a perfect questionnaire (Kumar et al. 2003; Hair et al. 2003)). How ever a good questionnaire has the ability to answer the researcher’s objectives (Kumar et al. 2003). According to Hair (et al. 2003), questionnaires consist of the following components;

• Words- The researcher must carefully consider the words and the scales used to collect raw data to prevent problems such as ambiguity and connotation

• Questions-Questions must be reliable, valid and avoid bias

• Format-The format of the questionnaire should be smooth and allow easy flow of communication

• Hypothesis- The questionnaire is being used to test a hypothesis, therefore raw data collected should reflect this rather than merely gathering facts.

(Hair et al. 2003)
3.7.1 Non Sampling Error

The first stage was to identify any possible sources of non sampling error. Non-sampling errors are all errors, exclusive of sampling errors, which may occur regardless of whether a sample or census was used at any stage of the research process (Hair et al. 2003). They are broken into several categories:

- **Design Errors**
  These are researcher induced errors caused by flaws in the research design. They include selection error, population specification error, sampling frame error, surrogate information error, measurement error, experimental error and data analysis error (Kumar et al. 2002)

- **Administrating Errors**
  These are errors that occur during the administration of the survey. They are caused by the person conducting the survey. Some examples include; miss-wording the question, improper recording of answers, failure to follow data collection procedure (Kumar et al. 2002)

- **Response Errors**
  This is when respondents give inaccurate information when participating in a survey. It can be intentional or unintentional. This may happen when a respondent does not understand the question or when they are embarrassed by the subject matter (Kumar et al. 2002)

- **Non-response Errors**
  This happens in two ways. Firstly a respondent can provide incomplete information or not responded to a survey. Secondly, a respondent may not have been contacted therefore being excluded from the survey (Kumar et al. 2002)
Non sampling errors (particularly non response) are more common in probability sampling (Cooper and Schindler 2003) However, it is possible to control non-sampling errors as they occur due to human fault during design or execution of a survey (Hair et al. 2003).

3.7.2 Scales of Measurement

The next step in the development process of a questionnaire is to establish scales measurement. Measurement is a standardised process where numbers are assigned to certain characteristics of an object of interest according to some predetermined rules. Then these objects are scaled across a continuum according to the amount of measured characteristic they possess. Different types of scales result in different levels of information, each level allows the research describe the object to a varying degree of depth. (Kumar et al. 2002).

A copy of the questionnaire is contained in Appendix 7

There are four types of scales in relation to numerical system;

- A nominal scale is most basic type of scale. This scale is assigned to mutually exclusive, labelled categories which need not necessarily have a relationship between one another (Cooper & Schnidler 2003; Kumar et al. 2002). In this research nominal scale was used to ascertain if respondents were customer contact employees (Q4), levels of management within the organisation (Q5) and if employees had the authority to compensate customers (Q13).

- An ordinal scale identifies and ranks objects with regard to a common specified variable. The researcher can establish the greater or lesser value, but not distance between different response (Cooper & Schindler 2003; Kumar et al. 2002). In this study the ordinal scale was used to establish how employees could satisfy
customers (Q12) as well as to establish their level of involvement at organisational level (Q16 & Q17).

- An interval scale arranges responses according to their strengths and allows differences to be compared (Cooper & Schindler 2003; Kumar et al. 2002). This scale also highlights absolute differences between each scale point (Hair et al. 2003). In this study ordinally interval scales were used in the form of a Likert scale and will be discussed in more detail below in section 3.7.3.

- A ratio scale is a scale in which zero has a meaningful point. This allows the researcher to find out how many times greater an object is to another (Cooper & Schindler 2003; Kumar et al. 2002). This scale was used to determine how many years each respondent had worked for the organisation (Q3).

3.7.3 The Formation of the Questions

Good question wording is vital to ensure reliable data is collected. Incorrect phrasing of a question can lead to non-response errors, incorrect answering or refusal to continue to participate in the study. (Churchill and Brown, 2004; Hair et al. 2003). In order to prevent this, the researcher followed questionnaire guidelines by Churchill and Brown, 2004; Hair et al. 2003 and Zikmund 1997. There are three types of questions that can be used in a questionnaire:

- Open ended questions are questions were respondents are free to answer in their own words rather than being confined to choosing from a set of alternatives (Churchill and Brown 2004) Although they provide insight and yield large quantities of information they have some limitations. The data retrieved is hard to code, interpret and analyze. (Zikmund 1997; Churchill and Brown 2004). It was for these reasons the use of open ended questions was kept to an absolute minimum for this questionnaire (Q1; Q2; Q3).
• Close-ended questions are questions which require respondents to choose an answer closest to their viewpoint from a list of alternatives. (Churchill and Brown 2004; Zikmund 1997). There are two forms of close-ended questions;  
  - A dichotomous question has two response options e.g. yes or no (Q4)  
  - A multiple-choice question gives more than two options for the responses (Q12)

The main advantages associated with these types of questions are; ease of completion, ease of coding, ease of processing and ease of analyzing (Hair et al. 2003). It was for these reasons that multiple choice questions were used throughout the questionnaire.

• Scaled-response questions are questions which involve a scale developed by the researcher to measure variables (Hair et al. 2003). In this research a Likert scale was used to measure information. The Likert scale is commonly used by marketing researchers to measure consumer opinions (Zikmund 1997). It is easy to use and therefore highly suitable for self administered surveys (Hair et al. 2003). This is an ordinal scale that is artificially turned into an interval scale (Hair et al. 2003). Two primary scale point descriptors were chosen then equally scaled in between options were given and therefore highlights the varying degree of intensity a respondent feels towards a subject therefore it was used to levels of autonomy (Q9-Q11) and organisational involvement (Q14;Q15) (Zikmund 1997).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Zikmund (1997) highlights four possible biases that can occur when wording a question:

- Acquiescence bias occurs when participants accept or reject all statements they are questioned on (Zikmund 1997). This most likely occurs in the Likert scale questions. In order to establish if this bias has occurred, the wording of questions has been changed slightly. This was done for Q7 and Q8 which both aim to establish the level of power employees have over their job description thus, the acquiescence bias could be detected, and reduced.

- Prestige bias occurs when a question is linked with a prestigious person or group, leading the respondent to answer based on their feelings toward the person or group rather than the topic being questioned (Zikmund 1997). The researcher used neutral words such as ‘management’ as oppose to ‘your manager’ to avoid this bias occurring.

- Social desirability bias occurs when respondents wish to make a good impression (Zikmund 1997). In order to prevent this, respondents were informed of the importance of truthful answers and that all questionnaires were anonymous in the form of a cover letter, Appendix 8.

- Auspices bias occurs when respondents are prejudiced by the organisation conducting the survey (Zikmund 1997). In order to reduce this all the respondents were informed of the researchers objectives in a cover letter attached to the questionnaire, Appendix 8.
3.7.4 The Structure of the Questionnaire

After the question wording was developed, the questionnaire structure was then determined. There should be some logical flow to the questions. This facilitates the respondent’s needs by preventing confusion. (Churchill and Brown 2004). In order to prevent this, the questionnaire was divided into the following sections:

- Classification questions
- Organisation
- Job Description
- Autonomy
- Autonomy at operational level

In order to avoid any bias stemming from answering detailed questions which affect more general ones (Zikmund 1997) the funnel approach was used. This is sequencing which starts with broad questions and then moves on to more specific ones (Churchill and Brown 2004). An example of this is the general question on autonomy (Q9) followed by more specific questions on autonomy at operational level (Q10 - Q11) and autonomy at organisational level (Q14)

3.7.5 Pre-coding

Pre-coding is the process of designation of numbers to the questions to aid data entry into the processing software; it should be completed before data collection (Hair et al. 2003). The multiple choice, dichotomous and Likert scale questions required pre-coding. For multiple choice and dichotomous questions, corresponding numbers were placed alongside each answer. The Likert scaled questions numbers were designated corresponding responses (section 3.7.3), so pre-coding was deemed unnecessary.
3.7.6 Pre-test

After the questionnaire was developed following the above design strategies, it was ready to be pre tested. A pre-test is the distribution of a questionnaire on a trail basis amongst a small number of respondents (Churchill and Brown 2004). It allows for testing of both the individual questions and the structure and sequence of the questionnaire (Churchill and Brown 2004; Hair et al. 2003). For this research, the questionnaire was pre-tested on three customer contact employees from different hotel organisations. On completion of the questionnaire the following issues were raised:

- Respondents found some questions were repetitive in nature
- Respondents found some of the terminology confusing

In line with Churchill and Brown’s (2004) advice, these concerns were addressed by further modification of the questionnaire; the pre test questionnaire can be viewed in Appendix 9. The questionnaire was then ready for distribution.
3.8 Analysing of the Questionnaire

Data is analysed to allow the researcher to find meaning in the collected information (Churchill and Brown 2004). For this research SPSS statistical analysis program for Windows was used to analyse qualitative data. The collected data was edited to impose some minimum quality standards on the raw data (Churchill and Brown 2004). Questionnaires were screened in order to ensure that they were suitable to use for this research. Following this the questionnaires were further examined for errors and omissions (Cooper and Schindler 2003), to ensure accuracy. As the questionnaire was pre-coded, only non response answers required coding. They were designated the code 999.

Following this, data was inputted to SPSS in order to be analysed. To highlight and prevent any administrative errors at this stage a frequency count of each question was run after all data was entered (Churchill and Brown 2004) (Appendix 12). All errors detected by the researcher were amended.
3.9 In-depth Interviews

Although the majority of studies on empowerment have followed quantitative methodologies (Nesan and Holt, 2002), it has been argued that a qualitative approach may retrieve further insight into the topic (Psinos and Smithson, 2002). The qualitative process is thought to have some advantages over quantitative surveys as it allows respondents to contribute additional contextual information which enhanced the data and understanding of their business environments (Wright 1996). A qualitative approach to data collection and analysis also allows for the flexibility required for gaining an in-depth understanding of individual views and experiences of an organisation and contexts in which these occur (Bryant, 2006).

The qualitative research method used for this research was semi-structured interviews with managers from three four star hotels. Interviews were deemed appropriate for this research as they enable the researcher to “generate thick description of a scenario or setting” (Bryant, 2006, pp 246). The semi structured interview allows participants to describe their stories of employee empowerment in their organisation within the context of their personal values and experiences more so than a structured interview (King, 2004). The interview also highlights the role of the interviewer in the collection of data as they acts as a participant in the interview (Bryant, 2006).

The researcher followed guidelines for in-depth interviews from Wright 1996; Bryan 2006; Denzin et al; King 2004 and Hair et al. 2003. Accordingly, the interviews followed suggested themes and probe questions (Appendix 10) which were formed from the results of the questionnaire and the researched literature. Through this approach, it was possible to explore the perceptions of empowerment from each respondent. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed in full; Hotel A can been viewed in Appendix 11A, Hotel B in Appendix 11B and Hotel C in Appendix 11C.
The interviews were conducted at the individual hotels. Before the interviews began the researcher explained the purpose of the interviews and that they were anonymous in nature. This encouraged interviewees to be open in their responses. The purpose of the interview was two-fold. Firstly, the researcher wanted to establish any inherent differences between manager’s perceptions of the level of autonomy of front line employees and front line employees’ perception of the level of autonomy held in their positions. Secondly, the research wanted to define the managerial motives behind empowerment (adapted from Lashley’s Managerial Motives for Empowerment 1995a).
3.10 Analysis of the Interviews

In order to analysis the qualitative data gathered, two analysing strategies proposed by Yin (1994) were followed

- Pattern matching
- Explanation building

For this qualitative research pattern matching was used as the main form of data analysis, and then explanation building was used to explain any established patterns. Qualitative research aims to describe and explain relationships within the framework of specific. The researchers aim is to derive meaning to the collected information (Burnard, 1998)
3.11 Reliability and Validity

In Appendix 5 the challenges to qualitatively and qualitatively research were highlighted. The common tests that used for establishing the quality research are; construct validity, external validity, internal validity and reliability (Kumar, 2000; Chisnall 1997; Dillion et al. 1994).

Construct validity refers to the research concept. A clearly defined research question leads to an unambiguous study aims and objectives. This outlays the construct and how it will be measured. In order to ensure construct validity a literature review was undertaken to clarify the research objectives and to establish the key concepts surrounding employee empowerment. The questionnaire was pre-tested before being presented to participants. During the interviews, the same guide questions were used. (Kumar, 2000; Chisnall 1997).

External validity refers to the extent the research findings can be projected onto the defined population. Due to the use of convenience sampling it was difficult to generalise the study’s results on the defined population. However to reduce this, three hotels were studied and the data was cross referenced in order to highlight any patterns. (Dillion et al. 1994; Green et al. 1988).

Internal validity is concerned with finding causal relationships between variables. It was difficult for the researcher to control variables in the study but in order to lessen the affect on internal validity the research was conducted in three hotels and both the semi structured interviews and the questionnaires followed proven academic guidelines as discussed above. (Dillion et al. 1994; Green et al. 1988).
The reliability of a study is measured by the ability to repeat the study with consistent results or is free from random error (Kinnear and Taylor 1996). In order to ensure reliability triangulation was achieved, the semi structured interviews and the questionnaires followed proven academic guidelines and proven data analysing techniques were used.
3.12 Limitations

The major limitation is that the results cannot be generalised on the defined population for two reasons: A census was deemed unsuitable due to time and budget constraints. Secondly, the researcher had great difficulty in obtaining a commitment from members of the population. The most frequent reasons cited were time restrictions and privacy issues. Therefore non-probability convenience sampling was used to gain a sample.

Although quantitative research was deemed to be most appropriate in order to establish employee’s perceptions of empowerment within their organisation, if time and budget factors allowed, greater insight of the phenomenon may have been gained if a qualitative approach was taken with both employees and management.

The in-depth interviews were conducted in order to suit the interviewees. However, all the interviewees were working on the day of the interviews. Therefore the interviews were unable to continue for a full hour and lasted on average 35 minutes.

This study has been descriptive in nature as it examined the actual phenomenon of empowerment within four star hotels. As variables were not manipulated by the researcher there is no explanation of causality, which would be explain if causal research had been conducted.

As the focus of the study was on four star hotels it is not possible to assume the results of the research on the entire hotel industry.
3.13 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the research methodology and design employed in this study. The research questions were described, along with the context of the study. This was to establish that the most fitting research philosophy for this study was the critical realism paradigm. Justifications of the selection both qualitative and quantitative research were given. The sample selection process was outlined which in turn gave rise to the development of the measurement process. The questionnaire design process and steps of survey administration were clarified. The coding of the questionnaires was addressed. The protocol for the in depth interview was established along with the analyses of the results. Triangulation processes from multiple interviews and multiple questionnaires aided the reliability and validity of the findings. Finally the major limitations to this study were addressed.
4. RESULTS AND ANALYSES

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to analysing the results of the primary research. The chapter is laid out in distinct sections. Each organisational example is systematically set out in a consistent manner and is further divided into subsections, dealing with research question 1, 2 and 3. This conformity was essential in ensuring that the results was presented in an objective and unbiased manner. The final section is concerned with research question 4 and concentrates on comparing and contrasting the results of each organisation.

Analyses of respondents sample size: questionnaire

The size of the sample has a direct effect on the appropriateness and the statistical power of both factor analysis and multiple regressions, which were used to examine reliability and validity of the collected data, and to test the proposed hypotheses respectively (Hair et al. 2003). The final sample size, after the discovery that there was no need for corrections to errors or deletion of any invalid cases was 69 cases. This sample consisted of 21 respondents from Hotel A, 26 from Hotel B and finally 22 from Hotel C. This is further categorized by job title in Table 4.1. The maximum total of possible emailed questionnaires was 75; therefore there was a response rate of 92%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Description</th>
<th>Hotel A</th>
<th>Hotel B</th>
<th>Hotel C</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reception</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reception Team leader</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Reservation Manager</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiter</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bar Staff</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porter</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 Analyses of respondents sample size questionnaire
4.2 Hotel A: Questionnaire Results

Hotel A is a four star hotel located on the Southside of Dublin. It has 152 employees and 357 rooms. As aforementioned there was 21 respondents to the questionnaire from Hotel A, of these 100% were customer contact staff as they are in daily face to face contact with customers. Following the collection of the questionnaires, an in-depth interview was held with the General Manager of the organisation. Figure 4.1 illustrates the 21 respondents’ number of years spent working at the organisation.

![Figure 4.1 Number of years in organisation](image-url)
Figure 4.2 highlights the level of perceived flexibility over employees have over their job description, 71.4% of respondents questioned in Hotel A agreed or strongly agreed that they had a degree of flexibility over their job description.

![Figure 4.2 Perceived Rigidness of Job Description](image)

My job description is very rigid

Figure 4.2 Perceived Rigidness of Job Description
When these results are further compared under the respondents’ job title it is interesting to note that those who found their job description rigid were low-ranked staff, waiters and porters. However, interestingly half of the Customer Reservations Managers surveyed were unsure of their degree of flexibility (Figure 4.3).

\[\text{Figure 4.3 Perceived Rigidity of Job Description categorised by Job Title}\]

The research indicates that 15 people from Hotel A agreed or strongly agreed that they had control over the sequence in which they performed their tasks, this represented 71.4% of the total respondents. This finding draws a parallel with the 71.4% that feel they have
flexibility in their job description highlighting both job description and sequence of tasks play an integral part in autonomy.

To further investigate employees’ level of autonomy, respondents were questioned regarding their authority to handle problems without input from management. The majority of respondents felt that this was within their power, 81%. In addition 95.2% of participants felt trusted by management to deal with customers. This is further broken down under job title in Figure 4.4. Moreover 81% employee believed that management actively encouraged their participation in operational level decisions

![Figure 4.4](image)

**Figure 4.4** Employees perceived trust by management categorised under job title.

An overwhelming 100% of participants had the authority to compensate a customer. All 21 questioned had the ability to issue complementary drinks and meals. Furthermore, 20
of these employees had the power to refund dissatisfied customers. Interestingly none of the recipients have the capacity offer to discount in order to satisfy a customer.

In order to establish if employees felt that they had any involvement at organisational level within their company they were first asked if they were consulted by management about organisational change. The results of this question were more varied than previous with 47.6% strongly agreeing or agreeing, 19% unsure, 28.6% disagreeing and 4.8% strongly disagreeing.

When these results are further categorised by job title the outcome is more intriguing. Firstly starting with the more senior positions of the 3 Central Reservation Managers questioned, 2 felt they were consulted whereas 1 disagreed. In comparison of the four Reception Team Leaders surveyed 2 strongly agreed with the statement 1 agreed however 1 remained unsure. And again there was a mixed result from the receptionists; 3 agreed, 3 were unsure and 2 disagreed. These results are illustrated on figure 4.5
Figure 4.5 Consultation on direction of policy categorised by job title
There is more consistency found when analysing the management's communication of financial performance with employees as 61.9% agreed or strongly agreed. This result includes the majority of the more senior staff with all of the Central Reservation Managers and 3 out of the 4 Reception Team Leaders. Nevertheless, 28.6% of respondents were unsure of this with a further 9.5% disagreeing. Figure 4.6 highlights these results under job title.

**Figure 4.6** Communication of financial performance categorised by job title
4.2.1 RQ1: To what degree are front line employees, in participating hotels, empowered? Hotel A

In summary, after analysing the results of the questionnaire and applying Lashley and McGoldrick’s (1994) Dimensions of Empowerment and Contingences Model, the following factors relating to employees’ experiences become evident:

The majority of Employees experience

- High task discretion
- High involvement in task allocation
- All participants can deal with complaints
- Participation at operational level
- No participation at an organisational level
- A trust orientated culture

Table 4.2 Dimensions of Empowerment and Contingences Model Hotel A, adapted from Lashley and McGoldrick’s (1994)

The presence of these characteristic indicate that the level of employ empowerment experienced falls into Bowen and Lawler’s (1992) job involvement.
4.2.2 RQ2: What is the managerial motive behind employee empowerment in each individual hotel? Hotel A

It is a non hierarchal organisation with a flat structure. This is highly evident as the few levels of management work on the hotel floor. The management view the job descriptions of customer contact employees as very flexible or 'non-existent'. There is also little emphasis on the sequence tasks are executed in. Employees are trained to execute all tasks within the organisation. Communication is both vertical and horizontal in nature due to the ‘open door policy’.

In order to ensure commitment and motivation from employees it is the company’s policy to promote from within. The provide training both internally and externally. Training was highlighted as one of the most important factors in selecting and retaining employees. In order to prevent de-motivation management do not divulge financial performance information. The employee turnover is believed to be low within the organisation.

Staff involvement in decisions at operational level is considered as utmost important as they ‘tend to know best’ when it comes to their tasks. This attitude is followed as in the past all members of the management have been customer contact staff. However, the employees have no say in organisational policy.

All employees within the organisation have the authority to deal with customer complaints through the ‘Plus one’ programme. This is a strategy which ensures a dissatisfied customer does not have to pay for a product or service that they are unhappy with. Moreover they will also receive a further complimentary product or service. This program does however remove an employee’s power to issue a discount as ‘you’re not happy you don’t pay that’s just that’. This strategy has increased the number of satisfied customers. Employees are seen as a way to reduce the risk of intangibility. The service is
slightly standardised to reduce the risk of variability. However some customisation is required.

Therefore it can be concluded that motive behind empowerment in Hotel A is Empowerment through Participation (Lashley 1995a).

4.2.3 RQ3. What are the differences between managerial perceptions of empowerment and employees' perception of empowerment in each participating hotel? Hotel A

There is a great deal of similarity between the results if the questionnaire and the interview for hotel A. By empowering through participation, the management have encouraged job involvement. This in turn has lead to a more responsive service, where complaints are dealt with quickly and there is high repeat business, well motivated staff and a low employee turnover. Theses are all benefits of an empowered organisation.
4.3 Hotel B: Results of Questionnaire

Hotel B is a four star hotel located on the Westside of Dublin City. It has 200 employees and 123 rooms. As previously stated in table 4.1 there was 26 respondents to the questionnaire from this organisation, of these 100% were front line employees. An interview was held with the HR manager of this organisation

Figure 4.7 illustrates the 26 respondents’ number of years spent working at the organisation.

![Figure 4.7 Number of years in organisation](image)

**Figure 4.7** Number of years in organisation
In a further investigation into levels of autonomy Figure 4.8 highlights the level of perceived flexibility employees have over their job description, 76.9% of respondents questioned in Hotel B believed that they had a ridged job description.

![Bar graph showing the perceived rigidness of job description.](image)

**Figure 4.8** Perceived Rigidness of Job Description
When these results are further compared under the respondents’ job title, it is interesting to note that the only respondents who found their job description flexible were more senior staff; Customer Reservations Managers and Reception Team leaders equalling 11.5% of total precipitants. None of the respondents holding lower positions in the organisation disagreed with the statement. (Figure 4.9)

Figure 4.9 Perceived Rigidness of Job Description categorised by Job Title
The research indicates that 57.7% feel that they have no power over the sequence of their tasks. This figure is less than the 76.9% that feel they have no flexibility in their job description. However when the results are broken up under job title it is clearly evident, once again that only more senior staff have the ability to change the sequence in which they perform their tasks. Of the 5 participants that agreed 3 were Central Reservations Managers and the remaining 2 were Reception Team leaders. This is demonstrated in figure 4.10.

![Figure 4.10 Sequence of tasks categorised under job title](image-url)

**Figure 4.10** Sequence of tasks categorised under job title
To further investigate employees’ level of autonomy, respondents were questioned regarding their authority to handle problems without input from management. The results show that 69.2% of participants felt they required approval from management before tackling any problems. Again this seems to have a direct link with seniority as the 19.2% that disagreed with the statement were either Central Reservations Managers or Reception Team leaders.

There seems to be little agreement from participants on whether the management of the organisation trust them to deal with customers. Of the results, 42.3% felt trusted, 30.8% were unsure and 26.9% did not feel trusted. Once more the majority of those who felt trusted were more senior staff, 74.8%, this is shown in figure 4.11

**Figure 4.11** Employees perceived trust by management categorised under job title.
The majority of employees surveyed felt they had little input on operational level decisions 42.3%, where as 30.8% were unsure and 26.9% felt that the had some input. This is shown in figure 4.12. The percentage of respondents with the authority to compensate a customer was 65.4%. Of these all could issue a complementary drink, 26.9% a complementary meal and 15.4% had the power to issue a discount and offer a refund.

![Figure 4.12 Operational level involvement](image)

**Figure 4.12** Operational level involvement
In order to establish if employees felt that they had any involvement at organisational level within their company they were first asked if they were consulted by management about organisational change.

Only 11% of participants felt they were consulted on issues of organisational policy. The remainder were unsure, 19.2% or were not consulted 69.2%. Moreover this 11% represents only Central Reservations Managers as illustrated in figure 4.13.

![Figure 4.13](image)

**Figure 4.13** Consultation on company policy categorised under job title.

However, despite this, over half those surveyed, 53.8%, felt that they were regularly informed on the company’s financial performance.
4.3.1 RQ1: To what degree are front line employees, in participating hotels, empowered? Hotel B

In conclusion, by applying Lashley and McGoldrick’s (1994) Dimensions of Empowerment and Contingences Model to the results of the questionnaire the following factors relating to employees’ experiences become evident:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lower Level Employees experience</th>
<th>Senior Employees experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Low Task Discretion</td>
<td>- High task discretion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Limited involvement in task allocation</td>
<td>- High involvement in task allocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Limited to Task</td>
<td>- They can deal with complaints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Little trust from management</td>
<td>- Participation at operational level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Some participation at an organisational level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- A trust orientated culture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 Dimensions of Empowerment and Contingences Model Hotel B, adapted from Lashley and McGoldrick’s (1994)

The presence of these characteristic indicate that the level of employ empowerment experienced falls short of Bowen and Lawler’s (1992) suggestion involvement for junior staff, however it seems the majority of more senior staff feel job involvement is in place..
4.3.2 RQ2: What is the managerial motive behind employee empowerment in each individual hotel? Hotel B

This organisation has a hierarchical structure in place. There are seven layers of management. The communication is vertical within departments. The job description is ridged for customer contact staff although it becomes more flexible with seniority as the sequencing of tasks becomes less important. Managers also have a set role. They are unlikely to perform tasks more junior to their job description.

The main motivator used is monetary reward. There is also some attempt to ensure shifts are agreeable with staff. There is also a belief that as it is ‘a family run’ hotel staff shows more commitment and productivity.

Individual autonomy is linked to seniority. Junior staff does not have the authority to deal with complaints. Supervisors are the only employees with powers that would be traditionally viewed in the realm of management. There is no formalisation of employee involvement at operational level. However it is felt that if there was ‘an ongoing problem’ team leaders would be consulted for suggestions and ideas on a solution. There is no method for proactive changes to operational tasks only reactive.

The organisation has no strategy in place to allow employees have an input at an organisational level, but it is felt that they would be informed if it was to have negative repercussions.

The organisation feels that their staff reduces the intangibility of their service offering. The service is not highly standardised as it is believed that employees should do ‘what ever it takes to please customers’. However this is only within the boundaries set by their superior.
Therefore it can be concluded that there is no official empowerment program in place in Hotel B. However more senior staff, Reception Team leaders and Central Reservation Manages are consulted by management. Thus the management empower these employees through involvement.

4.3.3 RQ3: What are the differences between managerial perceptions of empowerment and employees’ perception of empowerment in each participating hotel? Hotel B

There is a great deal of resemblance between the results of the questionnaire and the interview for Hotel B. Lower level staff experience low autonomy which goes in tandem with the hierarchical structure. By empowering more senior staff through involvement, the management have allowed some job involvement to take place. However the benefits associated with this are not clearly evident as there is a low level of trust and a high employee turnover. Theses are all problems associated with disempowered organisations (Lashley 1995a).
4.4 Hotel C: Questionnaire Results

Hotel C is a four star hotel located on the Northside of Dublin City. It has 186 employees and 153 rooms. There were 22 completed questionnaires from this organisation as shown in Table 4.1. All of the respondents were customer contact staff. An in-depth interview was conducted with the Assistant Manager of this establishment. Figure 4.14 illustrates the 22 respondents' number of years spent working at the organisation.

![Bar Chart](image)

Figure 4.14 Number of years in organisation
In order to establish employees autonomy over their job they were questioned on their job description and their ability to change the sequence of their task. In Hotel C 68.2% of participants feel that their job description is rigid, 27.3% of respondents feel they have flexibility, and 4.5% remain unsure. When these results are analysed under job title it is interesting to note that the 13.6% of those who strongly agreed with the statement are more senior level staff, Central Reservation Managers and Reception Team leaders. This is highlighted in figure 4.15.

![Figure 4.15 Perceived Rigidness of Job Description categorised by Job Title](image)

Figure 4.15 Perceived Rigidness of Job Description categorised by Job Title
The findings show that 54.5% of respondents in Hotel C feel they have power over the sequence of their tasks, 4.5% are unsure and 40.9% feel they have no influence over the sequence of their tasks. When this is further analysed by job title it is clear that seniority may be a factor influencing this power as 75% of those who felt they had the ability to alter the sequence of their tasks were more senior staff. This is illustrated in figure 4.16.

Figure 4.16 Sequence of tasks categorised under job title
This figure is less than the 76.9% that feel they have no flexibility in their job description. However when the results are broken up under job title it is clearly evident, once again that only more senior staff have the ability to change the sequence in which they perform their tasks. Of the 5 participants that agreed 3 were Central Reservations Managers and the remaining 2 were Reception Team leaders. This is demonstrated in figure 4.17.

Figure 4.17 Sequence of tasks categorised under job title
When questioned on their ability to tackle problems without management approval, 37.3% of participants feel they do not need approval. However, 50% of respondents believe they do need to seek consent from management. In spite of this, 50% of employees feel trusted by their management when dealing with customers, whereas 22.7% are not sure and 27.3% disagree. When this is broken down under job title, the answers vary within and across job titles as highlighted in Figure 4.18.

**Figure 4.18** Employees perceived trust by management categorised under job title.
There was also mixed opinion when employees were questioned on their level of input on operational level decisions, 4.55% strongly agreed, 40.91% agreed, 13.64% were unsure, 36.36% disagreed and finally 4.55% strongly disagreed. This is shown in figure 4.19. The percentage of respondents with the authority to compensate a customer was 90.9%. Of these all could issue a complementary drink, 86.4% a complementary meal and 36.4% had the power to issue a discount and 18.2% could offer a refund.

![Operational level involvement](image)

**Figure 4.19** Operational level involvement
Only 9.1% of participants felt they were consulted on issues of organisational policy. The remainder were unsure, 40.9% or were not consulted 50%. Moreover this 9.1% represents only Central Reservations Managers as illustrated in figure 4.20.

Figure 4.20 Consultation on company policy categorised under job title.

However, despite this, half those surveyed, 50%, felt that they were regularly informed on the company’s financial performance.
4.4.1 RQ1. To what degree are front line employees, in participating hotels, empowered? Hotel C

Finally, when Lashley and McGoldrick’s (1994) Dimensions of Empowerment and Contingences Model is applied to these results the following features relating to the majority of employees’ experiences become evident:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lower Level Employees experience</th>
<th>Senior Employees experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Low-medium task discretion</td>
<td>• High task discretion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Limited involvement in task allocation</td>
<td>• High involvement in task allocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Limited to Task</td>
<td>• They can deal with complaints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consultation on operational level issues</td>
<td>• Participation at operational level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Some trust from management</td>
<td>• Some participation at an organisational level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A trust orientated culture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4 Dimensions of Empowerment and Contingences Model Hotel C, adapted from Lashley and McGoldrick’s (1994)

The existence of these features show that the level of employee empowerment experienced by more junior staff can be categorised into Bowen and Lawler’s (1992) suggestion involvement, conversely the results from majority of more senior staff indicate job involvement.
4.4.2 RQ2: What is the managerial motive behind employee empowerment in each individual hotel? Hotel C

This organisation is hierarchal in nature. It has levels of management there are clear lines drawn between each; this is demonstrated by the lack of consultation between the Assistant Manager and the owner of the hotel. Employees have a strict job description; it does, however become more flexible with experience. There is little give in the sequence tasks must be carried out, it is felt that there is ‘routine for a reason’. Communication within the organisation is vertical.

The management use intrinsic motivator as well as pay to ensure commitment. The importance of making staff feel ‘appreciated’ with a thank you is highlighted. The staff turnover is believed to fall inline with the industry average.

Employees have an input on operational level issues through their team manager. Although most changes would not be made without the general consciences of staff, the final decision lies with management.

Customer contact employees have the ability to compensate dissatisfied customers. There is a defined limit to the amount they can do this. Once they reach this they must get a manager to solve the complaint.

There is no formalised empowerment programme within the hotel; however the more experienced staff becomes, the more autonomy they gain

Management to not participate in operational level tasks, they play a more administrative role.
The service offering is highly customised towards individual personal customers. Conferences have a more standardised framework however some customisation is allowed for in order to satisfy customers.

There is no official empowerment program in place in Hotel C. However there is indication that employees are consulted on operational and organisational level issues. It does differ between seniority, Reception Team leaders and Central Reservation Managers experience empowerment through participation, where as lower level staff experience empowerment through involvement. (Lashley 1999).

4.4.3 RQ3: What are the differences between managerial perceptions of empowerment and employees' perception of empowerment in each participating hotel? Hotel C

Both the questionnaire and the interview indicate a consensus between management and staff in Hotel C. Lower level staff experience low autonomy which may be explained by the presence of a hierarchical structure. However they do experience a degree of empowerment through suggestion involvement.

By empowering more senior staff through participation, the management have allowed some job involvement to take place. The benefits associated with this remain unclear because although trust levels are at 50% the staff turnover is at the industry average.
4.5 RQ4.: What are the similarities and differences towards empowerment between participating hotels?

In order to establish the similarities and differences between empowerment strategies in the three hotels, the questionnaires and the interviews were compared and contrasted under two sections; operational level and organisational level. The full results of the ANOVAs can be found in Appendix 13

4.5.1 Operational level

A one way between groups ANOVA with post-hoc tests was run to establish if there was a significant difference in the mean score in whether employees felt trusted by their management across the three hotels. The results of the ANOVA highlighted a significant difference among the mean scores of the hotels. In order to clarify where this significant difference has taken place a multi comparison was run.

This highlighted that there was a significant difference between all three hotels when they were compared as the values were less than .05. This is further illustrated on figure 4.21 A&B. To determine the effect size of this result the sum of the squares between groups was divided into the total sum of the squares. The result of this was 0.416 which represents a large effect.
**Figure 4.21A Multiple Comparisons**

Dependent Variable: Q8 management trust me
Tukey HSD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(I)</th>
<th>Q2 what (J)</th>
<th>Q2 what hotel do you work for</th>
<th>Mean Difference (I-J)</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.756(*)</td>
<td>.256</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>Lower Bound: -2.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.924(*)</td>
<td>.266</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>Lower Bound: -1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.756(*)</td>
<td>.256</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>Lower Bound: 1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td>.832(*)</td>
<td>.253</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>Lower Bound: .23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td>.924(*)</td>
<td>.266</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>Lower Bound: .29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.832(*)</td>
<td>.253</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>Lower Bound: -1.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

**Figure 4.21B Means Plot**
To establish if there was a significant difference in the mean score in perceived flexibility of employees' job description over the three hotels a one way between-groups ANOVA with post-hoc tests was performed.

The results of the ANOVA highlighted a significant difference among the mean scores of the hotels. A multi comparison was run to highlight where this difference occurred. This showed a significant difference between all three hotels when they were compared as the values were less than .05. This is demonstrated in figure 4.22 A&B. Consequently to determine the effect size of this result the sum of the squares between groups was divided into the total sum of the squares. The result of this was 0.328 which represents a large effect.

This is further underlined by the results of the interviews. Hotel A has a very flexible approach to both job description and the sequence in which tasks are performed across all classification of jobs. In comparison Hotel B and Hotel C relies more heavily on seniority for an increase in individual employee autonomy.

**Figure 4.22A Multiple Comparisons**

Dependent Variable: Q7 job description is very ridged

Tukey HSD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(I)</th>
<th>Q2 what hotel do you work for</th>
<th>(J)</th>
<th>Q2 what hotel do you work for</th>
<th>Mean Difference (I-J)</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
<th>Lower Bound</th>
<th>Upper Bound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.484(*)</td>
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<td>.82</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.260(*)</td>
<td>.287</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.484(*)</td>
<td>.276</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-2.14</td>
<td>-.82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.224</td>
<td>.272</td>
<td>.691</td>
<td>-.88</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.260(*)</td>
<td>.287</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-1.95</td>
<td>-.57</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.224</td>
<td>.272</td>
<td>.691</td>
<td>-.43</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.
Figure 4.22B Means Plot
When comparing whether employees felt they had to seek approval from management in order to deal with problems a one way ANOVA with post-hoc tests was executed. The purpose of which was to establish if there was a significant difference in the mean score in the participating organisations.

The results of the ANOVA highlighted a significant difference among the mean scores of the organisations. The next step entailed performing a multi comparison test. This emphasized a significant difference between all three hotels when they were compared as the values were less than .05. This is clarified in Figure 4.23 A&B. Moreover the effect size of this result was determined as a large effect as the result of dividing the sum of the squares between groups into the total sum of the squares was 0.316.

This is further underlined when the interviews are compared. Hotel A allow all their employees to deal with customer problems, In Hotel C it is evident only among more senior staff and receptionists and finally in Hotel B only senior staff can solve problems.

**Figure 4.23A Multiple Comparisons**

*Dependent Variable: Q10 Management approval problems*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(I)</th>
<th>Q2 what hotel do you work for</th>
<th>(J)</th>
<th>Q2 what hotel do you work for</th>
<th>Mean Difference (I-J)</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1.482(*)</td>
<td>.274</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1.087(*)</td>
<td>.285</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>-.1482(*)</td>
<td>.274</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>-.395</td>
<td>.270</td>
<td>.316</td>
<td>-1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>-.1087(*)</td>
<td>.285</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>-1.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>.395</td>
<td>.270</td>
<td>.316</td>
<td>-.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.
Figure 4.23B Mean Plot
In other to further explore the autonomy at operational level across the participating organisations the percentage of employees empowered to compensate customers was compared Figure 4.24. The interview with the management of Hotel A highlighted the importance of all their employees being able to compensate a customer as part of the ‘Plus One’ program. This thinking was not emulated by Hotel B and Hotel C where the majority of power to compensate lies with more senior level staff.

Figure 4.24 Comparison of customer compensation
To compare if employees believed management listened to their suggestions for operational level decisions a one way between-groups ANOVA with post-hoc tests was completed. This was to verify if there was a significant difference in the mean score in the participating hotels.

The results of the ANOVA highlighted a significant difference among the mean scores of the hotels. After running a multi comparison test a significant difference between all three hotels was ascertained illustrated in figure 4.25 A&B. Furthermore the effect size of this result was exposed as a large effect, 0.239

**Figure 4.25A Multiple Comparisons**
Dependent Variable: Q11 management listen to my suggestions

Tukey HSD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(I)</th>
<th>Q2 what hotel do you work for</th>
<th>(J)</th>
<th>Q2 what hotel do you work for</th>
<th>Mean Difference (I-J)</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
<th>Lower Bound</th>
<th>Upper Bound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>-.1106(*)</td>
<td>.254</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-1.71</td>
<td>-.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>.907(*)</td>
<td>.264</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>-1.54</td>
<td>-.27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1.106(*)</td>
<td>.254</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>.250</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>.907(*)</td>
<td>.264</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

In the interview all the Hotels noted the importance of having employees involved with operational level decisions, however Hotel B only seeks their involvement if it is an ‘ongoing problem’.
Figure 4.25B Means Plot
4.5.2 Organisational Level Involvement

To clarify if any differences existed in the employees' involvement at an organisational level throughout the hotels, a one way between-groups ANOVA with post-hoc tests was completed. This was to establish if there was a significant difference in the mean score in the participating organisations.

The results of the ANOVA highlighted a significant difference among the mean scores of the hotels. After running a multi comparison test a significant difference between Hotel A and Hotel B was established in figure 4.26 A&B. Furthermore the effect size of this result was exposed as a large effect, 0.416 between Hotel A and Hotel B.

Figure 4.26A Multiple Comparisons
Dependent Variable: Q14 management consult me company policy
Tukey HSD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(I)</th>
<th>Q2 what hotel do you work for</th>
<th>(J)</th>
<th>Q2 what hotel do you work for</th>
<th>Mean Difference (I-J)</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-.767(*)</td>
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<td>.008</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.600</td>
<td>.257</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>-1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.767(*)</td>
<td>.247</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.168</td>
<td>.244</td>
<td>.772</td>
<td>-.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.600</td>
<td>.257</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.168</td>
<td>.244</td>
<td>.772</td>
<td>-.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

The significant difference illustrated here between hotel A and Hotel B is explained further by the results of the interview. All though officially Hotel A does not inform or consult their employees on organisational issues, the researcher believes that due to the flat structure and nature of communication of the organisation that this may occur in an informal nature. However the hierarchical nature of Hotel B ensures that the policy on not consulting employees on organisational policy remains intake.
Figure 4.26B Mean Plot
4.5.3 Concluding Note

It is clearly evident that there are three different approaches to empowerment within the hotels. Hotel A has an official programmes in place, ‘plus one’, meaning employees follow Bowen and Lawlers (1992) job involvement. Hotel C does not have an official program in place, however employees gain more autonomy based on their years of service and they are consulted on operational issue although the final decision lies with the management. Finally Hotel B has no empowerment program and autonomy is only increased through promotion to a higher level.

The effects of these different approaches become evident when the staff turnover rates for each organization are compared, figure 4.27. Therefore it can be concluded level of employee empowerment has an effect on turnover rates.

![Figure 4.27 Level of employee turnover](image_url)
5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction
This section is concerned with the conclusions of the study. The practical implications of the investigation’s conclusions will also be addressed in the form of recommendations. Finally directions for future research will also be suggested.
5.2 Conclusions

Although the literature has highlights that empowerment can and should involve employees having an official role in organisational decision making the primary research has contradicted this. In the hotels examined empowerment means little more than increased employee responsibility for dealing with guest complaints. Consequently the consensus is that empowerment within these hotels is defined as increased discretion over operational tasks. Furthermore the correlation between increased autonomy and seniority evident throughout the primary research, particularly in Hotel B and Hotel C, calls into question whether this is in fact an increase in decision making power or reduced regularity controls.

However it is clear from both the primary and secondary research that the notion of empowerment is plagued by theoretical ambiguities and inconsistency. The form and level of empowerment preset in the hotels is fostered by the organisational structure. Employees with the greatest level of perceived autonomy worked in Hotel A, a flat, non hierarchical company. The level of perceived trust employees’ experiences also increased with flatter organisational structures. Therefore the organisations structure and culture plays a vital role in the process of empowerment. Thus it can be concluded that the most relevant and appropriate definition can be found within the boundaries of an individual organisation.

In addition the level of empowerment experienced by an employee is linked with the rate of employee turnover in an organisation. Highlighted by the results of the primary research the more empowered customer contact employees fell within their organisation, the lower the rate of employee turnover.
5.3 Recommendations

This section discusses the implications and recommendations derived from this investigation for management practices. Key practical implications of this research cover the topics of managerial motives, organisational structure, and the importance of customer context employees in a service situation. These issues are discussed in turn.

Empowerment is a concept that is not fully understood. Therefore it is vital for management to clarify and define the type of empowerment, the level of empowerment and the results they wish to gain from empowerment before implementing an empowerment strategy.

A non hierarchical, flat structure has preferred benefits for an organisation. It is evident from the literature that it aids a culture with a high flow of communication and increased employee-management trust. This is further underlined by the results of this investigation as it has highlighted a link between employee perceived trust by management and flat structures. Moreover the two factors of culture and structure have shown to be linked to the rate of employee turnover.

As highlighted in the literature customer contact employees play a vital role in service delivery. They are often the only contact a customer has with an organisation. If they play a vital role in the delivery of service quality, should they not be permitted to use discretion when dealing with customers?
5.4 Areas for Future Research

The opportunities for future research extend from the limitations of this research, discoveries whilst conducting the research and act in response to possibilities in implementation. Future research may consider the following issues.

- During the research it has become evident that in an organisation without a formal empowerment program level of seniority affects the level of autonomy experienced by employees. There is room for further investigation into the correlation between the two.

- There is need for an investigation into the effect of empowerment on customer satisfaction. In a hotel with an official empowerment programme is there an improvement in customer satisfaction?

- Does increased discretion and autonomy automatically lead to an increase in service quality?

- What benefits can be derived from differing levels of empowerment across different job classifications? Should all employees be empowered to the same degree?

- Do lower level front line employees in the hotel industry want the extra responsibility that comes hand in hand with being empowered?
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APPENDICES
### Appendix I Content Motivation Theories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Basic Explanation</th>
<th>Relevance at work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs** | This hierarchical theory is based on Maslow’s belief that people are motivated to satisfy five levels of needs: Physiological needs, Safety & Security needs, Belongingness needs, Esteem needs and Self-actualisation needs. This theory was further developed by Alderfer to form the ERG model. | • Assumes lower order needs are met  
• Only allows for one need to be met at a time  
• Widely accepted among organisations  
• Does not take into account people may chose to satisfy their needs outside work |
| **Herzberg’s Two Factor Theory** | If certain conditions; Hygiene factors e.g. pay are not present, it results in dissatisfaction and will not motivate. However the presence of these factors does not result in motivation they just prevent dissatisfaction.  
The factors that influence satisfaction are motivators, and they are specifically related to the content of the work. | Split into lower and higher order needs like Maslow’s  
• Assumes job satisfaction stems from productivity alone  
• Sample used not a reflection of working population  
• Work related terminology used  
• Oversimplifies job satisfaction  
• Assumes all variables are constant |
| **McGregor’s Theory X Theory Y** | McGregor proposed two sets of assumptions about individuals’ behavior. Managers could classify employees under one of the two theories.  
Negative Theory X: workers avoid work, need to be controlled, do not want responsibility and security and material rewards are all they seek.  
Theory Y states workers enjoy work, do not need control, accepted responsibility and seek intrinsic rewards | • Little evidence available to support  
• Assumes that in Theory X, works need to satisfy Maslows lower order needs and in Theory Y, workers need to satisfy Maslows higher order needs |
| **McCelland’s Learned Needs** | McCelland believes needs are learned not inherent to an individual. The three needs are; need for achievement, need for affiliation and need for power. | • Assumes lower order needs are met  
• Concentrates on socially acquired needs  
• Allows for the fact Individuals do not share needs to the same extent  
• Needs are learned  
• Not clear if these learned needs are satisfied over time |

Source: adapted for this research from: Stoner *et al.* 1995; Robins and Coulter 2002; Thorpe and Homan 2000
# Appendix 1
## Process Motivation Theories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Basic Explanation</th>
<th>Relevance at Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Equity Theory         | Motivation is based on a desire to be treated equal at work. It assumes that individuals ratio of their inputs and outcomes is inline with ratios of others. | • Concentrates is on pay, other factors not accounted for  
• The individual used for comparison may not be appropriate  
• Highlights issues of inequity at work  
• May be difficult to define inputs and outcomes |
| Vroom’s Expectancy Theory | Motivation is based on an individual’s choice among alternatives. The choice made will depended on the individual’s expectancy that a particular behaviour will more than likely result in a particular outcome, | • It is only possible to apply when the link between effort performance and performance reward is clearly visible  
• Believes there is no universal standard for stimulating an individual’s motivation |

Source: adapted for this research from: Stoner *et al.* 1995; Robins and Coulter 2002; Thorpe and Homan 2000
Appendix 2

Characteristics of mechanistic organisations and organic organisations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanistic</th>
<th>Organic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tasks are specialised and narrow</td>
<td>Tasks are independent and imprecise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ridged tasks, altered only by management</td>
<td>Employees adjust and redefine job description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No flow of information between employees and management</td>
<td>Information is generated throughout organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical communication</td>
<td>Vertical and horizontal communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obedience and loyalty to organisation expected</td>
<td>Loyalty to team and project work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: developed for this research from Cole, 2006; Robbins and Coulter 2002; Stoner and Freeman 1989
Appendix 3 A Summary of Management Theories

Classical Management Theories
The classical management perspective encompasses both scientific management and administrative management. The main focus of this perspective is an improvement in organisational efficiency and the work methods of individual employees by finding the 'one best way' of managing an organisation. Some examples of classical management theories are:

- Taylor-Scientific Management
- Fayol-General Management Theory
- Weber-Bureaucratic Theory

The Behavioural Management Perspective
This perspective moved away from the view that employees were part of the mechanics of an organisation. Instead the focus was on the importance of the human factor at work. The concern lay with what motivates employees to act and behave certain ways. Some examples of this perspective are:

- Mayo-Hawthorne Studies
- McGregor-Theory X Theory Y
- Maslow-Hierarchy of Needs

The Contingency Management Perspective
This perspective suggests that there is no 'one best way' to manage an organisation. The underlying theory is that solutions to organisational problems lay with responding to the unique circumstances involved. Some examples of this perspective are:

- Burns and Stalker-Mechanistic and Organic organisations (see appendix 2)
- Lawrence and Lorsch- Differentiation and integration of organisations
- Mintzberg-Organisational structure
- Peters and Waterman-Characteristics of an excellent organisation (see 2.7.3)
- Total Quality Management

Source: developed for this research from Cole, 2006; Robbins and Coulter 2002; Stoner and Freeman 1989
Appendix 4

The Four Research Philosophies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Critical Theory</th>
<th>Constructivism</th>
<th>Positivism</th>
<th>Critical Realism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ontology</td>
<td>Reality is created by social and other forces</td>
<td>The researcher develops the reality. These constructions vary depending on information and sophistication</td>
<td>The simple nature of the reality can be measured and understood</td>
<td>The highly multifaceted nature of the reality implies that it will never be fully understood due to the complexity of both the world and human mental limitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemology</td>
<td>Transformative intellectual</td>
<td>The researcher is a participant</td>
<td>The researcher is independent observer of reality</td>
<td>The researcher is an fundamental part of studying a reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Methodologies</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: adapted for this research from Sobh and Perry, 2006; Healy and Perry, 2000; Perry et al., 1999
Appendix 5

Three categories of research design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Design</th>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Main purpose of the research</th>
<th>Research Methods</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exploratory</strong></td>
<td>Does not intend to provide any conclusive information.</td>
<td>Used to gain background information in order to better understand the depth of the research problem and helps develop research questions</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Qualitative data can lead to bias results as the data can be subjective and non representative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Causal</strong></td>
<td>Uses scientific methods for formal and structured studies. Researcher can investigate the change in one variable by manipulating other variables in a controlled environment. Answers why questions.</td>
<td>Used to explain phenomena. Shows causal relationships between different variables.</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>An expensive, time consuming process. Impossible to gather all the relevant information necessary to prove causal relations beyond any doubt.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: developed for this research from Cooper & Schindler 2001; Hair et al. 2003; Leedy and Ormond 2005; Churchill and Brown 2004
### Appendix 6 Qualitative and Quantitative Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Qualitative**      | Involves a small number of respondents who provide descriptive information about their thoughts making it difficult to project the findings on an entire population. | Focus groups Interviews Projective techniques Observation | • Cannot generalise findings  
• Difficult to distinguish small differences  
• Can be unreliable  
• Person carrying out research must be well trained  
• Expensive  
• Time consuming |
| **Quantitative**     | Involves a relatively large number of respondents, structured and easily measurable making it easy to project the findings on a population. | Mail surveys Questionnaires           | • Little chance for a dialogue between theory and data collection during the research process  
• Restrictive as the data requested is the only data received little knowledge of peoples experiences  
• Large samples are require to be representative of population  
• Bias may be caused by poor questionnaire design |

Source: developed for this research from Cooper & Schindler 2001; Hair et al. 2003; Dillon et al. 1994; Churchill and Brown 2004 and Brunt 1997
Appendix 7
Employee Empowerment Questionnaire

Classification
1. What is your job title? ________________________________________

2. What is the name of your organisation? ________________

3. How long have you worked with the organisation? ________________

Please circle one code for each of the following
4. Are you responsible for dealing with customers face to face on a daily basis?
   1) - Yes
   2) - No

Organisation
5. Are there many levels of management in this organisation?
   1) - Yes
   2) - No

6. How would you rate the employee turnover in the organisation?
   1) Very High
   2) High
   3) Average
   4) Low
   5) Very Low
7. My job description is very rigid and requires little flexibility
   1 2 3 4 5

8. I have the ability to perform my tasks in my chosen sequence
   1 2 3 4 5

Autonomy

9. I need to get approval from management before handling problems
   1 2 3 4 5

Autonomy at operational level

10. I feel my management trust me to make the right decisions when dealing with customers;
    1 2 3 4 5

11. Management encourage and listen to my suggestions for improvements at an operational level
    1 2 3 4 5
Please circle appropriate code(s)

12. In order to satisfy customers I have the authority to:
   1) Issue complementary drinks
   2) Issue complementary meals
   3) Issue a discount
   4) Issue a refund
   5) None of the above

Please circle one code for each of the following

13. I can compensate a customer
   1) Yes  2) No

   Organisational level of involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. Management consult me in decisions on the direction of company policy

   1  2  3  4  5

15. Management inform me of the organisations financial performance on a regular basis

   1  2  3  4  5

16. If I make a suggestion to change organisational policy:
   1) Management consider it but ultimately decision lies with them
   2) There is immediate change
   3) My suggestion is ignored
   4) Don't know
17. Please circle one of the following statements

1) I have a **high** level of discretion in my job and **influence** in organisational decision making

2) I have a **high** level of discretion in my job and **no influence** in organisational decision making

3) I have a **low** level of discretion in my job and **influence** in organisational decision making

4) I have a **low** level of discretion in my job and **no influence** in organisational decision making

5) None of the above
Appendix 8

Employee Empowerment Questionnaire

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Triona McGrath. I am in my final year of a BA in Business Studies. I have chosen to write a thesis about employee empowerment in the hotel industry. In order to complete this I must conduct some primary research in the form of a questionnaire.

I would greatly appreciate it if you could take some time to complete this questionnaire. Please answer truthfully, all results are anonymous.

I thank you very much for your time and cooperation

Yours truly,

Triona McGrath
Appendix 9
Test Questionnaire
Employee Questionnaire

Classification
1. What is your job title? ____________________________

2. How long have you worked with the organisation? (Please circle one code)
   1) – Less than one year
   2) – 1-2 years
   3) – 3-4 years
   4) – 5 years plus

3. Are you responsible for dealing with customers face to face on a daily basis?
   3) - Yes
   4) - No

4. There are many levels of management in this organisation
   1) Strongly Agree
   2) Agree
   3) Slightly Agree
   4) Disagree
   5) Don’t Know

5. How would you rate the employee turnover in the organisation? (Please circle one code)
   1) Very High
   2) High
   3) Average
   4) Low
   5) Very Low
Job description

Please circle one code for each of the following statements:

6. My job description is very rigid and requires little flexibility;
   1) Strongly Agree
   2) Agree
   3) Slightly Agree
   4) Disagree
   5) Don’t Know

Autonomy

7. I have flexibility over my day to day tasks;
   1) Strongly Agree
   2) Agree
   3) Slightly Agree
   4) Disagree
   5) Don’t Know

8. I feel my management trust me to make the right decisions when dealing with customers;
   1) Strongly Agree
   2) Agree
   3) Slightly Agree
   4) Disagree
   5) Don’t Know
9. I need to get approval from management before handling difficult customer situations
   1) Strongly Agree
   2) Agree
   3) Slightly Agree
   4) Disagree
   5) Don’t Know

Degree of Autonomy within operational level

10. In order to satisfy a customer I have the authority to
   1) Issue complementary drinks
   2) Issue complementary meals
   3) Issue a discount
   4) Issue a refund
   5) Other (please specify) ________________________________

11. I have a limit to the amount I can compliment a customer
   1) €0-€50
   2) €51-€100
   3) €100+
   4) I can not compliment a customer
   5) Don’t Know
12. Management encourage and listen to my suggestions for improvements at an operational level
   6) Strongly Agree
   7) Agree
   8) Slightly Agree
   9) Disagree
   10) Don’t Know

Organisational level involvement

13. Management consult me in decisions on the direction of company policy;
   1) Strongly Agree
   2) Agree
   3) Slightly Agree
   4) Disagree
   5) Don’t Know

14. If I make a suggestion to change company policy:
   5) Management consider it but ultimately decision lies with them
   6) There is immediate change
   7) My suggestion is ignored
   8) Don’t know

15. Management inform me of the organisation’s financial performance on a regular basis
   1) Strongly Agree
   2) Agree
   3) Slightly Agree
   4) Disagree
   5) Don’t Know
16. Please circle one of the following statements

6) I have a **high** level of discretion in my job and **influence** in organisational decision making

7) I have a **high** level of discretion in my job and **no influence** in organisational decision making

8) I have a **low** level of discretion in my job and **influence** in organisational decision making

9) I have a **low** level of discretion in my job and **no influence** in organisational decision making

10) None of the above
Appendix 10
Probe questions for in-depth interview

1. What does empowerment mean to you?
2. How is the company’s management structured?
3. How would you rate the employee turnover?
4. How do you ensure commitment from your employees?
5. How do you motivate employees?
6. Are customer contact employees job description rigid?
   Does it depend on seniority/ title/ experience?
7. Do employees have control over the sequence in which they carry out their tasks?
8. If there is a problem at operational level are employees consulted for ideas?
9. When making changes to operational tasks are contact employees asked for their input?
10. Do customer contact employees have any extra power to make decisions which would be traditionally viewed in the realm of management?
11. Is there a formal employee empowerment program in the organisation?
   Was empowerment introduced as a tool for decentralisation?
12. When making organizational change are contact employees asked for their input?
   (Empowerment involvement)
13. How does your organization reduce the intangible nature of the service transaction?
14. Is your service offering highly standardised?
15. Describe the culture of the organisation
Appendix 11A

Management questions

General Manager Hotel A

1. How many people are working here?
164

2. How many rooms do you have?
351 including suits

3. What does empowerment mean to you?
It means being trusted enough to do your job without having to get regular approval from your management. Being trusted to make decisions when dealing with customers. Knowing that management have faith in your abilities, that you can complete your tasks. Something along those lines. I’m for every drumming it in to my staff that they will never get in trouble for trying to please a customer, I trust their judgement, they’re not going to give away the hotel, they are all trained well.

4. Do you think empowerment extends to employees having a say at operational level?
No not at all. Why on earth would a normal employee like a receptionist or waiter want to know about that kind of stuff. Who wants to be bogged down with figures and annual turnovers when you’re not the one being paid to do so.

5. How is the company’s management structured?
Its very flat, there is the owner of the chain but now we are open and successful he doesn’t have that much to do with the place, me (general manager) then below me is my training manager and assistant manager, they are pretty much on the same level with the same duties, the only difference is my training manager trains staff first and then covers assistant manager duties when the other ones not in. Then there is team leaders and ordinary staff. That’s it, its nothing like some of the hotels I’ve worked for before, some places just like to create job titles to keep employees happy, but in the end its just messy because nobody knows who they have to go to to get approval, and customers get confused too. It eats money too.
6. How would you rate the employee turnover?
Its low enough I suppose although I think I'd prefer it lower so I wouldn't ever have to hire new staff. It's really hard getting the right staff to work here because people don't want to muck in or they don't want to smile.

7. When you say muck in, you mean?
Well, sorry, the job description here is non existent, everyone has to do every thing everybody on my staff can do everything in the hotel, every one can take a booking, clean a room, use the property management system etc so that doesn't suit some people. I want people here that can think on their feet like if a light bulb needs changing they will just do it instead of filing a maintenance report, that's just stupid it only takes two seconds. That kind of stuff just annoys me, in saying that I'm not asking anyone to do anything dangerous, just if its there in front of you and its easy to do just do it.

8. How do you ensure commitment from your employees?
We pretty much promote from within, obviously you move around to different hotels in the brand, where ever they need you, but it's a very quick progression. I'm here six years and I started as a receptionist, my training manger is here four years. It also makes people work harder because they can see themselves progressing. Its actually a very good motivator because we will train staff internally or pay for external training if they want to move up within the organisation. Actually that's another thing about getting employees involved at organisational level, it wouldn't motivate them, if I told them we were doing badly do you not think a lot of my staff would start jumping ship? I mean I would tell them and thank them when we have a good month or whatever but other than that they don't need to know.

9. Do employees have control over the sequence in which they carry out their tasks?
Yeah, once everything is done well at the end of the day it doesn't really matter when its done unless there is a deadline obviously.

10. If there is a problem at operational level are employees consulted for ideas?
Well they have to be because they tend to know best how to fix it, but generally they just come to use and we will change it, we have all worked on the floor and we still do, its not unusual to see me working reception, so we understand that anything that makes the job easier should be done, it helps keep employees happy when you listen to them and then most of the time the customers are happy because the employees work harder because they feel more appreciated. We wouldn't actually make changes to someone's job description without talking to them but at the same time as I said the job description for this place is so loose. You have to be willing to climb ladders, run down to the boiler
room, even help old women out of the bath. That kind of stuff just has to be done in a hotel if you think about this place becomes a customers home for a few nights so you have to make it feel like that, so your employees have to be kind of like a little family that will just jump in when necessary.

11. Do customer contact employees have any extra power to make decisions which would be traditionally view in the realm of management?
I suppose so we do have a program in place called the plus one. Every employee can deal with a complaint, they refund or compensate whatever the problem was and then give one more. Like if you didn’t like your breakfast you get it free and we would give you a complimentary lunch or if you are really unhappy with your room you won’t pay for that night and we will give you another one free. I suppose it is an empowerment program of sorts. When we recruit new people they have a whole days induction just on the plus one, you see we don’t believe in discounts if you’re not happy you don’t pay that just that.

12. Have you noticed a difference in the company’s performance and number of complaints since it was introduced?
Yes in complaints anyway if customer’s problems are solved there and then without having to wait for a manager to approve it they just forget about it and leave happy. A huge percentage of our income comes from repeat customers so we can’t afford to let anybody walk out the door unsatisfied. People get really angry if they have to go to the bother of writing a letter of complaint to be taken seriously. That’s why its so important to trust employees to deal with problems, that’s why recruiting is such a big ordeal, we have to find the right people. I don’t have a HR manager or anything I do all the recruiting, I do however have a training manager. Without her this place would tumble. If there is any problem with any employee she fixes it with training and of course anyone who is new needs 3 days of training before there let near the floor.

13. How does your organisation reduce the intangible nature of the service transaction?
Now that’s service marketing if ever I heard it, people it’s the only way you can, your staff have to take away any risk a customer may feel towards buying a service, I suppose they are buying the use of the room but more importantly they are buying your team to look after them how ever long they are staying.
14. Is your service offering highly standardised?
Well it is and it isn't, we offer the same thing to every guest and the hope is that is enough, but we do have to customise our offering on occasion, which isn't a problem but the idea is that we will get the standard service so right that it will meet every customer's requirements and therefore we won't have to customise.

15. Describe the culture of the organisation
Well as I said there isn't much along the lines of levels of management, so it's very open door, if someone has a problem they can come to me or their team leader or whoever it is not like they would be going over someone's head or that sort of quite laid back. It's also fun because we all get involved we actually laugh a lot with each other the staff are close a lot of them socialise with each other and sometimes I'm invited I don't go out with them though because even though I'm very informal in my approach I do like to keep it slightly separate just so I am taken seriously.
Appendix 11 B

Management questions HR Manager Hotel B

1. How many people are working here?
   200

2. How many rooms do you have?
   123

3. How would you define empowerment?
   Well I suppose it means the amount of power a member of staff has over their day to day duties, like if they can decide when or how to do something in their job description.

4. How is the company’s management structured?
   The company is split into parts like the hotel, the conference centre, the business centre and the spa. Then each part is split into departments like in the hotel you have the bar, restaurant, reception which includes porters, and the health and hygiene department. Then within department there are different levels. In the greeting department (which is the reception and porters) there are receptionists and porters at the lowest level, then more senior receptionists and porters, then team leaders, then a shift supervisor then a manager. That manager then answers to the general hotel manager who is over all the departments in the hotel. But the manager of a department answers to any general manager. All the general managers including myself meet once a week to discuss the organisations performance or any problems that are going on.

5. How would you rate the employee turnover?
   It’s a bit higher than the industry average it’s hard to keep people for long in this industry because of the shift work and the unsocial hours, people burn out.

6. How do you ensure commitment from your employees?
   Well we pay are staff well, we also give bonuses the longer they’re working here like when they hit six months full time or 12 months part time. We try are best to arrange shifts to suit everyone it can be difficult like over holidays and stuff but we do our best to facilitate there needs. I think because it’s a family run hotel as well people work harder.

7. How do you mean?
   Well the owners are very hands on they work here daily and they are always on the floor so they no most of the staff by name which I think motivates you more because you don’t feel like your working for an anonymous corporation.
8. Are customer contact employees job description ridged?
Well the junior staff have very rigid job descriptions, they can't make very many
decisions unless they are routine without getting approval from someone more senior.
Like if a receptionist is dealing with a complaint, they can refer it to a team leader who
can give a discount or compliment something but if it's more serious they must pass it
on to a manager. They are better trained to deal with problems and keeping customers
happy. It's really important to us to resolve problems before the customer leaves because
once they walk out the door unhappy they won't come back and they will tell all their
friends about their bad experience so it's in our best interest to solve all problems as
quick as possible.

9. Do managers get involved on the floor?
No, we wonder around but we don't really work on reception or anything like that
obviously we deal with complaints because staff need approval before giving
complements or discounts.

10. Do employees have control over the sequence in which they carry out their
tasks?
Not really but again it depends on their seniority, the higher up you go they more
experience they have so you can just they're judgment better than say someone who has
only been here a few months.

11. If there is a problem at operational level are employees consulted for ideas?
If it's an ongoing problem yeah, the department manager would ask the team leaders to
ask their team for suggestions. Then the ideas would be discussed with the general
manager but it really depends on the problem, each one in different. Like there was a
issue with the amount of time it was taking to turn around a room, and after a discussion
with the health and hygiene department the cleaning trolleys were packed a different
way which sped things up that was a few years ago now though.

12. When making changes to operational tasks are contact employees asked for
their input?
Yes I suppose they would be but to be honest we would only make a change if
something was wrong you don't need to fix what isn't broken.

13. Do customer contact employees have any extra power to make decisions
which would be traditionally view in the realm of management?
Only supervisors but no one lower than that. They deal with complaints but if they are
serious a manager has to deal with it.
14. When making organisational change are contact employees asked for their input?
No, but then there hasn’t been many drastic changes maybe if we were going to do something that would really affect staff like letting people go we would have to.

15. How does your organization reduce the intangible nature of the service transaction?
Manly through the staff, when people book a hotel there not buying the room this is a four star hotel so it is expected that it will be clean and the room will be decent, what the customer want are nice people a smile when they’re checking in a friendly wake up call. So they are really paying for our staff, and when they’re neatly presented and friendly and helpful.

16. Is your service offering highly standardised?
There is I suppose a general formula if you like but we do try and cater to everyone’s needs, so I suppose we have a minimum standard and then what ever it takes to please a customer.

17. Can you explain what ever it takes?
Well like if some one rings down for cigarettes and there is none if its not to busy a porter can run to the shop to buy them but it is up to the manager or supervisor at the time.

18. Describe the culture of the organisation
Well although it sounds like it’s very hierarchical it’s not that bad, all the supervisors and team leaders work on the floor for the majority of their shift so their very close to the staff. Even myself, I’m in the office in the morning but I have to do the rounds at some stage because part of my duties include operational HR manager which means I have to check how the staff are performing and getting on. So I guess it’s a lot less formal than it sounds, we kind of have an open door policy.
Appendix 11C

Management questions

1. How many people are working here?
   186

2. How many rooms do you have?
150 at the moment but we are in the middle of refurbishment so we should have 53 more rooms soon.

3. What does empowerment mean to you?
Being able to do something when you are at work without having to ask your manager all the time for permission.

4. How is the company’s management structured?
The general manager, myself (assistant manager), the restaurant and bar manager, the spa manager, supervisors and then there are team leaders.

5. How would you rate the employee turnover?
Its pretty average, its no different to other four star hotels I’ve worked in. I think the higher the star the lower the turnover, I guess it’s just a nicer environment to work in

6. How do you ensure commitment from your employees?
It’s a difficult industry to work in so along with pay you have to be nice to them, just saying thank you makes a huge difference, it helps you feel appreciated and particularly after you’ve had a hard shift its nice just to know that you made a difference or that you manager has noticed that your doing a good job.

7. Are customer contact employees job description ridged?
Does it depend on seniority/ title/ experience?
Employees do have a job description and they have to perform their duties, but the longer you work here the less ridged it becomes. It’s not fair to expect somebody who is just starting out to know what’s expected of them if they don’t have a designated job description. The better they get and the more experience they have the easier it is for them to perform tasks outside their job description because they don’t get flustered. For example if I have a new host for the restaurant I cant very well make her stand in on reception on her second day, she would just get stressed. Its better to let people get comfortable in their jobs and in the company before asking them to do new things.
8. Do employees have control over the sequence in which they carry out their tasks?

That’s a good question, I don’t really know some things have to be done a certain way, like there is steps to cleaning a room that’s just to make sure that you don’t forget something so I suppose that that sequence can’t be changed, either can putting in food orders because that would mess up the timing in the kitchen. The lobby has to be cleaned very early in the morning about 4 am so that customers don’t see it happening. I’m not sure if I can think of anything that can be changed there is a routine in place for a reason. It works everything gets done on time.

9. If there is a problem at operational level are employees consulted for ideas?

The team leaders would be asked because we have a bi monthly meeting with them so that would be the best opportunity to get their input. But I think any changes would only be made if myself and the GM thought it was the right solution. We are not going to change the type of mop that the cleaning team use if its going to cost an extra €16 per unit, we have to be cost efficient, if we did that we couldn’t afford to pay them, not with the amount of mop heads they go through anyway, but once the implications or explained the is no problem.

10. When making changes to operational tasks are contact employees asked for their input?

You mean if we change the way they have to do something?

Yes

I think that’s a yes, we would talk to the team leaders and they could tell their team, if they weren’t happy about it I suppose we wouldn’t make the change unless it was completely necessary to stay competitive.

11. Do customer contact employees have any extra power to make decisions which would be traditionally view in the realm of management?

No I don’t think so, if they are dealing with a complaint and can’t solve the problem within their means they will call one of us to sort it.

12. So staff have rules to follow when dealing with a complaint?

Yeah, they have too just so too much stuff isn’t given away for free. In the bar they can give a round of drinks, within reason, in the restaurant a free course or a round of drinks and at reception all of the above, anything else must get a manager or supervisors approval but if for some reason there is no one around then a team leader can approve it but we don’t encourage that. They are not as trained to deal with complaints as we are.
13. Is there a formal employee empowerment program in the organisation?
No, but the longer you work here the more you will be left to your own devices if you want, it's because that you know the way the company works, you now what's normal and within your means. That only comes with experience with in a company I think.

14. When making organisational change are contact employees asked for their input?
No, I'm barely asked it's really between the owner and the GM

15. Do the management get involved on the floor?
Team leaders work on the floor because that's their job, supervisors are on the floor most of the time an if it's really busy or we are short staffed the will jump in, I float. I check its all going ok and talk to customers but I spend most of my time doing admin as does the GM.

16. Would you ever have to take a booking?
Not really thank god because we got a new property management system in about a year ago and I never really go the hang of it. It's hard when you don't use it every day, if I had to I'd manage but its not really my job anymore.

17. Is your service offering highly standardised?
No we try to cater to the individual needs of our customer; if you're allergic to feather pillows we will give you a synthetic one. Are customer base expect it, its mainly older people, Irish, German, English and American they want a customised service. Even if you look at the other end of the scale to the conferences we have a standard template but we change it to suit the customer because it's a chance to reach a new customer base. If the conference goes well every person that attended the event will remember the hotel and hopefully use us in the future. We try really hard to please our customers because we want them to come back and we want them to tell everyone they meet how much they enjoyed the experience.
# Appendix 12

## Frequency Tables (Highlighting Missing Data)

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|                  | Q13 can I compensate customer | Q14 management consult me company policy | Q15 org finance performance | Q16 suggestions for policy | Q17 level of involvement |
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