

# A Study on the Trans-Culture Management of International Hotel in China

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## Abstract

Along with the integration process of global economy, cultural conflicts gains more and more attentions. After China's entry to WTO, China economy is involved in world economy further. More and more international companies enter China. However, they encounter with an overall cultural impact. Trans-culture conflicts have already become a problem for international groups. Teams with different cultural beliefs challenge the effectiveness of traditional management theories. Differences between Chinese culture and western culture affect international groups' management significantly. Trans-culture management gains attentions from international groups more and more. Therefore, it is meaningful to research this issue. This paper selects the international hotel industry in China as a subject to study the trans-culture conflict phenomenon with the hope of achieving effective trans-culture management.

**Keywords:** International hotel group, Trans-culture management

## 1. Analyze the effect of culture from different levels of international hotel group

### 1.1 Founders

Many companies have their "heroes". Wilkins defines these people as "living or passing, real or virtual men who are models of behaviors in companies because of their widely-praising characteristics". Hotel industry is not an exception. It has lots of men of the time, such as Bill Marriot, Kemmons Wilson, and Conrad Hilton. They have high reputations in hotel groups. Their nationalities, experiences, and other cultural backgrounds directly affect companies' value judgments and value systems. Take Hilton Hotels Corporation for example, as a authentic American, the founder, Conrad Hilton describes its each hotel as "a small America, where all people from different countries can speak anything as they like". Every detail in the hotel, from design of building, advertising, and public relationship, reflects this democratic and friendly culture.

### 1.2 Top administrative managers

Along with the continuous development and growth of international hotel groups, many top administrative managers with different cultural backgrounds join in the management levels, what brings about new multi-cultural impacts on the international hotel groups. Because of different cultural and national backgrounds, these top administrative managers hold different philosophy of management, and different recognition to companies' organizational structure design and decision process. Decision-makers' different industrial backgrounds will affect their decision-making ways and management styles, what will inevitably generate cross-industrial impacts. On the other hand, hotel management has its uniqueness. Rich experiences are relatively more important. And internal promotion can benefit the reduction of management errors. However, more and more top managers are coming from other industries, what will cause more cross-industrial impacts on hotel groups. Many top administrative managers join in the management level by different professional ways, such as human resources or financial branch. These professional backgrounds will inversely affect their strategic choice.

### 1.3 Regional levels

International hotel groups usually partition their regional branches based on geographical locations. At this level, culture can still exert effects on companies, reflected mainly by the conflicts and integration between companies' mother culture and local culture and sub-culture. Different national culture backgrounds mean different value orientations and even different understandings to the term of "management". Corporate management is a kind of culture in essence. Drucker, a management scientist in America, connects management with culture clearly in his book "Management". In his opinion, management is not only a science but also a culture, with its values, beliefs, tools, and languages. Management culture is a part of common culture. It is an organizational culture and belongs to the scope of sub-culture. The management thoughts, management philosophy, and management system contained by management culture are undoubtedly restrained by specific culture instead of being generated from nothing.

#### *1.4 Interior of each hotel*

In every hotel of the groups, national culture possesses the dominant position, which influences hotel's operations directly. In specific, its influences focus on the cultural effects on employees and customers. Studies show that national culture's effects on employees are stronger than organizational effects. Chinese employees in international hotels are affected more by Chinese culture than by hotel groups' corporate culture. It means national culture can generate greater effects on management practices comparing with organizational culture. Therefore, employees in the hotel will be enslaved to national culture. They can bring about the company with "the popular culture and value orientation in their society". Because of different influences of national cultures, employees hold different ideas of time, labor habits, and work attitudes. Because of different cultural backgrounds, customers are in favor of different hotel services. Hotels should study customers' cultural orientations in target market and provide with right products for customers.

### **2. The necessities of implementing trans-culture management in international hotel group**

In the international hotel group, Chinese employees and western employees may come across these problems as follow in communication and cooperation.

(1) Extreme conservative. Chinese employees and western employees can not realize a mutual understanding toward others' politics, economy, laws, especially hotel culture and management way. The cultural sensitiveness between them is poor. And the relationship between them is tense. Foreign managers control the operation of hotels merely based on rules and regulations, which makes them separate from employees further. And the psychological distance between them is enlarged. The integration between Chinese employees and western employees is very difficult. In order to achieve trans-culture management, the two parts should reach compromises in specific issues and find out solutions. And these compromises may lead to more complex processes.

(2) Interruption of communication. The large psychological distance between Chinese employees and western employees will affect communication. As this distance reaches certain degree, the communication from the top to the bottom will be interrupted. The degree of work tense will rise. Meanwhile, different understandings or misunderstandings to leaders' intentions and work targets, and complete copy of foreign mode will cause the decrease of hotel's operation efficiency.

(3) Non-rational response. Chinese employees and western employees do not prepare completely for potential problems in cooperation. Their adapting abilities of culture and techniques of solving cultural conflicts are poor.

(4) Hating. Once a conflict appears, if Chinese employees and western employees complain others' impertinence or conservativeness instead of looking for commonness from others' cultural backgrounds, it will result in a widely hating in hotel.

The necessities of implementing trans-culture management in one international hotel group:

The so-called trans-culture management, also named as cross-culture management, refers to the management of people, materials, and affairs concerning different cultural backgrounds. In other words, it means how to overcome trans-cultural conflicts and realize effective management with the trans-culture condition. It aims at designing feasible organization structure and management mechanism in an environment with different cultures, achieving rational allocation of corporate resources, mining and using potentials and values of human resources as much as possible, and improving corporate comprehensive effect to a maximum degree. A famous American scholar points out "failures of multi-national companies are mostly originated from the neglect over cultural differences, primary or slight understandings". In order to achieve healthy development in China, international hotel group must implement effective trans-culture management. The key is to avoid the transformation from cultural difference to cultural conflict, solving present cultural conflicts as much as possible, and achieving operational targets, based on recognizing and distinguishing the cultural differences of Chinese hotels and western hotels.

#### *2.1 The essence of trans-culture management*

In researching companies' trans-culture management, cultural differences can affect management, but the effects are not necessarily negative. Cultural conflict refers to a mutual opposite process between different cultures or cultural elements. In a word, as cultural difference is free from reasonable control or management, it will cause a fierce rivalry that is reflected by cultural rub. Cultural conflict can hurt management efficiency. But we can escape from it. Therefore, it is not necessary for an international hotel group to change cultural differences in organizations. Inversely, the proper use of cultural difference may generate unexpected effects.

To sum up, the essence of trans-culture management can be summarized as using and controlling cultural difference, avoiding the transformation from difference to conflict, eliminating present cultural conflicts, and improving management efficiency.

### *2.2 Trans-culture management's procedures and measures*

The first step is the understanding of trans-culture. It includes two aspects. To understand other cultures, the first is to understand own culture. Secondly, understand other cultures with the basis of cultural empathy. Cultural empathy requires that people should get rid of local culture to certain degree and should understand other cultures at a relatively objective position. This understanding is more objective and exact. By this self recognition and comparative recognition, people can master the differences between local culture and other cultures. As a result, managers can take these cultural differences under control by proper management ways.

The second step is the trans-culture integration. Trans-culture integration aims at realizing trans-culture harmony by trans-culture understanding and trans-culture communication, and achieving the business mode with features of host country culture. In other words, with the basis of common understandings to culture, according to environmental requirements and group strategies, we can cultivate a powerful corporate culture among children companies, and mother company. This corporate culture is clear with continuity and coherence. It reflects features of the group and is right for the environment. Besides, it possesses strong powers that can make every employee to combine his or her thoughts and behaviors with corporate targets and tenets. On one hand, it can reduce the cultural conflicts. On the other hand, it connects Mother Company with children companies more closely, overcoming information distances caused by geophysical distances, and complementing shortages in technologies and finance. Meanwhile, it can help to build up nice brand fame for the group, enhancing the hotel group's cultural changing abilities.

The final step is the trans-culture training. It aims at improving people's abilities of reacting and adapting to different cultures, driving the communication and understanding between people with different cultural backgrounds, transferring the product of cultural integration ----- common operational thoughts and powerful corporate culture to employees, and forming an influencing culture cohesion in internal company.

### **3. Construct a hotel culture that suits for Chinese national culture**

In the international hotel group, the management is not only a process of conflict or separation of Chinese and western cultures, but also a process of integration of Chinese and western cultures. Cultural conflict and cultural integration run through the all process of trans-culture management of international hotel group in China. Comparatively speaking, the cultural integration process is more important because it is only a transition process although it is an inevitable process in the form of corporate culture of hotel group. Cultural integration is the key of trans-culture management in international hotel group.

Kempinski Hotels Beijing is composed of three countries, namely Germany, China, and Korea, four investors, and seven companies. German Kempinski Hotels is registered in Geneva, Switzerland. Its five-star hotels have experienced the conflict and friction of Chinese and western cultures, and the integration of Chinese and western management thoughts. Fortunately, the top managers have a deep understanding toward German culture. They are good at making innovation considering Chinese situation. In management, they lay more stresses on the service spirit of "I am good for everyone and everyone is good for me" and the management thought of "taking employees as the No.1". As a result, the management organically combines German scientific and precise management style and Chinese humanism together, and forms a successful corporate culture integrated by Chinese and western cultures. In order to cultivate the corporate culture in China, international hotel group should emphasize on the behavior culture, system culture, and spirit culture, based on pursuing the integration of cultures.

#### *3.1 Pursue the unity of excellence and harmony, and cultivate behavior culture in hotels*

Western hotel management pursues excellence, and eastern harmony. If a hotel pursues excellence and gives up harmony, it will destroy the social base for excellence. And it is impossible to realize hotel's social values and social benefits. If a hotel pursues harmony and gives up excellence, it will take harmony as the goal and kill all inventions and innovations departing from harmony. International hotel group should pursue the integration of excellence and harmony. Based on excellence, it can realize higher harmony, hold the spirit of harmony in competition, and pursue excellence. Emphasize on the protection of environment. Enhance employees' consciousness of environment protection and consciousness of serving the society. Strengthen total quality management and drive the sustainable development of society. In pursuing economic benefits, the group should pursue social benefits. And in pursuing excellent performances, the group should pursue the harmony of internal and external business environment.

#### *3.2 Pursue the unity of system management and soft management, and cultivate system culture in hotels*

The core of western hotel management is system management, emphasizing on technologies and rationalities in management. Insist on "hardware" but neglect "software". Insist on "material" factors but neglect "human" factors. It stresses on laws, reasons, and emotions in sequence. Western hotel management is centered on strictness. It can help to escape from harmful behaviors. However, it will directly lead to the antinomy between hotel employees

and managers. Soft management emphasizes on value principles and corporate spirits. Insist on human relationships but neglect rational reasons. It follows the sequence of emotions, reasons, and laws. Chinese hotel management usually uses parties and unions to infuse the primary principles and value faiths, including fundamental corporate tenet, what can dominate employees' behaviors. By this way, employees can increase their recognition to the hotel. And the hotel can possess stronger cohesion. In corporate management, the "hard" and the "soft" is a pair of contradictory unity. Soft management includes hard elements. We should get rid of the negative elements in traditional management. In hard management process, improve the soft elements and construct a human-oriented management idea. The scientific, practical, flexible, and effective management should hold both merits of hard management and soft management.

### *3.3 Insist the unity of legal spirits and ethic morals, the unity of interest-chasing behaviors and moral behaviors, the unity of individualism and collectivism*

The implementation of constructing hotel's spirit culture and legal spirits is to make up strict regulations, orders, and management. Turn human management into legal management. However, eastern nations have a primary feature as they are engaged in the modernization process. They lay stresses on the continuity and development of nations and ethics. As the international hotel group regulates its operational behaviors and management orders, they should notice the group's value orientation, especially the human values, and construct its corporate culture by innovation. Western hotels aim at pursuing maximum economic profits. This interest-chasing behavior may stray away from the social harmony. Chinese hotels usually restrict people's economic behaviors by moral principles. The highest target is not only economic interests but also special social benefits, cultural benefits, and management benefits. Only by completely taking the profits of employees, consumers, and society into consideration, can the international hotel group benefits its development and realize the top of interests.

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