

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE: A CASE STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF ETHICAL ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE ON THE EFFICIENCY OF ACCOR HOTELS

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Abstract

Top organizations can be differentiated due to the organizational culture that they promote, not only for the safety and high-quality services offered. One of the top companies in tourism, which pays a great attention to the norms and expectations that encourages the behavior oriented to performance is Accor. With an over 50-year experience, Accor represents one of the most important organizations at world level in the tourism sector, operating in 100 countries, containing over 30 brands and having over 250 000 employees with unique skills and competencies. This article aims to analyze the organizational culture in Accor company, through a research with the purpose of identify the opinions of former and current employees in Accor company regarding the quality of the implemented procedures in the company, of the management and existent leadership, but also of the method of spreading the information from the management and non-management. Accor employees are directly influenced by organizational culture of the company, so their opinion at working place is important to create a functional business that develops by adapting to the new tendencies and entirely respects the human resource that also makes the potential of the company. Each employee desires to be appreciated for his qualifications and for the work he provides to the company, expressing his views in certain situations, giving him the opportunity to develop into a better employee with performance and also giving him the feeling that he is part of a valuable team.

Keywords: Accor Hotels, organizational culture, ethics, opinions, employee

JEL Classification: M14, Z30

1. INTRODUCTION

The organizational culture is represented by a common system understood by the members of the organization that differentiates the organization from other organizations, and the main features that help to substantiate the organizational culture are: attention to detail, orientation to people, teams and results, innovation and risk taking, aggression and stability (Stephen P. Robbins, Timothy A. Judge, 2015).

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According to Ronald Jeurissen, ethics management analyzes and seeks to straighten out or remedy all organizational structures and procedures and decision-making processes, so that the activities of the organization have a stronger connection with ethical principles, while the primary tool used is the ethical code followed by ethical audit but also other management strategies that can help the organization to respect morality (Ronald Jeurissen, 2005).

As employees understand more and more that their work supports the achievements of the company they work in, the more they identify with their values, goals and mission (Wright & Pandey, 2011). According to Meglino & Ravlin (1998), it is highlighted that the values of an organization can be extremely important for a person who is committed to or not; and in the greatness of the cases, employees attach themselves to the organizational values they appreciate and can refer to. In order to achieve an ethical organizational culture, managers must follow certain steps and adhere to certain principles such as: the manager must be a staff member, communicate ethical expectations, provide ethical training, recognize ethical acts, and sanction them on the unethical ones, but also to provide protection mechanisms where employees can communicate the problems encountered (Stephen P. Robbins, Timothy A. Judge, 2015).

The authors Desmidt and Prinzie (2009) point out that in order to stimulate communication processes such as the transfer and convergence of information within an organization it is necessary to establish a written statement of a mission. In order for employees to live up to organizational values and to put them into practice and to live them, there is more to be done in the company, not just placing posters on the walls or on the company's sites, so proper managerial support is needed to the values and mission of the organization to not just remain on paper (Hassan, 2007). Garnett, Marlowe and Pandey (2008) highlight the fact that in a company communication acts as a mechanism for the dissemination and formation of organizational culture.

Corporate Social Responsibility represent a concept in which the organization must act responsibly in creating strategies for customers, employees, suppliers, shareholders, and business decisions (Moravcikova K., Stefanikova L., Rypakova M., 2015). Gray (2005) defined the corporate social responsibility report as a process of notifying the environmental and social impacts caused by the company's economic activity to certain interest groups. Nowadays, prestigious companies are changing their operating mode in an impressive time, now they are focusing on human resources, knowledge sharing, and even the cooperative way within the organization.

The creation of an ethical organizational culture within the Accor hotel group is an important starting point for top management staff and non management staff. The impact of organizational culture can be viewed from the power that it currently holds, and it can be noticed whether there is a high or low level of employee performance and satisfaction. Researching the opinion of employees or former employees of the hotel group was made to discover elements related to the organizational culture of one of the most important companies in the tourism and travel industry, namely Accor. The survey of employees' opinions was conducted on a sample of 100 respondents, people that work or people who are still working at Accor. The research has taken into account the opinions of online

respondents on websites such as: www.indeed.co.uk, www.indeed.co.in, ww.cariereonline.ro, www.seek.com.au and www.trendshrb.ro.

One of the most important companies in the tourism industry and in the hospitality industry worldwide is Accor Hotels, a company that was founded in August 1967 in France by Paul Dubrulle and Gérard Pélisson. At the moment, the Accor hotel group employs 250 000 people and is the main hospitality operator in North America, Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, the Middle East, Europe and in Asia Pacific, covering over 4 500 hotels, 650 000 rooms all in 30 brands and 100 countries. Globally 2 375 hotels are operated with a management contract, and 2 155 hotels are operated with a franchise contract. Hotel brands owned by Accor can be divided into two categories, namely luxury brands, premium brands and middle economic brands. The premium luxury brands are Raffles, Orient-Express, Banyan Tree, Sofitel Legend, Fairmont, SO/Sofitel, Sofitel, Rixos, Mantis, MGallery, Pullman, Swissôtel, Angsana, 25hours, Art series, Mövenpick, Grand Mercure, Peppers and The Sebel. The middle or economic brands consist of Mantra, Novotel, Mercure, Adagio, Mama Shelter, Breakfree, ibis, ibis Styles, ibis budget, JO&JOE, and hotelF1. Accor also owns brands other than hotel services for some services such as: *Thalassa* sea & spa wellness services, *onefinestay* private rental services, coworking rental place by *Mama Works* and *Nextdoor*, concierge services represented by *John Paul* and *AccorLocal*, event services represented by *Groupe Noctis* and *Potel et Chabot*, and digital solutions offered by *Availpro*, *Fastbooking*, *Gekko*, *VeryChic*, *Adoria* and *ResDiary*.

For Accor, organizational culture is a very important topic in to their activity, because it shows how employees understand the characteristics of the organization's culture. Managers represent the main ambassadors of the values they promote, while ensuring that the principles and commitments resulting from values are duly respected and applied. The most important principles that Accor takes into account are: increasing agility as well as capacity, willingness to demonstrate transparency, encouraging employees' responsibility, recognizing and rewarding talented people, and opening up new ideas from them. Within the Accor hotel group, there are six core values that are also reflected in the code of conduct, these values generate a strong sense of belonging, helping to maintain and stimulate hospitality around the world regardless of country, culture, people, or workplace. The six values that use as a common language and which form the basis of ethical commitment while expressing uniqueness in Accor are:

Passion for guests - the guests are the leaders of their decisions and actions, they are the first, they care about the guests, more precisely if necessary they make a special effort to accomplish or to meet any requirements;

Sustainable performance - Accor Hotel Group believes that long-term value creation is needed;

Spirit of conquest - hotel group guests are often traveling to different countries and so are they. Hotel staff explore, initiate and develop; are ambitious for their guests, make it impossible, while having fun;

Innovation - Accor employees transform the impossible into possible and exist to bring guests dreams to life, they like to do what they dream, being curious, and open to new ideas and free to try, to test, and to learn;

Trust - they believe in natural goodness, support and appreciate every person, recognize the value and fulfill their commitments;

Listen - they are connected to the world, enjoy the mixture of cultures, are proud of the differences they respect and respect and cherish.

The values of the hotel group are embodied every day in their behavior and relationships, both inside and outside the organization. Accor expects employees and future employees to understand that these values are the foundation of the hotel group's attitude, at the same time understanding, embracing, expressing them, and sharing them. The Accor Group has committed itself to supporting the ten fundamental principles of the United Nations Global Compact, which are universally accepted and, in some countries, are stricter than current legislation. By adopting the United Nations Global Compact, they reaffirmed their dedication to clearly focusing their attention on people, employees, the environment and integrity. By implementing ethical commitments Accor ensures compliance with the rules following fundamental documents such as: the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948; the fundamental conventions of the international labor organization and OECD guidelines for multinational enterprises issued by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. By setting a good example, each employee has an essential role in turning these values into an intense and dynamic influence in the corporate community of the hotel group.

Accor's human resources policies are guided by the key concepts of professionalism, recognition, diversity and mobility. Professionalism is a key to face-to-face jobs in an increasingly competitive market, where demanding customers make hotel staff constantly focus on adapting to their needs. Diversity of human resources is a major force in promoting team alignment, retaining and attracting talent, and cultivating the ability to innovate and accept change. The implementation of the Accor corporate social responsibility process is supported by a permanent dialogue with all of their stakeholders, including clients, employees, business partners, franchisees, hotel / investor owners. Discussions with stakeholders play a key role in identifying priority areas for action, thus contributing to the creation of a common value. In interaction with employees, the dialogue process consists of a set of well-established procedures from the very beginning designed to structure information exchange, discussion, consultation, mediation and negotiation, in which the interests of each party are protected. Dialogue policies are even implemented by managers who have the role of promoting the exchange of ideas with employees, organizing round tables or other events specifically dedicated to the dialogue.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Ethical codes are extremely important for international development because they are essential documents and provide the framework for fulfilling the responsibilities of Gilman S.C. (2005). In the view of Resnik D. B. (2011) the most used form of defining ethics is behavioral norms that differentiate unacceptable behavior from acceptable behavior. Another way of defining ethics can be based on disciplines that study behavioral standards such as law, theology, sociology, philosophy and psychology (Resnik D. B. 2011). Organizational culture is a highly meticulous and complex phenomenon that emerged from a multitude of different perspectives that later underwent

various interpretations (Perkins S. J. & Arvinen-Muondo R. 2013, pp. 209-236). Organizational culture is considered as a package of conceptions of norms, traditions, structures, values, artefacts, beliefs and customs (Schein, 2004). According to Todnem R.'s article (2005), ways to measure the success of organizational change management must be designed in an effective way to assess the value of any new frameworks.

In Kondalkar V. G. (2007) vision the scope of organizational behavior lies below “impact of personality on performance; employee motivation; leadership; how to create effective teams and groups; study of different organizational structures; individual behaviour, attitude and learning; perception; design and development of effective organization; job design; impact of culture on organizational behaviour; management of change; management of conflict and stress; organizational development; organizational culture; transactional analysis; group behaviour, power and politics; job design; study of emotions”. In opinion of Allen (2003), the organizational climate is another term used instead of organizational culture, and it also has an added significance that represents the employee's manifestation and perception of culture. In the opinion of Perkins S. J. & Arvinen-Muondo R. (2013, pp. 209-236) organizational culture plays a leading and important role in the performance of the organization. Regarding authors Smollan R. K. & Sayers J. G. (2009), organizational culture plays an extremely important role in triggering emotions and influencing expression during a change and also affective culture can help or hinder staff accommodation at the personal level. In Schein's view (2004), organizational culture requires engagement in learning or sharing experiences that lead to the declaration of assumptions by members of the organization or group.

According to Bukovec's article Success - Analysis of various models for organizational change management - the term success is defined broadly as a tendency to achieve expectations that we can not easily achieve, even if decisive changes can not be made at civilization, personal or organizational level. As stated by Perkins S. J. & Arvinen-Muondo R. (2013, pp. 209-236) members of an organizational culture can develop language and a set of rules that are not easy to interpret and resist. Among the most important values that need to be respected in a organizational culture are included:

Status-quo - organizational change explains the movement of an organization from the known situation (the current situation) to the unknown situation (the desired future situation). This happens because the future of this change is uncertain and can refer to the value of people, abilities and competences, so people in the organization cannot support change unless they are convinced against the status quo (Cummings & Worley, 2003). The organization could invest a lot in the status quo; consequently, the necessary steps must be adopted to motivate employees. Ethics of the leader may be one of the most important sources of employee change, as Durand and Calori (2006) established the role of leadership ethics in the process of change.

Change - during the last quarter of the 20th century the nature and organization of work in advanced industrial societ is said to have undergone a radical transformation, resulting from the emergence of forms of organizational innovation that are both quantitatively and qualitatively different than those that existed at the beginning of the century (Delbridge, 1998). The changes are said to provide businesses with the means to operate more flexibly to improve productivit, product quality and reliability, and therefore

customer satisfaction (Child, 2005). Change is about duality. The origins of the duality can be related to the Han dynasty in China and the early days of Taoism, when the Taoists believed that human situations could be balanced like yin and yang, two opposite elements that complement each other. In this dialectical view of reality, it can be the basis of all the changes (Morgan, 2006). The change factor changes the organizational structure to improve production and efficiency. The Change Agent uses operations research, system analysis, and other forms of analytical approaches to change the structure or technology of the organization (Lunenburg, 2010). The management of change as defined by Moran and Brightman (2001) as "the process of continuously renewing the direction, structure and capabilities of an organization to serve the diverse needs of external and internal clients." Change does not depend on size and age but exists in all businesses. The world is changing very fast, so organizations need to change quickly for the development and survival of the organization (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008). Organizational change is a kind of chaos, so the number of variables changes, changing the environment, the frequent change and resilience to change creates the confluence of the change process at the same time, it stimulates the prediction difficulties, but makes it impossible the control (Glieck, 1987). Research on organizational change approached resistance from two opposite perspectives; a visual resistance as a destructive force in any situation (Cummings & Huse, 1989), and the other visual resistance as a positive force (Perren, 1996). A big part of the resistance is determined by the socio-psychological needs for consistency of security, predictability and stability in life (Trice & Beyer, 2001). The change of leadership company actually refers to behavior that targets the specific change of vision, empowerment, monitoring, and help to adapt (Herold, 2008; Liu, 2010). There are two factors in Change Leadership, namely: a) changing leadership behavior in sales, an action that attempts to promote change during the defrosting phase, explains why change was necessary b) changing the implementation behavior of leaders, action that takes place to push for change and enhance success during implementation (Liu, 2010).

Employee Involvement (EI) was defined by Glew, Leary-Kelly, Griffin and Van Fleet (1995) as Employee Involvement aims to increase members' contribution to decisions that affect organization performance and employee welfare. Employee involvement is the oldest and most effective strategy in formulating planning and implementing change. Participation will lead to high-quality changes and will prevail over resilience during the implementation phase (Vroom & Yetton, 1973). Employee involvement will be more effective if employees are empowered in authority and responsibility (Mathieu, Gilson, & Rubby, 2006).

Management and Leadership are central to studying behaviour in workplaces. Leadership is concerned less with allocating world tasks than with energizing staff with a sense of direction and commitment (Knights and Willmott, 2007, p. 259). Appelbaum et.al. analyzed six empirical studies on the influence of leadership on employees' perceptions during organizational changes. The study has shown that the success or failure of any effort to implement change depends on the leader's ability to get support from his employees for change. Employees resistance is a major obstacle to implementing change (Klaus, 1997; Kumar and Kamalanabhan, 2005), and can be reduced by using a proper leadership style (Covey and Gullede, 1994). Pater (2011) said that leaders can

ensure clarity during organizational changes, stimulating successful implementation of change.

Training - effective training can increase employees' commitment during organizational change (Beer et al., 1990). Training helps employees overcome barriers of assimilation of knowledge that leads to employee obligations being increased during change programs (Robey et al., 2002, Shum, 2007).

Communication, decision making and negotiation are fundamental aspects of everyday life for all employees and all organizations (Martin, 2005, p. 670). Many management gurus, and also many academics, would without hesitation justify the role of teams in increasing and sustaining successful organizations (Knights and Willmott, 2007, p. 119). Communication is an important factor for the effective implementation of organizational changes (DiFonzo and Bordia, 1986-1998; Lewis and Seibold, 1993; Schweiger and Denisi, 1991). Research suggests creating an atmosphere in which reliable communication and collaboration can take place may be an important basis for achieving the goals of organizational change (Bocchino, 1993; Dutton, 1992; Weisbord, 1992). Also, research shows that up to 70% of the change programs fail (Senge et al., 1999; Beer and Nohria, 2000) and poor internal communication is considered the main reason for such failure (Murdoch, 1997).

Ethical issues are about rightness, wrongness, good and bad. This is as much applicable within organizational activity as it is in the field of politics or society as a whole. Ethics is not just about how people should behave within an organizational context (Martin, 2005, p. 474). There are many reasons why businesses take an interest in ethics like: response to pressure, pursuit of profit, stakeholders consider that it is right, following fashion, mixture of the reasons already given (Mahoney, 1997). Business ethics may be understood as the academic study and promotion of corporate social responsibility. This explores the ethical legitimations for, and effects of, a wide range of business practices (Knights and Willmott, 2007, p. 508).

3. METHODOLOGY

In the following, a study about organizational culture in Accor will be presented. This study was conducted on a sample of 100 respondents and is based on opinions expressed by people still working or people who worked in the Accor Hotel Group.

In order to achieve this goal, a qualitative research about the quality of organizational culture has been realised, especially have been analyzed opinions of subjects expressed in online on different sites or platforms, due to the fact that the employees of the company are subject to confidentiality contracts. In this study were used sites such as: www.indeed.co.uk, www.indeed.co.in, www.cariereonline.ro, www.seek.com.au and www.trendshrb.ro.

In the *Food and Beverage department*, can be noticed that the people who worked there have different opinions and 7 out of 10 employees have stated that the most difficult part of the job is to work under pressure and to be multitasking in a short time keeping professional and trustworthy attitude, as well as the fact that work in the hotel restaurant has been an extraordinary experience, as it has contributed to the development of many communication skills and increased trust in customer relations. 9 people remarked that

the team they were part of was a very good one, the staff is friendly, the opportunities are endless, there are also some discounts for the employees, another 5 people specified that the salary is not very advantageous, and too many working hours, as well as the minimal chances of promoting where disorder and stress are added.

Inside of the *Housekeeping department*, 22 opinions were taken into consideration, and because of cleaning high standards in the group, their opinions are different. Three out of 10 people think the job they have had was the most terrible due to lack of communication, improper manage of staff and improper treatment for the employees who have a short-term contract compared to the ones who have a long-term contract and of course small pay. The rest of the people considered the Accor Hotel Group has brought many benefits such as: free hotel stays, free meals and staff parties. They were also delighted with cultural diversity, friendly and encouraging staff, well organized management as well as family atmosphere at work.

In the *Front-Office department*, were analyzed 32 opinions, out of which 5 persons reported problems they had registered, namely lack of training or guidance, lack of breaks and lack of communication within the department; 16 people said the staff were friendly and working, especially those who were directly responsible for the guests, and the fact that the Accor Group provides safety at working place, support and trust and is open to all people who wish to form a career in the hospitality industry.

Another 8 people have noted the existence of many trainings that offer them the opportunity to develop personally and professionally, the opportunity to develop their career, and the fact that they are willing to change. 3 people were unhappy because they do not do enough to keep their quality employees, and the management does not care about the employees. Inside of the *Reservations department*, 3 views of the managers of this department were analyzed, and 2 out of 3 people appreciate the organizational culture because they learned how to act in different situations, encouraging each employee to think creatively and lead to constantly improve employees success, but noted that there is a small but clear gap between management and non-management employees.

The *Technical department* took into account the opinions of 6 respondents of which 5 said that in the Accor Group people are friendly, the program is flexible, the team is able to work without interruption in order to accomplish its goals but sometimes has to work over the program, have been instructed to perform reactive maintenance checks, namely checks of heating, fire alarm, sanitary and electrical repairs as well as painting, decorating, repair of locks and furniture, and 1 person stated that the program is not flexible.

The *Sales department* reviewed the opinions of 13 people. 10 respondents said they had been trained and provided with everything they needed to be able to carry out the tasks listed in the job sheet, and they learned what it means to offer high quality services with minimal resources, at the same time they declared the fact that the environment where they formed has given a perspective not only on the direction to which the hotel industry is heading but on the problems it faces.

Employees also enjoy discounts and have many opportunities to move and travel. Three others were dissatisfied with the company's small profit that they can not invest in technology, the unrealistic expectations, and the fact that the human resources department cares more about the company than about people.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

We have analyzed 100 opinions of employees who have worked or who are still working with Accor as a night auditor, food and beverage manager, bar manager, guest service assistant, housekeeper, receptionist, booking manager, and technical and sales department staff. Of course, opinions are divided and there are employees who have to reproach the hotels they worked for, but generally they are satisfied with the job.

As expected, not very good opinions about the hotels in the Accor Group come from former employees who said they were supposed to be multifunctional in the workplace, fulfilling attributes other than those found in the job description. Good opinions are multiple, encouraging those who want a career in the company. There are complaints about salary, but employees say they are happy because the group offers many others benefits to employees compared to other companies. Further, salary is compensated by something else, and employees feel good every time they come to work, knowing that their work is appreciated, so giving them a good psychological state.

Employees beliefs show that there is no discrimination in hotels, and an employee says they are "open to any kind of people," whether introverted or extroverted, of another nationality, color, origin, religion, etc. Freedom and privacy at work is another defining factor of the company, employees being free to expose their ideas and be encouraged to implement them if they are valuable.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATION

Organizational changes have the capacity to influence or change culture willingly or not influencing employees' emotional responses, so culture affect how employees respond at emotional level to change (Smollan R. K. & Sayers J. G. 2009).

Nowadays it is very important to create an ethical organizational culture within Accor, and this can be done in various and countless ways. First of all, founders, shareholders or company managers hire and retain only employees who feel and think the same way they do. Secondly, they teach and pass on their employees or future employees their way of thinking and feeling to get used and lean new techniques and tasks in the hospitality industry. Finally, managers' behavior encourages employees to identify with them and integrates their beliefs and values.

Organizational culture of Accor directly influences employees to have ethical behavior at work. This is made with the integrity of the company. Employees are influenced to have ethical behavior through the mission, values and goals of the company. The company's mission is a major pioneer to develop the employee's ethical character, depending on it's type.

Various ethical training help employees to develop as many ethical facts and actions as possible in the company, forming a team of people who are concerned about the company's moral principles and how they can help to develop it.

Anonymous on-line platform gives employees the opportunity to complain about the complaints or why not to praise the company, encouraging them to express themselves. Comments can be seen by anyone, especially managers, so action is taken on deficits in some departments, preventing proper functioning. The most courageous are encouraged by the company to report themselves boycott.

Meetings between employees and managers are intended to solve the company's internal problems, each being able to express their opinion on what should be improved to maintain the company's ethical standards. Superiors expect feedback from employees as well as full understanding of the company's aspirations. Accor follows a selection process that applies the same criteria to each applicant for a particular position; and will base its work on all employment decisions exclusively on professional skills and personal qualities, according to their needs and the applicant's own attributes. The way in which we communicate with people around us in our professional activity, and beyond, strikes the results obtained, and the quality of managerial communication is influenced by the way the human resource is used and the work productivity it produces.

In conclusion, Accor highlights the importance of organizational culture and emphasizes this by focusing on standards and expectations that encourage performance-oriented behavior.

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