

A Comparative Study of the Leadership Styles of Kwon Ping Ho (Banyan Tree Hotels and Resorts) and Kwek Leng Beng (Millennium Hotels and Resorts)

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Abstract

Leadership is an essential factor of successful management. The objective of this paper is to investigate the leadership styles of two ASEAN hospitality leaders in managing the two largest hotel chains in Asia, namely, Banyan Tree Hotels and Resorts and Millennium Hotels and Resorts. The findings reveal that strong leadership styles and approaches by the two chains have led to the success of their respective organisations. Transformational, servant and transactional approaches have significantly influenced the management of organisations in today's fast-changing business environment. Furthermore, this study provides perspectives through which it is possible to better understand ASEAN hospitality industry.

Keywords: Leadership style, hospitality industry, ASEAN leaders, comparative study.

1. Introduction

Organisational leadership is an essential element in achieving success in business. The definition of leadership has been widely debated, as different people associate varied meanings to the concept. However, leadership is generally accepted as being a process whereby an individual influences a group of people to achieve common goals (Alexakis, 2011). Leadership has also been defined as the way through which a leader supports, engages and induces all concerned stakeholders to pursue the organizational mission and vision (Gill, 2011). Crother-Laurin (2006) defines leadership as "a commitment to the success of the people around you." (p.7). Therefore, holders of leadership positions significantly influence the success and sustenance of the organisation.

The topic of leadership has gained attention from researchers in various contexts (Kamisan & King, 2013), such as leadership across culture (Trompenaars & Voerman, 2010), servant leadership (Greenleaf, 2002) and leadership styles and approaches (Humphrey, 2014; Ibarra, 2015; Lussier & Achua, 2010). Recently, more profound contexts of leadership styles have been examined by researchers, such as transactional and transformational leadership (Patiar & Mia, 2009). As many aspects of leadership have been investigated, core leadership theories have emerged over time, including Traits, Behavioural, Contingency, Power and Influence, Servant Leadership, Transactional and Transformational Theories.

According to Kozak and Uca (2008), leadership styles are vital. The effective utilization of leadership styles can improve work atmosphere, enhance service performance and develop positive relationships with associates. Like in other industries, the hospitality industry considers human resources as a valuable asset. Customer experience and satisfaction mainly rely on services provided by the workforce. When hospitality staff is satisfied with the working environment, the tendency is high that good quality of service shall be delivered to the customer (Alexakis, 2011).

By contrast, failure of leadership leads to ineffective performance, high employee turnover rate and customer dissatisfaction (Kara, Uysal, Sirgy, & Lee, 2013). For these reasons, organizational leadership is to be considered a key element of success for a hospitality organization. As argued by Kamisan and King (2013), no leadership style is best in all circumstances, as effective leaders should be sensible in selecting the best style in managing and handling their followers. Thus, an effective leader should continue searching for the best leadership methods to fit in any situation (Nahavandi, 2009).

This paper aims to compare leadership styles between two leaders in their sector, namely, Kwon Ping Ho (Banyan Tree Hotels and Resorts) and Kwek Leng Beng (Millennium Hotels and Resorts) who are both well known in the ASEAN hotel business industry. It also aims to investigate how these ASEAN leaders have led their respective organizations to success amidst a dynamic business world. Three potential leadership domains (i.e. transactional, transformational and servant) are discussed and employed as foundations throughout the research. The central research questions of this study are as follows:

- 1) What leadership styles should hotel business leaders adopt to manage their organizations in a fast-changing business environment?
- 2) Do successful ASEAN hotel business leaders implement the same or different styles of leadership?

This paper blends research and application to present the leadership performances of the ASEAN hotel business leaders and uses experience and evidence from related hospitality disciplines.

2. Literature Review

- Transactional and Transformational Leadership

In the last several decades, the hospitality industry has experienced dynamic changes, such as a global economic downturn, intense competition and rapid technological development (Tracey & Hinkin, 1996). To manage the changing environment and ensure organizational stability, a hospitality firm may require transformational style of leadership (Tracey & Hinkin, 1994). However, prior to the emergence of transformational leadership, transactional leadership was the most popular concept in managerial leadership (Moore & Rudd, 2006). Transactional leaders emphasize task completion, control procedures and organizational rewards (Felfe & Schyns, 2006). To influence employee performance, the leader concentrates on employee compliance and quantity of outcomes using their legitimate and reward powers from positions given by the organization (Lussier & Achua, 2010; Tracey & Hinkin, 1996). This leadership style is generally based on bureaucratic authority within the organisation (Tracey & Hinkin, 1994).

According to Moore and Rudd (2006), transactional leaders exercise contingent reward and follow two forms of management-by-exception: passive and active. Contingent reward is the motivating scheme used by leaders to reward employee performance. Financial or psychological rewards are usually compensated when employee performance targets are achieved, whereas punishment is given to employees whose outcomes are dissatisfactory (Gill, 2011). As work motivation is based on price, employees' self-interests become tense (Bass & Avolio, 1993). On the one hand, passive management-by-exception argues that the intervening actions are taken by leaders to correct errors, but only if the followers have done something by mistake. On the other, active management-by-exception describes leaders as constantly monitoring followers' performances and simultaneously enforces rules and procedures to ensure organizational standards are met (Gill, 2011; Moore & Rudd, 2006).

However, Lowe, Kroeck and Sivasubramaniam (1996) argue that effective transactional leaders seem to thrive in an organization that is in a stable and predictable environment. Therefore, in dynamic and changing environments, adopting a new approach like transformational leadership might be appropriate. Transformational leadership emphasizes the shared vision of leaders and associates in the organization to achieve common goals (Zopiatis & Constanti, 2012). This style of leadership employed by leaders to influence followers comprises a set of behaviors, such as applying idealised influence, increasing motivation, encouraging creativity and innovation to inspire followers and making them feel as important assets of the organization (Felfe & Schyns, 2006).

According to Bass and Avolio's Transformational Leadership Model, leaders tend to apply one or more of the following four dimensions to transform their followers' beliefs (Humphrey, 2014). Firstly, individualized consideration is demonstrated by transformational leaders when they personally treat followers attentively, such as, for example, acting like a mentor, providing opportunities to learn in a supportive climate and identifying personal concerns and needs. Still, the leader should realize that different approaches should be adjusted in dealing with different people (Moore & Rudd, 2006). Secondly, intellectual stimulation is used by leaders when they want to encourage followers' imagination and creativity. By asking challenging questions, followers are engaged to carry out problem solving. Transformational leader roles reframe problems to find creative solutions (Gill, 2011). Thirdly, inspirational motivation is used when leaders want to increase team spirit and enthusiasm.

A clear communication of organizational vision is shared across the organisation to provide meaning and challenge in the work. Transformational leaders inspire followers by generating acceptance in which their personal goals can be achieved by attaining organizational goals (Bass, 1995). Finally, idealized influence is displayed by leaders who serve as role models in demonstrating skills, confidence and high standards of moral behavior to lead the organisation (Gill, 2011). As a consequence of emphasising accomplishment, transformational leaders gain trust, admiration and respect from their followers (Moore & Rudd, 2006). Nevertheless, the transformational leadership style has been criticized for the leader's potential abuse of power (Hall, Johnson, Wysocki, & Kepner, 2008). Followers' trust and value about the organization are formed due to the influence of their leaders (Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004).

- *Servant Leadership*

The concept of servant leadership has been a popular leadership philosophy for many years. Greenleaf (2002) defines servant leadership as "a model that identifies serving others, including employees, customers and community." (p.4). Trompenaars and Voerman (2010) argue that servant leadership emphasizes service to others but it can simply be the other way around, which is the leading servant. Prioritizing followers' interests, increasing service and sharing authority with others are key aspects of servant leadership (Humphrey, 2014). According to Russell and Stone (2002), the literature has identified more than 20 characteristics of servant leadership, including vision, honesty, trust, empowerment, service and pioneering. Page and Wong (2000) categorized those characteristics into four orientations as follows:

- *Character-orientation*. This personality component concerns the character of being a servant leader, such as having strong moral principle, servant attitude and humility. As moral responsibility is recognized as a characteristic of servant leaders, Walumbwa, Hartnell and Oke (2010) suggest that leaders should lead the organization toward success along with the success of their followers and other stakeholders.

- *People-orientation.* The relationship component focuses on leaders' relationship with followers and their commitment to develop, empower, and care for others.
- *Task-orientation.* This orientation concerns a leader's work, including skills and abilities, in order to successfully lead the organisation. Setting the organisation's vision and goals is part of this component.
- *Process-orientation.* This orientation cultivates the organizational system, for instance, team building, modelling and acquiring flexible and efficient organizational processes. (Dennis & Winston, 2003; Page & Wong, 2000)

De Waal and Sivo (2012) investigated whether servant leadership is relevant to high performance organizations (HPOs). HPOs are defined as organizations that have better financial and non-financial performances than their competitors for at least five years. Eight servant leadership dimensions were considered based on Nuijten (2009). Interestingly, the researchers found that five out of the eight attributes of servant leadership, (i.e. empowerment, stewardship, humility, forgiveness and standing back) were significantly related to HPOs. Even though authenticity, courage and accountability were not highly related to HPOs, at the very least, several of the dimensions were.

Therefore, servant leadership is related to the high-performance characteristics of organizational management. The principle of servant leadership (i.e. leaders willingly support and give followers their authorities to manage the responsible areas) is becoming the next step in hospitality leadership evolution. The model of servant leadership is based on the values of service, which is considerably associated with the hospitality industry. Thus, hospitality mentors must gradually implant the servant leadership concept to the young hospitality industrialists for them to become effective servant leaders in the future (Brownell, 2010).

- Similarities and Differences between Transformational and Servant Leadership

According to Stone et al. (2004), the characteristics of transformational and servant leadership are comparably related. Both concepts concentrate on people-orientation, which incorporates a common leadership framework, such as vision, work delegation, trust, integrity, modelling and influence. Transformational and servant leaders emphasise mentoring, listening and empowering their followers. Individualised consideration seems to be the most similar component in these two leadership approaches. Russell and Stone (2002) argued that whilst transformational and servant leaders are influential, servant leaders gain control and power over their followers in a distinctive way from the condition of being a servant.

Thus, in the servant leadership paradigm, service to followers is greatly emphasised. Stone et al. (2004) suggested that transformational leaders tend to have more concerns in supporting and engaging followers to achieve organizational goals than servant leaders. As a result, the distinguishing aspect in defining whether a leader is a transformational or servant leader is the degree to which he/she wants to convey his/her primary focus of leadership to the followers.

Cardona (2000) stated that each leader has different foci depending on the leadership orientation he/she possesses. Transformational leaders do not concentrate on an economically-based exchange relationship like transactional leaders, but create a work-based exchange relationship as well as build follower's commitment toward organizational vision and missions. As the primary focus is on the organization, the employees' development and empowerment form the supporting mechanism to achieving the organizational objectives (Stone et al., 2004).

Thus, achieving the company goals results in improving follower's performance as well (Bass, 1995). On the contrary, servant leaders focus on their followers and value the ones who constitute the organization. Russell and Stone (2002) claimed that outcomes are not the key focus of servant leaders but the service itself. Joseph and Winston (2005) revealed that strong relationships between servant leaders and people within the organization help establish organizational trust. As a consequence, those relationships will take priority over task and product. Even though the primary concentration of servant leaders is not on organizational objectives, the leaders believe their co-workers have the best interest of their responsibilities in the organization (Stone et al., 2004).

- Leadership in the Hospitality Industry

According to El Masry, Kattara and El Demerdash (2004), the success of any hospitality organization requires efficient human resources operations that can move the organization toward achieving its goals. As the hospitality industry is considered a labor-intensive industry, organizational performance tends to rely on employees. Kozak and Uca (2008) reported that most hospitality leaders employ change- and human-orientation as well as flexible management style to increase organizational success rate. These leaders tend to focus on democratic, coaching and participative approaches to build positive relationships with followers, improve working climate and develop service performance. Therefore, the leader's flexibility in adopting various styles of leadership in different situations and his/her ability to build and maintain good relationships with employees are necessary in leading hospitality organizations (El Masry et al., 2004; Kozak & Uca, 2008; Worsfold, 1989).

Hinkin (2011) argued that effective hospitality leaders must be able to understand the dynamics within and amongst organizations as such an understanding can help nurture important interdependent relationships in the organizations. Considering the overview of hospitality leadership, people-orientation is perceived as a primary factor in leading hospitality organizations. Relating this component to the two leadership theories discussed earlier, transformational and servant leadership reveal several basic similarities, including their humanistic orientation. Even though several points are significantly different, these principles are still complementary (Stone et al., 2004).

Transformational and servant leaders can bring change in the organization. Followers may become leaders themselves when they recognize that their leaders truly follow the concept of servant leadership. Hospitality organizations eventually benefit from such a change, especially when they gain long-term profitability and success. Generally, transformational and servant leadership offer effective models for contemporary leadership in managing hospitality firms (Stone et al., 2004).

3. Methodology

A comparative analysis was conducted on the leadership styles of two leaders of international hotel companies; Banyan Tree Hotels and Resorts and Millennium Hotels and Resorts. The study employed a qualitative research method by conducting a biographical narrative approach. In response to the central research questions of this study (i.e. 'What leadership styles should the hotel business leaders adopt to manage their organisations in a fast-changing business environment?' and 'Do successful ASEAN hotel business leaders implement the same or different styles of leadership?'), the methodology adopted in the research involved secondary data. This type of data was used due to time constraints in conducting field work and monetary limitations. According to Creswell (2012), "a biography is a form of narrative study in which the researcher writes and records the experiences of another person's life" (p. 504) and is normally constructed from records and archives.

As Veal (2011) suggested, secondary data are instantly available and can be reused in research. Walliman (2011) claimed that secondary data are reliable because they are produced from previous researchers or accredited writers. Accordingly, this study mainly used secondary data obtained from published written materials, academic articles, newspapers, books, magazines, industry reports and company documents. After collecting data, the content analysis technique was used to analyze the data. As defined by Elo et al. (2014), content analysis is a data analytical technique that represents a systematic interpretation of data involving preparation, organization and reporting of results.

4. Findings

The aim of this study is to compare the leadership styles of two ASEAN executives at the helm of two international hotel groups; Kwon Ping Ho, Founder and Executive Chairman of Banyan Tree Hotels and Resorts, and Kwek Leng Beng, Chairman of Millennium Hotels and Resorts. Table 1 summarizes the backgrounds of these two business leaders.

Table 1: Comparison of the Leaders' Backgrounds

Profiles/Leaders	Kwon Ping Ho	Kwek Leng Beng
Date of Birth	24/8/1952	1941
Age	67	78
Nationality	Singaporean	Singaporean
Education	Economics, National University of Singapore	Laws, University of London
	Honourable D.B.A., Johnson & Wales University Honourable Doctoral Degree, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	Honourable D.B.A, Johnson & Wales University Honourable Doctorate, Oxford Brookes University
Managed Hotels and Resorts	41 properties in 24 countries	136 properties in 27 countries

Kwon Ping Ho's Background

Kwon Ping Ho is a Singaporean businessman. He was born on 24 August 1952 in Hong Kong and spent his childhood in Thailand, where his father was a former ambassador and entrepreneur. He holds a degree in Economics from the National University of Singapore and recently received an Honourable Doctorate of Business Administration in Hospitality Management from Johnson & Wales University. Mr. Ho started his career as a journalist and joined the family business in 1981. After spending more than 10 years managing the family business, Mr. Ho launched a luxury brand, Banyan Tree Hotels and Resorts, and has led the company since then (Ahmad, 2015). In 1994, Mr. Ho identified a gap in the industry that other international hotel chains could not fill. He believed a market segment existed but the prevailing marketplace could not fulfil such needs.

Thus, Mr. Ho saw potential in offering innovative and niche resort products to the market segment that wanted more than just private and luxurious accommodation. He created the Banyan Tree Brand in Phuket, which later became the company's flagship property. Banyan Tree Phuket offers accommodation products presented in a distinct individual villa style comprising local-inspired designs and romantic atmosphere. A few years after the establishment, Banyan Tree positioned itself in the upper-scale luxury resort (Roll, 2015; Wirtz, 2011). In 2002, after the success of the Phuket resort, Mr. Ho expanded his hotel business to Bangkok along with a spa outlet and retail shop, Banyan Tree Spa and Banyan Tree Gallery (Wirtz, 2011).

The brand later expanded to other major tourist cities in Asia, such as Samui, Bali and Macau, and in other areas, such as Africa and Central America. The success of the Banyan Tree Brand enabled brand extension. Angsana Hotels and Resorts was launched in 2000. The Angsana brand concentrates on leisure and business travellers who are looking for a trendy and lively holiday experience (Hospitality Net, 2011). In 2014, Banyan Tree unveiled a new brand, Cassia, which targeted middle-class travellers looking for holiday homes or fully-equipped serviced apartments. Currently, the Banyan Tree Hotels and Resorts brand operates over 37 hotels, 70 spas, 80 retail galleries and 3 golf courses spread throughout 28 countries. Many properties in the pipeline are under development (Roll, 2015).

Leadership Style and Its Impact on Hotel Performance

Kwon Ping Ho's foresight on turning an abandoned tin mine into an integrated resort complex (Laguna Resorts & Hotels, 2013) created a significant impact on the company. His long-term vision has made Banyan Tree a world-class luxury hotel brand providing a sense of Asian hospitality. Mr. Ho has led over 12,000 associates from 50 nationalities (Roll, 2015). Nonetheless, as Executive Chairman of the company, Mr. Ho is not difficult to approach. He is very humble even in his encounters with rank and file staff. As El Masry et al. (2004) stated, interpersonal aspect should be given more attention by hospitality leaders, and the personality component is one key leadership feature that moves a company toward success (Page & Wong, 2000).

Mr. Ho's caring personality has earned him the respect, praise and trust of Banyan Tree's staff. He has become a role model of a hospitality leader who demonstrates high standards of moral behavior. From this leadership practice, the staff gains confidence in the leader, who shows work dedication and loyalty in building the company's long-term profitability and success (Stone et al., 2004). Under Mr. Ho's leadership, Banyan Tree Hotels and Resorts has continued to perform very well in terms of revenue and profits. In 2017, the company earned 317.5 million US dollars in revenue, with a profit of 74.7 million (Banyan Tree Hotels and Resorts, 2018).

Kwek Leng Beng's Background

Kwek Leng Beng, who was born in 1941, is a Singaporean hotel and property tycoon. At 17, Mr. Kwek completed his internship at Hong Leong, his father's company. However, at that time he did not feel ready to inherit a home business. He studied at the Law School of the University of London, where he received a bachelor degree. After graduation, he acquired the business philosophy of his father, who instilled the company vision in him. In 1967, Mr. Kwek joined Hong Leong Finance as General Manager. Three years later, in 1970, he entered the hotel business and opened the first hotel, King's Hotel. Mr. Kwek then became the Managing Director of City Development Limited (CDL), a publicly-listed property company acquired by Hong Leong (Chua, 2015; Millennium & Copthorne Hotels Plc, 2015; Suryadinata, 2012).

In 1990, Mr. Kwek became the Executive Chairman of the Hong Leong Group and started acquiring hotels in the region. Four years later, valuable assets, such as the Millennium and the Macklowe, were bought at bargain prices in New York. In 1995, CDL acquired the Copthorne hotel chain, which helped raise the profile and reputation of the company. That same year, Millennium and Copthorne Hotels (M&C) joined with CDL's hotels and were listed in the London Stock Exchange (Chua, 2015; Suryadinata, 2012). Mr. Kwek led M&C to become a competitive hotel chain in the international hotel market. From a single hotel in 1970, M&C currently owns and manages over 120 hotels in 79 leisure and business destinations in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, North America and New Zealand.

Hotels and resorts under the M&C umbrella have expanded and are currently classified into three collections: Millennium, Copthorne and Leng's (Millennium & Copthorne Hotels Plc, 2015).

Leadership Style and Its Impact on Hotel Performance

Kwek Leng Beng came from a strong financial background as he ran Hong Leong Financial office before taking the position of Executive Chairman of the Hong Leong Group. His foresight and strong entrepreneurial spirit, instilled by his father, helped transform CDL into a well-known global hotel group. Currently, Mr. Kwek heads over 10,000 M&C staff and, combining all the activities of the Group, leads a staff of over 40,000 worldwide (Millennium & Copthorne Hotels Plc, 2015). Even though Mr. Kwek is said to be a demanding boss who is unafraid to challenge his management team if their performance is not satisfactory, his leadership style is very inspirational and decisive.

Once Mr. Kwek started working as a General Manager at Hong Leong Finance, he demonstrated strong entrepreneurial spirit by accommodating staff in his car for business dealing (Chua, 2015). Such practice proved he is an inspiring and motivating leader. Bass (1995) stated that inspirational motivation can be used to increase staff enthusiasm and push their performance toward achieving personal and company goals. Mr. Kwek quickly became a role model to his associates and a stimulating leader. In 2017, M&C Hotels under the leadership of Mr. Kwek showed outstanding performance. The company gained 1.008 billion pounds in revenue with a profit of 147 million (Millennium & Copthorne Hotels Plc, 2018).

Comparative Analysis of Leadership Styles

- Kwon Ping Ho

Kwon Ping Ho is known to be a visionary and an innovative leader with admirable moral qualities as attested by the launch of The Banyan Tree brand out of an abandoned tin mine into Asia's first integrated resort. Mr. Ho's explanation on how the brand was established is as follows: "There are only two advantages in life which are proprietary: technology and branding. Since I am not a technologist, I decided that whatever business I was going to do next had to have a strong brand." (Roll, 2015). Mr. Ho believes that Banyan Tree has sustainably maintained its competitive position in the market because of the strong branding focus. Even though the resort faced several crises, including the aftermath of 9/11, the Iraq War, and SARS, the company remained profitable as it managed to achieve its occupancy target. A clear emphasis was placed on brand identity, which was aligned with the concept of romantic escape and resort location (Roll, 2015). As Dennis and Winston (2003) argue, a task-oriented leader uses his/her skills and abilities to provide long-term vision and his/her vision will lead the organisation toward success. Mr. Ho did not only talk and think but he also acted to accomplish things from his visionary perspective.

Moreover, the company's objectives are clearly articulated throughout the organization. Mr. Ho creates a sense of brand ownership amongst employees by ensuring employee success is consistent with organizational success and objectives. He has been very generous with staff welfare. Evidently, the company provides good quality medical services, dining facilities and transportation for the staff. The staff dormitories are also well furnished. All these show much consideration for employees. Undoubtedly, these generous policies successfully pay off. As Mr. Ho was cited in Wirtz (2011): "The most gratifying response is the sense of ownership that our staff began to have. It's not a sense of financial ownership, but they actually care about the property." (p. 8).

This leadership practice is supported by the transformation construct, whereby common goals between leaders and followers can be achieved through organizational vision (Zopiatis & Constanti, 2012). When the process of how personal and organizational goals can be achieved is clearly communicated, employees are encouraged to work with increasing motivation (Humphrey, 2014). As a result of successful practice, the entrepreneurial spirit is instilled in the employee's mind. Empowerment is one key aspect to Mr. Ho's management philosophy. Although the standard of delivering five-star service is very high and strict rules are imposed in resort administration, the staff is still allowed to be creative and innovative. For instance, the housekeepers could design and decorate guestrooms in their own ways as long as these tasks are within the resort guidelines (Wirtz, 2011). As Mr. Ho mentioned in Milligan and Smith (2002): "We try to involve as many people as possible in the creative process – brainstorming, designing, redesigning and talking through what we want a particular project or new product, and the kind of standards we want to set." (p. 24).

The ways by which Mr. Ho leads his organization are fully supported by servant leadership concepts of being people-, character- and process-oriented. He has created a culture of servanthood. As stated by Walumbwa, Hartnell and Oke (2010), servant leaders do not only focus on engaging and developing employees in achieving company's objectives, like transformational leaders, they concentrate on moral dimensions and on the employees' interests and development.

- *Kwek Leng Beng*

In terms of leadership philosophy, Kwek Leng Beng is known to be a visionary and decisive hands-on leader. During an interview with CNBC's *Managing Asia*, Mr. Kwek was asked what leadership style he takes to drive M&C and Hong Leong Group. His answer was as follows:

I am a very hands-on person because I believe if you have to be hands-on, you need to understand what is the best strategy and policy you should have. Of course, because of the time constraint, you cannot be hands-on all the time in every aspect of the business. You only look at the more important aspects, such as sales and products. (Kwek, 2012).

Mr. Kwek tends to take an active form of management-by-exception, one of the concepts underlining transformational leadership (Gill, 2011). Still, he gives some freedom to his subordinates to manage their operations (Kwek, 2012). When in that same interview Mr. Kwek was asked how he is as Chairman of the company, he replied:

As a boss, I am demanding, but at the same time I am fair. I am outspoken. Some people like it and some people do not like it. I waste no time in trying to be talking sweet. I am very critical but if they know that, they can learn a lot from me and they will be very appreciative' (Kwek, 2012).

Apparently, Mr. Kwek is not a charismatic leader. This aspect of his leadership style tends to be supported by transactional constructs based on task completion and employee compliance (Tracey & Hinkin, 1994). Nonetheless, employees are treated fairly. This idea is consistent with contingent reward, that is, if employee performances are satisfactory, they are compensated but employees are punished if objectives are not achieved (Moore & Rudd, 2006). Mr. Kwek's management philosophy is very straightforward. He has the image of a decisive leader. If disagreements occur over his and company executives' management style, he is unafraid to change the management team (Chua, 2015). As he said to *The Guardian*, a British daily, when M&C went through a change of CEO, "We just said the style of management is different in terms of priorities, in terms of different ways of doing things. It's for our mutual benefit that we should part company' (Allen, 2007).

However, Mr. Kwek understands that people are one of the key aspects in running a hotel business and has therefore always shown appreciation of his employees as they play a significant role in implementing organizational strategies. In case his employees do not understand how to implement the strategy, he is willing to teach them (Kwek, 2012). As he mentioned when he received the TTG Travel Entrepreneur of the Year in 2014, “This honor would not have been possible without the support of many capable people who work with me as a team” (Today, 2014). This is in line with Kozlowski and Bell's (2003) findings.

Organizational success does not only rely on an individual but on a team. Team effectiveness is one important factor in driving an organization toward achieving goals. The acquisition of the Copthorne hotel chain in 1995 had a significant impact on CDL hotel management. It has transformed M&C into a well-established international hotel chain. Currently, M&C owns and operates over 120 hotels in 24 countries and is considered one of the largest hotel companies in the world (Shellum, 2015). Mr. Kwek's long-term vision has enabled M&C to achieve the company's goals together with the success of employees. Moreover, Mr. Kwek exhibits idealized influence, a core transformational leadership construct (Felfe & Schyns, 2006). His skills and high morality have made Mr. Kwek a company role model – one who embodies a sense of achievement amongst his followers.

5. Discussion

The central research questions of this study are as follows: 1) What leadership styles should the hotel business leaders adopt to manage their organizations in a fast-changing business environment? and 2) Do successful ASEAN hotel business leaders implement the same or different styles of leadership? Through an assessment of the leadership styles of the two ASEAN hotel business leaders, we found the following information based on the analysis of secondary data. Kwon Ping Ho and Kwek Leng Beng are Singaporean tycoons who specialise in hotel and resort development. Both have established international hotel chains. Even though the two leaders have different styles of leadership in managing organizations, they are both evidently effective and successful. Mr. Ho tends to have strong transformational and servant leadership characteristics, whilst Mr. Kwek tends to exhibit solid transactional and transformational leadership characteristics. However, the two share common leadership values in leading their organizations.

- *Entrepreneurial Leadership*: Considering the entrepreneur's perspective, Mr. Ho and Mr. Kwek demonstrate strong entrepreneurial leadership skills. Other than being successors of family-owned businesses, their strong entrepreneurial orientation significantly influenced organizational performance. Mr. Ho's willingness to take high risks can be seen from his willingness to make massive investments to turn abandoned land into a resort complex. Positive results from the investment led the Banyan Tree brand to quickly become a world-class luxury brand that provides a sense of Asian hospitality (Milligan & Smith, 2002).

Similarly, Mr. Kwek, whose decisive style of sealing deals and value investing, especially in the establishment of M&C, propelled the organisation to global recognition (Chua, 2015). His ambition in creating the first global hotel brand to come out of Asia challenged existing key players in the market. Even though competing with well-established American and European hotel chains was difficult, Mr. Kwek performed extraordinarily well (Doebele, 2001). As a result, M&C has now become one of the world's largest hotel management companies (Chua, 2015). Mr. Ho and Mr. Kwek are effective entrepreneurial leaders due to their practice of entrepreneurial spirit throughout their organizations. Consequently, their companies have shown sustainability in terms of performance, profits and employee loyalty. As stated by Muchiri and McMurray (2015), the stronger the entrepreneurial orientation business owners have, the healthier the ensuing business performance of the company.

- *Visionary Leadership*: Westley and Mintzberg (1989) have indicated that visionary leadership is emphasized on a process in which represented ideas are communicated in words and actions to effect organizational change. The visionary spirit of Mr. Ho and Mr. Kwek helped turn their respective companies into reputable international hotel brands. Pioneering in luxury resort products helped to establish the Banyan Tree brand, whilst the decisive style and meticulous eye for details took M&C to the global front. Interestingly, asset-based strategies are optimised by the two companies. As Mr. Kwek said to TTG Asia:

I use the rule of thumb that, in terms of income, one hotel you own equals 20 management contracts. The fee is based on percentage of turnover and GOP, but do you realise how many people and how much infrastructure you must have? If you have 10 good hotels, why would you want to manage other people's hotels and earn so little? So, our priority is our own hotels.' (Hamdi, 2014).

Similarly, the group revenues of Banyan Tree rely on hotel investment segments (Banyan Tree Holdings Limited, 2015), which means the asset-based approach is utilized for company's growth. The two leaders' strategic visions on business growth are in contrast to other major international hotel chains that normally earn money based on asset-light (Hamdi, 2014). In terms of human resources management, Mr. Ho and Mr. Kwek value people as the most important assets of the companies. Even though the two leaders employ different actions in managing their organizations, their commitments to lead the companies and employees toward achieving specific goals are clearly and effectively communicated throughout the workplaces (Banyan Tree Holdings Limited, 2015; Millennium & Copthorne Hotels Plc, 2015). Based on the overall accomplishment of Banyan Tree and M&C, one of the key success factors is the vision of the leaders. As Harper (2001) stated, the future of a company relies on the leader's skill and ability to craft vision. Hence, the leadership vision of these two ASEAN hotel business leaders can be observed and applied to other hospitality organizations.

6. Conclusion

Leadership style vary from one leader to another depending on the context of the core vision of the organization (Westley & Mintzberg, 1989). This study concentrated on two corporate ASEAN Executive Chairpersons, Kwon Ping Ho and Kwek Leng Beng, who have presented good qualities of leadership in the hotel industry. This study proved that leadership constructs, including servant, transactional and transformational leadership, are effective in managing hospitality organizations. Nonetheless, in many examples, the leaders adopted mixed styles of leadership in managing their organizations. Even though the transformational leadership style is argued to be more appropriate in managing dynamic changing environments (Lowe et al., 1996), this study revealed that transactional style of leadership is still effectively applicable in a changing and growing company. All these results depend on the situations that the leaders face and the organizational performance for the time being.

In summary, one leader may successfully apply one style of leadership in managing one organization, but that same leader may fail in applying that leadership style in another organization. Thus, the need of having a leader who possesses transactional, transformational, servant and other leadership styles greatly depend on the nature of the workforce and the distinct circumstances of each organization.

Limitations and Future Research

This research has a limitation that should be acknowledged. Due to the time constraint, secondary data were used in the analysis, which could be a disadvantage of this research. Further studies using a biographical narrative approach should employ qualitative or quantitative methods along with secondary data.

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