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Emerging critical generic managerial competencies

A challenge to hospitality educators in Kenya

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to identify emerging critical generic managerial competencies in the Kenyan hotel industry.

Design/methodology/approach – A cross-sectional survey research design was used to gather primary data using self-administered questionnaires. The population was composed of hospitality managers from ten five-star hotels in Nairobi and Mombasa, Kenya. A sample of 160 hospitality managers was selected proportionately by simple random sample method.

Findings – Several critical generic management competencies are emerging in the Kenyan hospitality industry. However, there is a gap between utilization and importance of managerial competencies in Kenya. Managers do not value human relations competencies.

Practical implications – Hotels and training institutions need to enhance acquisition of generic managerial competencies in their management development programs and curricula, respectively.

Originality/value – The paper focuses on both the level of utilization of managerial competencies and the level of importance attached to managerial competencies. It contributes to a new body of knowledge in management literature in Kenya. The paper has value to researchers, hospitality graduates and students, hospitality educators and human resource managers in Kenya.

Keywords Kenya, Hotel and catering industry, Managers, Competencies

Paper type Research paper

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

The hospitality and tourism industry was the largest in the world in 2006 (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2007). Despite the recent political crises in Kenya, the tourism and hospitality industry has generally recorded a tremendous improvement because of aggressive destination marketing coupled with the reversal of negative travel advisory by Western countries. In Kenya, tourism earnings increased from Kshs 21 million (US$286,000) in 2002 to Kshs 65 billion (US$855 million) in 2007 (Central Bureau of Statistics(CBS), Ministry of Planning and National Development, 2007). The general growth in the Kenyan economy and steady increase in tourism earnings in recent years have led to expansion and new investments in hotels in Kenya. Along with this, there has

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been a rapid growth of hotels under the various star-classifications. Employment in the Kenyan tourism and hospitality industry in the year 2006 was 820,400 persons; however, there is a lack of appropriately skilled human resources (Fwaya, 2006; Irungu, 2006). In response to the need for skilled personnel in hospitality management, several institutions of higher learning (for example Maseno University and Kenyatta University) started hospitality management programs.

With the increase in the number of hospitality graduates, questions have emerged regarding industry expectations pertaining to generic managerial competencies. Research studies of hospitality workplaces (Goodman and Sprague, 1991; Baum, 1991; Umbreit, 1992; Pavesic, 1993; Sneed and Heiman, 1995; Geissler and Martin, 1998) indicate that there are large discrepancies between formal training and employer demands in the hospitality industry. Furthermore, the hospitality industry has not been actively involved in the past in terms of development of curricula for hospitality education in Kenya. Most of the private tertiary institutions develop their programs based on the curricula of external examining bodies such as the UK's Chartered Institute of Management and Association of Business Education. Pavesic (1993) notes that hospitality education would need to focus on the future needs of recruiters. Consequently, tourism and hospitality employers have concerns regarding graduates' managerial performance and promise. Hospitality firms may find it costly to engage these graduates, as they have to be re-trained to acquire the management competencies required to perform their roles as managers or assistant managers. Thus, there appears to be a gap between generic management competencies acquired during formal training and industry expectations. This study therefore aimed to identify the emerging critical generic managerial competencies in the Kenyan hospitality industry. In order to achieve this purpose, two research questions were formulated:

RQ1. What are the emerging critical managerial competencies utilized in the Kenyan hospitality industry?

RQ2. What level of importance do managers attach to those management competencies?

1.2 Significance of the study

The study will provide information for the purposes of assisting academic institutions in designing curricula that meet the needs of not only graduates but also the job market. Results arising from this study will enable educators to understand the requisite generic management competencies that managers in today's hospitality industry demand. Human resource managers will emphasize significant management competencies in their management development programs. From an empirical standpoint, few studies have been done in Kenya regarding requisite generic management competencies in the hospitality industry. Information arising from the study will therefore add a new body of knowledge in the field of hospitality management competencies.

2. Review of literature

2.1 Managerial competencies

According to Brophy and Kiely (2002), the idea of testing competence rather than intelligence was first proposed by a Harvard psychologist, David McClelland, in the early 1970s. McClelland was asked by the US Foreign Service to find new research methods that could predict human performance and reduce the bias of traditional intelligence

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and aptitude testing; hence, the notion of measuring competencies was born. Though it is difficult to find a universally accepted definition of competencies, there appears to be similar arguments as noted in scholarly articles. For example, Tas (1988) defines competencies as those activities and skills judged essential to perform the duties of a specific position. Albanese (1989, p. 67) asserts, "no single set of competencies can fully capture the mystery of the managerial role", and that there are many job-specific skills that influence effectiveness in particular managerial roles. Competencies are defined as observable performance (Boam and Sparrow, 1992). Wynne and Stringer (1997) define competencies simply as the things people have to be, know and do, to achieve the outputs required in their job. Hoffmann (1999) developed a typology of the meanings of competency to show that the term has several meanings depending on the purpose for which it is used. He notes that the term competency is multi-faceted, the shifting definition has brought with it a degree of confusion over the nature and concept and its application. Brophy and Kiely (2002) contend that when using a competency-based approach, the focus is on the behaviors that are necessary to perform the job. Competencies focus on how the job or role is performed by identifying those behaviors that contribute to achieving effective performance. Each individual competency consists of a number of observable behaviors that are relevant to the performance of that particular role.

Quinn *et al.* (1996) developed a definition of competency that recognizes the importance of skills, knowledge and personal characteristics and the linkages between possessing these competencies and performing certain tasks or roles. They argue that the term competency suggests both the possession of knowledge and the behavioral capacity to act appropriately. To develop competencies, an individual must both be introduced to knowledge and has the opportunity to practice those skills learned.

2.2 Management competencies in hospitality

Current literature (Heffernan and Flood, 2000; Geissler and Martin, 1998; Boam and Sparrow, 1992) validates the demand of management competencies by the hospitality industry and supports the idea that these competencies and skills are essential for both the most successful hospitality managers and graduates. Several studies have attempted to identify the managerial skills, knowledge, and competencies essential in the hospitality industry. For example, Ghiselli (1963) identified taking initiative to be a key competency. He argued that initiative involves aspects of motivation and ability to gain support of others. Katz (1974) claimed that managers at all levels require technical, human, and conceptual skills and emphasis on particular types of skills will depend on the individual's management level. On the other hand, Tas (1988) found that understanding guest problems, sensitivity to guest issues, maintaining professional and ethical standards, professional appearance, effective oral and written communication, developing positive customer relations, striving to achieve a positive working relationship are critical. According to Yukl *et al.* (1990), key competencies include planning, organizing, problem solving, informing, clarifying, motivating, monitoring, consulting, recognizing, supporting, managing conflict and teambuilding, networking, delegating, mentoring, and rewarding. In examining the state of management education in the UK, Thorpe (1990) reviewed the management literature and suggested that changes in management philosophy and practice indicated a paradigm shift from competencies such as planning, controlling, and organizing to those of leadership, market orientation, and management of change.

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Baum (1991) concluded that human relations associated competencies as the most significant within the top-rated grouping. A study by Umbreit (1992) indicated that the future of hospitality curriculum would have six major skill areas for preparing professional graduates. The areas included leadership, human resources, service marketing, financial analysis, total quality management, as well as written and oral communication skills. Sneed and Heiman (1995), identified leadership, decision making/critical thinking, communication skills (interpersonal verbal, writing, and listening skills), and financial skills as very important to students. In a 1996 study completed by Breiter and Clements in USA, the top three skills that were deemed important by hospitality graduate recruiters were leadership skills, managerial communication and employee relations, training, and organization (Breiter and Clements, 1996). Kay and Russette (2000) in their study on hospitality management competencies found that competencies in leadership domain represented the majority of skills designated as "Essential Competencies." Leadership competencies were essential to more than one functional area and management level. Walo (2001) while using CVF found that managers in the Australian hospitality industry expected recent tourism and hospitality graduates to demonstrate ability in all 24 management competencies. Chung-Herrera *et al.* (2003) identified 99 competencies, which contribute to leadership success. Industry knowledge, leadership, and interpersonal skills factors ranked low. In the hospitality industry, effective human resource management is critical. Many tourism and hospitality researchers (Baum, 1991; Okeiyi *et al.*, 1994; Walo, 2001; Tait, *et al.*, 1993) maintain that human relation skills including oral and written communication and interpersonal communication are essential for graduates and trainees.

2.3 Industrial expectations of hospitality education

Powers (1992) believes that hospitality is a discipline that has the responsibility to produce knowledge that can be applied by hospitality professionals. Simply, hospitality education is a field devoted to preparing students for management positions in the hospitality industry. The main objective of management education is to provide industry with high-caliber graduates equipped with relevant management competencies (Baum, 1991). Subsequently, Purcell (1993) mentioned that campus recruiters view that many university educators are out of touch with the industry, are unaware of the current needs of the industry, and continue solving educational problems based on the past experiences, but not for the new century. A hospitality educational program should aim to educate graduates who can demonstrate practical competence and possess a wide range of transferable skills. To the extent that meeting the needs of industry is the ultimate goal of hospitality programs, there is a consideration of recognizing the voice of the industry. As a result, it is imperative for hospitality educators in Kenya to seek the future needs of the industry. Therefore, this study attempted to identify the significant management competencies.

It can be concluded from the above studies that generic management competencies are essential for the hospitality industry. While the above studies were instrumental in the development of literature on future managerial skills in the hospitality industry, they fell short of explicitly linking the identified skills to the performance of managerial roles. Furthermore, they concentrated on grouping managerial skills rather than identifying significant managerial competencies, which are directly linked to managerial effectiveness. The studies only looked at the level of importance managers attached

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to the skills. They failed to look at skills being utilized by managers. The present study addressed the above gap by linking competencies to managerial roles. The study also identified both the level of utilization and level of importance of each competency.

2.4 Theoretical framework

Since hospitality managers need transferable generic competencies, a general framework of management competencies was deemed suitable for this study. The study adopted a framework by Quinn *et al.* (1996) "Competing Values Framework" (CVF – Figure 1) to identify and explain significant management competencies. This model has a sound theoretical and research base and offers an opportunity to examine key managerial competencies based on organizational outcomes such as maximization of output, adaptation and change, human relations and consolidation and continuity. Quinn *et al.* (1996) identified eight managerial roles and 24 management competencies linked to each role using (CVF). As shown in Figure 1, the relationships among the four models can be viewed in terms of two axes. The vertical axis ranges from flexibility to control. The horizontal axis ranges from an internal organization focus to an external focus. The CVF conceptualizes that each of the organizational outcomes are crucial parts that make up the larger construct, namely organizational and managerial effectiveness (Quinn *et al.*, 1996). The paradoxical demands placed on managers under adaptation and change outcomes, and consolidation, and continuity become evident. Managers need to be externally focused under adaptation and change, and internally focused under

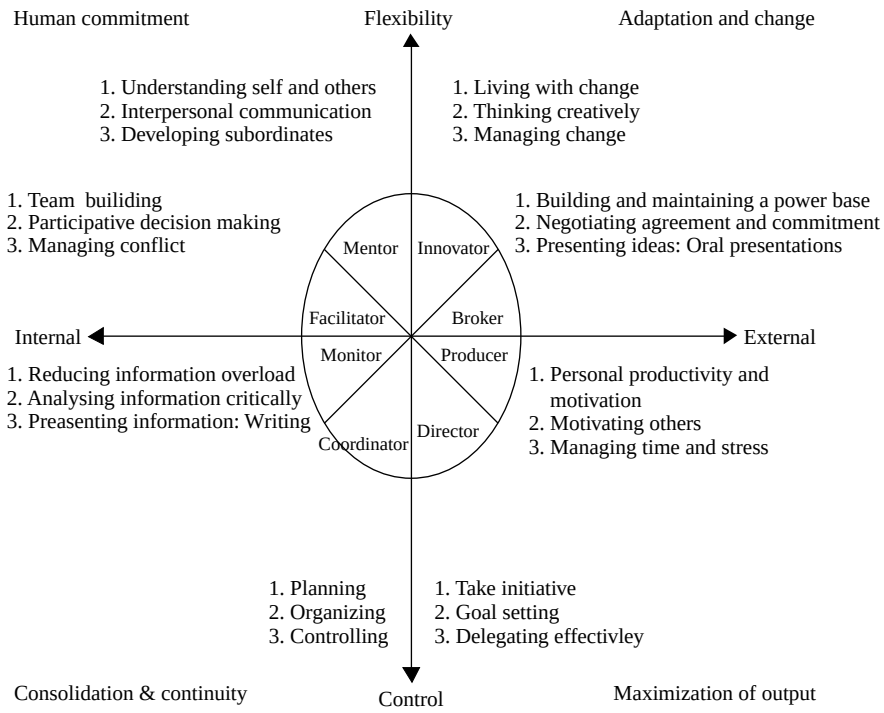

Figure 1.
Competing values framework – management competencies

Source: Quinn *et al.* (1996)

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consolidation and continuity. The conflicting demands placed on managers under maximization of output and human relations are also illustrated. The manager needs to be focused on the demands of the task and getting the work done under maximization of output; in human relations, the manager needs to be focused on their staff and their needs. According to Di Padova (1990), the range of competencies and skills associated with the model are consistent with those required by managers to function effectively. The CVF provides managers with the opportunity to increase effectiveness by developing and utilizing a range of often competing competencies, depending on the situation. Furthermore, researchers (Walo, 2001; Dimmock *et al.*, 2003; Breen *et al.*, 2004) have utilized CVF in hospitality research.

3. Research method

3.1 Research design

The study used a cross-sectional research design to gather primary data. This research design was chosen over other designs because the data were collected within short period of time and less expensively. The results obtained from the survey sample are generalizable to the entire population of hospitality managers in Kenya. In addition, the characteristics of variables to be measured do not change much due to the short period of data collection. The design involved administering questionnaires to hospitality managers in Kenya. The study was conducted in Nairobi and Mombasa between September 2007 and January 2008. Mombasa was chosen because it has excellent vacation hotels and is influenced by seasonality of tourism while Nairobi has hotels, which serve both tourists and business clients.

3.2 Population, sample, and sampling procedure

Veal (1992) identifies three criteria that may be used to determine a sample size – the level of precision in the results, the level of detail in the proposed analysis and the available budget. The population of the study was composed of hospitality managers in ten five-star hotels in Kenya. Five-star hotels were considered appropriate because they have clear and consistent organizational structures, which make the results more generalizable without much error, as the population is relatively homogenous. A highly trained and experienced person manages a five-star hotel in Kenya assisted by several managers with relevant professional qualifications. In addition, the hotels have a comprehensive in-house training programme and a Human Resources Development Manager (Republic of Kenya (RoK), 2003). These attributes further justified the consideration of five-star hotels in this study.

The sample size included 160 hospitality managers. In order to compile the sampling frame, six out of the ten five-star hotels were randomly selected without replacement from the overall hotel classification list (Republic of Kenya (RoK), 2003). The hotels from which the sample was drawn were identified by the letters A, B, C, D, E and F to ensure the confidentiality of the hotels. Hotels A and D are vacation hotels located in Mombasa while B, C, E and F are town hotels located in Nairobi. To get the actual participants involved in the study, individual managers were selected proportionately across the six hotels through simple random sampling:

$$\text{Proportionate sample per hotel} = \left\{\frac{\text{Managers in Hotel A}}{\text{Sampling frame}}\right\} * \text{Sample Size}$$

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Random sampling has the advantage of cancelling out biases and providing a statistical means for estimating sampling errors (Bailey, 1978).

3.3 Method of data collection

A questionnaire as a survey instrument was developed to identify significant management competencies. A self-administered questionnaire was chosen for this study as it has the lowest cost. Moreover, it provided the greatest anonymity and lowest chance of biasness. The questionnaire included questions on demographics, questions on 24 competencies utilized in the hospitality industry (level of utilization measured on a five-point Likert scale 1 – not at all to 5 – completely) and their perception on important management competencies (level of importance measured on a five-point Likert scale 1 – no importance to 5 – essential). The 24 competency statements are those included in the CVF model. The hospitality managers read and responded to questions at their own pace and time without the help of the researchers.

3.4 Pre-testing

Pre-testing was used to refine the questionnaire in terms of content, wording and design, and to identify errors, which may only be apparent to the population concerned (Bailey, 1978). Managers from one hotel in Nairobi and the other from Mombasa were used to pre-test the questionnaire. Being representative of the study population, they were excluded from the final sample. After pre-testing, the managers felt a question on the performance appraisal was not clear and irrelevant to the study. The question was therefore deleted from the survey instrument.

3.5 Method of data analysis and presentation

Statistical procedures included calculating means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages to investigate the individual set of observed variables measuring management competencies. The five-point Likert scale is essentially a ranked scale, as the intervals between each integer cannot be assumed equal as in an interval scale. Several writers have indicated that the use of ranked data as interval data is unacceptable (Bohrnstedt and Knoke, 1982; Grinnell, 2001). There is agreement, supported by research from others, that wise selection of statistical tools appropriate to interval data may be used with ranked data (Martilla and Carvey, 1975). Jaccard and Wan (1996, p. 4) summarize:

> [...] for many statistical tests, rather severe departures (from intervalness) do not seem to affect Type I and Type II errors dramatically. Likert scales are very commonly used with interval procedures, provided the scale item has at least 5 and preferably 7 categories.

This allows the retention of more characteristics of the data and greater versatility in statistical analysis. Mean scores were used to create the rank. Bailey (1978) argues that many researchers treat five-point Likert scales as if they are intervals and compute the mean statistic. The means of both the level of importance and the level of use of managerial competencies were calculated to get the actual composite mean of each management competency. Any variable with a mean score of greater than 4.0 was considered significant. Ranking of mean scores to identify significant management competencies was consistent with previous studies (Quinn *et al.*, 1996; Umbreit, 1992; Walo, 2001; Breen *et al.*, 2004; Tas, 1988; Baum, 1991; Okeiyi *et al.*, 1994;

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Kay and Russette, 2000; Chung-Herrera *et al.*, 2003) which used similar research approaches in the hospitality management field.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Demographic characteristics of the respondents

The overall response was 134 out of 160 questionnaires giving a response rate of 84 percent. The total number of usable responses was 124 giving a usable response rate of 77.5 percent. The results of the demographic characteristics of the respondents are summarized in Table I.

Characteristic	Frequency	%
Gender ($n = 124$)		
Male	82	66.1
Female	42	33.9
Age grouping ($n = 117$)		
18-27 yrs	16	12.9
28-37 yrs	60	51.6
38-47 yrs	28	24.2
48 yrs and above	13	11.3
Level of education ($n = 114$)		
2 yrs certificate	7	6.5
2 yrs diploma program	15	12.9
3 yrs diploma	7	6.5
4 yrs diploma program	53	45.2
Higher national diploma	3	3.2
4 yrs bachelors degree program	22	19.4
2 yrs masters program	7	6.5
Functional area ($n = 122$)		
Finance and control	12	9.7
Human resource	12	9.7
Food and beverage	23	19.4
Front office	23	19.4
Sales and marketing	16	12.9
Housekeeping	06	4.8
General management	18	14.5
Operations (IT, stores, purchasing)	12	9.7
Current position ($n = 124$)		
General manager	06	4.8
Asst. general manager	12	9.7
Departmental manager	52	41.9
Assistant manager	54	43.5
Work experience ($n = 120$)		
Under 3 yrs	14	11.3
4-6 yrs	39	24.2
7-10 yrs	33	27.4
Above 11 yrs	42	37.1
Levels of management ($n = 124$)		
Top-level management	70	56.5
Middle-level management	54	43.5

Note: $n = 124$

Table I. Demographic characteristics of the sample

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About 84 (67.7 percent) respondents were from town hotels while 40 (32.2 percent) were from vacation hotels. In Kenya, there are more five-star town hotels than vacation hotels. Town hotels have slightly more complex organizational structures than vacation hotels due to the nature of business. On gender, the results indicate that the hotel industry in Kenya has surpassed the World Development Bank of Millennium Development Gender Goals target of 30 percent representation of women. The education level of managers is representative of the Kenyan hospitality industry considering that the hospitality education field is relatively young compared to other academic fields. For many years, hospitality training in Kenya has been limited to a four-year diploma in hotel management at the Utalii College. However, in the recent past several public and private universities have started both undergraduate and post-graduate programs in hospitality management. The majority of the managers are drawn from food and beverage and front office departments due to the intensive nature of work in the two functional areas. The results in Table I indicate that the managers used in the sample are relatively experienced in hospitality operations in Kenya. It can be observed from Table I that the numbers of employees working under one manager are relatively few, which then precludes the need for assistant managers. These results suggest that managers used in the sample were conversant with the departmental operations, which validates their ability to provide the needed information on managerial competencies.

4.2 Significant management competencies in the Kenyan hospitality industry

According to the results in Table II, the mean score on the level of utilization of management competencies ranged from 3.32 to 4.19 on a five-point Likert scale. The significant competencies that managers in the Kenyan hospitality industry utilize in descending order are taking initiative (4.19), presenting written information effectively (4.03), and organizing (4.00).

The level of importance of management competencies from the mean score ranged from 3.61 to 4.61 on a five-point Likert scale (Table II). Furthermore, a majority (15 out of 24) of the competencies had a mean score of 4.00 and above hence they were considered significant. Managers consider the following competencies essential in descending order: taking initiative (4.61), motivating others (4.35), goal setting (4.32), personal productivity and motivation (4.32), planning (4.26), writing effectively (4.23), delegating effectively (4.16), organizing (4.16), developing subordinates (4.16), creative thinking (4.10), conflict management (4.10), controlling (4.06), time and stress management (4.03), team building (4.03), managing change (4.00), negotiating agreements and commitment (4.00).

The level of use and level of importance scores were averaged to give a composite mean score for each competency. The composite mean scores for managerial competencies ranged from 3.53 up to 4.40 (Table II). When the mean scores were ranked, the seven significant management competencies with a mean score of 4.00 and above in descending order were as follows: taking initiative (4.40), goal setting (4.15), writing effectively (4.13), motivating others (4.10), organizing (4.08), personal productivity and motivation (4.03) and planning (4.02). In contrast, the least five important competencies in descending order were living with change, interpersonal communication, building and maintaining a power base, understanding self and others, reducing information overload. Although these five competencies were the least significant, the mean scores were still higher than 3.0 indicating that they are still important.

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Table II. Ranking of significant management competencies by mean scores

Competencies	(α)	Level of use M	Level of use SD	Level of use Rank	Level of importance M	Level of importance SD	Level of importance Rank	Composite mean M	Composite mean SD	Composite mean Rank
Maximization of output										
Director role	0.88							4.17	0.70	
Taking initiative		4.19	0.87	1	4.61	0.88	1	4.40	0.76	1
Goal setting		3.97	0.94		4.32	0.86	3	4.15	0.75	2
Delegating effectively		3.74	0.99		4.16	0.81	7	3.95	0.82	
Producer role	0.73							*3.95*	*0.65*	
Motivating others		3.84	1.12		4.35	0.83	2	4.10	0.80	4
Personal productivity and motivation		3.74	0.89		4.32	0.94	3	4.03	0.75	6
Time and stress management		3.42	1.11		4.03	0.87	13	3.73	0.87	
Consolidation and cont.										
Monitor role	0.80							3.80	0.66	
Writing effectively		4.03	1.01	2	4.23	0.88	6	4.13	0.77	3
Analyzing information		3.52	0.95		3.94	0.96		3.73	0.79	
Reducing information overload		3.32	1.00		3.74	0.89		3.53	0.78	
Coordinator role	0.88							*4.00*	*0.74*	
Organizing		4.00	0.92	3	4.16	0.85	7	4.08	0.80	5
Planning		3.77	1.08		4.26	0.92	5	4.02	0.91	*7*
Controlling		3.71	1.00		4.06	0.81	12	3.89	0.75	
Human commitment										
Facilitator role	0.85							3.76	0.68	
Team building		3.55	1.11		4.03	0.87	13	3.79	0.76	
Conflict management		3.39	1.14		4.10	0.86	10	3.74	0.85	
Participative decision making		3.58	0.88		3.87	0.84		3.73	0.71	
Mentor role	0.90							*3.73*	*0.90*	
Developing subordinates		3.55	1.42		4.16	0.85	7	3.85	1.03	
Interpersonal communication		3.42	1.33		3.97	0.83		3.69	0.92	
Understanding self and others		3.32	1.34		3.94	0.96		3.63	0.98	
Adaptation and change										
Innovator role	0.90							3.79	0.79	
Managing change		3.68	1.18		4.00	0.72	5	3.84	0.85	
Creative thinking		3.55	1.33		4.10	0.86	10	3.82	0.92	
Living with change		3.55	1.05		3.84	0.89		3.69	0.83	
Broker role	0.83							*3.75*	*0.73*	
Negotiating agreement and commitment		3.74	1.17		4.00	0.85	15	3.87	0.87	
Effective oral presentations		3.61	1.14		3.87	0.76		3.74	0.88	
Building and maintaining a power base		3.65	1.01		3.65	0.91		3.65	0.79	

Notes: M, mean; SD, standard deviation

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The results on management competencies are consistent with previous studies (Ghiselli, 1963; Geissler and Martin, 1998; Kay and Russette, 2000; Mintzberg, 1975; Tas, 1988; Chung-Herrera *et al.*, 2003; Francis, 1996; Yukl *et al.*, 1990; Walo, 2001) as discussed earlier in the literature review. Taking initiative relates to the level of decisiveness a manager must display (Quinn *et al.*, 1996). To ensure success, hospitality managers should be results oriented and take an active rather than passive approach. The focus, purpose, and kind of activities in the goal-setting process vary with different levels of management within an organization. It is believed that due to the high departmentalization of Kenyan hotel operations, each manager is a strategic and tactical leader of his own department. Personal productivity is essential in the Kenyan hospitality industry due to the nature of the promotion systems used in the hospitality industry. It is important to note that managers in the Kenyan hospitality industry are promoted based on their personal performance and results. In view of the prevalence of performance contracts in the Kenyan corporate world, it is not uncommon to find performance appraisal among managerial ranks in the hospitality industry.

Various human resource studies (Fwaya, 2006; Irungu, 2006) in the Kenyan hospitality industry have proved that there is linkage between employee motivation, satisfaction, turnover and organizational performance. The Kenyan hospitality industry is largely labor-intensive making human resource a valuable input. Motivation is therefore an invaluable management strategy. This can take various forms such as rewards, promotion, bonuses, new challenges and competitions. During their work, managers use verbal and written documents (memos, reports, manuals) to communicate with customers and their peers, superiors, and subordinates. These results indicate the manager's ability to execute operational planning, involving financial, material and human resource decisions to ensure the most effective delivery of services, is still essential.

4.3 Emerging critical general managerial competencies

The results indicated that all managerial competencies had a composite mean score of 3.0 or higher (refer to Table II). Owing to the generic nature of these competencies and their recognized importance by hospitality managers in the literature (Quinn *et al.*, 1996; Mullins and Davies, 1991; Thorpe, 1990) managers should be able to achieve any outcomes. The current study also revealed that hospitality managers require a broad range of management competencies to cope with the diverse range of issues and complexities that confront them. This new multi-department focus demands increased leadership ability in managers. Managers do not need hands-on technical expertise, but instead must have the skills to use this information for decision making and to view the impacts of these decisions conceptually for the whole organization.

Results arising from the ranking of management competencies contrast with Thorpe's (1990) assertion of a paradigm shift from competencies such as planning, controlling, and organizing to those of leadership, market orientation, and management of change. Planning and organizing are among the significant competencies while living with change was among the least significant.

These findings further support the need for general management competencies in tourism and hospitality management. In light of the CVF model, hospitality managers in Kenya strive to achieve both external and internal orientation. However, they are majorly concerned with stability and control of the organization. It can therefore

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be inferred that managers in the Kenyan hospitality industry tend to strive to maximize output externally and at the same time aspire to internally achieve consolidation and continuity in the organization while maintaining stability and control.

4.4 Human relations competencies

Contrary to previous studies (Baum, 1991; Umbreit, 1992; Breiter and Clements, 1996; Mullins and Davies, 1991; Fwaya, 2006; Walo, 2001), human relations competencies in the mentor and facilitator role were ranked low. Managers do not consider the competencies essential as none of them registered a mean score of 4.0 and above. This may be due to the competitive strategies that different hotels pursue which makes managers focus on maximization of output and consolidation and continuity outcomes. Previous studies (Fwaya, 2006; Irungu, 2006) in the human resource field in the Kenyan hospitality industry have indicated use of dysfunctional strategies towards human resources in the industry. For instance, Fwaya (2006) found that most hospitality organizations use numerical flexibility system in managing human resources. In addition, only a handful of them had proper training, recruitment, selection, and performance appraisal and compensation systems in place. The results of Irungu (2006) indicate that there is a high turnover rate of human resources in the Kenyan hospitality industry. Hyden (1994) suggested in that the contemporary business environment, too many managers focus on control and do not encourage employee training and empowerment. However, the ability to make the best use of people (Mullins and Davies, 1991; Fwaya, 2006) and create an environment that ensures they contribute their best to the organization is a distinct feature of effective management in the tourism and hospitality industries.

4.5 Conclusions

In the Kenyan hospitality industry, there is a gap between the level of utilization and the level of importance that managers attach to the competencies. The three significant competencies that hospitality managers utilize are taking initiative, presenting written information effectively, and organizing. On the other hand, managers consider the following 15 competencies to be important; taking initiative, motivating others, goal setting, personal productivity and motivation, planning and presenting information; writing effectively, delegating effectively, organizing, developing subordinates, creative thinking, conflict management, controlling, time and stress management, team building, managing change, negotiating agreement and commitment.

The findings of this study confirm that, overall, significant management competencies in the Kenyan hospitality industry are taking initiative and goal setting which are associated with a director's role; personal productivity and motivation and motivating others, which are associated with a producer's role; presenting information and writing effectively is part of a monitor's role; and planning and organizing is associated with a coordinator's role. Hospitality managers in Kenya do not consider human relations competencies to be significant yet the industry is labor intensive.

4.6 Implications

The human resource development managers will use the significant competencies identified in this study to structure programs and training schedules. This will help broaden managers' learning and develop a wide range of competencies including generic management competencies. The empirical findings of the study, supported

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by the literature in this area, suggest that both competencies in the consolidation and continuity roles and maximization of output roles are important for managers to succeed in the hospitality industry. Empirical evidence arising out of this study together with the literature review suggest that consolidation and continuity roles and maximization of output roles are important for managers to succeed in the hospitality industry. It is important that these competencies are addressed in future hospitality education curricula. This study therefore suggests that consideration should be given to assessing the effectiveness of teaching general management competencies in the current hospitality curricula. The significant competencies identified should be incorporated in the hospitality management curricula to produce graduates that fit the industry expectations. Furthermore, hospitality graduates should be exposed internship programs that will offer opportunities to develop the needed competencies through interaction with hospitality managers. The findings of this study have implications for students and graduates with respect to their own preparation for employment and future career planning. The students themselves must take responsibility for ensuring they are able to satisfy future employers in terms of the competencies required to be successful. This involves having awareness and understanding of their managerial strengths and weaknesses and strengthening those requiring attention to ensure their ultimate success.

More research in the direction of significant management competencies using both generic and technical competencies is welcome for purposes of further insights into this interesting topic. Further research may focus on studying significant management competencies in other sectors of the hospitality and tourism industry.

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