Investigating the Role of Communication in Hotel Human Resource Management

Persis Darukhanawalla

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Faculty of Culture & Society – School of Hospitality

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Abstract

This thesis examines the role of communication in hotel human resource management and explores the impacts of effective and ineffective communication practices for employees within a hotel setting. The hospitality and tourism industry is one of the world's largest economies and industries. In New Zealand, the hospitality industry is currently the second-largest export earner, making it a huge economic and employment driver for the country. While the country has benefited from the economic gains the industry brings to it, the industry continues to be battled by poor employment conditions of low pay, long hours and lack of work–life balance. These employment conditions have led to the common characteristic of the industry and its biggest downfall: high turnover rates (Jobin, 2011). Poor human resource management practices have also contributed to this because they are another factor of poor employment conditions. Placing more emphasis on effective human resource management processes will lead to employees feeling more valued and thus willing to perform more efficiently in the workplace (Barron, 2008).

Communication studies on the hospitality and hotel industry are fairly underdeveloped within the academic realm. This is concerning considering the abundance of academic research available on communication in business and other industries, and the important role communication plays in these industries. Working in the hospitality and hotel industry requires working with people, be they guests or colleagues. Therefore, communication is a key skill required within this industry for processes to work efficiently. Communication is a transferable skill across all industries; however, its implementation requires consistent work and maintenance for the process to become organic and effective.

The aim of this thesis was:

To investigate hotel employees' perceived effectiveness of communication from human resource managers and supervisors.

The research aim was explored by answering the following questions:

1. How satisfied are hotel employees with the level and quality of communication received from the human resource department and their managers?
2. To what extent do different forms of communication affect perceived communication effectiveness?
3. What are the perceived challenges of effective communication?
4. How do human resource managers try to respond to these challenges?

The thesis consists of a literature review written through the lens of an interpretive paradigm for a qualitative methodology. Two qualitative methods were used to produce data for this research: an online employee survey and semi-structured interviews with five human resource managers.

The survey findings presented an overwhelmingly positive result from respondents and found that most respondents were satisfied with communication processes. The interview findings presented a thorough overview on key communication forms and the challenges that come with specific forms of communication.

This thesis contributes to the literature because it provides a qualitative employee voice from the data collection phase. This aspect is rarely found in the literature because previous studies on communication use a quantitative perspective and focus only on management employees. In addition, this thesis provides a critical insight into internal communication practices and their implications within a hotel setting from the perspective of human resource managers.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Persis Darukhanawalla

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Context

The hospitality and tourism industry is one of the world's largest economies and industries. In New Zealand, the hospitality industry is currently the second-largest export earner, making it a huge economic and employment driver for the country. With visitor numbers expected to continually rise in the years to come, the industry is growing exponentially. The economic gains have far surpassed the forecasts that were placed for recent years, and while this has had positive impacts on the country's economic return, the industry continues to be battled by poor employment conditions of low pay, long hours, lack of work–life balance, and the biggest downfall of the industry, high turnover of employees (Barron et al., 2014).

Poor employment conditions are not new in hospitality and hotel organisations; the industry has commonly been shown to provide low pay, long hours of work, a lack of work–life balance and below-standard work conditions (Alberti, 2014; Barron et al., 2014; Weaver, 2009). These employment conditions have led to a common characteristic of the industry: high turnover rates (Jobin, 2011). Poor human resource management (HRM) practices have also contributed to this because they are also a factor of poor employment conditions (Abdullah & Antony, 2012). Placing more emphasis on effective HRM processes will lead to employees feeling more valued and thus willing to perform more efficiently in the workplace (Barron, 2008).

The high rates of labour turnover are a reflection of the work setting within the industry (Baum, 2007), and this process occurs because of a combination of factors that negatively affect an employee's perception of working in this industry (Jobin, 2011). Generally, turnover occurs because of employees' dissatisfaction with their position in their work organisation (Jobin, 2011). Turnover also affects the ability of organisations to become competitive in the labour market because top talent leave the hospitality industry and choose to work in industries that offer better pay, improved work–life balance, and better career progression and opportunities to develop (Alberti, 2014; Barron et al., 2014; Baum, 2007; Bharwani & Butt, 2012). Therefore, the ability to engage and retain talent within the industry requires a stronger focus.

An organisation's success is conditioned by the perceptions of external (customers or guests) and internal (employees) stakeholders about what and how a company is performing (Malmelin, 2007). This is especially important in hospitality because the industry requires a high level of communication with both types of stakeholders (Camillo & Pietro, 2011). However, within today's domain of increasing competitiveness and need for constant change, organisations are beginning to realise the importance of their intangible aspects as they search for new and unique ways of achieving success (Malmelin, 2007). Using effective communication is an intangible means of creating a competitive advantage (Camillo & Pietro, 2011).

Communication studies on the hospitality and hotel industry are fairly underdeveloped within the academic realm. This is concerning considering the abundance of academic research available on communication in business and other industries, and the important role communication plays in these industries. Working in the hospitality and hotel industry requires working with people, be they guests or colleagues. Therefore, communication is a key skill required within this industry for processes to work efficiently. Communication is a transferable skill across all industries; however, its implementation requires consistent work and maintenance for the process to become organic and effective (Hedman & Valo, 2015; Malmelin, 2007; Quinn & Hargie, 2004; Saurabh & Chattopadhyay, 2013).

1.2 Narrative on Findings

This thesis therefore aimed to bring to light the topic of communication within the hospitality, and more specifically, the hotel industry, and what its implications are for HRM. The findings of this thesis were drawn from unique data about employees working for a large hotel company in Auckland, New Zealand. Data was first gained through a survey, which relayed the employees' voice and perceptions, followed by interviews, which relayed the perceptions of human resource (HR) managers. The survey explored communication satisfaction measures. Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with how their HR teams communicated and how their supervisors or managers communicated. The survey also explored general hotel communication processes and how they aligned with employee communication satisfaction. The second part of the data collection was undertaken by interviewing five HR managers within the hotel company. The interviews produced a thorough

explanation of general communication procedures, outlining what is communicated within the hotels and the various forms through which information was communicated. Participants in the interview were asked about challenges they faced and saw occurring within the business, in particular, the forms of communication that were not always effective, the abundance of information that needed to be communicated and the need to cater to different demographics. Participants were also asked their definition of effective communication and what it entails within the hotel industry.

The aim of this thesis was:

To investigate hotel employees' perceived effectiveness of communication from human resource managers and supervisors.

The research aim was explored by answering the following questions:

1. How satisfied are hotel employees with the level and quality of communication received from the human resource department and their managers?
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3. What are the perceived challenges of effective communication?
4. How do human resource managers try to respond to these challenges?

1.3   Gaps

Within the academic forum, there are gaps from a qualitative standpoint regarding theoretical studies on communication and its importance within the hospitality and hotel industry. While quantitative studies have been conducted that discuss communication practices in general, few to no studies have provided rich qualitative data on this topic area. Moreover, there is an evident lack of the employee voice regarding researching communication, since most quantitative studies are based on management teams (Jalalkamali et al., 2016; Sharma & Kamalanabhan, 2012). Madera et al. (2016), for instance, conducted a study on communication satisfaction using a quantitative approach. The study sourced mathematical equations to produce the outcomes of the data. While quantitative data is useful for collecting numerical and hard data, this style of methodology fails to capture the soft data, which often

contains richer quality data. This thesis therefore captured the research from a qualitative standpoint to express the unspoken details that are often overlooked in research.

1.4 Rationale and Significance of the Research

The research provided in this thesis is important because it imparts valuable insights into the perceptions of employees and managers regarding their satisfaction with communication processes. Communication is a key component of striving to improve engagement and participation (Quinn & Hargie, 2004), and thus a key indicator of success within any organisation. Especially within hospitality, where building relationships is a key skill to nurture, effective communication practices aid in sustaining and developing interpersonal relationships with individuals, because of the transparency and trust that it can provide (McCroskey & Richmond, 2005). The hospitality industry relies heavily on part-time employees, so the importance of effective communication processes has never been greater, because of the vast impacts that negative communication processes can have on employees (Stevens & Hisle, 1996). Internal communication has also been described as having a major impact on efficiency within an environment. Internal communication is defined as a level of communication connecting the strategic leaders and managers of an organisation with their internal stakeholders (employees) (Sharma & Kamalanabhan, 2012; Welch & Jackson, 2007). However, despite the importance of internal communication to an organisation, a noticeable lack of academic research pertains to this facet. As mentioned before, quantitative studies are common; however, little to no qualitative research has been carried out in this context. This shows the need for qualitative research to explore the opinions of individuals and the environment they are in to come to a conclusion that has taken into account all factors.

1.5 Methodology Overview

This thesis adopted an interpretive paradigm because the interpretivist approach finds meaning within the scope of the cultural world (Baškarada & Koronios, 2018). The interpretive approach aims to examine society with unbiased judgement, and does not follow common values and truths. Instead, it allows the process to contribute and build on prior understanding (Baškarada & Koronios, 2018). The interpretive paradigm therefore was the most suitable for this research because it allowed

individuals to share their opinions freely. To aid with the interpretive paradigm, an inductive approach was used because inductive research advances knowledge (Woiceshyn & Daellenbach, 2018).

A relativist ontology, constructivist epistemology and qualitative methodology were used in this research. All these approaches were well suited to this research because the research was about people and their opinions. The relativist ontology believes that there are multiple truths in the world (Kihn & Ihantola, 2015; Klapper et al., 2015; Nyaga & Fink, 2009), and the constructive epistemology believes that reality comprises "multiple realities" (p. 4) that are formed and shaped by individuals (Healy & Perry, 2000). These approaches have similar processes that lead to the same outcome. Qualitative research methods were used for this research because they aided in the process of discovering new and emerging phenomena (Garcia & Gluesing, 2013).

In terms of methods, a qualitative research methodology was used. The first stage of data collection involved an online survey that was distributed to all front-line employees, supervisors and managers in the company. This assisted in attaining the "employee voice" that is often difficult to acquire. This stage was followed by semi-structured interviews conducted with five HR managers to bring out the management voice. The data collection was done in this way to allow the results of the survey to aid in the direction and scope of the interview questions. This is similar to an inductive approach, in which new data is built on existing data. The sequential approach of this data collection enables the data to be richer (Pansiri & Jogulu, 2011) and built on solid experiences and unique ideas backed up by evidence. Lastly, a thematic analysis was conducted using Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach to analysing data. This was the best form of analysis because the approach draws out significant themes from the data to enable valid conclusions to be made.

1.6   Thesis Overview

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter outlined the scope and context of the thesis, exploring a narrative of the findings that are discussed later in the thesis. This chapter also outlined the rationale and significance of the research and the contributions it hopes to make to further

academic research. Lastly, this chapter provided the structure of each chapter in this thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature review provides the theoretical framework on which this research was based. The chapter starts by providing an overview of the hospitality industry and then an outline of general communication processes. The chapter then explores internal communication and communication satisfaction more deeply.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The methodology chapter begins by describing the interpretive paradigm to outline the foundation on which this research was based. The chapter then discusses the amalgamation of the relativist ontology, constructivist epistemology and qualitative methodology, and how these approaches all fit within the interpretive paradigm. The research methods are discussed, followed by an overview of the thematic analysis approach used for analysing the data collected.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the data and findings attained during the data collection phase. The chapter begins by outlining the results obtained from the survey. In this section, key communication satisfaction processes are highlighted. The next section of this chapter outlines the key interview findings obtained by the semi-structured interview process. This section discusses general communication procedures, challenges faced with internal communication and an overall definition of what effective communication encompasses.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter ties together the literature review and findings chapter, and links the data mentioned in the findings to theoretical research. The chapter first focuses on ascertaining what encompasses effective communication, and then analyses communication satisfaction processes. The chapter then investigates the challenges faced with internal communication more deeply and outlines the key findings revealed here.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This chapter provides a summary of the main findings revealed through the research. Each research question is answered in summary form, followed by discussion of the study's contributions to academic research and the gaps it has filled. The limitations are briefly explained, followed by the final comments.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed literature review that examines the subject area of communication within the hospitality and, more specifically, the hotel industry. The chapter is sectioned in four parts. The chapter starts by providing an overview of the hospitality industry, followed by an outline of general communication processes. The literature review then explores more deeply internal communication and communication satisfaction processes within the hospitality and hotel industry realm.

2.2 Overview of the Hospitality Industry

The hospitality industry is evolving at an increasing rate (Ryan, 2015). From its early beginnings, the industry has been described as the commercial provider of services correlated with accommodation, eating and drinking (Lashley, 2015), with "hospitality" used as the umbrella word to include all these establishments. The industry is huge; hospitality services are present all over the globe, thus making it one of the world's largest industries because of the revenue that is generated as well as the employment opportunities from these services (Baker & Magnini, 2016).

According to Deloitte's *2018 Travel and Hospitality Industry Outlook* report, the number of international travel departures globally has more than doubled since previous years, from approximately 600 million to the current 1.3 billion (Langford & Weissenberg, 2018). Additional figures show that in 2017, the global travel industry gross bookings achieved an approximate US$1.6 trillion, making the travel and tourism industry one of the fastest growing industries in the world, accounting for 10.2% of the global gross domestic product (Langford & Weissenberg, 2018).

On a national scale, the tourism and hospitality industry is currently the second-largest export earner within New Zealand (*Tourism & Hospitality Jobs | Work in NZ | New Zealand Now*, 2019). According to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE, 2018), 4.9 million international visitor arrivals were forecasted to arrive in the country in 2018. This is a huge 39% increase from 3.5 million in 2016, equating to a growth of 4.8% per year (*New Zealand Tourism Forecasts 2017-2023*, 2017). The MBIE also mentioned that China was expected to become New Zealand's

largest tourism market, as well as bringing in a proposed contribution of 37% of the total international visitor growth (*New Zealand Tourism Forecasts 2017-2023*, 2017).

The Deloitte report also stated that the hotel sector would venture to carry a 5% to 6% expansion and growth throughout the course of 2018 (Langford & Weissenberg, 2018). With the surge of technology usage among hospitality services and providers, as well as the increasing variety and competition within the market, the ability of consumers to compare and contrast different service outlets of hospitality has been greater than ever (Langford & Weissenberg, 2018). In addition, the hotel sector in particular is in constant competition with up-and-coming new trends, especially Airbnb, which is described as a networked hospitality business. Oskam and Boswijk (2016) explained that even though Airbnb is a fairly new phenomenon within the industry, it has the ability to surpass the norm of hotels and the services provided in that part of the sector. With Airbnb coming into the fold, this not only increases the competition, but the hotel sector will also be forced to think outside the box in terms of innovation, with the aim of being one step ahead of their counterparts and new trends that may arise (Oskam & Boswijk, 2016).

Through globalisation and ease of migration, the industry has also become one of the most diverse in terms of the mix of ethnicities among employees in hospitality outlets, in particular, within the hotel sector (Bharwani & Butt, 2012). However, the industry continues to face issues in relation to retention of staff, which has led to the industry's reputation of having high turnover (Walsh & Taylor, 2007). In addition, other characteristics of the industry, such as low pay, long working hours resulting in a lack of work–life balance and the perceived notion that sustainable career pathways are lacking within this sector, have resulted in a continuous pattern of turnover, which negatively affects hospitality businesses (Alberti, 2014; Barron, 2008; Weaver, 2009).

Turnover rates are constantly rising within the hospitality industry, and have become an inevitable as well as unfortunate characteristic of the industry (Jobin, 2011). Baum (2007) noted that the nature of the industry has caused the labour turnover to be higher than in any other sector of the economy. Turnover is defined by the proportion of employees who leave their organisations and roles in contrast to employees who remain in that organisation and in their roles (Jobin, 2011). It is essentially referred to

as the process related to filling a vacancy, and the replacement cycle is known as the turnover (Jobin, 2011).

High rates of labour turnover are a reflection of the work setting within the industry as this affects the turnover rates (Baum, 2007). The process happens because of a series of factors that negatively affect an employee's perception of and attitude towards the environment in which they are employed (Jobin, 2011). On most occasions, turnover occurs because of employees' dissatisfaction with their position in their work organisation (Jobin, 2011), for a multitude of reasons. Barron (2008) claimed that turnover occurs because of the industry's imbalance of work and life, which causes poor and inflexible working conditions. He added that the constant emotional labour of having to deal with guests and customers on a daily basis increases employees' unhappiness (Barron, 2008). Hinkin and Tracey (as cited in Jobin, 2011) mentioned poor pay rates and poor working conditions as some of the reasons for high turnover rates.

Poor employment practices have also been deemed an indicator of high turnover rates in the hospitality industry (Jobin, 2011). This brings in the aspect of HRs and HRM. While there is no sound connection between HR practices and organisational performance, there is a link in that HR practices adversely affect employee turnover (Davidson et al., 2011). A study carried out on hotels in Hong Kong discovered that employee turnover occurs within the first few months of employment (Barron, 2008), thus demonstrating the urgent need for effective HRM practices within the hospitality industry. Having effective practices means placing higher importance on the value of employees and achieving the expectations of new employees within their first few months of employment (Barron, 2008).

The industry is reaching high levels of competitiveness, not just within the tourism market, but also within the labour market. In other words, it is becoming more difficult to attract, train and retain high-quality workers. Keeping the turnover rates low provides organisations with a competitive edge over their counterparts. In addition, effective HRM practices affect organisations' ability to remain an attractive place to work.

2.3   Outline on General Communication Processes

Communication is the continuous process of individuals sharing their thoughts, ideas and actions, and collaborating with one another (Hedman & Valo, 2015). Along with knowledge creation, communication affects decision-making (Hedman & Valo, 2015). Thus, it is a key indicator of success within any organisation. Quinn and Hargie (2004) argued that effective communication is a key component of striving to improve engagement and participation, and living the corporate values and goals of the company. In addition, communication is a function that affects the entirety of an organisation's performance and its eventual success in attaining the organisation's mission (Malmelin, 2007).

Saurabh and Chattopadhyay (2013) described the importance of communication as the "lifeline" (p. 1) of every company and that a company's success depends on proficient use of communication with their internal guests (employees). Termed as an intangible organisational asset (Malmelin, 2007), communication falls within this category in such areas as staff capabilities. These capabilities encompass skills, knowledge and experience (Malmelin, 2007). These capabilities show that communication branches out and affects key areas of an organisation. However, because of its intangibility, the implications of this function for an organisation's growth and success are difficult to measure (Malmelin, 2007). This is because communication affects individual beliefs and attitudes, making it a complex pathway of research. The intangibility of this topic has been suggested as one of the reasons why there is not an abundance of research on communication despite its importance within a corporate environment (Quinn & Hargie, 2004).

An organisation's success is conditioned on the perceptions of external (customers or guests) and internal (employees) stakeholders about what and how a company is performing (Malmelin, 2007). This is especially important in hospitality because the industry requires a high level of communication with both types of stakeholders (Camillo & Pietro, 2011). However, within today's domain of increasing competitiveness and need for constant change, organisations are beginning to realise the importance of their intangible aspects as they search for new and unique ways of achieving success (Malmelin, 2007). Using effective communication is an intangible means of creating a competitive advantage (Camillo & Pietro, 2011). However, in

Brønn's (2014) study, the findings showed that communication was considered not as important as other management disciplines, but communication skills were the most desired skills in the communication discipline. While this finding is contradictory, it poses a question about the exposure of communication and its importance within a company, and how this itself is communicated.

As stated by McCroskey and Richmond (2005), communication is the key component needed to nurture and sustain relationships, regardless of the type of organisation. The nature of an organisation largely depends on the way individuals communicate within it (Trenholm, 2008). Through communication, individuals are more likely to be able to cooperate and coordinate with others through their efforts and to achieve organisational goals and outcomes (Church, 1994; Trenholm, 2008). When communication tends to fail or deteriorate, it can cause fragmentation of the individuals or employees within an organisation. As a result, subgroups that have their own preferred way of communicating are created, which can also cause dysfunction and deviance within the scope of the whole organisation. This results in suffering of both the individual and the organisation (Trenholm, 2008).

2.3.1 Organisational Communication

Organisational communication can be defined as the process by which individuals encourage significance and meaning in the minds of other individuals through the use of verbal or non-verbal signals and messages, within the environment of a formal organisation (McCroskey & Richmond, 2005). Breaking this down can further explain the definition. The use of the word "process" (p. 5) signifies that communication is powerful as well as ever changing (McCroskey & Richmond, 2005). Thus, it is essential throughout all types of forums in life (Church, 1994). Encouraging meaning and significance in the minds of others, correlates to the ability of *what* our messages are and thus these are delivered to other individuals in order to produce and shape ideas (McCroskey & Richmond, 2005). Trenholm (2008) further added that organisations are structures established on a basis of human connection. Without communication, modern organisations would not be able to be successful for long and would therefore not continue (Church, 1994). Lastly, verbal and non-verbal messages make up *how* these messages are delivered: verbal is the common language used in a particular corporate environment and non-verbal includes aspects such as facial expressions, tone of voice and eye contact. Communication is also a two-way

interaction involving the process of disseminating and receiving information (Lee et al., 2015). Together, these explanations encompass what organisational communication is.

As a basic need, communication develops interpersonal relationships between individuals (McCroskey & Richmond, 2005). This occurs by filtering out individuals who share each other's beliefs and values, and who can thus create an interpersonal relationship. Communication also seeks to attain understanding, and within an organisational forum, this is through the delivery of information (McCroskey & Richmond, 2005). Trenholm (2008) mentioned that information is essentially a valuable organisational resource. Through obtaining accurate information, individuals are more likely to make better decisions and share creative ideas, based on what is fed to them (Trenholm, 2008). This also increases the likelihood of an increase in employee satisfaction (Trenholm, 2008). Conversely, if communication mechanisms are insufficient, this will bring out a decrease in employee satisfaction, because of the demotivating culture of the organisation (Malmelin, 2007).

2.3.2   Communication Networks

Two different communication networks exist within an organisational network. The formal network is one that conforms with the hierarchical structure of the organisation, and adheres to the traditional and official means of communication (McCroskey & Richmond, 2005; Trenholm, 2008). In contrast, informal networks tend to be the opposite of formal networks, with communication leading from the "grapevine". These links grow out of interpersonal relationships among employees and management, and are an inevitable network of communication within any organisation (McCroskey & Richmond, 2005). Cumulatively, both formal and informal means of communication are essential for organisational effectiveness and efficiency (Quinn & Hargie, 2004; Trenholm, 2008).

Formal communication can be separated into vertical and horizontal communication. Vertical communication (upward and downward) encompasses the communication touchpoints of different employees in the hierarchical structure making an attempt to communicate with one another (McCroskey & Richmond, 2005). Downward communication is when communication is directed by those in upper management and scaled down the hierarchical ladder to front-line employees (McCroskey & Richmond,

2005). Upward communication is established by front-line employees who wish to take their feedback or suggestions and present their ideas to those in upper management (McCroskey & Richmond, 2005).

The two forms of formal communication, however, are not always the most effective, and each has a set of issues when put into practice. In a study carried out by Stevens and Hisle (1996), the authors examined the issues involved in upward and downward communication faced by 40 hotel managers, predominantly in the United States. Even though the research that was carried out for this thesis focused mainly on communication inefficiencies with front-line employees, Stevens and Hisle's (1996) study provides an interesting perspective from hotel managers. Downward communication encompasses the complexity of communicating through many layers of middle management (Trenholm, 2016). The essential stance with this issue is that messages tend to be misinterpreted and distorted on the journey from upper management to front-line employees, and sometimes the messages do not even reach front-line employees, thus making this style of communication unreliable (Stevens & Hisle, 1996; Trenholm, 2008).

Within the hospitality industry context, the implications of the negativities of downward communication could be detrimental for a hospitality outlet, such as a hotel. With the industry strongly dependent on part-time workers, the communication challenges are doubled because there is a high possibility that these workers will be frequently outside of the communication loop (Stevens & Hisle, 1996). With the industry's already known characteristic of high turnover, the lack of and dissatisfaction with communication can also contribute to high turnover rates (Stevens & Hisle, 1996).

Upward communication is a common, yet not fully utilised or understood, formal communication network; moreover, information can be distorted as it travels from front-line employees to upper management (Trenholm, 2008). Interestingly, this same issue seems prevalent across both forms of communication (upward and downward). McCroskey and Richmond (2005) stated that upward communication is only useful if those in upper management are willing to accept the communication from those beneath them in the hierarchy.

Horizontal communication can be viewed as an informal communication network, and this style of communication flows from across the organisation and has no involvement with hierarchical status or upper management (McCroskey & Richmond, 2005). As mentioned previously, horizontal communication is an inevitable communication network within any organisation because it is essentially human nature to converse and communicate with colleagues in departments and share thoughts and ideas (McCroskey & Richmond, 2005). As a result, there is most likely always going to be more horizontal communication (informal) taking place than vertical communication (formal) (McCroskey & Richmond, 2005). Interestingly, Gray and Laidlaw (2002) mentioned that sometimes employees rely on horizontal communication methods because formal communication does not provide a thorough enough explanation. This thus leads to "grapevine" (p. 12) chatter and could result in incorrect information being spread.

Horizontal communication is the medium through which most social interaction takes place. and it has correlations with employee morale and satisfaction (McCroskey & Richmond, 2005). In addition, McCroskey and Richmond (2005) explained that employees are more likely to increase their socialisation skills and learn new skills through the medium of horizontal communication.

2.3.3   Organisational Change

Change in an organisational setting is inevitable; it occurs on a constant basis in any organisation and has an influence on the perceptions of different individuals (Elving, 2005). Fiss and Zajac (as cited in Vuuren & Elving, 2008) explained that successfully communicating changes in organisations depends not only on the organisation's ability to carry out these changes but also on how these changes are communicated to their internal (employees) and external (guests) stakeholders. Elving (2005) added that the effort to communicate changes to employees is a vital and integrative component of the organisation structure, required to decrease the possibilities of negative resistance to and "grapevine chatter" about the changes occurring. This is particularly vital when organisations are going into a period of extended change (Irving & Tourish, 1994).

However, further research is needed on communication during organisational change, because of the lack of related research, and the current increasing need to understand

this new concept and the implications it has for organisational effectiveness (Vuuren & Elving, 2008). Internal communication has a significant effect on communicating change in organisations; however, Elving (2005) also pointed out the lack of empirical research carried out in this area, which is concerning considering the need for an increased understanding of the connectedness of organisational change and communication (Elving, 2005). In addition, there is a call for more research on the link between HRM, organisational change and the importance of communication. Because HRM is always presumed to be the instigator in resolving communication change issues in organisations, Watson and D'Annunzio-Green (1996) stated that there is in fact little to no evidence to suggest that HR practitioners, while they do act as messengers, are solely responsible for mediating change in organisations. This opens the floor to research on the factors that correlate with organisational communication during change.

2.4   Internal Communication

Management teams (MTs) have been stated to play a central role in any organisation (Hedman & Valo, 2015). Hedman and Valo (2015) maintained that MTs have more impact on organisational outcomes than any other major group in an organisation. In a sense, MTs can be viewed as HRs because they are linked to organisational performance and change, strategic processes, leadership and knowledge management (Hedman & Valo, 2015). The term "internal communication" plays its part here because MTs and HRM systems need to use internal communication to convey important information to staff. Hence, communication can be perceived as pivotal to management and organisational theory (Quinn & Hargie, 2004).

Internal communication is a perpetual process within organisations (Welch & Jackson, 2007). A lack of it is detrimental to any organisational setting (Saurabh & Chattopadhyay, 2013; Welch & Jackson, 2007) because it affects workplace efficiency (Welch & Jackson, 2007) and leads to staff conflict and dissatisfaction (Quinn & Hargie, 2004). Internal communication can be defined as a level of communication connecting the strategic leaders and managers of an organisation with their internal stakeholders (employees) (Sharma & Kamalanabhan, 2012; Welch & Jackson, 2007). This is with the intention of fostering a sense of commitment and belonging within the organisation, and creating an understanding of the changing

needs and aims of the business environment (Lee et al., 2015; Sharma & Kamalanabhan, 2012; Welch & Jackson, 2007).

Defining internal communication as the flow of communication among individuals within an organisation, Mazzei (2010) proposed that its primary function is not just to disseminate messages but to encourage active communication practices within all organisational levels (Rezaeian et al., 2013). Abdullah and Antony (2012) added that internal communication is valuing employees through the action of effective internal communication practices as well as the strategic management of interpersonal relationships among individuals (King & Lee, 2016; Lee et al., 2015; Rezaeian et al., 2013; Welch & Jackson, 2007) in order to meet organisational goals. This is done through establishing simple and clear communication linkages to reinforce and strengthen the organisation (Abdullah & Antony, 2012). These linkages can be through such tools as noticeboards and newsletters, to create a more participative and engaged organisation (King & Lee, 2016). An interesting point mentioned by Rezaeian et al. (2013) is that internal communication practices incorporate the whole scope of communication, from formal to informal measures, as mentioned previously by McCroskey and Richmond (2005), Quinn and Hargie (2004) and Trenholm (2008). To supplement this, internal communication practices are used to complement the different forms of communication such as downward, horizontal or upward (Rezaeian et al., 2013).

2.4.1   Internal Communication Tools

Putting appropriate internal communication tools in place is of utmost importance, as a means of delivering information to employees (Abdullah & Antony, 2012). Hotel internal communication methods generally include the traditional means of structured communication, such as daily reports, newsletters, noticeboards and memos, and these are generally passed down in a "cascading downward" movement, from HR departments to department managers, to supervisors, to front-line employees (Abdullah & Antony, 2012). Because of the nature of the hospitality industry, the cascading motion of delivering information is most common (David, as cited in Abdullah & Antony, 2012) and essentially mirrors downward communication.

A study carried out by Chen, Okumus, Hua, and Nusair (2011) researched effective communication tools in a hotel within a multicultural environment and the importance

of each tool for employees. In general, they found that putting effective communication practices in place positively enhances employees' performance (Chen et al., 2011), and that using different means of communication channels increases the social capital and teamwork among employees in an organisation (King & Lee, 2016; Sharma & Kamalanabhan, 2012). A number of different tools were used in this hotel. The findings in this study were that this hotel communicated through a largely verbal context (e.g. meetings) and a written context (e.g. emails and noticeboards).

Daily meetings and formal department meetings (which also can be viewed as briefings prior to a shift commencing) provided employees with key information that they needed to assist them with their current shift (Chen et al., 2011). For those that were not well-experienced with emails, this was seen as an extremely useful communication tool (Chen et al., 2011). Abdullah and Antony (2012) also ascertained that face-to-face communication, such as meetings, should be maintained by employers to provide effective communication with their employees. A disadvantage with this tool, however, is that employees who had difficulty understanding English found the meetings hard to comprehend, and they often would feel uncomfortable asking for clarification and hence would ask their team members for translation instead (Chen et al., 2011). Another form of communication was hotel meetings or catch-ups, in which the hotel's financial performance was shared and discussed with the team. However, this did not seem to be perceived as having major value for employees because most employees were not motivated to attend (Chen et al., 2011).

A briefing sheet (called the "Hot Sheet" at this hotel) was created daily, and it communicated specific information such as the hotel's occupancy for the day, how many guests were due to check in and out, any VIP guests highlighted along with any special requests carried out for them, conference rooms' usage and information about groups, and general events in the hotel (Chen et al., 2011). This document served as a quick reference point for all employees, enabling them to access this information efficiently, and was claimed to be very useful (Chen et al., 2011).

Emails were another form of communication used, but they were not appreciated by all employees. Chen et al. (2011) found that while most employees preferred emails because of the ease of access and convenience, those employees from older

generations who were not experienced with technology and those who had difficulty understanding written English found this mode of communication to be ineffective.

Lastly, noticeboards were seen as a useful mode of communication from the findings of Chen et al.'s (2011) study, because they helped keep employees informed about what was going on in the hotel. This finding was unexpected by some department managers, and they were surprised to discover that their employees did, in fact, read noticeboards and pay attention to information posted (Chen et al., 2011). The hotel in this study also created a newsletter called "Splatter Chatter", in which employee tenure was recognised and posted on noticeboards for all employees to read (Chen et al., 2011).

2.4.2 Social Media

According to research, social media is another up-and-coming form of communication used by hospitality professionals (Camillo & Pietro, 2011; King & Lee, 2016). The advantages of using social media include increasing socialisation among employees and creating a collaborative environment with other team members (King & Lee, 2016). This form of communication is also used extensively to communicate and connect successfully with guests or consumers; however, there are concerns about its practicality when used for employee communication purposes (Gibbs et al., 2015; King & Lee, 2016). In addition, there is a lack of research on this form and how it can successfully link to internal communication from an HR perspective and in a hotel setting (Gibbs et al., 2015; King & Lee, 2016). Social media is a fairly new concept, but is deemed "ambiguous" by hospitality and HR professionals, despite the growing interest. Because the platform is new, hospitality and HR professionals need to spend time learning how to manoeuvre it and obtain the best result from its usage. However, currently the social media tool is not seen as "essential" to increasing employee engagement (King & Lee, 2016). In addition, from an HR standpoint, Gibbs et al. (2015) detailed the legal and ethical concerns about using the social media platform, as well as the new policies and procedures that would need to be determined and established while ensuring the reliability of information would be shared prior to sharing information in such a forum.

2.4.3 Human Resource Management and Internal Communication

The link between internal communication and HRM is also a key HRM process within an organisation (Garcia-Carbonell et al., 2018). HRM practices play a critical role in disseminating clear and consistent messages and information to all hierarchical levels of an organisation (Garcia-Carbonell et al., 2015, 2018; Gray & Laidlaw, 2002). HR professionals, in particular, need to work closely with managers and supervisors to ensure that the messages being conveyed to front-line employees are consistent with the original information communicated to supervisors and managers (Garcia-Carbonell et al., 2015, 2018). Therefore, establishing the appropriate tool for internal communication to disseminate information effectively and accurately is crucial for an organisation, particularly in a hotel setting.

However, the importance of HRM and communication is not highlighted as much as it could be. Defined as a category of an HRM subsystem, internal communication encompasses information sharing and participative decision-making (Kidron et al., 2013). Information sharing relates more to the general communication of ideas, delegation of tasks and coordination of activities with other team members, whereas participative decision-making allows HRM practitioners to convey their thoughts and influence on changing the culture of an organisation through the use of communication tools (Kidron et al., 2013; Watson & D'Annunzio-Green, 1996).

2.4.4 Supervisors or Managers and Internal Communication

An important point that Camillo and Pietro (2011) mentioned is that too often supervisors and managers are not equipped with the appropriate skills or are not given the required training to be effective communicators. This is concerning since supervisors make up one of the most important groups on the hierarchical ladder in terms of communicating information, particularly to front-line employees (Abdullah & Antony, 2012; Jalalkamali et al., 2016; Madera et al., 2016; Vuuren & Elving, 2008). A lapse in performance can be the result of communication breakdown due to a lack of skills in communicating effectively (Camillo & Pietro, 2011). In addition, because of the nature of the hospitality industry, more often than not supervisors and managers are on the "shop floor" and attending to guests, meaning that their time behind a computer is limited for communicating with their team.

Stevens and Hisle (1996) identified the specific challenges when supervisors and managers attempt to communicate information. First, because of the various levels of leadership, the information passed down tends to become distorted or changed, and front-line employees at times do not even receive the information in its accurate form, or at all (Stevens & Hisle, 1996). In addition, sometimes the delivery of the communication, in regard to the tone and context, may differ from how it was intended, thus once again changing and distorting the initial message (Stevens & Hisle, 1996).

2.4.5 Importance of Sharing Information

In previous generations, the importance and value of sharing information within MTs and beyond to front-line employees and the entire organisation was seldom actioned, because there was a perception that not all individuals needed to know (Abdullah & Antony, 2012). Another challenge indicated by Steven and Hisle (1996) is that some supervisors and managers feel they are required to filter the information they communicate in order to sound more positive. However, in today's rapidly changing industry and business environment, with an even further emphasis on globalisation, coupled with new social demands and technological advances (Kidron et al., 2013), organisations need to be cognisant that communication is no longer a "nice to do" (p. 2) task (Abdullah & Antony, 2012). If organisations are eager to succeed, they must be aware that focusing on effective internal communication measures ensures organisational success.

Scholars have suggested that effective internal communication is imperative for advocating an innovative culture within an organisation as well as simultaneously creating a positive external corporate image (Rezaeian et al., 2013). Employees are more receptive to learning and becoming aware of the organisational culture through the outcome of internal communication, as this is carried out by all parties within an organisation (Rezaeian et al., 2013). Sharma and Kamalanabhan (2012) further suggested that organisations that place the utmost importance on and time into ensuring communication is received by all individuals tend to attain higher levels of employee engagement and are viewed in a more positive light by employees. When employees have current and up-to-date knowledge about the events in their environment, their awareness increases and they are able to make more sound

judgements because they have that information communicated to them (Monge, as cited in Abdullah & Antony, 2012).

2.4.6 Volume of Communication

Trenholm (2016) explained that there can be detrimental impacts on the effectiveness of an organisation if employees are dissatisfied with the quantity of information being disseminated. The result is that employees within an organisation miss out on opportunities to share knowledge they have gained as well as interaction with others within the business (Lee et al., 2015). Researchers place strong emphasis on the frequent, repeated communication, in particular, during organisational change, such as in emails and newsletters (Vuuren & Elving, 2008). Trenholm (2016) stated that in most cases there is an imbalance of information; at times, too much information is passed on and at other times there is too little. Bourque and Carrière (2009) suggested that for internal communication processes within organisations, more is better. However, this point is in contrast to Lee et al.'s (2015) statement that too much communication has the ability to impede employees' concentration and results in a lack of clarity due to the abundance of information delivered. To a certain degrees, Trenholm (2016) supported this claim by Lee et al. (2015) from an industry standpoint, adding that employees at times may feel inundated with memos, reports, emails and bulletins that are disseminated within the business as a tool of internal communication, during their day-to-day working day. Another interesting point that Trenholm (2016) concluded with is that the "want" or "need" for the type of information is questionable, and that, in fact, more face-to-face interaction is needed as a medium to gain information, rather than non-face-to-face interaction. Bourque and Carrière (2009) summed up by explaining that despite the differing levels and quantity of information provided to and shared with employees, the premise of first having internal communication processes will lessen the gap between information sought and information given, which is a positive outcome in any industry.

2.4.7 Brand Management

While brand management is a strategy focused on ensuring loyalty from external stakeholders such as customers and guests, it can also be seen as an area of HRM, to gauge the loyalty of internal stakeholders, such as employees (Hedman & Valo, 2015; Sharma & Kamalanabhan, 2012). Internal branding, as defined by Sharma and Kamalanabhan (2012), is an outcome of an organisation's internal communication

efforts when developing a workforce that is devoted and loyal to the organisation's brand values and goals. Internal brand management is relatively untapped in terms of academic research; however, organisations are realising the potential that it has on engagement among employees and its direct correlation to positivity in loyalty and commitment, according to the study carried out in Sharma and Kamalanabhan's (2012) paper.

2.4.8 Lack of Theory on Internal Communication

Quinn and Hargie (2004) rightly stated that the value of internal communication and its importance for attaining organisational success (Sharma & Kamalanabhan, 2012) is broadly understood across most industries and organisations. However, despite the important role that internal communication plays within an organisation, there is a noticeable lack of theoretical research on communication and internal communication (Hedman & Valo, 2015; Sharma & Kamalanabhan, 2012; Welch & Jackson, 2007), leaving this framework fairly underdeveloped and a neglected management tool (Sharma & Kamalanabhan, 2012). A number of studies have quantified this subject matter; however, a more qualitative perspective is needed (Hedman & Valo, 2015) to truly gauge the perceptions and experiences of individuals. King and Lee (2016) added that research on internal communication, especially in the hospitality industry, is severely lacking. Sharma and Kamalanabhan (2012) argued in favour of this point by questioning the gaps in internal communication theory and poor implementation of internal communication strategies, especially considering that brand management has become a paramount aspect of an organisation's function. Despite the value that internal communication holds and the importance of its practice, it is not yet a widely discussed topic among scholars, because of the lack of theoretical models to aid in interpreting this type of communication mechanism (Mazzei, 2010; Quinn & Hargie, 2004; Welch & Jackson, 2007).

With the growing interest surrounding internal communication, communication satisfaction is also affected, because studies show a correlation between internal communication and communication satisfaction (Rezaeian et al., 2013; Sharma & Kamalanabhan, 2012). Rezaeian et al. (2013) explained that employees' perception of internal communication has a direct link with their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the communication efforts in the organisation, which can further affect the level of connectedness and the attitudes they feel towards their workplace (Sharma &

Kamalanabhan, 2012). Improved internal communication efforts diminish the gap between the proportion of information desired and the proportion of information required (Rezaeian et al., 2013). In addition, employees tend to be more stimulated to work harder and display positive reinforcement of brand loyalty and commitment when their communication satisfaction has been achieved (Sharma & Kamalanabhan, 2012), thus making it an interesting aspect yet to be discussed.

2.5 Communication Satisfaction

Communication satisfaction can be defined as "an employee's affective appraisal of the organisation's communication practices" (p. 15) (Carriere and Bourque, as cited in Sharma & Kamalanabhan, 2012). It alludes to the general feeling an individual has in relation to the overall quality of communication within the organisation, which directly affects the interactions between individuals in the organisation and their willingness to partake in activities in order to increase organisational effectiveness (Madera et al., 2016). Building from this, we can also define communication satisfaction as an individual's satisfaction towards the contexts of interpersonal, group and organisational relationships (Bourque & Carrière, 2009; Jalalkamali et al., 2016). Additionally, the concept of communication satisfaction can be looked upon as an "affective reaction", in which an expectation is met in relation to the interchange of messages, resulting in a satisfying experience (Jalalkamali et al., 2016).

Communication satisfaction can be seen as having two main dimensions: an informational and a relational dimension. The informational dimension focuses on the credibility of the information and content passed on, through the exchange of information sharing among employees, supervisors and managers (Jalalkamali et al., 2016). This dimension explores exactly *what* information is being shared or passed on (Jalalkamali et al., 2016). The relational dimension focuses on the interpersonal relationships between employees and managers, and essentially explores *how* information is communicated, through downward, upward or horizontal communication, and the level to which this affects the perceptions and attitudes of employees (Jalalkamali et al., 2016).

Organisational outcomes such as employee involvement, job performance and work values relate simultaneously to the effects of communication satisfaction (Jalalkamali et al., 2016; Sharma & Kamalanabhan, 2012). Hence, the term can be stated to

harbour multiple dimensions (Jalalkamali et al., 2016). Communication satisfaction has a positive correlation with job performance and work values, as stated by Jalalkamali (2016). This is especially the case when an employee's relational communication satisfaction is achieved and meets the requirement of the employee, as this further emphasises that the organisation's communication mechanisms are effective, thus leading to better job performance (Jalalkamali et al., 2016).

Owusu (1999) explained the positive correlations between communication satisfaction and employee involvement. Employee involvement can be defined as the involvement of all members of an organisation partaking in key organisational events as well as having the openness to contribute ideas and suggestions, which eventually leads to company competitiveness (Owusu, 1999). As a result, employee involvement is an imperative culture of an organisation that needs to be cultivated through such aspects as communication satisfaction (Owusu, 1999). In addition, communication satisfaction stimulates emotional bonds within an organisation, because employees will often try to obtain communication interactions through their interpersonal relationships as a way of inclusion (Madera et al., 2016). Inclusion plays an important role in employee involvement because it pertains to the inclusive nature of an organisation and ensures employees feel as if they are a part of the organisation (Madera et al., 2016). This can be through such aspects as accessibility to information, their interpersonal relationships with team members and supervisors, and the level of empowerment they are given to make their own decisions (Madera et al., 2016).

Saurabh and Chattopadhyay (2013) also explored the idea of communication satisfaction, and how this affects employees' satisfaction within an organisation in relation to the communication activities. Saurabh and Chattopadhyay (2013) claimed that communication satisfaction occurs mostly through the relationship between supervisors and front-line staff. This idea is extended by Saurah and Chattopadhyay (2013) to the relationship between employees and supervisors, stating that this relationship is the most significant, as far as the transfer of communication is concerned (Barron, Leask, & Fyall, 2014; Vuuren & Elving, 2008).

Communication satisfaction plays an important role in group dynamics especially, because communication processes influence whether individuals feel comfortable about participating and contributing in key discussions (Hedman & Valo, 2015). In

addition, communication and trust between management and employees are necessary for creating an effective organisation (Akkirman & Harris, 2005; Owusu, 1999). Once trust and satisfaction with communication processes are attained, this generally leads to a positive outlook towards communication processes by employees, which encourages them to engage more in their roles for a better output (Jalalkamali et al., 2016). In summary, a higher push and emphasis on communication efforts results in an increased level of communication satisfaction among all employees in an organisation (Bourque & Carrière, 2009; Madera et al., 2016; Rezaeian et al., 2013).

2.5.1 Generational and Cultural Barriers to Communication Satisfaction

Generational and cultural differences are another aspect that can affect communication satisfaction within organisations. Madera et al. (2016) explained that emotional bonds are created when strong communication satisfaction is fostered because employees feel a sense of inclusion within their organisation. Inclusion is a huge and important aspect of work within any organisation, particularly in the hospitality industry, where environments are extremely multicultural and diverse on a daily basis. Communication satisfaction here becomes integral in managing misunderstandings due to language barriers and cultural cues that arise within organisations (Madera et al., 2016). Madera et al. (2016) also mentioned in their theoretical review that hotels should be aware of any specific language barriers arising in their hotel environment, so they can put processes in place to ensure that employees feel encouraged to partake in organisation activities, despite their inability to converse fluently in English. Despite Madera et al.'s (2016) study, there is a lack of empirical research discussing the cultural barriers and implications this has on communication satisfaction.

Generational perspectives also affect communication satisfaction. There are apparent differences regarding communication satisfaction needs between younger and older employees within the hotel industry. Madera et al.'s (2016) research showed that younger employees generally valued constant guidance and aid to perform effectively at work, whereas older employees wanted more of a say on decisions being made by their managers at work. This is mirrored in research papers by Mehra and Nickerson (2019) and Torsello (2019). This shows that there is a valid disconnect and HR professionals need to grapple constantly with the changing demographics of their teams on a daily basis (Mehra & Nickerson, 2019). The general consensus with

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generational differences affecting organisations, as pointed out by Mehra and Nickerson (2019), is that organisations need to understand and be more aware of the impact they have, and HRM endeavours should strive to become strategic, as well as ensuring all employees' needs are being met regarding communication satisfaction. Despite the importance of this topic area, this field of research is relatively underdeveloped and has not been widely investigated (Mehra & Nickerson, 2019; Torsello, 2019).

2.6   Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter presented a comprehensive literature review that examined the subject area of communication within the hospitality and, more specifically, the hotel industry. The chapter first detailed the characteristics and importance of the tourism and hospitality industry on a global scale as well as within New Zealand. The scope of communication was then outlined, specifically detailing organisational communication, communication networks and organisational change. The chapter then examined internal communication more deeply, specifically within the context of a hotel. Here internal communication tools and the impact of social media were introduced. The link between internal communication and HRM, and with supervisors and managers, was discussed, and the role these employees play and their perception in communicating information was highlighted. The chapter briefly explored key challenges with communication, in particular, what impact the volume of communication has on individuals, and brand management, and outlined the lack of theoretical content regarding internal communication. Lastly, communication satisfaction was discussed along with a brief insight into generational and cultural barriers to communication.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Methodology is an integral part of the research process because it showcases the ontological, epistemological and methodological perspectives of the researcher. This chapter discusses these perspectives related to the researcher and this research, and examines the applied research methods and the research analysis techniques. The first section of this chapter starts off by evaluating the differing paradigms of positivism and interpretivism, focusing largely on the interpretive paradigm because this paradigm is better suited to this research. Following on from here, the inductive and deductive approaches are discussed, with a focus on the inductive approach of collecting research and data. The next section discusses the researcher's ontological stance, which is relativist ontology, followed by the researcher's epistemological stance, which is constructivism. The qualitative methodology is then discussed and its use justified, followed by a thorough description of the methods used to carry out this research. Lastly, the ethical process is explained followed by a description of the analysis process of the data researched.

3.2 Paradigm

A paradigm is a series of basic beliefs that interlink with the fundamental principles of the world, as well as exploring the researcher's place and identity in this world Guba & Lincoln, as cited in (Voros et al., 2011). These beliefs and values are something that the researcher has been exposed to throughout his or her life in order to come to conclusions about life and form perceptions about what the world should be like Guba & Lincoln, as cited in Voros et al, 2011; (Tronvoll et al., 2011).

Derived from the Greek word "paradeigma" (Mink, 1992), a paradigm can be seen as a conceptual framework that reveals the underlying principles and theories of a field of study at a specific point in time, which pertains to the generally recognised and accepted world view (Fellows, 2010). It refers to a model that embodies a particular theory, and has its own set of perceptions and assumptions, and its own individual stance on how the world is viewed in terms of perceiving it, understanding it and interpreting it (Mink, 1992; Perry & Sobh, 2006). An important point to mention is that researchers are guided by the paradigm that they wish to follow (Perry & Sobh,

2006). Choosing a paradigm stance is not objective, because researchers work within the boundaries of their own presumptions and perceptions – therefore, choosing a paradigm is a subjective process (Perry & Sobh, 2006). In essence, a paradigm acts as the "lens" through which perceptions are seen and made (Fellows, 2010; Mink, 1992).

There are different paradigmatic stances, ranging from the objective outlook through to the subjective outlook (Voros et al., 2011). Positivist and postpositivist paradigms cover more the quantitative aspects of research (Giddings & Grant, 2009), and have an external objective reality. Because each paradigm has its own philosophical stance and values, it is imperative to understand the influence they have on both the design of the research and its potential outcomes (Tronvoll et al., 2011).

3.2.1   Positivism

Positivism and its studies are more inclined to assume that reality is viewed from an objective lens (Tronvoll et al., 2011). The positivistic stance embodies the "received view" (p. 6) of scientific inquiry (Voros et al., 2011). Tronvoll et al. (2011) explained that positivistic research has a more quantitative approach (Giddings & Grant, 2009) in the sense that it tests hypotheses and measures variables and preconceived notions and relationships. As Orlikowski (as cited in Tronvoll et al., 2011) explained, studies that exhibit the positivistic stance typically test theory in the hope of justifying what they already know about a typical phenomenon. This paradigm generally uses methods that express static and invariable situations, such as quantifiable surveys or experiments (Tronvoll et al., 2011).

3.2.2   Interpretivism

The interpretive paradigm, however, moves towards qualitative research, and is thus appropriate for interpreting existing phenomena (Giddings & Grant, 2009). The interpretivist paradigm revolves around subjective meanings in the social world (Goldkuhl, 2012). Goldkuhl (2012) further mentioned that the main notion regarding interpretivism is to recognise, comprehend, recreate and refrain from altering these subjective meanings, in order to be able to use them as "building blocks" when creating principles and ideas. By applying this paradigm, the researcher is able to come to conclusions and provide recommendations on how to improve processes (Goldkuhl, 2012).

The interpretive approach chooses to not follow conventional values and truths, and instead, aims to contribute to further human understanding of the world (Baškarada & Koronios, 2018). Interpretivist attitudes to social issues can provide rich and invaluable insights through helping researchers to be more engaged in transcending the description and diving deep into the social context at hand (Goulding, 1999), and the interpretive approach seeks to amalgamate descriptive social sciences with mainstream societies (Baškarada & Koronios, 2018).

This research adopted an interpretivist approach because the paradigm finds meanings within the realm of the cultural world (Baškarada & Koronios, 2018). Ranciere (as cited in Baškarada & Koronios, 2018) claimed that interpretation of the society and world around us is already a method of change. The interpretive paradigm is the most useful framework for this research because the fundamental aim of interpretivism is to explore the subjective meanings already prevalent in the social world, to recognise, recondition and, most importantly, understand them in order to use these meanings as building blocks to move forward and to create more useful outcomes (Baškarada & Koronios, 2018; Collins, 1996; Goldkuhl, 2012). A key point made by Collins (1996) is that this change and awareness essentially influences the standpoint and actions of individuals within an organisation.

This research assessed the current communication practices in a prominent hotel chain in Auckland, New Zealand, gaining insights from a variety of individuals from each hotel, to identify the current practices that are working and those that are not working.

Therefore, the main aim of this research was:

To investigate hotel employees' perceived effectiveness of communication from human resource managers and supervisors.

The research aim was explored by answering the following research questions:

1. How satisfied are hotel employees with the level and quality of communication received from the human resource department and their managers?
2. To what extent do different forms of communication affect perceived communication effectiveness?
3. What are the perceived challenges of effective communication?

4. How do human resource managers try to respond to these challenges?

3.2.3 Inductive and Deductive Approaches

An inductive approach was used to fit with the interpretive paradigm and qualitative methodology of this research (Woiceshyn & Daellenbach, 2018). Inductive research seeks to foster knowledge in order to create new theories (Wang et al., 2009; Woiceshyn & Daellenbach, 2018). This process caters to the questioning of "how" and "why" to observe organisational processes (Woiceshyn & Daellenbach, 2018). This is useful because qualitative research seeks to present insights through texts, words and talk to generate concepts that enable understanding of social phenomena. The inductive approach begins with observation of a phenomenon, which is generally formulated as a question that has yet to be explored in more detail (Woiceshyn & Daellenbach, 2018).

In contrast, a deductive approach begins with a prior theoretical base in order to test hypotheses (Wang et al., 2009; Woiceshyn & Daellenbach, 2018). Researchers using this method are required to provide justifications for their theoretical outlooks and hypotheses before beginning to venture into collecting and testing data (Woiceshyn & Daellenbach, 2018). While deduction is a popular approach, particularly within the quantitative research domain, this research used an inductive approach.

An inductive study is one that has been informed by previous studies and theories (Rowley, 2012). Inductive research is also known for its means to advance knowledge (Woiceshyn & Daellenbach, 2018) through the research being determined by the theory selected prior to the data collection, because this influences the scope of the overall research questions to be studied (Rowley, 2012). This approach, therefore, has many parallels with this research study and was the most suitable approach because theory formulated the direction of this study, as well as the data collection and analysis methods. Through using raw data to extract key concepts and themes (Azungah, 2018; Woiceshyn & Daellenbach, 2018), the inductive approach requires the researcher to go thoroughly through data and assign codes as themes develop (Azungah, 2018). The process is repetitive because it requires moving to and from data and literature more than once in order for concepts to emerge that are relevant to the research questions (Azungah, 2018). When themes are being drawn from raw data, the inductive approach prevents the likelihood of the researcher making

predetermined judgements about the outcome of the data analysis (Azungah, 2018), thus making it more favourable for qualitative researchers.

3.3 Ontology

A paradigm is supported by its three main facets of ontology, epistemology and methodology (Healy & Perry, 2000; Perry & Sobh, 2006; Tronvoll et al., 2011). It is important that the ontological, epistemological and methodological views are congruent with the paradigm that the researcher has chosen to follow because the paradigm is the lens through which the research is conducted (Fellows, 2010; Perry & Sobh, 2006). Subsequently, the ontology, epistemology and methodology must support the main paradigm view to stay within the realms and terms of the paradigm (Healy & Perry, 2000) and to also create a substantial and rich research product through its cohesive underpinnings.

Ontology refers to the initial and fundamental assumptions about reality (Tronvoll et al., 2011). Ontology is essentially the reality that is evaluated by the researcher (Healy & Perry, 2000; Perry & Sobh, 2006) and thus reflects why reality is the way it is, and what factors make up this reality (Tronvoll et al., 2011). Identifying an ontological approach is important because it sets the foundation for the epistemological and methodological approach (Tronvoll et al., 2011). It is essentially a lens aiding in influencing the next stage of the research process towards the epistemological and methodological approaches (Tronvoll et al., 2011).

A relativist ontology was applied to this research because this type of ontology seeks to understand the formation of social experiences and how they gain significance (Choudhury Kaul et al., 2019). Relativist ontology proposes that multiple truths exist in this world (Kihn & Ihantola, 2015; Klapper et al., 2015; Nyaga & Fink, 2009) and these are demonstrated in the form of "intangible mental constructions" (Zaeri et al., 2017), which generally make up people's opinions and thoughts. In comparison with the positivist stance, which demands objective views (Choudhury Kaul et al., 2019), the data generated using relativist ontology cannot uncover an objective universal truth, since every individual constructs meanings, perceptions and emotions in various different ways, even when the same phenomenon is shared among them (Klapper et al., 2015). For this particular study, the relativist ontology was used because the study aimed to explore the different perceptions and thoughts held on communication

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effectiveness by employees in various hierarchical positions within a well-known hotel company to create a unique data set that contains the opinions of employees from management through to the front line. This correlates well with the relativist ontology because the study explored numerous perceptions and realities that make up a social phenomenon (Naeem, 2019).

3.4   Epistemology

The epistemology "entails the nature and origin of knowledge and asks how we know what we know" (p. 3) (Tronvoll et al., 2011). In clearer terms, epistemology communicates how our assumptions of the world and society are perceived and proposes the means by which we accept this information and communicate it to others within society (Tronvoll et al., 2011). When linked back to a researcher carrying out a research project, the epistemology basically outlines the relationship between the researcher and the research topic (Healy & Perry, 2000; Perry & Sobh, 2006; Tronvoll et al., 2011).

For this research, the constructivist epistemology further supported the interpretative paradigm and relativist ontology as a sense of subjectivity by using this framework and this allowed ideas and thoughts to develop through space and time in different situations (Bayer, 2008). The interpretive paradigm also depends on the relativist ontology and constructivist epistemology, because of its similar outlooks and the values that each holds (Goldkuhl, 2012). Goldkuhl (2012) explained that ontology and epistemology are interweaved within interpretivism because knowledge (in particular, understanding meanings) is so crucial in the social world.

Constructivism believes that reality actually comprises "multiple realities" (p. 4), which are formed and shaped by individuals (Healy & Perry, 2000). This is also explained from an ontological standpoint where, "Ontologically, interpretive information systems research assumes that the social world (that is, social relationships, organisations) are not 'given'. Rather, the world is produced and reinforced by humans through action and interaction" (p. 4) (Orlikowski & Baroudi, as cited in Goldkuhl, 2012). This point by Orlikowski and Baroudi resonates well with a key feature of this research methodology, in particular, regarding "social relationships". This research puts a significant onus on the relationships between

individuals and how they affect their ability to work together and how communication practices enter and affect social relationships.

3.5 Methodology

The methodology of any research focuses on how knowledge is sought by scholars, and explores the connection between theory and method, rather than just the method individually (Tronvoll et al., 2011). Along with the ontology and epistemology, the methodology is one of the three facets of a paradigm that a researcher works within (Perry & Sobh, 2006). While ontology is "reality", and epistemology is the relationship between the researcher and the reality, the methodology is the means used by the researcher to ascertain that reality (Healy & Perry, 2000; Neuman, 2011; Perry & Sobh, 2006).

The methodology of any research focuses on the key principles for carrying out quality research (Neuman, 2011). It also includes an awareness of the societal surroundings within which the social research is set (Neuman, 2011). The meaning of science notably moulds how social scientific research is carried out, and this is through awareness of the many basic assumptions that individuals make (Neuman, 2011). The methodology is also an important aspect of the research process that needs to be recognised, because it describes how the knowledge of the research will be attained (Cutcliffe & Harder, 2012).

The two main methodologies that researchers utilise are the quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Each methodology corresponds and pertains to different methods and hence the outcomes provide varying outlooks on the phenomenon (Cutcliffe & Harder, 2012). It is imperative that the methodology suits the type of research that is undertaken because it affects how the research is carried out.

While quantitative research uses numerical figures and large samples to test the theories they are researching, qualitative research establishes theories using words and meanings through smaller sample sizes (Ellis et al., 2012; Perry & Sobh, 2006). Qualitative research is carried out through establishing connections with individuals (Ezzy, 2002). This style of research requires working with different perspectives of individuals, and ascertaining the rationale and reasons behind their thoughts and actions around a societal issue or subject (Ezzy, 2002; Ying Yang & Lê, 2008). For

qualitative researchers, the aim of research is not to validate or announce definite laws, because these may not appeal to all individuals; instead, a qualitative researcher, through interpretation, seeks to develop a theory to provide a more sound understanding of a phenomenon (Ezzy, 2002).

This research used qualitative research methods because they play an important role in establishing and understanding contexts surrounding the evolving nature of cultures within a particular organisation (Garcia & Gluesing, 2013). This was suitable for this research because it explored the discovery of new and emerging phenomena. As organisations become more complex, it becomes necessary for greater importance to be given to understanding new concepts and patterns that become apparent in this social environment (Garcia & Gluesing, 2013). Most importantly, this research is about people, and their perceptions and values, and how these play a part in forming organisational change within a social setting. A qualitative interpretative methodology was most appropriate for this topic because interpretive research is based on the subjective ideas and thoughts stated by individuals in a social context (Goldkuhl, 2012).

3.6   Methods

A qualitative research methodology approach was used in terms of research methods. This research incorporated two different, but complementary, research methods, which included the use of a qualitative survey and interviews as the main forms of collecting data. Purposeful sampling was used to select participants when carrying out the surveys and interviews, and approval was sought from the participants prior to the collection of data. The qualitative surveys were conducted first and then the interviews. This approach was used in order for the results from the survey to ascertain the scope of the interview, to create data that is rich and consistent.

It is important to note the methodological stance of using two different methods for this research project. This research adopted a qualitative interpretivist approach, which means that qualitative methods were incorporated. The use of interviews as a research method fits this approach, since interviews are able to formulate data of great depth (Amaratunga et al., 2002). However, the use of surveys as a method in this qualitative research may raise questions about the credibility of the interpretive approach, because of surveys being predominately a research method used in

quantitative methodology and acknowledging a positivism approach (Azungah, 2018; Tronvoll et al., 2011). However, for this research, the survey method was used entirely for descriptive and interpretive reasons.

The method structure incorporated the surveys being implemented first followed by the interviews. This research carried out the data collection in this way from an inductive perspective because the purpose was to gain opinions from the survey that would eventually feed into the framework of the data collected in the interview stage. Described as the "sequential approach", which is carrying out two singular methods one after the other (Pansiri & Jogulu, 2011), this method is supported by Golicic and Davis (2012), who implemented the same order of data collection. They stated that the descriptive data gathered during the survey aided in contextualising the interviews (Golicic & Davis, 2012). This statement is also supported by other authors because they found that the survey created the general structure and the interviews presented the detail for this structure (Charalampidi & Hammond, 2016). For this research, the surveys were useful to gain the opinions of the employees, whereas interviews were adopted to gain opinions from the HR managers.

Mixed methods is a methodology that involves the combination of both quantitative and qualitative approaches in a single study (Creswell et al., 2006). While qualitative research focuses on words and observations to reveal reality, the quantitative approach puts trust in numbers to denote opinions (Amaratunga et al., 2002). Creswell et al. (2006) and Amaratunga et al. (2002) both stated that the mixing of these methods can strengthen the quality and richness of the data. Research that incorporates mixed methods methodology uses the particular strengths of each singular methodology (qualitative and quantitative) to have a useful outcome that accentuates the contributions of both (Amaratunga et al., 2002; Creswell et al., 2006). In relation to this particular research, even though at the outset it may seem as if the mixed methods methodology was applied because of the use of surveys as one of the main research method, this research denotes purely an interpretative qualitative methodology.

3.6.1   Survey Method

A survey was defined by Ross and Freeman (as cited in Hartley, 2001) as a "systematic collection of information from large study groups, usually by means of…questionnaires administered to samples of units in the population" (p. 2). In

addition, Fink (as cited in Hartley, 2001) defined a survey as "a system for collecting information to describe, compare, or explain knowledge, attitudes and behaviours" (p. 2). Surveys mostly focus and draw on individuals' own personal experiences, and the individuals may also be questioned about their perceptions of others in their surrounding environment ("Ask No Questions – Tell No Lies," 2002; Hartley, 2001). Most importantly, surveys are used to influence change in an environment (Hartley, 2001).

3.6.2 Survey Design

The Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire by Downs and Hazen (1977) was used as a lens when creating the survey for this research. This lens was appropriate to use because it assesses communication satisfaction and much of the content of the questionnaire was relevant for this study. The study by Downs and Hazen (1977) focused on seven dimensions of communication satisfaction:

- satisfaction with communication climate
- satisfaction with superiors
- satisfaction with organisational integration
- satisfaction with media quality
- satisfaction with horizontal informal communication
- satisfaction with general organisational perspective
- satisfaction with communication with subordinates
- satisfaction with personal feedback.

These seven dimensions were shown by Downs and Hazen (1977) to be the most important when assessing communication satisfaction. The study by Downs and Hazen (1977), albeit quantitative, was only used as a lens for creating the survey in this qualitative research, and the data gained from the survey was viewed from an interpretive lens.

The survey method was adopted to reach a large pool of respondents at one time. The survey method is also an excellent communication channel that allows employers and employees to exchange information in order to create organisational change (Woodward & Williams, 1987). Using purposeful sampling, the target audience for this survey was front-line employees, supervisors and heads of departments within

four hotel properties belonging to the same company in Auckland. The aim of this survey was to obtain the employees' voice, their perception of communication and what they felt communication should look like in their department and hotel. Hence, it was important that the survey catered to those in the hotel setting in order to obtain the best data.

The survey was split into four key sections. The first section focused on the demographics of each respondent: gender, age, tenure at current hotel, hotel currently worked at, department worked in, employment status, and whether they were a front-line employee, supervisor or head of department.

The second section of the survey encompassed six statements assessing their satisfaction with communication received from their HR team. Having four to five categories for respondents to choose from promotes sufficient data, according to Ornstein (2013). Therefore, respondents were asked to choose from "Strongly Disagree", "Disagree", "Agree" or "Strongly Agree". Having these options encouraged respondents to choose an option that best fit their thoughts. Including an option of "neither agree nor disagree" would have likely meant that some respondents would choose that option, because of their supposed lack of understanding (Ornstein, 2013), which would not have created an accurate representation of their thoughts, and would make the data seem vague and less clear. In addition, respondents are more likely to choose a "no opinion" response when a "no opinion" response is presented (Ornstein, 2013). In light of this, the "neither agree nor disagree" option was not considered as an option for respondents in this survey.

After responding to the six statements, respondents were asked two additional open-ended questions: in what ways did they feel their HR team communicated effectively at their hotel, and what did they feel could be better? Fill-in boxes allowed respondents to write their thoughts and recommendations. Surveys that ask respondents to write comments in response to open-ended questions are becoming more popular; however, research on the use of these comments is rare (Borg & Zuell, 2012). Nevertheless, open-ended questions are used to gain more information on a topic that closed-questions were not able to answer substantially (Borg & Zuell, 2012; Ornstein, 2013).

The third section included the same six statements as in the second section; however, this was directed to the respondents' supervisors and heads of departments. The two additional open-ended questions were also included to gauge the ways in which they communicated well and how they could improve. As the researcher, I wanted Sections 2 and 3 to ask the same set of statements and questions, in order to be consistent, and encourage the respondents to answer the same question for different sets of people within their hotel. One respondent might feel that their HR team communicated really well, but that that was not the case with their supervisor or head of department.

The fourth and final section of the survey included 12 statements about the overall communication results within the respondents' hotel. The survey ended with the last two open-ended questions, asking in what ways communication was effective in their hotel and how communication could improve in their hotel.

A copy of the survey statements and questions is provided in the appendix.

3.6.3   Distribution of Survey and Ethical Concerns

The survey was created on Survey Monkey because of the simplicity of the website and ease of access for any respondent. The primary researcher sent the survey link to the HR manager of each hotel and asked for the web link to be distributed to their front-line, supervisor and head of department employees. This covered ethical concerns because the primary researcher did not have access to any personal information while the survey link was being distributed. The HR manager distributed the survey link through various methods: email, putting a poster on a staff noticeboard or copying the survey link onto their hotel Facebook group (this is a closed group only for current hotel team members). The cover page of the survey acted as the consent form and asked respondents to give consent before completing the survey. No contact information was asked of the respondents. The survey was live for two months in order for it to reach as many respondents as possible and to give enough time for respondents to complete the survey.

3.6.4   Interview Method

Interviews are one of the key methods used in qualitative research (Dumay & Qu, 2011; Rowley, 2012). Interviews are generally a series of verbal exchanges between two individuals – the researcher and the participant – used to create a conversation of

understanding about a particular topic or issue that the participant has a close relationship with (Rowley, 2012). They involve the researcher gathering facts and awareness about issues relating to their research, while taking into account perceptions, behaviours and attitudes of individuals (Rowley, 2012). Interviewing requires "a respect for and curiosity about what people say, and a systematic effort to really hear and understand what people tell you" (p. 3) (Rubin & Rubin, as cited in Dumay & Qu, 2011). Therefore, this research method allows the researcher to gain access to the world of individuals by acquiring knowledge of their genuine emotions, feelings and thoughts about an issue along with discovering how and why they have this perspective (Amaratunga et al., 2002; Dumay & Qu, 2011).

3.6.5 Interview Design

There are different forms of qualitative interviews and each style has its own data output (Rowley, 2012). Interviews can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured. Each style of interview has advantages and disadvantages that pertain to a particular type of research.

Structured interviews have a strict form that rarely deviates from its main form (Dumay & Qu, 2011). Every respondent is asked the same questions in the same order. The aim of this style is to generate consistency among the answers given so that comparisons can be easily made. Rowley (2012) and Dumay and Qu (2011) liken structured interviews to having quantitative connotations, because of the structure, style of questions asked and the desired output. However, the rigidness of the structured interview design can be a disadvantage because it does not allow the researcher to probe into interesting factors and discussion points that arise in the interview. Unstructured interviews form the other end of the continuum, having no structure or guide. These interviews have no "interview questions" as such; rather, the respondent is encouraged to speak about a general topic, and the interviewee relays questions around the conversation (Rowley, 2012). Unstructured interviews are difficult to deliver, and it is challenging to generate consistencies and comparisons with the data generated (Rowley, 2012).

Semi-structured interviews are formed by combining the two styles of structured and unstructured interviews, and they are also the most common style of interview (Dumay & Qu, 2011; Rowley, 2012). Semi-structured interviews are based on a series

of phrases or interview questions that help guide the researcher throughout the interview. The questions are based on broad themes that help to guide the discussion towards the areas the researcher is interested in learning more about (Dumay & Qu, 2011).

There is flexibility, however, for researchers to probe and ask further questions on a specific interesting point mentioned by the respondent to gain a full understanding of what the respondent is trying to say (Azungah, 2018; Dumay & Qu, 2011; Rowley, 2012). This style of interview is a good balance of structured and unstructured, and the results of this style of interview mean that comparisons and consistencies can be made, along with data gained that generates new ideas and discussion points. This research used a semi-structured style because of its ability to gather facts and understand and cater for the responses of the participant.

The literature review undertaken by the researcher helped form the general guide for the interview questions. The interview questions were based on key concepts from the literature review. A question about the survey outcome was also posed, because the researcher wanted to combine the two forms of data with the aim of cohesiveness. Prompts were noted in the interview guide so that the researcher could probe to gain more information about specific concepts (Dumay & Qu, 2011).

3.6.6   Interview Protocol

Participants for the interviews were chosen through purposeful sampling – these were the HR managers of five different hotel properties. The reason why HR managers were interviewed is that they would be able to provide key insights into what the communication practices were like in their own hotel property and what they felt through their observations and experience needed to be improved in regard to communication within their hotel property to make communication practices more effective.

Prior to reaching out to respondents, a pilot interview was conducted to gauge the length of the interview as well as the appropriateness and effectiveness of the questions asked and the topics discussed. This was an important step because it aided in streamlining questions and further enhanced the actual interviews being undertaken.

The primary researcher made contact with the chosen participants using their professional network. An initial email was sent out to all chosen interview participants, outlining the reason why they were chosen as well as the benefit of conducting this research, and asking for their time. Once the participants responded and accepted the request, the primary researcher coordinated and set up a time with the participants using a calendar invite. Once a date and time was established, the primary researcher emailed the participants the participant information sheet and consent form. Copies of both these documents were brought by the primary researcher to the interview as well.

Each interview lasted approximately one hour and the interviews were recorded using the Voice Memo app on an iPhone. The researcher first explained the format of the interview and asked the participant to read and sign the consent form, as well as read through the participant information sheet. The researcher asked the participant whether he or she had any questions. The interview questions were based on the results of the surveys administered earlier, and were essentially about their perceptions and thoughts on communication practices within their own hotel property, and if they agreed or disagreed with the results that emerged from the surveys.

3.7 Ethics

Ethics Application Number: 18/370

This research acquired approval from the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC), since the research focused on a number of different individuals within the same organisation. The data collection commenced once approval was gained from AUTEC. Participation for this research was completely voluntary for both the survey and the interview participants. Since the survey was anonymous, participants gave their consent by agreeing to have read the survey guidelines and information sheet before commencing. The interview participants were asked to sign a consent form before starting an interview. Participants also had the right to withdraw from the interview at any stage of the process, and their answers were excluded from the main data collection set, if they so wished. Anonymity of the participants and participating hotels was assured by the use of pseudonyms.

3.8   Analysis

Analysis of the data collected was conducted using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. This style is one of the most popular techniques of analysis, particularly because of the flexibility it provides in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis identifies, analyses and reports patterns and themes found within data, while organising and describing the data set in an effective way (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes are found through rigorous stages of coding and organising within the data. Thematic analysis was the key technique of analysis for this research because it aimed to derive the main concepts from the data to form a detailed analysis of it. It was best to use thematic analysis for this research, in particular, to aid with the analysis of the data collected from the interview stages, because of the large volume of data to be analysed. Thematic analysis was useful here because it helped in taking parts of the data and grouping them into themes to aid with the discussion and conclusions of the research.

The surveys were analysed using thematic analysis as well, to provide for descriptive analysis of this data set. The data was sieved through multiple times in order to ascertain initial patterns, themes and codes. The differing sections of the survey helped in initiating the patterns and themes that emerged from the data. The surveys added a scope of information as patterns and trends were identified. Braun and Clarke (2006) stated that this step refocuses, on a wider level, the scope of themes, not just in relation to the codes themselves.

For the interviews, the analysis process started with the important step of transcribing all five interviews. This step ensures that all verbal data is recorded in a written format to make it easier to identify initial codes and themes that might emerge. After transcription, the researcher inputted the transcriptions into NVivo. NVivo is a software program used especially for qualitative research. The researcher used this software because it kept all transcriptions on one platform, which made it easier to identify similarities, differences and contrasts between the data. This step aided with generation of the initial codes or broader themes that arose from the data. Through further refining and separation of ideas, key themes were identified from the data on which the findings chapter is based.

3.9   Conclusion

In summary, this chapter discussed and justified the underlying and foundational perspectives of the researcher towards this particular research study. First, the interpretive paradigm was selected to act as the lens on which this study was based. Furthermore, the chapter discussed and justified the use of the relativist ontology, constructivism epistemology and qualitative methodology and methods. These perspectives supported the interpretive lens. Lastly, thematic analysis was used to appropriately analyse the qualitative research gained by the researcher.

Chapter 4: Findings Chapter

4.1   Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the data that was collected for this study. Five hotels within a prominent hotel company in Auckland, New Zealand, took part in this research. Four hotels were 5-star and one hotel was 4-star, however there were no major differences across the five hotels. Table 1 outlines the breakdown of the type and size of each hotel.

Table 1. Hotels participating in this research

Hotel number	Characteristics
1	5-star hotel, 340 rooms
2	5-star hotel, 172 rooms
3	5-star hotel, 207 rooms
4	5-star hotel, 130 rooms
5	4-star hotel, 147 rooms

Data was acquired through two forms. First, an online survey was distributed, specifically targeted to gauging opinions and insights from front-line employees, supervisors and managers. The first section explaining the results of the online survey was split into five subsections. The first subsection examined the demographics of each respondent who participated in the survey. The second and third subsections reviewed the results of communication satisfaction with HR teams and their supervisors and managers. The fourth subsection showcased the satisfaction within general communication processes, and the fifth subsection detailed the overall thoughts of the survey findings.

Following the surveys were semi-structured interviews carried out with the five HR managers of these hotels. As per the methodology, the survey process was carried out first to gauge important topics or themes to be discussed during the interviews. This section was split into three subsections. The first subsection outlined the general communication procedures. This was followed by the second subsection, which discussed the challenges faced with internal communication. The third and final subsection explored what effective communication encompasses.

4.2　Survey

The target audience for the communication survey were heads of departments (excluding HR teams and managers), supervisors and front-line employees. Forty-nine individuals took part in this survey. Twenty questions were asked in this survey. Full results from this survey are included in the appendices. Data from specific respondents that identified as "managers" was looked at as well to determine whether a managerial approach to communication would bring out differences as opposed to a perspective from the front-line employee level.

4.2.1　Demographics

Table 2 below outlines the demographic information of survey respondents.

Table 2. Demographic contents of survey respondents

Demographic	*n*
Gender	
Male	24
Female	25
Age	
< 21 years	2
21–29 years	27
30–39 years	15
40–59 years	5
Tenure at current hotel	
< 1 year	20
1–3 years	19
4–6 years	3
6–8 years	7
Department	
Food and beverage	15
Front office, reservations and housekeeping	18
Kitchen and maintenance	4
Other	12
Employment status	
Full-time	25
Part-time	24
Role	
Front-line employee	31
Supervisor	13
Manager	5

4.2.2 Satisfaction with Communication Methods of Human Resource Teams

Respondents were asked about their perception of how well their HR team communicated at their hotel. The response options were:

- I receive adequate communication from my HR team in order to perform my role effectively.
- My HR team recognises a job well done.
- My HR team listen to ideas and suggestions.
- I feel free to discuss suggestions or challenges with my HR team.
- I share a good relationship with my HR team.
- I receive direct communication from my HR team on a regular basis.

In summary, most respondents agreed with these statements and were happy with the level of communication from their HR team as shown in Figure 1 below. When asked the question "In what ways do you think your HR team effectively communicate information in your hotel?", most respondents wrote that emails were an effective form of communication, followed by noticeboards and face-to-face catch-ups or meetings. When asked the question "In what ways do you think the overall communication processes can be improved in your hotel by your HR team?", some respondents thought nothing needed improving. A few respondents mentioned that noticeboards need to be updated more regularly. Some respondents noted that they wanted more face-to-face interaction with their HR team; however, a couple of respondents noted that in their hotel *"communication through Facebook posts has just been implemented recently. I think it has improved communication in terms of what is happening at the hotel"*. Another respondent wrote that HR teams should *"find more creative ways to communicate, create videos, interactive messages etc"*.

The following statements are about your Human Resource teams. Please state your level of agreement with the below:

Answered: 49   Skipped: 0
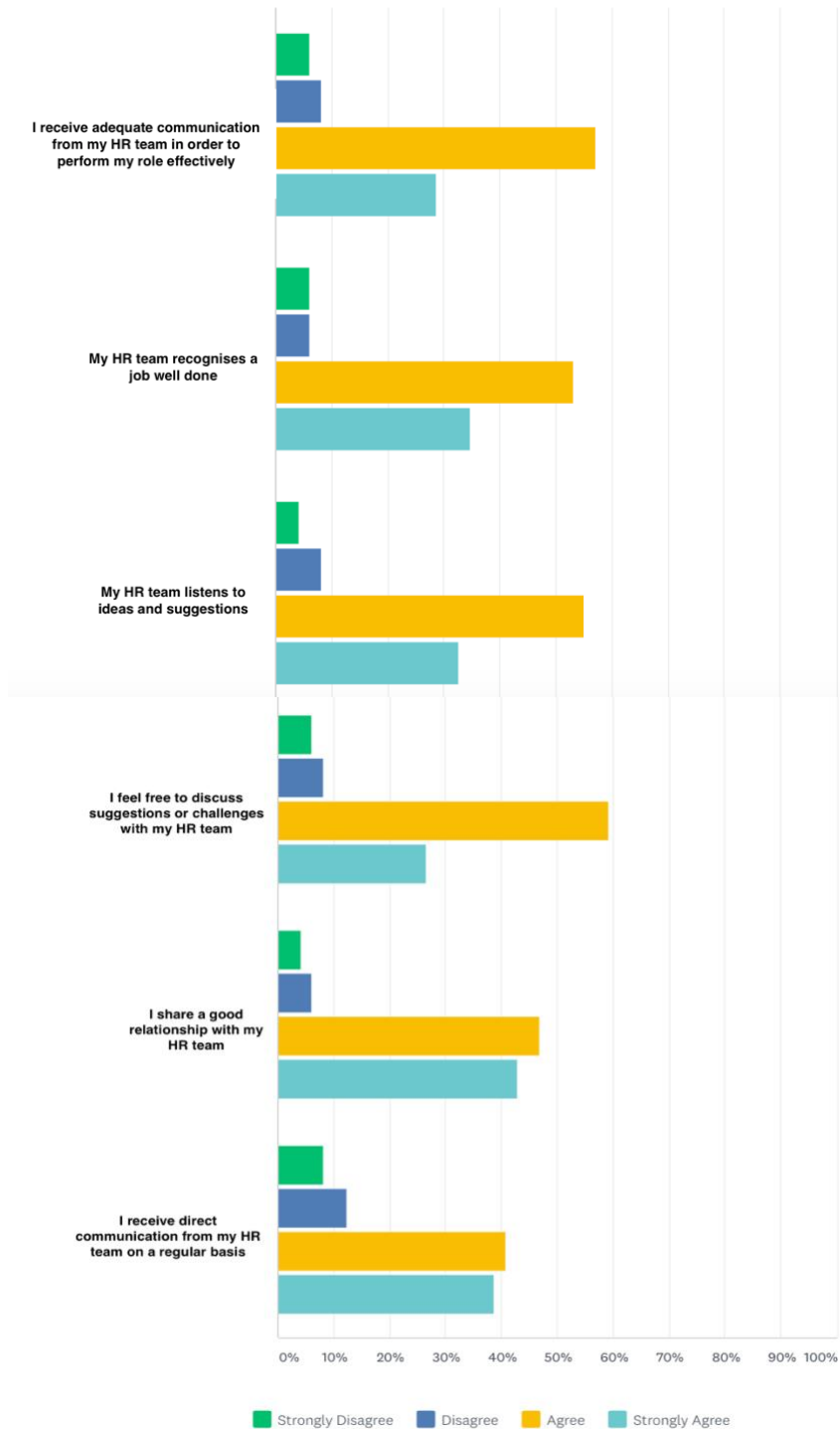
Figure 1. Satisfaction with communication methods from human resource teams

4.2.3   Satisfaction with Communication Methods of Supervisors and Managers

Respondents in this question were asked about their perception of how well their supervisors or managers communicated at their hotel, as visualised in Figure 2. The same response options were used as in Figure 1, but pertaining to supervisors and managers. There were similar results to the above, with most respondents agreeing with the statements and happy with the standard of communication from their supervisors or managers. When asked, "In what ways do you think your supervisors / managers effectively communicate information in your hotel?", most respondents wrote through face-to-face meetings (briefings, meetings, etc). One respondent wrote, *"[the] digital communication board in our F&B back of house [has] just been added recently. This is basically telling us the functions that are happening around the hotel as well as any food and wine promotions".* When asked the question "In what ways do you think the overall communication processes can be improved in your hotel by supervisors / managers?", a key idea voiced by most respondents was that more group face-to-face meetings should occur on a regular basis.
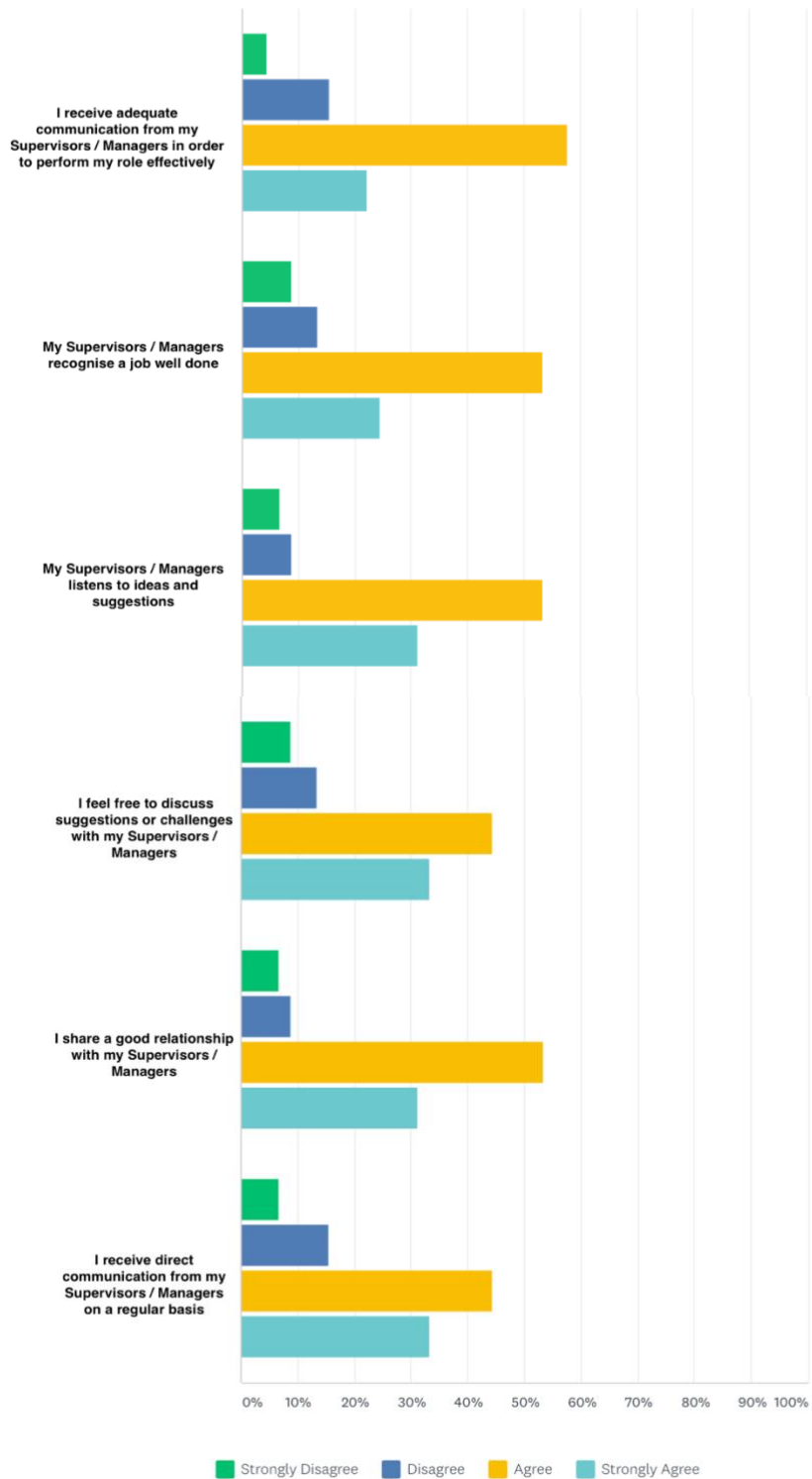
Figure 2. Satisfaction with communication methods from supervisors and managers

4.2.4 Satisfaction with General Communication Processes

Figure 3 shows respondents in this section asked about their level of satisfaction with general communication practices occurring at their hotel. The response options were:

- The communication within my department is effective.
- The communication between the various departments in my hotel is effective.
- My colleagues and I share our thoughts about the performance of the hotel with each other.
- Information about company and departmental policies and goals are shared with everyone in the team.
- Information on company profits and company standings are shared with everyone in the team.
- I receive information about changes within the hotel / organisation.
- I understand how my work impacts on the organisation's business goals.
- The hotel's communication processes make me identify with it or feel like a vital part of it.
- Most communication I receive is relevant to me.

In summary, most respondents agreed with the above statements; however, slightly more respondents disagreed with these statements compared with the questions surrounding communication from HR and supervisors or managers. Below are a few standout observations from this section:

- 23% of respondents disagreed and 5% strongly disagreed that the communication within their department was effective. However, 51% agreed and 21% strongly agreed.
- 30% of respondents disagreed and 2% strongly disagreed that the communication within the various departments in their hotel was effective. However, 56% agreed and 12% strongly agreed.
- 23% of respondents disagreed and 12% strongly disagreed that information on company profits and standings were shared at their hotel. However, 56% agreed and 9% strongly agreed.

Interestingly, when data was filtered to only view results from managers, at least one respondent disagreed with almost all of the statements in this particular section.

Although there were only five respondents, this was interesting to note. The only statement that all five respondents agreed with was "My colleagues and I share our thoughts about the performance of the hotel with each other". In addition, only one respondent strongly agreed that communication within their department was effective.
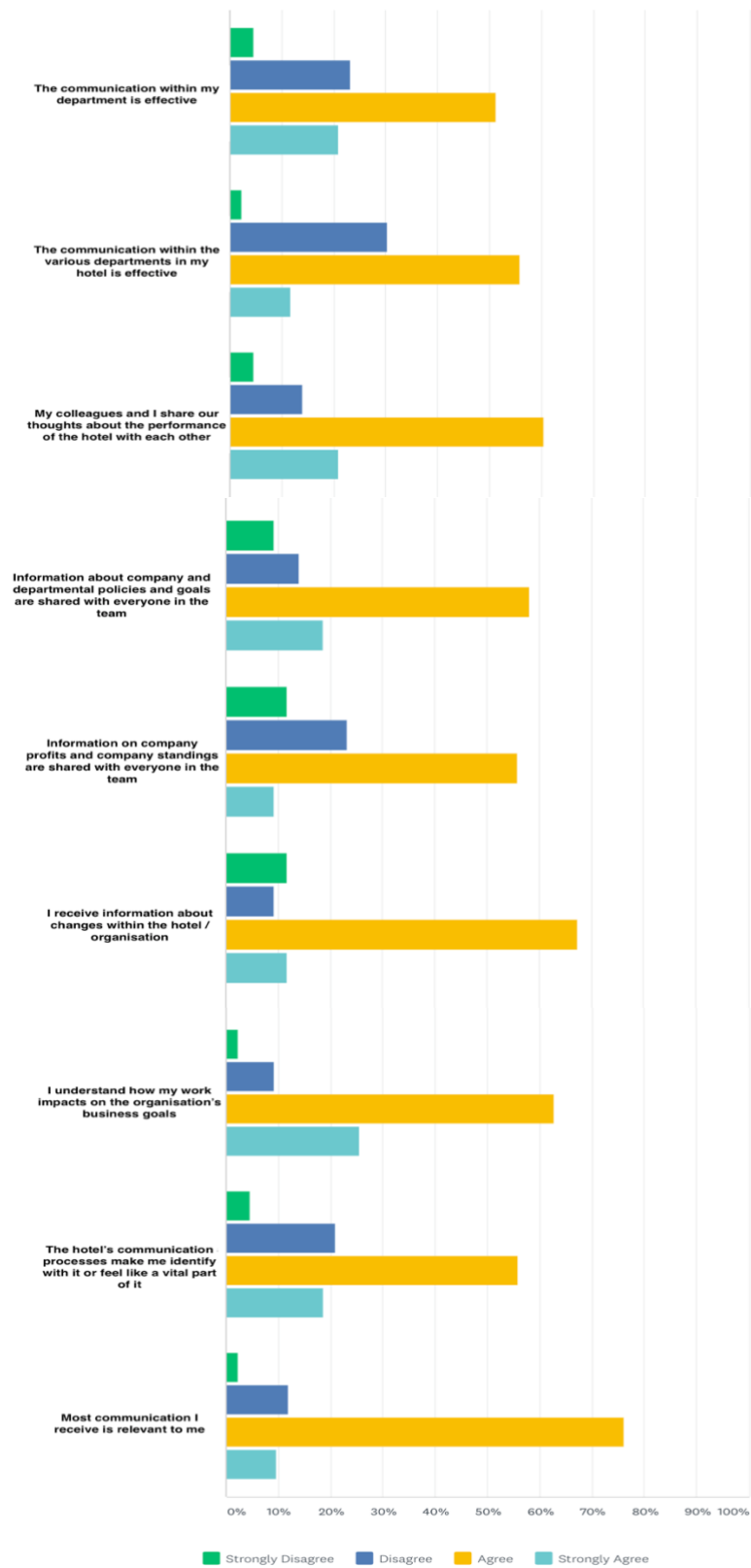
Figure 3. Satisfaction with general communication practices

Most respondents received information about their job, benefits or career opportunities from their HR department, followed by supervisors and managers as shown below in Figure 4.
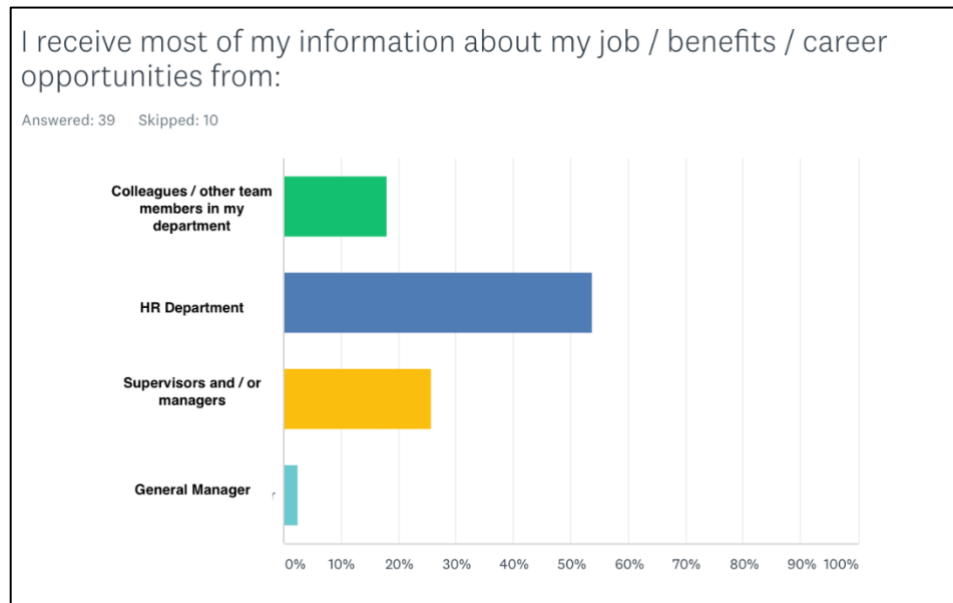
Figure 4. Where information comes from

Figure 5 shows that most respondents received information about their job, benefits or career opportunities through emails. Figure 6 shows that this was also the most preferred form of communication.
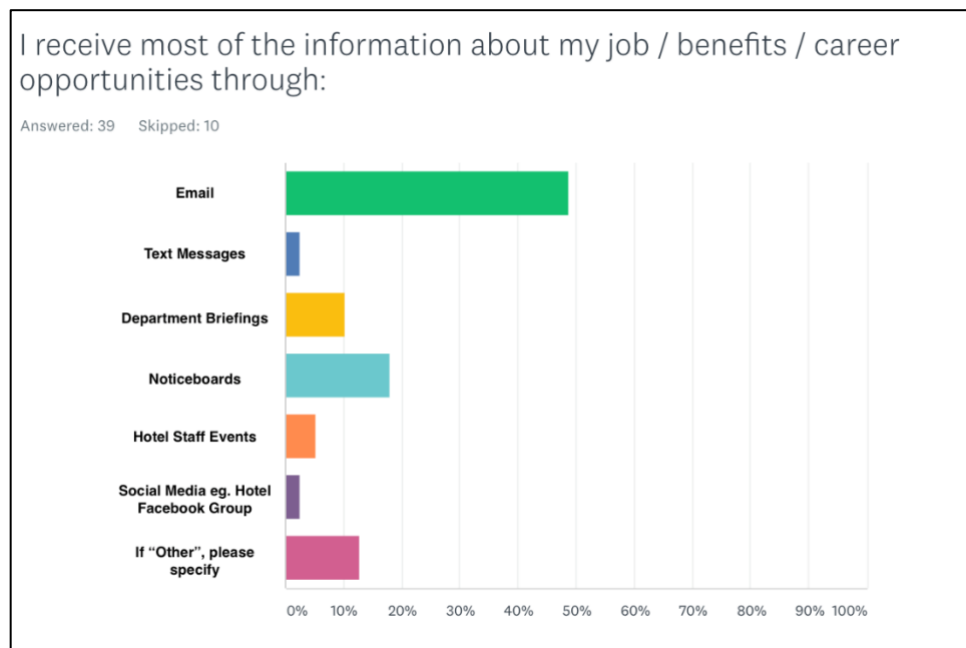
Figure 5. How information is communicated
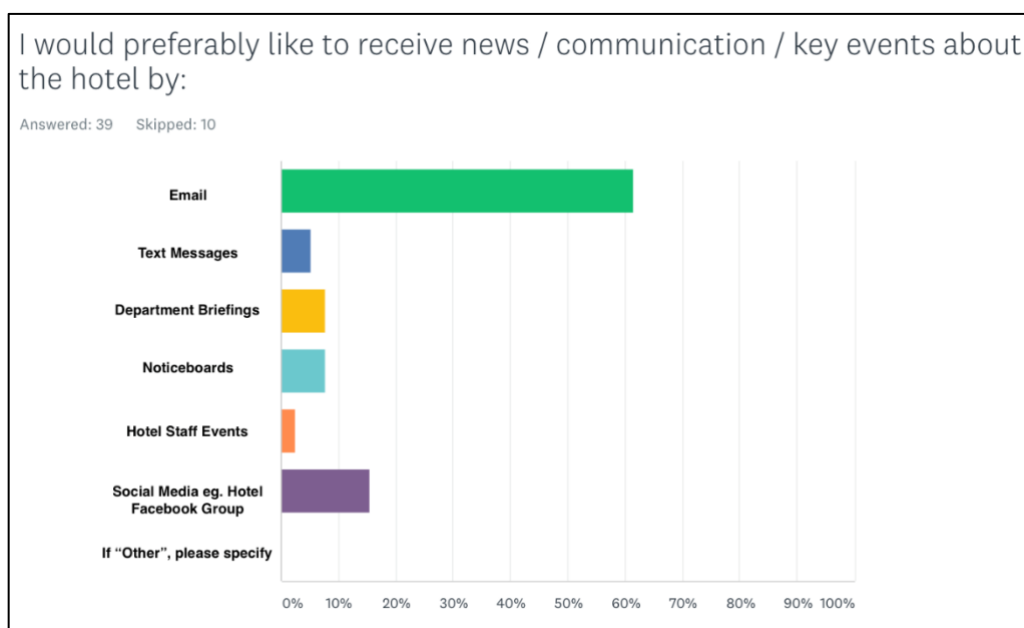
Figure 6. How survey respondents would like information to be shared

The majority of respondents noted that the amount of communication they received was "just right", and only 20% of respondents noted they received too little, as shown below in Figure 7. No respondent recorded receiving too much information.

TOO MUCH	ABOUT RIGHT	TOO LITTLE	TOTAL
0.00%	79.49%	20.51%	
0	31	8	39
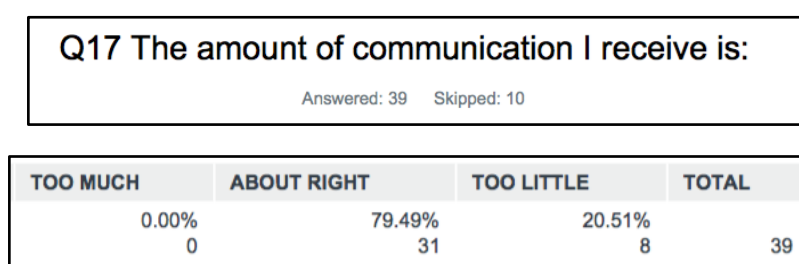
Figure 7. Amount of communication

4.2.5   Overall Thoughts

Finally, respondents were asked their perceptions of how effective they found the overall communication practices at their hotel. A variety of different responses were gathered; however, emails, noticeboards and face-to-face communication were among the most popular to be mentioned in this section. Respondents were also asked their perceptions of how communication processes overall could be improved at their hotel. Respondents seemed to want more face-to-face communication through the means of regular team and department briefings. Interestingly, only two respondents in this section mentioned using social media more often to communicate information:

> *Meetings or discussions between team members or different departments, preferably every 3 months.*

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All communication should not depend on social media or emails. They need to interact face to face.

4.2.6 Summary

- On the whole, most respondents were satisfied with the level and quality of communication from both their HR teams and their supervisors or managers.

- More respondents disagreed with the statements relating to general hotel communication practices, in particular, noting their dissatisfaction with communication within their department as well as communicating to different departments.

- Most respondents received their communication through email, and this was the preferred method of communication as well.

- Approximately 80% of respondents felt that the amount of communication they were receiving was just right.

- Results were filtered by position (front-line employee, supervisor and manager) to determine whether there could be variances in results; however, this had no real impact because the overall consensus of the survey results was generally quite positive and respondents were satisfied with the communication processes occurring at their hotel.

4.3 Interviews

The general theme of the findings from the interview data concerns individuals' key experiences of communication. This chapter has three different subsections. The first subsection considers general communication procedures, describing what is being communicated, the different forms of communication and what the role of HR is in communication. The second subsection concerns the challenges of communication processes within the hotel industry. Lastly, the third subsection discusses what was perceived as effective communication by the five HR managers.

Table 3 below outlines the profile of each interview participant.

Table 3. Profile of interview participants

Participant	Participant profile
A	Human Resource Manager of 5-star hotel
B	Human Resource Coordinator of 5-star hotel (no manager appointed during time of data collection)
C	Human Resource Manager of 5-star hotel
D	Human Resource Manager of 5-star hotel
E	Human Resource Manager of 4-star hotel

4.3.1 General Communication Procedures

4.3.1.1 What is communicated

There were a variety of responses from all participants indicating that "*anything and everything is communicated!*" Regarding the guest perspective, Participant E mentioned in detail that "*there's a lot of information that comes out about our guests*", signifying the strong guest focus that hotels have. This information included "*who's coming, why they're so important, how long they're staying...what do they need*". Participant A and Participant C grouped this as "*VIP information*", which was communicated to all employees on a daily basis. The daily briefing sheet outlined what was happening in the day and was generally discussed in morning briefings. This included information such as VIP information, daily happenings, any groups that the team needed to be aware of, what meetings or conferences were being held and in which boardrooms, and any staff events that were scheduled. Participant A stated that "*everyone refers to it [the daily briefing sheet], and everyone looks at it*", making it a key form of communication as well as something that is communicated regularly.

Participants A and E mentioned that both positive and negative guest feedback was shared, although this would be standard procedure among all hotels. Participant E explained how there was an online platform where all guest feedback was collected. This allowed the hotels to review and reply back to each piece of feedback received from the guests. Any constructive or negative feedback was reviewed thoroughly and plans were put into place to fix what went wrong so that it did not happen again. Positive feedback about employees was also shared, particularly if a guest had mentioned their name through the online feedback system.

Information that was specifically for employees was also communicated and even this had varying responses from each participant. Participants A, B and C spoke about

benefits, in particular, *"corporate deals"* that were communicated generally from head office and then distributed to the rest of the team. Participant B spoke in detail about employee relations matters that were shared with the team regularly from the HR department. This included employee birthdays and anniversaries with the company, which were shared monthly with the team, along with any ad hoc messages, such as collecting of name badges, ID cards, distributing of new contracts and communicating new starters within the hotel. Other ad hoc messages shared concerned events coming up in relation to bimonthly staff meetings, information about annual employee surveys, and other staff events.

Employee recognition was something that all participants mentioned that they communicated. Participant A put it as *"celebrating the wins"*. News of employees gaining successes or accolades in relation to work were shared with the team, along with those employees who received positive feedback from guests, be it in person, email or even third party websites such as Trip Advisor.

> Participant E: *We do celebrate or spend time talking about comments, like when guests comment on our performance as a hotel, or individual people. That's often sent around by email, and talked about in briefings and we try as managers to talk directly to the employee and say "Hey we saw this comment, and well done!" So they don't just get that feedback from their manager.*

This shows that employee recognition was extremely valued in this company.

In terms of management, Participants C and E added that compliance matters such as Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) and the company's sustainability program, requirements and policies were communicated as well. Participant C added that any updated standard operating procedures or information related to this also came through from the corporate office team. Financial information about the hotel's performance was shared during management meetings, according to Participant C, and Participant E relayed that *"information [is] shared around revenue and business, and how much business is coming, or business that we thought was coming and now it's changed"*. With regard to HR, updates were shared on key projects in the works as well as information about what was happening at that time of the year, such as talent reviews or pay reviews.

4.3.1.2 Forms of communication

There was no "one" way that information was communicated and all participants had similar yet unique responses describing the forms of communication applied at their hotels.

4.3.1.2.1 Briefings

Across all participants, briefings were the most popular and well-regarded forum of communication, particularly in a hotel setting. Participant A preferred this forum because it was possible to communicate one message to multiple individuals at a time. Noting that there must be consistency in the messages each day, this forum was an effective and efficient way to communicate, especially when certain departments had larger numbers of staff. An interesting point mentioned by Participant A is that when communicating face to face, *"you can tell if they're listening or not"*. Which makes it easy for heads of departments and key management personnel to clarify for and assist those who were still unsure. Most participants relayed that management briefings were carried out every day of the week, whereas Participant C stated only three times a week. In addition to management briefings, each department held their own briefing prior to a shift period commencing. Participant B acknowledged that information gained about a particular department from the management briefings would be filtered through to the supervisors and then the front-line team.

In summary, all participants were advocates of communicating through briefings, as expressed by Participant A:

> *When you're in a hotel, the majority of your team are front-line, and the majority of your front-line team don't have [work] emails. If the question was around communication in the management team…at that level…I would say emails [would be best way to communicate]. But I think if you talk about communication to your front-line and supervisory team, then I'd say briefings.*

Participants B, C and E shared similar views that briefings were the "best way", because then everyone was on the same page.

4.3.1.2.2 Team meetings

Team meetings were another form of communication utilised. Participants A, B and C all had slightly different yet similar interpretations. Team meetings could be held bimonthly or quarterly, as stated by Participant A, and they would be department

meetings to talk about current challenges facing the team and discuss steps on how to better the situation for the team. Participant B indicated that they also had staff meetings on a larger and more formal scale through a hotel meeting, also held bimonthly. This event was a chance for the general manager to discuss with the team the performance of the hotel and ask for any feedback from the team. Participant C mentioned that they *"communicate through regular meetings and updates with certain layers of the business"*. A supervisors' meeting had recently been introduced for this layer of the team at Participant C's hotel, which provided the opportunity for up-and-coming future leaders within the business to voice their suggestions on current issues. A formal monthly HOD meeting was also established at Participant C's hotel, which gave the management layer of the business an opportunity to formally discuss the performance of the hotel on a regular basis and to touch base with how each department was doing.

4.3.1.2.3 Noticeboards

Most participants mentioned the use of noticeboards as a tool that they used to communicate information with. Participants B, C and E spoke about the traditional use of this tool of putting up posters on the noticeboards and updating them on an ongoing basis. However, Participant E noted that *"the danger of this [having noticeboards] is that people stop looking"*. Participant E also noted that there were *"pressures of making sure that you're a sustainable organisation…so you don't want to be printing 500 pieces of information all the time"*. Participant A's response to the usage of noticeboards was unique. At Participant A's hotel, televisions were set up in the area where original noticeboards were and key announcements or information would be shown through a rolling slideshow:

> Participant A: *The TV has vacancies…the announcements of any new staff….hotel's performance score, any guest feedback…any pictures of anything departments have done recently. It's got info about what we might do sustainability wise…any weekly specials. They might put up a story about where the food comes from, so that everyone knows.*

The idea behind communicating information on a television was to be rid of the plain noticeboards because *"it's a waste of paper…and no one really reads it [the noticeboards]"*.

4.3.1.2.4 Emails

All participants reported and agreed that using emails was a key way for them as HR employees to communicate. Participants C and E explained that since they were in a computer-based role, emails were used more from a follow-up and time management perspective. Outlook was used especially as a tool to manage time and tasks, as well as a communicative tool for sending emails. However, Participant C pointed out that using emails for operational teams was challenging, since their roles were not computer based on a regular basis. Therefore, it was important to find a way around that.

Participant C explained:

> *So what I tend to do is I might email it, but then I might print it and put it on their desk as a follow-up if it's really critical information.*

Participant B noted that sending emails in bulk is another way to reach those who have work email addresses. All hotels had an "**** (hotel) ALL" email group, so any email communication sent through could be forwarded on to this email group if applicable. Furthermore, people's personal emails could also be used; however, they were used only if the communication applied directly to them, from an HR perspective.

4.3.1.2.5 Social media

Lastly, social media can be described as an up-and-coming tool for communicating information. Most participants gave mixed reviews about this tool, and its use and effects on the team. Hotel Facebook groups were mentioned and tended to be prevalent across all participants at their hotels. These group pages were closed and only accessible to those who were current employees at the hotel. Participant B explained that information such as monthly birthdays, dates for key staff meetings and events such as International Women's Day and Valentine's Day were posted on this group. The general consensus from the participants was that while it was a unique tool, as Participant A claimed, *"Facebook is a bit of a hit and miss…unless there's a picture on it [the post], they [the employees] don't really care".* Participants B and C also noted that even though social media is a widely used tool outside of work, not all current employees have Facebook accounts or use it to such an extent that all group posts are regularly read or followed. Participant C shared the concern that this tool

would not be used as the main form of communication because of the disparity of users. She elaborated by saying that the medium was not risk adverse, and because of the volume of information communication, in addition to high turnover rates, sometimes employees who had been terminated might not be taken off the group straight away, because of operational demands. Therefore, there was a risk because the medium required regular maintenance.

Participant E, on the other hand, spoke about the use of WhatsApp as a social media tool that was widely used at her hotel. A management WhatsApp group was implemented to create cohesiveness within the senior management employees through "instant communication". In addition, department WhatsApp groups were implemented to communicate general information in an informal tone. Participant E claimed that this process had worked well for the teams and resulted in an increase in communication throughout the hotel.

4.3.1.3 Role of HR in communication

Participant A stated:

> *It's important we [HR department] aren't seen as that person that just sits in the office. HR should be out and about, in delivering messages and catching up with the team.*

This aspect was a strong factor in responses about the role of HR in communication. Participant A went on to express that a big part of an HR professional's role was to remind the managers of operational departments that although their priority was the guests and their needs, their team and their needs also needed to be prioritised. Participant B agreed that the relationship with their guests and clients was important; however, this extended to ensuring the needs of their employees were met as well. This point was further extended and emphasised by Participant E, who had personally undergone a shift in communication style. Initially relying on detailed emails to communicate information, Participant E had found it important to shift the focus from a desk role and ensure an *"'open door policy' is always maintained"*.

> Participant E: *Now I know the way to get effective communication is literally to go to those briefings, go up on the floors in Housekeeping, help the girls etc…and the porters, if you're out there and you go and collect a car for them, they see you and they know you, and they know you're approachable and they can talk to you. The F&B team, if they see you clearing plates for them, they're like, "how do you know how to carry 3 plates?", and [I say to them],*

> *"I did it for 12 years!". But then they see you differently, and they're more comfortable talking to you.*

A specific area that Participant C elaborated on was that HRs had responsibilities towards the brand and owners to ensure the hotel always remained compliant. Participant C notably touched extensively on how important it was to have the "buy-in" from the team, in particular, the senior MT, because without their support, the HR department would not be effective:

> Participant C: *A lot of it comes down to picking the battles that you can win…Knowing that hotels generally operate in lean fashion…we don't have the luxury of 15 people in HR to manage and backdate and cross every box. So a lot of it comes down to prioritising.*

Participant C stressed that her job in HR was to manage risk and communicate this information from an HR perspective to the senior heads of departments and let *"them handle their business how they see fit".* As long as the information had been passed on from HR to the heads of departments, it was up to the senior managers how they chose to filter this down to the rest of their teams:

> Participant C: *They understand their business more than I understand their business. My job is not to understand their operational need. My job is to make sure that we manage our risk and support them in terms of the people.*

4.3.2   Challenges Faced with Internal Communication

4.3.2.1   How internal communication is filtered through the tiers of the business

4.3.2.1.1   Forms of communication not always effective

The participants expressed their need to rely on different forms of communication, as indicated in Section 4.3.1.2; however, all forms had underlying challenges. A recurring theme that came through from the findings was that delivering consistent internal communication was *"extremely hard to achieve".* One of the reasons for this, as Participant B pointed out, was that "*one style of communication doesn't suit everyone".* With hotels employing on average more than 100+ employees to work in their hotels, in particular, larger scale hotels, the need to ensure that important internal communication is distributed clearly and effectively has never been more important.

An issue that Participant A specifically faced in her hotel was ensuring consistency in messages delivered to all employees. Because of the magnitude of the team, messages passed down the line from manager to supervisor to front-line employees tended to

end up being distorted by the time they reached the end of this chain. Participant A likened this to *"Chinese whispers"*, where messages change each time they are conveyed to a different person. Participant D shared the same consensus and acknowledged that among the MT, the line of internal communication was clear most of the time. However, the line of internal communication from supervisors to front-line employees *"needs to be worked on"*. There was an evident "breakdown" in communication, especially when information was not passed on and it is interesting to note that Participant D recognised that this needed to be addressed. Participant E also recognised the need for a better way of ensuring operational employees (those who did not have desk-based roles) were given the same level of communication as those with desk-based roles.

> Participant B: *Most of our communication, if it's not face to face, is through…mostly email.*

Participant B expressed that even though the hotel was using different forms of communication to try to cater to everyone's needs, there was always a number of employees who evidently did not receive the information that was passed on. When asked the reason why, Participant B stated that sometimes this was due to the employee not being as *"active on their phone, or they don't understand technology as much, so that's probably one of the barriers"*. She added that some employees also did not have an email address:

> Participant B: *They've never had an email address, they've walked in [to the hotel] and handed their CV in person, because maybe they've been out of the workforce for a long time.*

Participant B explained that in the present day, because of the reliance on emails specifically as a communication tool, it was important to be conscious of the small minority that might not be as experienced with emails or using technology as a form of communication. She gave an example that part of her role in onboarding new employees was to set up their profiles on the online university platform. However, this relied on the new starters having an email address. Participant B expressed her concern that sometimes these small setbacks might *"shun"* this minority group from feeling included in work activities and as a result *"disengage them from work"*.

Participant D shared a slightly different opinion from that of Participant B, stating that there should not be a reliance on using briefings or emails because communication at

times ended up being dropped off, which resulted in not everyone receiving the same message. Another eventuality was that some managers might not be as focused as other managers on communicating information regularly, because they might not believe that some information was relevant for sharing; however, other managers might be communicating everything. On a different note, Participant D explained that in a briefing or meeting, if the information being delivered was not particularly interesting or it did not directly affect them, some individuals *"switch off"* because they found it difficult to stay focused and listen to the message. Participant D shared that they were still finding their feet in terms of communicating effectively.

Participant A's opinion ties together the concerns that Participants B and C shared and explains that even though different forms of communication were used to deliver messages and information, such as Facebook pages and team meetings, it was frustrating then to realise at times that the message had not been passed on. She mentioned that the general manager at her hotel sometimes conducted spot checks on random front-line employees to determine whether important messages had been passed on to them, and sometimes the employee was not sure. There could be a number of reasons why the employee was not sure, but Participant A added that it could be that their *"manager has told them, and they've just forgotten"*. When asked how to go about this issue, Participant A simply advised that just because a message was delivered once did not mean the message had been retained, and to be consistent with the message, *"you've got to be repetitive in what you're saying to ensure that everyone is on the same page"*.

> Participant E: *Sometimes communication is…when it's done wrong, it can be a huge waste of time. So you can have meetings and meetings, but if they're not effective, and you're not getting outcomes from them and people don't know how to have a meeting, or how to have a discussion, then it's a waste of time. So then people view communication as wasting time.*

Participant E strongly expressed her opinions regarding communicating effectively because not doing so resulted in a lack of efficiency and disengagement within the team. She alluded to what Participant A said about being repetitive with communicating messages to be consistent but added that there needed to be follow-ups after delivering a message to ensure that the information was being retained. Participant D experienced a period when a number of meetings were held with managers; however, there was no follow-through from these meetings or trust that the

actions that were laid out to be completed would be done, which resulted in the meetings being ineffective, as well as a waste of time.

Participant D was also a big advocate for the use of WhatsApp at her hotel because she found it to be a useful tool to communicate information instantaneously. However, the downfall with such a tool is that there needs to be *"respectful considerations"* and the tool needs to be used appropriately.

> Participant E: *There has been a few times that I've spoken to the managers over the last three months because there's been messages coming through at midnight and 2am, and they're finishing work. And….that wakes me up! And then I read it thinking it's an emergency, and it's not…*

4.3.2.1.2 Social media

Participant C shared concerns about the use of Facebook as a tool of communication. She explained that in theory the idea was great; however, the constant management of the page would end up being with the HR department. Once an employee had resigned and left the business, their profile needed to be deleted from the page because they would be no longer be privy to the information being communicated.

> Participant C: *When you've got, not sensitive information, but stuff that doesn't necessarily need to be out in the public forum, there is risk that if you're not on top of it, you've got team members in the group that may have resigned or may have been terminated, and you just haven't managed that properly. And there is risk around that.*

Participant A, on the other hand, explained that their hotel Facebook group was used on a more regular basis; however, she mentioned that if the message did not include a photo, then the message was not read or did not receive many likes.

> Participant A: *If I just put a picture of something to do with [the topic], they're more likely to read it, for whatever reason. I think it might be because it stands out more to them.*

4.3.2.1.3 Volume of communication

When asked about the volume of communication, all participants shared the view that there was too much information.

> Participant A: *There's always going to be too much information that you're trying to communicate.*

Participant B, in particular, focused on the induction process, noting the extensiveness of information to be covered within the initial days of new employment:

> Participant B: *I feel like on their first day we do kind of overload them with information…they've sat down for three hours, and they've needed to read through this massive chunk of paperwork, and then they do their risk training.*

Compliance trainings, especially, were focused on most in the initial days of employment for a new starter in addition to other administration tasks.

When asked how they try to overcome the issue of communicating too much information to their employees, almost all participants said that they *"filter"* the information that they need to pass on. Participants C and D alluded to prioritising and finding different ways of communicating different information, for example, critical messages to be passed on during briefings and less critical messages to be put on a poster in the staff room. Participant C explained that this way the information was prioritised and communicated in a specific way on a need-to-know basis.

Participant A spoke a great deal about ensuring that only relevant information was communicated and timing the nature of these messages accordingly. However, with respect to the volume of communication within the HR team, Participant A mentioned that she would *"rather have it all [the information]"*, because then if the information was filed away, at least it could always be referred back to if needed. Overall, it was a matter of knowing what was best for the hotel, depending on the status or level of completion, as Participant D stated.

> Participant A: *If they're not mentioned in it, I don't really think they need to know….our role in the hotel is to decide whether that's going to benefit our team. Is it the right time to launch this info….or do we need to sit on it?*

An interesting point mentioned by Participant D was that sometimes the information was filtered through the managers so that not everything was communicated by the HR department. If HR continuously sent information, then *"you will lose the impact"*, and employees would not take communication from HR seriously:

> Participant D: *If we're always sending out messages and they're always policies or memos…you start shutting off, "it's just another email from HR *DELETE*", without reading it.*

4.3.2.2 Catering to different demographics

4.3.2.2.1 Language barriers

Almost all participants felt that language barriers were a big deterrent when trying to communicate information. They mentioned that when there were many employees working in a hotel with English as their second language it was challenging to communicate effectively. When asked why, Participant D explained that *"sometimes instructions may not be as clear for one, as it is for the other"*, and there could be varying reasons for this, such as how clearly the instruction was delivered and what the mother tongue was of the person receiving the message. This could lead to misunderstandings because *"a message could be delivered by one person, and someone else could say it, but it could mean something different or it might be taken on the wrong or different way"*.

> Participant D: *…say if English is not your first language, and you are trying to give an instruction, but you may not know the correct English term…it could give a different message. Or say from the other side, if English is not your first language and you are still learning it and you have someone like me giving instructions, whose first language is English, and I talk very fast…that can be very hard to receive the message as well…Or to hear the correct wording or tone of the message. Sometimes that can be relayed accidentally in the wrong way.*

> Participant A: *It's hard. If I even think about my Housekeeping team meeting yesterday, there's 50 of them sitting in a room and four of them are students from Japan doing an internship with us. And in all honesty, I know that everything I am saying, the information I am saying is lost on them, and they are not really interested. They pretend to be, but I know that they do not understand. But then we don't just talk to them. There is also an activity, and so there are a couple of them [other team members] that have taken those people under their wing, and they will start to explain the main points [to the students].*

One of the reasons for the language constraints, according to Participant A, was that there were too many *"big words"* used in communications, and they needed to *"dumb it down"*, for the mere sake of making things simpler to understand and to explain, depending on whom the information was being explained to. However, she added that this specifically was not a challenge, but just something to be mindful of.

Participant D spoke about how the delivery of the message could really affect whether or not the message was received in its rightful manner, especially when working with a diverse team. The words used in a message at times might not translate for someone

who spoke a different language into the same meaning as what was originally intended.

> Participant D: *Sometimes the delivery of the message…might come across…more blunt or ruder than what it was actually meant because…in English, and especially in New Zealand, we have a lot of slang, or we use a lot of fluffy words. Whereas in other cultures they may not, so when they are trying to say something in English, it might come across too direct. It is not meant to be but…sometimes [it might be taken] the wrong way.*

4.3.2.2.2 Different communication needs

Participant B focused on how it was important to be mindful of different cultures and especially those employees who began working within days of having arrived in the country. She suggested that the way information was delivered to this specific group of people should be considerate of their situation in order to include them more:

> Participant B: *I guess change your way of communication to make sure that you are not excluding these people, because it is hard enough to move away from your family in most cases to a different country, and let alone feel like the world is kind of just moving around you, and you are not being involved in anything.*

On a completely different tangent, Participant C believed that language barriers were apparent and specific to the different levels and roles within a hotel. When asked what she meant by this, Participant C gave the example of a housekeeper and a supervisor, and how both roles required different levels of communication, in regard to content, volume and style. She also mentioned that the "buy-in" from both parties would differ between the two positions.

> Participant C: *Information I give to the supervisor about what is happening around Australia might be more relevant and useful than giving that to a housekeeper. Equally I give information to a housekeeper about…something that has come out of a WHS meeting, and a potential change around how they do something. [Information like this] is going to be much more interesting to them than anyone else in the business.*

Participant C importantly pointed out that a large percentage of employees in hotels worked on a part-time basis. In addition, some employees were visa holders and therefore might only be working as a short-term holiday. Because of this, the level of communication delivered and the investment from each group of employees also differed:

> Participant C: *In a hotel, you have got a career-focused sector, but that is generally your supervisor level or above. In your front-line roles, it is very transient and so what communication you give to them, and how much you offer and how much your supervisors are telling them, I think needs to vary because their investment is less or different.*

Another aspect pointed out by Participant C was that the 24/7 nature of the business in the hospitality industry "*poses challenges because often you are not seeing people all the time*". Participant C felt that in light of this and knowing the characteristics of the industry, *"different channels of communication for different parts of the business"* should be thought of, in addition to different ways of communicating.

4.3.2.2.3 *Generational differences*

Participant D was the only one who touched on the fact that there were generational differences now in terms of communicating information:

> Participant D: *The way our grandparents and parents have learnt to communicate and manage people…through communication is completely different to how millennials and Generation Z [would effectively communicate].*

She felt that hotels really did need to take this into account and find ways of merging the needs of the different generations to make communication effective for everyone.

Participant E also alluded to this point by mentioning that different departments would be approached and communicated with in a specific way, because of the type of people working in that department.

> Participant E: *You know, you have got Front Office, who are mostly early 20s and they are pretty young and quick. And [so] you would approach them different to a Housekeeping team, which are mostly sort of more mature women….*

4.3.3 What Is Effective Communication?

When participants were asked what they believed was the key to effective communication, their responses involved consistency and regularity, and transparency and trust.

4.3.3.1 *Consistency and regularity*

> Participant A: *Effective communication is getting the same message [delivered] consistently across all levels. It's as simple as that.*

All participants responded with delivering consistent messages regularly. Participant C explained that this came from having knowledge about your team [management team, in particular], how they worked and what their *"pressure points"* were:

> Participant C: *If I know they are really busy on a Monday, I don't bother them then…I know for example that my Director of Revenue is rammed on a Monday, so there is no point in talking to him then…so I wait till Tuesday.*

Participant E spoke about how communication needed to *"start from the top"* (from the general manager and head of department team), needed to happen regularly, and needed to be something that was an organic process that people did fluently:

> Participant E: *In this hotel…we have really struggled…to have regular briefings. Housekeeping and Front Office have them, but Food & Beverage and Kitchen didn't till about two years ago, and then even now they struggle to make it regular…also to be clearer about what they should even be talking about. That comes with experience, I think…From the top it needs to be clear what needs to be communicated and that needs to be coached and coached and coached all the way down the hierarchy.*

Participant E mentioned that when they had communication that started from the top, there was clarity and teamwork among the team, which resulted in a more cohesive and efficient team. She found that the constant follow-ups from the general manager ensured team members were actively communicating and engaging with one another:

> Participant E: *It started with him, and we had meetings. There was a purpose to the meetings. He wrote minutes to the meetings and he followed these up…And the staff…the way he set up…what our commitments were…meant that the managers were talking to each other, and they were talking to each other's departments [and] were in each other's briefings. We had more frequent, but less formal meetings. We were talking…And the teams…that is when Food & Beverage and Kitchen started having set times for briefings, and they started to teach the supervisors what to talk about in these meetings. So it kind of forced the managers to pass on the information from the General Manager to the supervisors, because they had something to talk about.*

4.3.3.2 Transparency and trust

Being transparent with information and communication was a big topic touched on by most participants. Participant B claimed that being open and transparent with communication were the *"fundamentals"* to manage a high-performing team. This was echoed profusely by other participants.

Participant D explained that effective communication was when there was openness and honesty with people and the full picture was shown, rather than bits of

information and then *"just expecting them to fill in the blanks"*. She rightly questioned "*if people do not know, or they don't know…what we talk about in our meetings….how do we effectively get the same message across and get the same result?"* She added that sometimes people were afraid to share information because of the repercussions it might have on the team; however, she claimed that openness was still the way to go:

> Participant D: *I think sometimes they need to know that yes, "the market is quiet at the moment, so the hotel is going to be a bit quiet, but don't worry because we can then spend more time with our guests and make them have more memorable stays". You know, just to encourage them….keep them informed and let them know what is happening.*

Participant E introduced a different angle and added the concept of two-way communication being paramount because managers, supervisors and front-line team members needed to be comfortable enough to share their thoughts and concerns with each other:

> Participant E: *Being able to have those effective discussions really impacts the efficiency and your success in the business.*

Participant E also brought up the idea of trust and how crucial this was when trying to communicate information. Having trust effectively means that the communication and information delivered will be actioned and trusting that the task outlined will be completed:

> Participant E: *You can talk all you like, but if you do not trust the person you are talking to and trying to work something out with them, then you will not have that vulnerability…it is the trust stuff…leading by example. You have got to have this when communicating.*

4.3.4 Summary

- A great deal of information was constantly communicated and shared. This included:
  - information about guests, VIPs, guest feedback
  - benefits for employees, such as corporate deals
  - employee relations
  - employee recognition
  - compliance matters, such as health and safety, and processes towards the company's sustainability program.

- Different forms of communication were used:
  - Briefings and team meetings were the most beneficial form of communicating information because many individuals could be reached at once. All participants agreed with this.
  - A few participants mentioned that they were veering away from the traditional use of noticeboards, because of its current lack of effectiveness, as well as sustainability concerns.
  - There were mixed reviews about the effectiveness of social media and its usage as a communication tool for employees in the hotel industry.

- There were, evidently, challenges with communicating information:
  - trying to create an effective communication channel that suits all employees, which was *"extremely hard to achieve"*
  - ensuring consistency and repetitiveness of information to ensure clarity and disallowing *"Chinese whispers"* to take place
  - volume of communication and figuring out best practice in making this manageable yet effective as well – almost all participants believed that information needed to be spaced out and filtered to ensure information was being delivered effectively
  - catering to different demographics, and being mindful of language barriers and generational differences, and how this could affect the *"buy-in"* from different employees.

4.4   Conclusion

In summary, this chapter presented findings from both a survey and an interview approach. Key findings from this chapter are discussed in more depth in the discussion chapter.

The chapter started off by detailing findings from the survey approach, mainly examining communication satisfaction with HR teams, supervisors and managers, and with general communication processes. The overall consensus of these survey findings was that respondents were fairly positive and satisfied with the quality of communication provided at their hotel and by their senior leaders.

The second main part of this chapter detailed and gave thorough insights into the interview findings. In this section, general communication procedures were discussed, outlining the content of what was communicated, the forms of communication used and the role of HR teams in communication. The challenges faced with internal communication were then detailed, which also included how different demographics affected the provision and use of communication. Lastly, what effective communication encompasses was detailed and explained.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1   Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the current research study, which explored key communication processes within a significant hotel company in Auckland, New Zealand.

The main research aim of this research was:

To investigate the role of communication in hotel human resource management.

Four key research questions were addressed in this thesis:

1. How satisfied are hotel employees with the level and quality of communication received from the human resource department and their managers?
2. To what extent do different forms of communication affect perceived communication effectiveness?
3. What are the perceived challenges of effective communication?
4. How do human resource managers try to respond to these challenges?

The chapter opens with a brief discussion on the definition of communication and how communication satisfaction affects individuals within organisations. The first section of the chapter reviews the satisfaction with the communication methods of HR teams, drawing on key findings revealed from the survey data. Within the same section, the role of HR teams in communication is defined and the importance of this role explained. The next section draws on satisfaction with the communication methods of supervisors and managers, and the section following that examines satisfaction with general communication processes. Following on from this, the penultimate section of this chapter evaluates the challenges of internal communication and the impact they have on the forms of communication used, how the volume of communication can be challenging to work with, and differing demographic issues such as language barriers and different communication needs and generational differences.

5.2   What Is Effective Communication?

It is interesting that the survey findings, in particular, revealed an overwhelmingly high level of satisfaction with communication processes on the whole. This indicates that most employees who took part in the survey and research were satisfied with the communication processes being employed at their hotel. As Quinn and Hargie (2004) explained, effective communication is essential when striving to improve and sustain employee engagement and participation. Communication has also been defined as being the "lifeline" of a company, and that the success of an organisation depends on its ability to effectively communicate information to its internal guests (Saurabh & Chattopadhyay, 2013). Therefore, it is important that all touchpoints of an employee's journey within an organisation demonstrate effective communication processes. With respect to HR managers, the interview findings revealed that the key to effective communication is consistency, regularity, transparency and trust. Participant E explained that effective communication processes needed to *"start from the top"* (see Section 4.3.3.1), referring to the hierarchical levels that hotels have, so that this could eventuate into an organic process that all employees inherit. Participant D expressed the importance of being open and transparent with employees:

> Participant D: *Just to encourage them…keep them informed and let them know what is happening.*

Lastly, trust was a key point emphasised by Participant E, as she pressed that without trust and having buy-in from employees, the process of being an engaging company and organisation to work with and for would be challenging. This finding supports Lee et al.'s (2015) statement that trust enhances gaining and sharing knowledge.

> Participant E: *You can talk all you like, but if you do not trust the person you are talking to and trying to work something out with them, then you will not have that vulnerability…it is the trust stuff…leading by example. You have got to have this when communicating.*

The formal communication network, in particular, downward communication, was a significant aspect. McCroskey and Richmond (2005) and Trenholm (2016) both explained that the formal communication network conforms to the hierarchical structure of the organisation, and therefore makes up the bulk of the communicating that takes place. The survey findings explored the communication satisfaction of front-line employees and their perception of communication processes used by their

HR teams as well as those of their supervisors and managers. The survey findings revealed that most employees were satisfied with the level of communication shown by their HR teams, their supervisors and managers, and with general communication processes carried out at their hotel.

5.3 Satisfaction with Communication Methods of Human Resource Teams

The findings in this study revealed that most respondents were satisfied with the level and quality of communication delivered by their HR teams. Most respondents felt their HR teams:

- recognised a job well done
- listened to ideas and suggestions
- were open to discussing challenges
- shared a good relationship with their team members.

Hedman and Valo (2015) suggested that MTs and HR teams have similar features because they have a pivotal function when it comes to fulfilling organisational outcomes. Quinn and Hargie (2004) also supported this point by stressing the importance of HR teams being effective in their internal communication processes to ensure communication satisfaction is maintained within their teams. By HR teams having positive relationships with their front-line and supervisory colleagues, as was exhibited in the findings, autonomy within the team was created, because team members were aware that there was a support mechanism for them in the hotel (Hedman & Valo, 2015; Quinn & Hargie, 2004). In turn, hotel employees felt more comfortable approaching and engaging with their HR teams. The positive presence of HR teams was prevalent in the findings, as shown in section 4.2.2, particularly in the points about employees sharing a good relationship with their HR teams and HR teams listening to ideas, suggestions and employee challenges. This links to the relational dimension of communication satisfaction that Jalalkamali (2016) referred to. Having positive interpersonal relationships in an organisation leads to an increase in communication satisfaction, particularly when communication networks such as downward communication (in this instance, from HR teams to front-line and supervisory employees) is taking place. Hence, this positively affects the perceptions and attitudes of employees (Jalalkamali et al., 2016) about, in this instance, their HR

teams. In addition, despite literature suggesting that upward communication is a not fully utilized or understood communication tool (Trenholm, 2016), positive upward communication was also found in that respondents were comfortable in sharing their suggestions and ideas with their HR teams.

5.4   Role of Human Resource Teams in Communication

With respect to management, it was important to understand what an HR professional deemed the cornerstone of their role regarding communication, which is what the interview process sought to find. A key aspect shared by participants in relation to this was ensuring a consistent and constant HR presence in their hotel and environment. Participant A stated that the HR team should not be seen as the department that just *"sits in the office"* (see Section 4.3.1.3). Participant E added that along with maintaining presence and visibility within their hotels, HR professionals should have an *"open door policy"* (see Section 4.3.1.3). This participant stated that the best way for her to maintain her presence and an open door policy was to attend department briefings and help front-line employees during busy periods, such as helping the team out in housekeeping, collecting a car for a porter or helping food and beverage attendants with clearing tables in the hotel restaurant. She maintained that when employees saw their HR teams becoming involved in day-to-day operational requirements, the employees found their HR teams more approachable and were willing to come and speak freely and without hesitation.

These findings indicate that when HR professionals are "out and about", delivering messages, meeting and talking to their team, they not only show their presence as explained above, but they also gain further insight into key details of positive and negative issues occurring in the business. Linking this with the communication networks, McCroskey and Richmond (2005) stated that there will always be more horizontal (informal) communication than vertical (formal) communication. Gray and Laidlaw (2002), however, claimed that an excess of horizontal communication, in the absence of clear formal communication, may lead to inaccurate information being spread, thereby aiding in the "grapevine" (p. 12) chatter. However, if, as demonstrated in the findings, HR professionals are maintaining their presence within hotels, then there will be little room for horizontal communication to spread inaccurate

information, because employees would feel comfortable approaching their HR teams directly with any issues.

Another responsibility of an HR professional is to clearly disseminate messages to all employees, but in particular to supervisors and managers. Participant C described this as reminding operational leaders of departments to be cognisant that, in addition to guests, they have a duty of care and priority towards their team's well-being (see Section 4.3.1.3). These findings support the literature (Garcia-Carbonell et al., 2015, 2018; Gray & Laidlaw, 2002) that states that HR professionals should have a close relationship with their supervisors and managers to ensure that they are being consistent with the messages and information they pass on to front-line employees.

5.5 Satisfaction with Communication Methods of Supervisors and Managers

According to the survey findings, most respondents were also fairly satisfied with the level and quality of communication delivered by their department supervisors and managers. Most respondents felt that their supervisors and managers:

- communicated adequate amounts of information
- recognised a job well done
- were comfortable to approach and listened to ideas, suggestions and challenges
- shared a good relationship with the rest of the front-line employees.

Communication satisfaction is especially significant in the relationship between supervisors and department managers, and front-line employees (Saurabh & Chattopadhyay, 2013). This relationship is deemed one of the most important within an organisation in terms of transfer of communication (Abdullah & Antony, 2012; Barron et al., 2014; Jalalkamali et al., 2016; Madera et al., 2016; Vuuren & Elving, 2008), because of the regularity of internal communication that takes place between these two parties. This means that organisations are doing a good job if they are ensuring this relationship between two significant groups of employees is maintained and supported.

Respondents in the survey revealed that most communication that occurred between them and their supervisor or manager was through face-to-face communication modes such as briefings and meetings. Other modes, such as email and social media, were

used, but respondents mentioned a desire and need for more regular and consistent face-to-face meetings within their departments. However, the literature points out that the supervisory level of the team is most often not equipped with the appropriate skills for communicating information effectively (Camillo & Pietro, 2011). With their constant operational demands, communicating effectively regarding employee relation matters becomes secondary. Steven and Hisle (1996) ascertained that the challenge to communicate becomes apparent when the message changes as it is passed down the hierarchical ladder. The volume of communication could be related to this, in light of Trenholm's (2016) statement that an excess of information leads to dissatisfaction with communication methods. In addition, delivery of the message in terms of the tone and context (Stevens & Hisle, 1996) in which it is verbalised plays a part when messages change, and therefore depicts an incorrect message. When information is communicated in a way that is misinterpreted because of these factors, it leads to a breakdown in communication and essentially a lack of efficiency within the team.

The findings show that communication networks play a part in the relationship between front-line employees and their supervisors and managers. The relationship can be viewed as being formal downward communication because of the hierarchical ladder (McCroskey & Richmond, 2005; Trenholm, 2016). However, with communication being a two-way interaction (Lee et al., 2015), upward communication is also apparent within an organisation. This is a vital part of these roles within a business. According to the findings presented in Section 4.2.2, and Section 5.3 about communication satisfaction with HR teams, the relational dimension plays a significant role in achieving communication satisfaction (Jalalkamali et al., 2016). The informational dimension (Jalalkamali et al., 2016) is another important dimension that supports the credibility of the information that is conveyed. This is important within relationships because organisations would not be able to function successfully without accurate information being transmitted. The combination of the two dimensions of relational and informational can further aid in communication successfully flowing within the business, and thus maintaining positive relationships between front-line employees and their supervisors and managers.

The findings showed a combination of positive upward and downward communication among front-line and supervisory or management employees in the organisation. The ability to maintain this positive balance is important because the

functionality of organisations depends on this relationship. Similarly to the HR role, supervisors and managers are in a position of leadership, and front-line employees seek guidance and advice from them. Therefore, supervisors and managers need to build and maintain their relationship with their team. The ability to communicate openly and honestly on a regular and consistent basis is also an important aspect, as indicated by the finding that employees wanted more regular face-to-face interaction through additional team meetings.

5.6   Satisfaction with General Communication Processes

The findings once again also outlined a mostly positive satisfaction with the general communication processes in the respondents' hotel environments (see Section 4.2.4). Most respondents gave positive remarks towards their hotel's ways of communicating and felt that:

- the communication within their department was effective
- the communication between the various departments at their hotel was effective
- thoughts about the performance of the hotel were shared between their colleagues and themselves
- information about company and departmental policies and goals were shared with everyone in the team
- information on company profits and company standings were shared with everyone in the team
- information about changes within the hotel or organisation were communicated
- there was an understanding of how everyone played a part working towards achieving the organisation's business goals
- the hotel's communication processes helped respondents identify with the hotel and feel like a vital part of it
- most communication shared was relevant to respondents.

In addition to ensuring HR teams and supervisors and managers have effective communication processes, general communication aspects such as the statements mentioned above need to be effective in their processes within an organisational environment. With communication skills being actively sought in management

disciplines (Brønn, 2014) and knowing that organisations function efficiently when individuals are able to communicate within them (Trenholm, 2016), general communication processes are a combination of the cumulative efforts of all individuals in organisations in various hierarchical positions to play their role as effective communicators.

Despite the modest sample size, it is interesting that slightly more respondents disagreed with the majority of the statements in this section. This was particularly noticeable in the responses to whether there was effective communication within their own department and within other various departments in their hotel. While there is no specific literature currently that can help to explain this result, Malmelin (2007) suggested that lapses in communication lead to a decrease in employee satisfaction and potentially demotivation within the organisation. Looking at this scenario within an industry context, hotels' functionality depends on its departments working together cohesively to provide an output, which is essentially to look after guests. In situations in which miscommunication prevails, this has correlations with the job performance of employees and their motivation to succeed (Jalalkamali et al., 2016). Therefore, this would be an interesting area to focus further research on.

Another point conveyed by the findings relates to organisational change. Organisational change in any business facet is inevitable, with change occurring on a constant basis (Elving, 2005). In particular, the responses about information being shared about the company and departmental policies and goals, and about company profits and company standings as well as general changes occurring within the business relate to this point. While, in general, most respondents were pleased with the information they received on all three aspects, it is interesting that there seemed to be more respondents who would have liked more information shared about company profits and company standings. Because of a lack of empirical research on the significance of communicating organisational change within organisations, it is difficult to pinpoint the current effects of this action (Vuuren & Elving, 2008). However, Elving (2005) maintained that positively communicating changes occurring in the business is an integrative action to take in an organisation because it binds individuals together and keeps everyone involved with the changes taking place. This therefore reduces the risk of further "grapevine chatter" taking place, along with any undue opposition to any changes planned taking place (Elving, 2005). Therefore,

considering the overall findings, it is evident that respondents acknowledged that they received communication about changes occurring within the business.

Owusu (1999) defined employee involvement as all employees participating in organisational activities and events while being willing to contribute ideas and suggestions regarding key focus areas within the business. With the exception in the findings of dissatisfaction about communication processes being effective within various departments, as previously mentioned, on the whole, most respondents were fairly content with the quality of communication they received, which means their engagement and involvement levels were at a high level. Hedman and Valo (2015) also introduced here the importance of maintaining group dynamics, which coincidingly correlates with communication satisfaction as well. Having a positive group dynamic means also that employees are comfortable with sharing their ideas with their team, which thus links to an increase in employee involvement and has an impact on job performance (Hedman & Valo, 2015).

Rezaeian et al. (2013) indicated the importance of sharing information within an organisation because it creates a positive corporate image, not only to external guests, but also to internal guests (employees). Internal branding, as explained by Sharma and Kamalanabhan (2012), is an untapped area of research; however, the main consensus is that internal branding is how organisations promote their vision and values to their internal guests. On this note, Rezaeian et al. (2013) explained that the perception that employees have of internal communication has a direct link with their satisfaction, or lack of satisfaction, with communication processes in their organisation. Coupled with internal branding, the perception that employees hold of communication processes has a direct link with the communication satisfaction ratio.

The findings show that most respondents agreed that their hotel's communication processes made them identify with their hotel and feel like a major part of it. This is positive because to achieve higher levels of employee engagement and employee involvement employees must be kept up to date with information they need to be efficient workers (Abdullah & Antony, 2012; Sharma & Kamalanabhan, 2012). Another aspect that links into this are the two dimensions of communication satisfaction. The informational dimension relates to the integrity of the content provided through information sharing among front-line employees, supervisors and

managers (Jalalkamali et al., 2016). The relational dimension, on the other hand, relates to the interpersonal relationships and focuses on how information is communicated through the communication networks (downward, upward or horizontal) (Jalalkamali et al., 2016). When both dimensions work effectively simultaneously, communication satisfaction occurs for the betterment of the employees.

The findings show that most respondents were comfortable conversing with one another about the performance of their hotel, outlining the horizontal communication network in process. In addition, the majority of respondents felt that they understood how their work affected the organisation's business goals. This is an extremely positive result because it demonstrates the level of employee engagement and employee involvement prevailing in this company. Madera et al. (2016) elaborated on this, stating that inclusion plays a major role in employee engagement and employee involvement, because it encourages interpersonal relationships to flourish within organisations for the betterment of the business. Inclusion can be achieved by providing ease of access to information for employees so they can be even more efficient team players and be able to ask for it without hesitation, by encouraging positive interpersonal relationships among all members of the team and by empowering team members to make their own decisions (Madera et al., 2016). By creating an inclusive and welcoming company, MTs ensure that their employees feel like they are a part of the organisation and that their ideas, views and suggestions matter. This is clearly evident from the overwhelmingly positive findings.

5.7   Challenges Faced with Internal Communication

5.7.1   Forms of Internal Communication Not Always Effective

The findings presented in Section 4.3.1.2 revealed there were five main forms of internal communication used in this hotel company:

- briefings and team meetings
- noticeboards
- emails
- social media.

A combination of the above forms of communication makes the process of internal communication a seamless process of effective communication with internal guests. Rezaeian et al. (2013) stated that using a variety of internal communication tools elevates the scope of communication and makes it a more effective tool. Abdullah and Antony (2012) discussed the importance of having these forms of communication in place, because they are a means of delivering information to employees. Using tools to communicate, in essence, is also a means of valuing employees (King & Lee, 2016; Rezaeian et al., 2013; Welch & Jackson, 2007). Most of the above list can be described as "traditional" forms of communication; social media, instead, is an up-and-coming and modern form of communication (Abdullah & Antony, 2012). Literature points out that these forms of communication are used in a "cascading downward" motion, to reach the required target audiences (Abdullah & Antony, 2012). This is recognised in the findings as well in that downward communication is achieved by using these tools.

This list does not include all forms and types of internal communication used; other means are being used as well. However, this list is a starting point for assessing how effective they are in communicating information. The tools used to disseminate internal communication should be simple and clear to use (Abdullah & Antony, 2012). However, as is evident from the findings, establishing these tools in an environment such as a hotel has further challenges. While in theory putting together internal communication tools sounds simple, they are rather difficult to establish. It is also important to note that literature that specifically focuses on examining internal communication tools within hotels is severely lacking. However, the literature and current research findings from this study provide good insight into the different types of internal communication tools being used. This next section assesses these five forms of internal communication tools and discusses the challenges in using them.

5.7.1.1 Briefings and team meetings

Participants viewed the tool of briefings as extremely beneficial. The main reason for this is that this tool can reach a large group of people at once, and information can be transmitted to them through one medium. A participant mentioned that communicating during briefings was useful because they could be a way of clearly identifying employees who were not listening or did not understand. This shows the role that face-to-face communication plays in communicating information (Abdullah

& Antony, 2012). According to the findings, the type, amount and frequency of briefings held depended on each individual hotel and department demands. Department briefings were held every day, at least two or three times a day, generally prior to a shift commencing. Another type of briefing was management briefings and these were generally held once a day. One participant mentioned that any important information that would be of use to individual teams and was shared at this particular briefing was filtered through to supervisors for them to communicate to front-line employees during their department briefings. In Chen et al.'s (2011) study, they found that briefings were a useful tool, especially for those who were not experienced with technology and emails. Participants from the interview findings also maintained that briefings were the best way to communicate, particularly to ensure information reached front-line employees effectively.

However, despite the positive aspects of briefings as a communication tool, this is not to say that communicating information once in a briefing will be sufficient. One participant mentioned the concept of *"Chinese whispers"*, in which a message is passed on through the ranks of manager to supervisor to front-line employee, but the message at the end would be distorted or different from the message initially intended. This shows exact similarities to studies that refer to downward communication networks and the complexity in communicating through the many layers within a hotel business (Stevens & Hisle, 1996; Trenholm, 2016).

Team meetings were another form of communication used in the hotels that was mentioned by participants. Generally held on a larger scale, these meetings can be termed as a "hotel performance catch-up", and occurred either bimonthly or quarterly. An interview participant mentioned that the company made every effort to *"communicate through regular meetings and updates with certain layers of the business"*. At this participant's hotel, a bimonthly meeting specifically for supervisors was established, along with a formal monthly meeting for managers. In Chen et al.'s (2011) study, the results showed that team members were not interested or motivated to attend these hotel events. This finding contradicts the survey findings: although the majority of respondents were satisfied, a handful of respondents disagreed that they received information about company profits and standings, and company and departmental policy updates. This poses the question, if the hotel events are occurring, why are employees choosing not to attend?

5.7.1.2 Noticeboards

Noticeboards is another "old school" form of communication that belongs to the general traditional means of communication. The findings showed that all participants still used this form; however, they were quick to point out the challenges in terms of its maintenance. With more companies becoming conscious of sustainability, a few participants mentioned the danger of printing posters to communicate information. A study (Chen et al., 2011) did, in fact, find that team members were quite engaged with communication through noticeboards because of their constant maintenance. However, participants in this study maintained that noticeboards, while useful for the short term, were essentially a waste of paper, and not a sustainable form of communication because team members zoned out from seeing the same tangible communication on a daily basis, in addition to the constant maintenance required to keep it updated.

5.7.1.3 Emails

Emails were another form of communication used. However, the findings revealed that this mechanism was only really useful for those in desk-bound jobs, such as HR teams, managers and some supervisors. Generally, whatever information was communicated through email would somehow be relayed to the front-line team, either by discussing the topic at a briefing or by forwarding the email. While this form was useful and definitely important, according to a study, email communication is not a sustainable form of communication because older generations are not being experienced with technology and some have difficulty understanding written English (Chen et al., 2011). However, this finding contradicts the survey findings of this current research study, because most respondents claimed to receive most communication through email, and they also far preferred this medium to any other form of communication.

5.7.1.4 Social media

Lastly, social media was another form of communication used in this company. Although it is not used extensively yet, it can provide scope for what the future of communication may look like (Camillo & Pietro, 2011; King & Lee, 2016). In the interviews, participants mentioned that while they had started their own hotel Facebook closed groups, the medium was *"a bit of a hit and miss"*. The idea behind

starting the groups was to create a platform outside of the work spectrum, for team members to engage with hotel activities and upcoming events. This idea was shared by King and Lee (2016), who maintained that social media is the way of the future because it will increase social capitalisation within hotels in terms of employee engagement and create more collaboration among employees. However, Participant A mentioned that *"unless there is a photo with the post, most people will not read or engage with the post"*. In addition, similarly to the standpoint of Gibbs et al. (2015), Participant C voiced her concerns over using social media as a platform because of the regular maintenance it required, and shared her concern that some employees who had been terminated and were no longer privy to hotel information would still be able to access this information. Similarly, the ethical and legal concerns of using this medium as a communication tool were voiced by Gibbs et al. (2015).

5.7.2 Volume of Communication

The volume of communication delivered or that needed distributing was an interesting point discussed by all participants during the interviews. The general opinion was that there was a great deal of information to be shared constantly, which Participant A summed up by saying that *"there is always going to be too much information that you are trying to communicate"* (see Section 4.3.2.1.3). An *"overload"* of communication was mentioned by Participant B when she described the onboarding process and explained that the volume of information shared during this process could be overwhelming for new employees (see Section 4.3.2.1.3).

Interestingly, a study claimed that there are, in fact, more issues with the imbalance of information communicated, which can lead to dissatisfaction with the quantity of information communicated among employees within an organisation (Trenholm, 2016). Vuuren and Elving (2008) stressed this point when explaining the importance of getting communication processes right, especially during periods of organisational change, because employees may react positively or negatively to inconsistent levels of communication shared. With regard to identifying the level and quantity of information to share, Bourque and Carrière (2009) claimed that "more is better" in internal communication processes. This is interesting because it links to Participant A's claim that as an HR manager, she would much rather *"have it all"* than only selected bits of information to work with (see Section 4.3.2.1.3). Participant A, however, was referring to the HR context, where the information can be referred to

again if needed. However, in regard to disseminating information to employees, both Participant A and Participant D claimed that they filtered the information based on its necessity and the importance of employees knowing it (see Section 4.3.2.1.3).

> Participant A: *If they're not mentioned in it, I don't really think they need to know…our role in the hotel is to decide whether that's going to benefit our team. Is it the right time to launch this info…or do we need to sit on it?*

Participant D also maintained that if information is constantly being sent out and communicated through the HR team, the *"impact will be lost"*, and essentially employees will stop paying attention to the information shared by their HR team (see Section 4.3.2.1.3).

> Participant D: *If we're always sending out messages and they're always policies or memos…you start shutting off. "It's just another email from HR *DELETE*", without reading it.*

This finding supports a study by Lee et al. (2015) that explained that too much information overwhelms employees' ability to work efficiently within the workplace and creates a lack of clarity because of the quantity of information shared. In terms of managing this issue, participants concluded that prioritising which information to be shared was one way of addressing this issue. Filtering information and sending it through different channels, such as through supervisors at briefings and posters on noticeboards, are other options that participants in this research sought to use.

5.7.3 Catering to Different Demographics

5.7.3.1 Language barriers and different communication needs

Language barriers were mentioned by most participants during the interviews as being a key deterrent and challenge when trying to communicate information. With the demographic of hotels becoming more diverse than ever, there is more need to be aware of how language capability can influence an employee's experience within an organisation. During the interviews, participants mentioned how it was challenging to communicate to employees who had English as their second language and found it difficult to converse, verbally and written. The effect of this challenge, as Participant D stated, is that misinterpretations can occur when a message is not understood as it was intended, which can lead to inefficiencies within a workplace (see Section 4.3.2.2.1):

Participant D: *A message could be delivered by one person, and someone else could say it, but it could mean something different or it might be taken on the wrong or different way.*

Despite the importance of language barrier issues that arise in workplaces, there is a lack of empirical research that discusses this in more detail. Madera et al. (2016) however, suggested that the issue of language barriers plays a part in the larger issue of creating and maintaining inclusion in the workplace.

A few interesting points on this topic emerged from the findings. Inclusion is a huge part of an employee's experience at work within any industry. Therefore, ensuring that workplaces create an atmosphere where employees feel like they belong is a crucial aspect in creating workplace productivity and efficiency. A sizeable percentage of employees employed at hotels are from overseas and on visas, and Participant B touched on the importance of being mindful that some employees have moved countries to work in their role (see Section 4.3.2.2.2). Inclusion plays a part here, as Participant B explained, through showing empathy to these individuals and being mindful and aware of their situation:

Participant B: *I guess change your way of communication to make sure that you are not excluding these people, because it is hard enough to move away from your family in most cases to a different country, and let alone feel like the world is kind of just moving around you, and you are not being involved in anything.*

Madera et al. (2016) explained that being aware of the importance of inclusion, in fact, leads to a more positive rate of communication satisfaction within an organisation. This is because employees feel like they belong and that their work and effort counts for something. When employees feel like they belong, emotional bonds are inherently created, and as a result, this leads to a more efficient workplace (Madera et al., 2016). Once again, despite the importance that inclusion plays in an organisation, there is a lack of theoretical research on this subject area.

5.7.3.2 *Generational differences*

Albeit minimally, generational differences were touched on by Participants D and E during the interviews. Both participants alluded to the fact that different generations working within the same team would create differences; Generation X would have different communication styles and needs to those of Generation Y or Generation Z (see Section 4.3.2.2.3). While the findings do not directly link with the literature,

Madera et al. (2016) did explain that younger employees value guidance in the workplace. This is in contrast to Gen X employees, who prefer to complete given tasks their own way. Mehra and Nickerson (2019) suggested that this can create a disconnect within a team environment, because of the differing communication styles and needs. Therefore, HRM needs to be present regarding this issue and endeavour to meet the needs of different communication styles. The lack of empirical research once again shows that this area of communication theory is fairly underdeveloped.

5.8 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter provided a combination of the theoretical review in the literature review chapter and the findings chapter, which collated the data. The chapter started off by providing a scope and definition of effective communication. Using the survey findings, especially, the next two sections described and explained key findings on communication satisfaction with HR teams and respondents' supervisors and managers, and found that the results were overwhelmingly positive. General communication satisfaction processes were also evaluated, and this section had the most negative results in the research study. The next section of this chapter examined in detail the challenges that eventuate from internal communication, including challenges with the forms of internal communication used and how the volume of communication can be a deterrent in this regard. Differing demographics issues such as language barriers and different communication needs, along with generational differences, were also discussed and how these aspects were challenging when it came to communicating internal communication effectively was explained.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This concluding chapter provides a summary of the main findings, conclusions and contributions of the research.

The aim of this research was:

To investigate hotel employees' perceived effectiveness of communication from human resource managers and supervisors.

This research investigated this aim by addressing the following research questions:

1. How satisfied are hotel employees with the level and quality of communication received from the human resource department and their managers?
2. To what extent do different forms of communication affect perceived communication effectiveness?
3. What are the perceived challenges of effective communication?
4. How do human resource managers try to respond to these challenges?

6.1 Summary of the Main Findings

First, my research discovered how employees and managers perceived effective communication in a selection of hotels. The survey findings, in particular, conveyed an overwhelmingly positive result regarding identifying communication satisfaction methods used by HR teams and supervisors and managers. Participants in the survey exhibited a high level of satisfaction with the communication processes of their HR teams and of their supervisors and managers. Participants found that their HR teams and supervisors and managers recognised a job well done, listened to ideas and suggestions, were open to discussing challenges and shared a good relationship with their team members. Cumulatively, all these factors led to an impressive positive outcome for the survey results, which supports Jalalkamali et al.'s (2016) study about strong interpersonal relationships affecting the perceptions and attitudes of employees about communication satisfaction. However, the general communication processes section of the survey posed an interesting point in that more respondents disagreed with the statements in this section. This was particularly in regard to whether

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communication was effective within their own department and between the various other departments in the hotel. On the whole, however, even this section was fairly positive in the remarks.

This research found that different forms of communication were used when communicating information. The interview findings, in particular, outlined the most common forms of communication as briefings and team meetings, noticeboards and emails. Of these three forms, briefings and team meetings were the most preferred. Participants (HR managers) in the interview stages acknowledged that briefings were the most effective way of communicating because information could be shared with a large group of people at once. This also places a huge emphasis on the need for more face-to-face communication (Abdullah & Antony, 2012). Interestingly, from a front-line employee or supervisor point of view, the survey findings revealed that emails were the most preferred form of communication. While a previous study found that emails are not a sustainable form of communication because not everyone in the team is comfortable with using technology (Chen et al., 2011), the survey findings say otherwise.

In addition to discussing the forms of communication and their impact on how the organisation is run, this thesis examined the various challenges that came with communicating information. Each form of communication had its own set of challenges; however, the key idea that emerged from the analysis was that just as each form of communication was different, so were the employees and what they perceived as effective communication, making this a very subjective matter. Hence, it would be difficult to please a majority of employees with only one form of communication that suited all. The volume of communication was a key challenge voiced by HR managers during the interviews, with all participants stating that *"there will always be too much information that needs to be communicated"*. However, filtering and prioritising when communicating key information was the key to combatting this challenge. Language barriers and generational differences were also key challenges noted by participants in the interviews. In particular, they noted the need to be aware of the importance of inclusion and its impacts on an organisation.

Lastly, the thesis explored how HR managers responded to challenges when it came to communicating effectively. The findings revealed that consistency and regularity,

along with transparency and trust, were the keys to success in terms of effective communication. Research has shown that communication is the "lifeline" of a company (Saurabh & Chattopadhyay, 2013), and the positive survey results highlight that communication processes were at a strong and satisfactory level in this organisation.

6.2   Contribution to Knowledge

6.2.1   Theoretical Contribution

One of the biggest theoretical contributions of this thesis is the use of the employee voice. In an area that was already underdeveloped, the use of employee voice was rarely found in related studies because of the difficulty involved in attaining this data. The use of employee voice allowed the theory to effectively either be similar to or in contrast with the views of employees. This was particularly the case in the survey findings on "Satisfaction with communication methods of human resource teams", "Satisfaction with communication methods of supervisors and managers" and "Satisfaction with general communication processes".

The survey and these sections allowed the employees to voice their opinions on communication processes at their hotel ("Ask No Questions – Tell No Lies," 2002; Hartley, 2001). The findings revealed a general consensus that was overwhelmingly positive and that employees were satisfied with the communication processes. When HR teams have positive relationships with their front-line and supervisory employees, a sense of autonomy is created because team members understand that there is a support base for them (Jalalkamali et al., 2016). It has also been found that the relationship between supervisors and front-line employees is most significant, especially within the context of the transfer of communication between these two important groups of employees within a hotel setting (Saurabh & Chattopadhyay, 2013).

Another theoretical contribution that this thesis has made to the literature is the critical analysis of internal communication methods and their challenges in a hotel setting. Chen et al. (2011) discussed the different forms of internal communication only from a quantitative perspective and briefly explained the challenges each form had in the hotel researched in their study. This thesis, however, took this idea a step further by not only identifying the challenges but also identifying the implications that each form

of communication has for the employees in a hotel setting. In this section of the thesis, there was a large input from HR managers and their perceptions were voiced on what they felt were effective internal communication processes. Providing a qualitative HR perspective is a contribution of this thesis because it is a stance that has not been focused on from a qualitative context.

Lastly, this thesis has provided insight into the role that HR professionals play in communicating information within a hotel setting. HR practices play a huge role in the dissemination of information within any organisation (Garcia-Carbonell et al., 2018), yet there is a lack of academic research on the relationship between HRs and communication within the hotel industry (Kidron et al., 2013). This thesis aimed to bridge the gap and provided insights into "HR etiquette" with respect to communicating information. The thesis identified that HR professionals need to be "out and about" and delivering messages face to face. This increases the likelihood of buy-in from other key employees within the business to support the communication processes that HR is using.

6.2.2   Methodological Contribution

This thesis makes a unique theoretical contribution to research because of its distinctive methodological approach. As the methodology chapter discussed, the method used to carry out this research was the use of surveys followed by interviews. This is a rare method because it brings two different styles of methods towards a qualitative outcome. Most studies on communication in organisations and communication satisfaction have used purely quantitative measures. The process of carrying out the survey method first, followed by the interviews, was theoretically supported from a quantitative perspective, because researchers have found that surveys create the structure of a study, while the interviews allow the researcher to dig deeper to collect richer data (Charalampidi & Hammond, 2016). Using this method for a qualitative outcome is a fairly new avenue of research.

The literature review mentioned in various aspects where there was a lack of theoretical research conducted on the topic of communication in hospitality. In particular, internal communication and communication satisfaction within hospitality are aspects that are lacking in the academic realm (Hedman & Valo, 2015; Sharma &

Kamalanabhan, 2012; Welch & Jackson, 2007). This research therefore has opened up this area and allowed for new literature to be conducted in the area.

Another unique aspect about this research, in addition to the survey methods used, is that the research used employees' voice and perceptions (through the survey method) and management's voice and perceptions (through the interview method). This is a new avenue of research that has been underdeveloped and untapped into because gaining employee voice is fairly difficult, and therefore, the effects on employees are under-researched. This thesis aimed to fill this gap by providing the employee voice and combining this with the perceptions of management to show the discrepancies and areas that need improvement.

6.2.3   Practical Contribution

A key output that managers in hospitality outlets can use from this research is that having a solid awareness of how their communication practices can affect the motivation and efficiency of their employees. An interesting aspect that will benefit the organisation is not to rely on only one mode of communication, because one style does not fit all. This will mean therefore that MTs need to become experienced and comfortable in using all forms of communication and knowing the output that each form will bring. Another way this research can benefit the organisation is through the focus on technology and social media, and how organisations can use these tools to their advantage when communicating information. This research will also provide clarity through the finding that communicating effectively is not the sole responsibility of HR professionals. If all team members communicate effectively within their personal roles, productivity and efficiency will become an organic process.

6.3   Future Research and Limitations

There are several limitations of this research. First, there would be increased credibility of the data acquired if the sample size had been larger. Having a larger sample size would have also produced more accurate data that would have potentially created some interesting results. The data from this research was also only able to be collated using one hotel chain, and therefore should be interpreted with caution as the results may not apply in other hotel chains. Secondly, the overwhelmingly positive results from the survey data acted as a limitation for this research, because the

researcher was not able to acquire key information that would have led to more interesting interviews during the interview data collection stage. With the positive survey results, the interview questions ended up being quite generic and thus were not able to garner the types of results preferred.

This thesis, however, was a much needed first step into research on the importance of communication within the hospitality and hotel industry. Future research could focus more on technology usage in communication, and how this affects teams in today's society. In addition, there is scope for exploring communication practices in relation to cultural and generational differences, and how they affect an organisation when planning for effective communication.

6.4   Final Comment

Effective communication and internal communication is a fairly underdeveloped research area in the academic world. This research has sought to bridge this gap and provide relevant and rich data to show the importance that communication plays, not just in work environments, but in everyday society. This research has endeavoured to show that without effective communication processes, organisations will find it difficult to succeed.

Appendix

Survey Statements

Demographics
- Male / Female?
- Age
  - Under 21
  - 21 – 29
  - 30 – 39
  - 40 – 49
  - 50 – 59
  - Over 60
- How long have you worked at your current property for?
  - 0 – 1 year
  - 1 – 3 years
  - 4 – 6 years
  - 6 – 8 years
  - 8+ years
- Which property do you currently work in?
  - *list of hotels participating in research*
- Which department do you work in?
  - Food & Beverage >> Restaurant and Bar / Conference and Banquets /
  - Kitchen
  - Front Office & Reservations
  - Housekeeping
  - Maintenance
  - Other
- What is your employment status?
  - Full Time
  - Part Time
  - Casual
- Are you a;
  - Team member
  - Supervisor
  - Manager

The following statements are about your Human Resources team: (options will range from Strongly Disagree – Disagree – Agree – Strongly Agree)

Please state your level of agreement with the below:

- I receive adequate communication from my Human Resources team in order to perform my role effectively
- My Human Resources team recognize a job well done
- My Human Resources team listen to ideas and suggestions
- I feel free to discuss suggestions or challenges with my Human Resources team
- I share a good relationship with my Human Resources team

- I receive direct communication from my Human Resources team on a regular basis
- In what ways do you think your HR team effectively communicate information in your hotel?
- In what ways do you think the overall communication processes can be improved in your hotel by HR?

The following statements are about your Supervisors / Managers (HODs): (options will range from Strongly Disagree – Disagree – Agree – Strongly Agree)

Please state your level of agreement with the below:

- I receive adequate communication from my supervisors / managers in order to perform my role effectively
- My supervisors / managers recognize a job well done
- My supervisors / managers listen to ideas and suggestions
- I feel free to discuss my suggestions / challenges with my supervisors / managers
- I share a good relationship with my supervisors / managers
- I receive direct communication from my supervisors / managers on a regular basis
- In what ways do you think your supervisors / managers effectively communicate information in your hotel?
- In what ways do you think the overall communication processes can be improved in your hotel by supervisors / managers?

Overall Questions: (options will range from Strongly Disagree – Disagree – Agree – Strongly Agree)

Please state your level of agreement with the below:

- The communication between the various departments in my hotel is effective
- The communication within my department is effective
- My colleagues and I share our thoughts about the performance of the hotel to each other
- Information about company and departmental policies and goals are shared with everyone in the team
- Information on company profits and company standings are shared with everyone in the team
- I receive information about changes within the organization
- I understand how my work impacts the organisation's business goals
- The hotel's communication processes makes me identify with it or feel like a vital part of it

- I receive most of my information about my job / benefits / career opportunities from:
  - Human Resources Department
  - Supervisors or Managers
  - General Manager
  - Other

- I receive most of the information about my job / benefits / career opportunities through:
  - Email
  - Text
  - Department briefings
  - Hotel staff events
  - Social media – eg. Hotel facebook group
  - Other
- Amount of communication
  - I receive too much
  - Is about right
  - I receive too little
- I would preferably like to receive news / communication / key events about the hotel by:
  - Email
  - Txt
  - Department briefings
  - Noticeboards in BOH
  - Hotel staff events
  - Social media – eg. Hotel facebook group

In what ways do you think the overall communication processes are GOOD in your hotel?

In what ways do you think the overall communication processes could be improved in your hotel?

Thank you for your feedback!

Interview Questions

1. Could you please start by first introducing yourself and what your professional background has been from the start of your career to where you are right now.

2. In your opinion, what do you feel effective communication looks like?

   - Draw on experience mentioned in Q.1

   - How about hospitality industry – what should effective communication look like in this industry? Is it the same / different?

3. How do you pass on information through a downward directive channel? Ie. HR > HODs > Supervisors > Front Line employees

   Follow up q's;

   - When is it easy to pass info on to the team?

   - What challenges do you face when trying to pass on information to your teams?

4. What formal / informal forums do you use to communicate information to your teams?

5. What sorts of information is communicated to your teams? Do you feel it is too much, about right, or too little?

   Follow up q's

   - Do you feel at times that you are faced with having to pass on too much information in one go to your teams?

     o How do you deal with this?

     o Does this have positive / negative implications to your team?

   - *talk about survey here + general results*

     o Before we go into the results, if survey was conducted at your hotel, how do you think you perform overall as a hotel in terms of communicating effectively?

       ▪ From HR perspective?

       ▪ From HODs / sups perspective?

6. Do you feel at times HR are faced with information overload? How do you deal with this?

7. With the diverse nature of the industry, do you face any challenges catering to differing demographics within the workforce in regards to communicating information?

8. In what ways do you foresee the future of communication in the hospitality industry? Will it be easier or more difficult for hospitality professionals?

9. Do you have any suggestions or recommendations about what communication processes should look like in the hotel industry?

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