Norwegian organisational culture.
A case study from a Norwegian organisation

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ABSTRACT

This work presents the concept of organisational culture, with a particular emphasis on Norwegian organisational culture. It explains why organisational culture plays an important role in an organisation's success and features the main determinants of Norwegian organisational culture which distinguish it from other organisational cultures and support the coherent functioning of the organisation. The main goal of the work is to identify the organisational culture profile of the selected Norwegian organisation culture and to check the compliance of the cultural profile of the organisation under analysis with the determinants of Norwegian organisational culture, which were established on the basis of the work of Norwegian researches such as B. Espedal, T. Grennes or J. Bru. The assessment of Norwegian organisational culture showed that Norwegian organisations are dominated by a clan-like culture, also showing the features of female culture, and thus based on trust, cooperation and compliance of goals. The research carried out for the purposes of this study showed the compliance of the cultural profile of the studied enterprise with the profile of Norwegian organisational culture – the responses of the employees of the Beta Hotel allow us to draw conclusions that the company is also dominated by the clan culture and features of female organisational culture. The questionnaire also made it possible to identify the type of culture desired by the Beta Hotel staff – the preferred type of culture still shows the dominance of the clan culture, which allows for the implications that employees are satisfied with the current situation in the company. The results of the study show that employees of an organisation identify with their internal system of values, which may translate into the effectiveness of their work and social relations, and, as a result, the success of the organisation.

Keywords: organisational culture, dominant type of culture, questionnaire survey, enterprise, Norway.

1. Introduction

Organisational culture is a commonly used term, but it seems to cause some degree of ambiguity. Over the years, many definitions and views on organisational culture have been created, which should not come as a surprise, since the very concept of „culture" raises much controversy in literature. Researchers present different ways of understanding organisational culture, but most of them agree that organisational culture is, among others, shared, empathetic and responsive. It emphasises what is common, unites, stabilises and reduces uncertainty. It is a social glue; it is the whole of human ways of living in organisations and the whole of interpersonal relations, attitudes, values, norms and beliefs (Czerska, 2003).

The concept of organisational culture aroused considerable interest of entrepreneurs in the 1980s, when it was proved that the success of the company is connected with its cultural aspects. Over the past decades, it has been proven that it plays an important role in shaping many key areas of the organisation and has an impact on its success (Cameron, Quinn, 2006). For this reason, shaping a coherent organisational culture is now the task of almost every manager, which is why the author decided to explore the topic of organisational culture in this study.

Particularly noteworthy is the Scandinavian organisational culture, which stands out against the global backdrop, emphasising values such as consensus and equality, opposing the popular approach based on rigid hierarchy and control. Scandinavia is a place where many corporations have been established that are recognised as highly innovative and meet the needs of demanding customers. As one can find in both 2017 and 2018 Bloomberg Innovation Index, Scandinavian Economies were all ranked among the first 15 in the world.

In this study, the author has decided to explore the organisational culture of a Norwegian organisation following a belief that Norwegian business culture is worth researching and has a positive impact on the functioning of the company.

The main goal of the work is to identify the organisational culture profile of the selected Norwegian organisation culture and to check the compliance of the cultural profile of the organisation under study with the determinants of Norwegian organisational culture. The author tries to answer questions such as: What are the determinants of Norwegian organisational culture? What are the features of the organisational culture of the audited entity? Does the organisational culture of the examined hotel correspond to the determinants of Norwegian organisational culture?

Although there have been numerous studies on it since the 1980s, when the interest in organisational culture began, the breakthrough publication was the work of T. Peters and R.H Waterman's "In Search of Excellence", published in 1982, which proved that organisational culture plays a key role in the company's success. Since then, the subject of organisational culture has been explored by many researchers from different countries, including Czesław Sikorski, a Polish researcher, who provided a lot of important information about it. In his research, he analysed fundamental issues related to organisational culture, such as strategies for shaping organisational culture, varieties of organisational culture or its impact on the functioning of an enterprise (Sikorski, 2002). His first publications on organisational culture were published as early as the 1980s.

Another important study on organisational culture was the 2004 GLOBE (Globe Leadership and Organisational Effectiveness) project of House, Javidan, Dorfman and Gupt, which looked at the interrelationships between social culture, organisational culture and leadership in organisations. The study was international in nature, with 17,000 mid-level managers from 62 countries around the world participating in it, and provided a wealth of information on organisational cultures and the issues of individual countries (House, 2004).

Operational terms used in this study:

- ***Hierarchy culture*** – a type of culture based on structure and control. The company is characterised by a hierarchical culture, it is highly formalised and hierarchical – internal control and cohesion of the organisation is possible thanks to centralised decisions as well as numerous regulations and rules. The organisation strives for the fastest and most efficient work possible. Leaders have excellent coordination and organisational skills, monitoring the work of the enterprise, which is determined by regulations and rules. The working environment is highly formal, and the emphasis is on the undisturbed activity of the company, which in the long run supports the achievement of efficiency, predictability and sustainability (Cameron, Quinn, 2015).

- ***Market culture*** – a company characterised by a market culture conducts its activities in a way that makes it similar to the market. It focuses on external matters and its own position in the environment, paying less attention to internal affairs. The organisation operates mainly thanks to economic market mechanisms, mainly money exchange – it carries out transactions (exchanges, sales, contracts) mostly with external entities, such as suppliers, customers or trade unions. The emphasis is on the end result, market position, regular customer base, profitability and profit. The main task of the company is to pursue a clearly defined goal by means of an aggressive strategy. This type of culture assumes that the environment is hostile and the customers are demanding and picky. The cohesiveness of the organisation ensures the willingness to overcome the competition, and the company's success is understood as the share in the market (Cameron, Quinn, 2015).

- ***The clan culture*** – owes its name to its similarity to a family-type organisation. Contrary to the culture of hierarchy and the market, organisations focus not on procedures and numerous rules or their own position in the environment, but on teamwork, the greatest possible involvement of individuals and the company's sense of responsibility for employees. Shared values, participation and strong ties are essential. Leaders who act as mentors and tutors, a friendly working atmosphere and care for employees make the organisation more like a family than a company. Employees work well together and their morale is appreciated. Personal development, loyalty and tradition are also emphasised (Cameron, Quinn, 2015).

- ***The culture of adhocracy*** – a type of culture that is oriented towards innovation and creativity. The main task of the enterprise is to produce and improve the offered goods and services so that they become difficult to replace. Non-stereotypical ideas and risky proposals are valued, and the emphasis is on flexibility and innovation that enable increased resources and profits. It is also important to quickly adapt to new conditions and be able to predict the situation in the future. The name of the adhocracy culture type comes from the phrase ad hoc, which suggests ad hoc, dynamic and temporary activities – teams in an organisation are created for a specific task, and then resolved immediately after solving a given problem, which facilitates adaptation in a situation of uncertainty. The management encourages the search for non-standard solutions, and supports entrepreneurship and creativity (Cameron, Quinn, 2015).

2. Methods

The research subject is a Norwegian organisation whose name has been anonymised and replaced with the name „Beta Hotel", which in the following work corresponds to the analysed hotel. The audited entity operates as a joint-stock company that has been offering hotel services since 2014 and is located in Tromso in the northern part of Norway. The analysed entity's employees form the following organisational units: a group of strategic leaders, a management team, middle managers / superiors, administration, reception, kitchen / waiters and a cleaning team. The tool that was used to diagnose the organisational culture of the Hotel Beta is the questionnaire for organisational culture assessment (OCAI) by Cameron and Quinn. OCAI is one of the most common tools for measuring organisational culture, verified by thousands of companies in their research. OCAI is considered to be an exceptionally useful and precise tool in the analysis of the most important aspects of an organisation's culture. OCAI allows for measuring six key dimensions of organisational culture, relating to the following characteristics of an organisation: leadership, employee management, what binds the organisation together, strategy and success criteria. The questionnaire aims to establish the dominant type of culture in the enterprise, using the types of hierarchy, market, clan and adhocracy (Cameron, Quinn, 2006). The questionnaire consists of six questions with four answers. In each question, 100 points should be divided among four answers, depending on the degree to which the given answer reflects the actual situation in the analysed organisation. Most points should be given to the answer that most accurately reflects the reality. For example, if answer A is the best reflection of the real situation, answers B and C are somewhat close to the actual state, and answer D is the least accurate, then one can allocate, e.g., 60 points to answers A, 15 points to answers B and C each, and 10 points to answers D. The most important condition has been met, with the total number of points being 100. The questions have to be answered twice – the first time the answer should be given on the basis of the current situation in the surveyed enterprise in order to identify the current type of culture. The second time, one needs to answer the same questions, but taking into account the desired state in the organisation – it aims at determining the type of culture that is preferred by the employees of the organisation. Therefore, it is a type of culture that allows the company to function more effectively and respond more efficiently to the challenges of the environment. In the following work, a modified OCAI questionnaire is used – the original questions in English were transformed in a way to make them more understandable and accessible, bearing in mind that for the purposes of the study, the questionnaire will be completed by company employees with varying levels of English. The questionnaire has also been translated into Norwegian, due to the fact that a significant part of the employees is of Norwegian nationality, and moreover, the main focus of the work is placed on the Scandinavian organisational culture. Table 1. shows a modified OCAI questionnaire.

The survey was conducted in an online form – the original concept of conducting a stationary survey among hotel employees through the distribution of surveys by the manager had to be changed due to the dynamically developing situation related to COVID-19. As a result of the announced pandemic and the necessity to close the Beta Hotel for an indefinite period, most of the employees were dismissed or suspended from their duties for an indefinite period. Therefore, collecting data from employees of the Beta Hotel was very difficult – there were only a few employees left, therefore 27 responses were obtained. The respondents represented various organisational units: kitchen / waiters (20 people), mid-level managers / superiors (3 people), reception (2 people), cleaning team (2 people). It is worth mentioning that before this situation, about 100 employees were employed at the Beta Hotel.

The data was collected through the Google Forms platform at the turn of February / March 2020. The author was constantly in contact with the Employee's Manager of Beta Hotel.

Table 1: Modified OCAI questionnaire

Organisational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI)		
Company or organisational unit	Hotel Beta	
Employee group	(select one)	
Strategic Leader Group		
Management Team		
Middle Management Team/Supervisors		
Administration		
Front Desk		
Kitchen/Waiters		
Housekeeping		
Other -		
1.Dominant Characteristics	**now**	**preferred**
A Hotel Beta can be described as a friendly workplace. People tend to share a lot and trust themselves. Working atmosphere is rather easy-going.		
B Hotel Beta is a progressive and dynamic place. People tend to take risks and aren't afraid of changes.		
C Hotel Beta focuses on achievements. People are competitive and determined to deliver results. Employees work as individuals rather than like a team.		
D Hotel Beta is a disciplined and structured organisation. Strict formal procedures are on regular daily basis.		
Total (100)	100	100
2. Organisational Leadership	**now**	**preferred**
A The leadership of Hotel Beta tend to represent mentoring, simplifying given tasks and care. The communication is rather friendly and convenient.		
B The leadership of Hotel Beta tend to take risks and make innovative decisions. The role of an individual is important.		
C The leadership of Hotel Beta tend to act in a performance-based, straightforward and aggressive manner.		
D The leadership of Hotel Beta tend to demonstrate coordination and effective organisation.		
Total (100)	100	100
3. Management of Employees	**now**	**preferred**
A The management style in Hotel Beta can be described by teamwork and mutual agreement.		
B The management style in Hotel Beta can be described by risk-taking, innovation and freedom. Changes and creative projects often occur.		
C The management style in Hotel Beta Edge can be described by competitiveness, high requirements and accent on employee's results.		
D The management style in Hotel Beta can be described by security of employment, predictability and stability. Every-day reality usually remain the same.		
Total (100)	100	100
4. Organisation Glue	**now**	**preferred**
A The glue that holds Hotel Beta together is dedication, loyalty and trust. People rely on one another and can count on one another.		
B The glue that holds Hotel Beta together is continuous change and improvement. Innovative decisions and creative ideas are valued.		
C The glue that holds Hotel Beta together is desire to win and accomplish targets. Aggressive and bossy behaviour occur on daily basis.		
D The glue that holds Hotel Beta is regulations and coordination. Well-ordered every-day reality is crucial.		
Total (100)	100	100
5. Strategic Emphases	**now**	**preferred**
A Hotel Beta emphasises personal growth. High trust, acceptance and commitment among employees are crucial.		
B Hotel Beta emphasises gaining new resources and facing new challenges. Trying new things and looking for opportunities are crucial.		
C Hotel Beta emphasises competition and results. Achieving targets and winning are major goals.		
D Hotel Beta emphasises stability. The organisation focuses on effective functioning and supervision.		
Total (100)	100	100
6. Criteria of Success	**now**	**preferred**
A Hotel Beta determines success based on its improvement of human resources, teamwork, work dedication and loyalty.		
B Hotel Beta determines success based on its exceptionality and special quality. Creative spirit and innovation are important.		
C Hotel Beta determines success based on accomplishments and wins. Outperforming competition is important.		
D Hotel Beta determines success based on its efficiency and effectiveness. Well organised schedules and plans are crucial.		

Source: own study.

Due to new conditions, the author transformed the questionnaire into an online survey that was sent to the Manager, who then sent the survey to the remaining employees. The employees of the Beta Hotel filled out an online questionnaire and the data was automatically saved by the Google Forms which was then visible for the author.

3. Results

The results were compiled in a graphical form using Microsoft Excel and a profile of the organisational culture of the Beta Hotel was created on the basis of the obtained responses, presented in Diagram 1. All diagrams presented in this research were developed independently based on the results of the study.

When analysing the cultural profile of the Beta Hotel presented in Diagram 1, one can notice that the discrepancies between the current and the desired state are very small, noticeable primarily in the area of market culture. The graphical representation of the organisation characteristics shows that the dominant culture profile, both now and in the desired version, is the clan culture, which currently accounts for 37.5% of the overall profile of the Beta Hotel. The culture of hierarchy (25%), followed by adhocracy (21.5%) and the culture of the market (16%), which constitute the smallest share in the organisational culture profile of the Beta Hotel, are much less important in the overall profile. Based on the results obtained, one can conclude that the Beta Hotel puts emphasis on teamwork, good relations between employees, as well as knowledge sharing. The employees' replies also indicate that the Beta Hotel has a friendly atmosphere that fosters a sense of responsibility and commitment. The management emphasises the value of respect and loyalty, and is characterised by highly developed coordination and organisational skills. A fairly high score in the area of hierarchy culture indicates that despite the clan's culture, which is the dominant profile, the Beta Hotel values well-organised everyday life, which is possible thanks to the applicable regulations and rules. The profile of the Beta Hotel therefore suggests that it is a formal place which, however, bases its activities on teamwork and strong ties. The results of the study also show that, according to the employees, innovative ideas and non-standard solutions are valued, which is indicated by a significant percentage of the adhocracy culture (21.5%) in the general cultural profile. The profile of the culture preferred by the employees is very similar to the current organisational culture of the Beta Hotel, based on which it can

be concluded that the employees are satisfied with the situation and work in the organisation. The employees' small need for change is directed towards the market culture – currently it constitutes 16% of the cultural profile of the Beta Hotel, while – according to the employees – it should be 13%. This means that despite the low importance of the will to overcome competition, aggressive strategy or focus on the final results in the current profile of the Beta Hotel, the employees feel the need to reduce activities related to competition, tough requirements and achievements. According to Cameron and Quinn (2015), whether an organisation needs a dominant culture or a harmonious culture depends on the type of challenges that a given company has to face. Considering that competition in the hotel industry is growing year by year, a poor market culture may pose a threat to the functioning of the organisation. The change desired by the employees could weaken the Beta Hotel's position on the market, bearing in mind that the current share of the market culture in the overall profile is small. Therefore, one can assume that in the case under study, the proposed change is beneficial only from the point of view of employees who prefer a friendly, cooperative relationship with their superiors and tend to reduce aggressive, results-oriented behaviour. The chart also shows that employees prefer a slightly higher level of adhocracy culture, which means that the importance of creativity and innovation should be increased at the Beta Hotel. The desired change seems to be beneficial from the point of view of contemporary customers who, having a wide range of hotel services to choose from, are looking for creative solutions tailored to their individual needs on the market. This imposes obligations
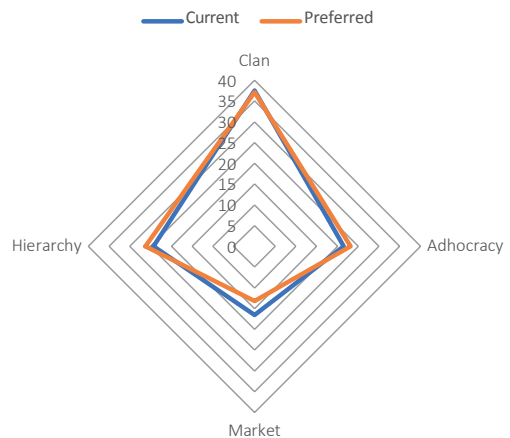

Diagram 1: Profile of the organisational culture
of the Beta Hotel
Source: own study

on hotel service providers to constantly improve their offer, which will stand out from the competition. The proposed change is also beneficial for the employees of the Beta Hotel, who are thus encouraged to seek non-stereotypical ideas and creative proposals. The results also show that employees prefer a slightly higher influence of the hierarchy culture in the organisation (+ 2%), which may suggest that they lack clear guidelines for the daily tasks outsourced. The clearly dominant culture of the clan means that the way of making decisions is not centralised, and the employees have a lot of freedom in the way of solving given problems. Based on the responses, one can conclude that employees need somewhat clearer rules and principles of conduct that would strengthen the sense of stability and security.

By analysing individual questions of the questionnaire, it is possible to assess what profile of the organisational culture dominates in specific areas of the organisation, so the following are taken into account: dominant features of the Beta Hotel, leadership, employee management style, what binds the organisation together, strategic emphasis and success criteria presented in Diagrams 2-7.
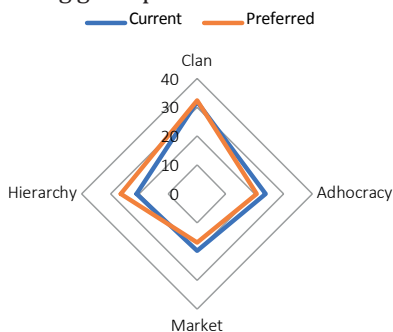
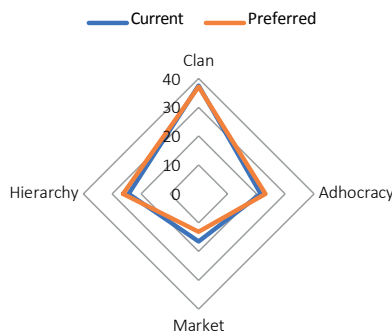Diagram 2: Dominant characteristics

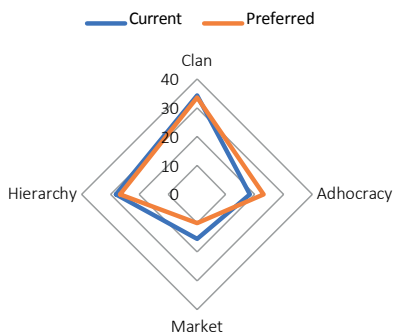Diagram 3: Organisational leadership
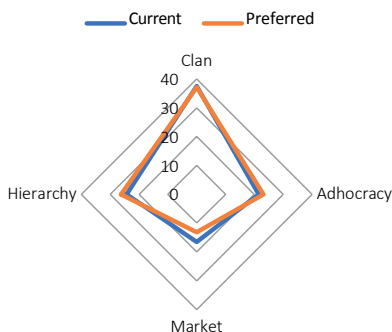
Diagram 4: Management of employees
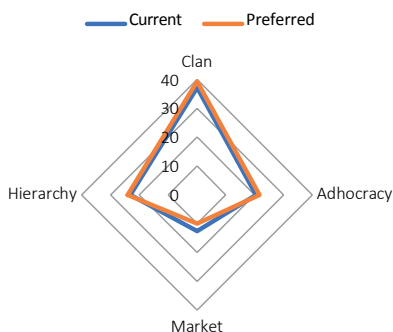
Diagram 5: Organisational glue

Diagram 6: Strategic emphasis

Diagram 7: Criteria of Success

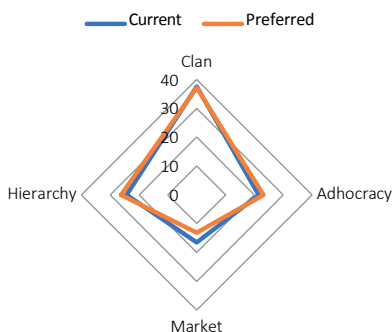Source: own study

Analysing the results in individual areas of the Beta Hotel (Diagrams 2-7), one can conclude that in most areas there is compliance with the general profile of the Beta Hotel – the clan culture remains the dominant profile, with a smaller share of adhocracy and hierarchy culture, and also it can be seen that in some cases there are slight discrepancies between the current and the desired culture. For example, in the area of leadership, employees declare the need to change towards a culture of hierarchy, which may indicate that they lack the sense of security and stability that a leader should evoke. In the case of the style of human resource management, a lower influence of the market culture and a stronger culture of adhocracy are desirable, which means that employees lack creative, ad hoc projects that dynamise work at the Beta Hotel, and also indicate the need for a response to employee initiatives. On the other hand, in the area of dominant organisational features, the employees of the Beta Hotel believe that the strength of the influence of the hierarchy culture should be higher, which may suggest that everyday functioning in the organisation is unclear or opaque, and therefore a higher hierarchy is needed.

Comparing the profile of the organisational culture of the Beta Hotel with the key determinants of the Norwegian organisational culture, one can notice compliance in most aspects. Treating employees as partners and mutual trust are key aspects of Norwegian corporate culture, which is compared to a clan culture (Grennes, 2006). The study showed that the clan's culture is dominant in the profile of the Beta Hotel, which indicates that its organisational culture is in line with the Norwegian standard – the emphasis is on values such as cooperation, participation and respect. As Espedal (2009) emphasises, the main standards of Norwegian organisational culture are cooperation, partnership and trust, which can be found in the Beta Hotel, as evidenced by its general cultural profile. Norwegian organisational culture is also characterised by a very weak correlation with male culture, thus focusing on results and profit, competitiveness and tough requirements towards employees (Grennes, 2006). A similarity can therefore be seen in the weak strength of the market culture (16%) in the overall profile of the Beta Hotel – the organisation is not oriented towards achievement, competition and aggressive behaviour. The determinants of Norwegian organisational culture also include the emphasis on equality and fairness, which we can learn from the Norwegian manager June Kristine Lima Bru, who interviewed eight key managers in Norway, inc-

luding Alf Christian Thorkildsen, former CEO of Seadrill Norge As. However, the OCAI questionnaire used does not directly test these aspects of the organisation's functioning, so it cannot be determined whether these values are valued at the Beta Hotel. However, based on the data of the Beta Hotel, which can be found on their LinkedIn profile it is known that the organisation employs employees of many nationalities (including Bulgaria, India, the Philippines, Poland), which gives the basis for the conclusion that also in terms of equality, the organisational culture of the Beta Hotel corresponds to the characteristics of the Norwegian organisational culture.

4. Discussion

Despite the disadvantages of the selected tool, which is not able to thoroughly analyse a given culture, due to its purely quantitative nature and the limited number of respondents, caused by the sudden situation related to the COVID-19 pandemic, it can be stated that the research objectives have been completed – the questionnaire allowed for the analysis of the main areas of the organisational culture of the Beta Hotel and comparing it with the determinants of the Norwegian organisational culture. On the basis of the conducted study, it can be concluded that the cultural profile of the Beta Hotel is consistent with the profile of Norwegian organisational culture – both profiles show a strong correlation with the culture of the clan and the female type of culture. When interpreting the above research results, it should also be noted that most of the respondents in the research carried out belonged to lower-level organisational units (kitchen, waiters, cleaning team). The presented results illustrate the view of the units that are subject to management and are not at the top of the hierarchy. Therefore, it should be taken into account that if the questionnaire were completed by employees representing all positions, including the management team, the results of the study would be different and would present a view of, among others, the management and leadership also from the perspective of senior managers, which would probably change the overall picture of the Beta Hotel's profile. However, the result of this survey allows us to examine the level of employee satisfaction with the current culture in the enterprise and may indicate to the management where changes should be made in the functioning of the organisation. In the examined case, the employees show satisfaction with the current culture, which allows us to conclude that they are satisfied with the

current culture, the profile of which is consistent with the determinants of Norwegian organisational culture.

5. Conclusions

The research carried out for the purposes of this study showed the compliance of the cultural profile of the studied enterprise with the profile of Norwegian organisational culture. The responses of the employees of the Beta Hotel allow us to draw conclusions that the company is dominated by the culture of the clan and the features of female organisational culture, which are main indicators of Norwegian organisational culture (Grennes, 2006). The questionnaire also made it possible to identify the type of culture desired by the Beta Hotel staff – the preferred type of culture still shows the dominance of the clan culture, which implies that employees are satisfied with the current situation in the company. This allows us to draw the conclusion that the employees of the organisation identify with their internal system of values, which may translate into the efficiency of their work and the relationships of their superiors and colleagues, and, as a result, also

the success of the entire organisation (Peters, Waterman, 1982).

I am convinced that my article will be a valuable source of information for other researchers who want to learn more about the determinants of Norwegian organisational culture. When writing my thesis, I encountered considerable difficulties in finding materials on the topic. I also believe that my work will be useful for company managers who should pay attention to the organisational culture of their companies. Especially the Norwegian organisational culture – departing from the hierarchy and control model, building a sense of security and trust among employees, may turn out to be a useful hint in the area of management. According to the global Deloitte Millenial Survey 2019, young generations feel disappointed with traditional business motives, which should warn entrepreneurs that the needs of employees and their morale should not be neglected. Perhaps the solution is a bit of the Scandinavian influence in each organisation, because as reported by the World Happiness Report 2019, Finland ranks first among the happiest nations in the world, followed by Denmark and Norway third.

Acknowledgements

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