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Future directions for international education and research on hospitality

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This paper presents considerations about future directions for international education and research in the field of hospitality management. The ideas are presented to provide a closer connection for the hospitality industry on an intellectual basis for doing joint research. Furthermore, the role of students and working with them on partnership basis in research is discussed. To illustrate the ideas, two examples are given of recent research projects in the field of employment branding. One of the project examples reports on joint research dissemination efforts between industry and education, while the other project is an example of research co-creation by student and supervisor. The aim of this paper is to stimulate further debate on the themes raised.

Keywords: Future directions, hospitality research, education, hospitality industry

Introduction

This paper presents possible future directions for international education and research on hospitality. Some of the first thoughts were shared at the Academy of International Hospitality Research Conference at Stenden University of Applied Sciences in November 2014. Points of contemplation are discussed that provide an approach to hospitality research in terms of potentially reworking the relationship with the hospitality industry in research (co-creation) and upgrading the role that students take in hospitality research. Each point is introduced with the accompanying perspective of explaining the approach and providing a specific outcome example from the researcher's world. This paper is intended to stimulate debate and develop innovating directions that can serve international hospitality research practice. The motivation for these proposed new directions is driven by involvement in an applied research unit with the intention to provide innovations in hospitality not only in content but also in approaches. This paper explores innovation in approaches on how the relationship or partnership with the hospitality industry can be viewed and how the relationship or partnership with students in research can be re-defined. Each of the approaches is examplified with a relevant mini-research case.

Relationship with the hospitality industry: research co-creation

There seems by origin to have been a somewhat ambivalent relationship between industry and researchers/academics in hospitality. As Kruss (2005) argues, there has been a perception amongst academics that 'industry' is reluctant to initiate cooperation with higher education beyond that which is short-term and meets industry's immediate needs. Similarly, it could be argued that when academics present partnership initiatives towards industry it is usually in the search for funding and not necessarily to build intellectual connections with the industry. Nevertheless, a connection between higher education and industry is one of the directions for engaging in meaningful, relevant and applied research in fields such as hospitality management. Oord (2012) confirms that in successful Dutch University of Applied Sciences Professorship research practice, the creation of crossovers with the field of profession is important. The gap between industry and academia is primarily a result of the cultural differences between the two professional categories (Gehrels 2013). Schneider and Barsoux (2003) confirm the impact of professional cultures on the working lives of those in particular fields, with the differences in professional cultures caused by the specific values and beliefs in each group. Despite the challenging relationship between industry and academia, there seem to be strong indications that co-creation of research, between industry and academia can provide added value for those who need to benefit from the research, such as, for example, students in hospitality management programmes. Research, and not necessarily only research aimed at publishing in high rated academic journals, can benefit industrial applications (Law & Chon 2007). In Figure 1, the dimensions involved in partnerships between higher education are illustrated diagramatically. The matrix as created by Kruss (2006) looks at two intersecting continua defined as primarily intellectual or financial imperatives shaping a partnership between industry and higher education. It is not about 'either-or opposites', because in fact, as Kruss explains, they operate simultaneously. Although the matrix was created on the basis of the South African situation related to higher education in the technology sector and industry partnerships, the value can be very well used to mark the situation in the hospitality and tourism sectors.

The suggestion in this paper is that 'networked forms of partnerships' (right bottom of the matrix) driven by the motivation to satisfy intellectual needs by both industry
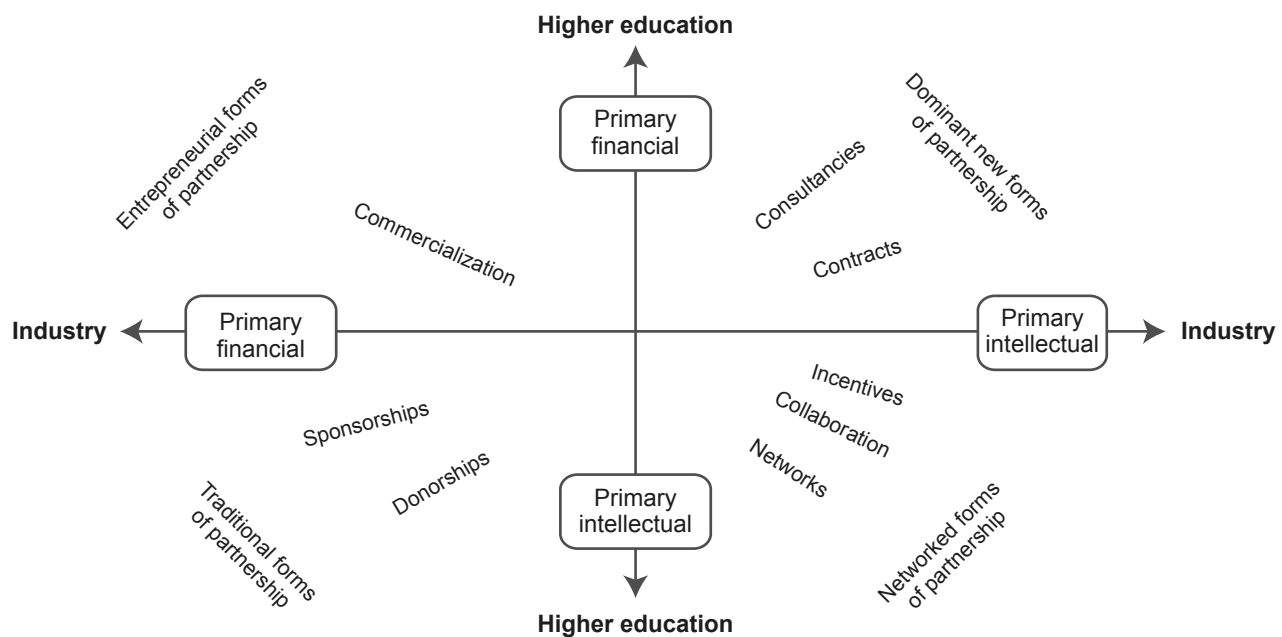
Figure 1: An analytical matrix of forms of partnership between higher education and industry (Kruss 2006)

and higher education in the hospitality sector will provide a constructive way forward. If partnerships are built on intellectual foundations they are more strategic in nature and contribute towards innovation of product or process, as was illustrated in the South African example. A potential case is provided here of a partnership between research in higher education and the hospitality industry that was based on intellectual imperatives. This resulted in joint work between a hospitality researcher (the author of this paper) on behalf of his research unit and the industry partner.

Example 1. Book chapter: an international hotel company's employment brand

The development of this book chapter for the *Routledge Handbook of Hotel Chain Management* (Ivanov & Magnini 2016, forthcoming) started from the relationship between a hotel chain taking interns and the Stenden Hotel Management School in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands. At an annual industry fair, the VP Human Resource Management got into a conversation with the researcher. Their joint interests in the topic of employer branding resulted in an invitation for the researcher to come to the corporate office and to interview senior management about the company's strategy in employment branding. In the sharing of information, valuable insights about the company's vision were revealed. One of the division directors shared documents on how the hotel chain was working towards implementing their vision for the future. Both manager and researcher decided to develop a joint research paper or book chapter based on the information. The project was extremely interesting because the insider, the manager, knew exactly what was going on within the company and could pinpoint the challenges that were faced. The result was a book chapter constructed in cooperation between industry and academia. Because

of the information that potentially might be perceived as 'not looking good for the company', the researcher and the company decided not to reveal the identity of the company. The researcher worked the material into a anonymous case study with a fictive company name. The cooperation on this research project definitely strengthened the connection between higher education research and industry, driven by an intellectual motivation. A compact version of the book chapter is presented here.

Precis
The hospitality industry is in a constant state of change, which requires management to continuously review and update corporate strategies. Evaluating a company's value proposition is a key process, for which a thorough and objective assessment is needed of how to deliver the guests' desired services (Kwortnik 2011). This chapter outlines how Company X engaged in the process of analysing its current external brand within a historical and developmental perspective. The ongoing changes in brand promise are explored as well as the major process of developing an employment brand. Internal and external brands are compared in terms of consistency and a set of improvement actions is discussed. The discussion is then taken further to explain how enhancing the company's employment brand and resulting diversity strategy are taken on.

Background: history and profile
Company X's competitors include Marriott, Hilton, Sofitel, Mövenpick, Steigenberger and Sheraton and its first hotel opened in Western Europe in the previous century. From the first hotels in Europe, Company X expanded into other markets and began to experience rapid growth. It was recognised that the frontline employees provide the service, and therefore Company X's employees are the brand.

Attracting, hiring, developing and retaining of employees, and keeping the engagement level up is crucial for Company X. In order to implement a company culture in line with a renewed brand promise and cascade it down to the hotel level, a co-creation initiative was headed by executive management including the general managers of all hotels. Substantial research went into surveying and interviewing employees, management and customers to assess what they felt represented the brand. The outcomes presented the following company values: 'Hospitableness', 'Quality', and 'Service … with attention to the Individual'. Additionally, the expected behaviour of employees and management was defined. Both values and expected behaviour build Company X's company culture that characterises the brand internally and externally. Five years ago, Company X embarked on further defining the external brand promise in order to align it with the company's 2016 strategy. Company X realized that one of their strategic objectives, growth, would require a more international brand perception differentiating Company X clearly from competitors. In order to grow the brand, the primary focus areas were set as follows:
• Brand assessment
• Public relations
• Customer insights & CRM/loyalty.

The HR perspective 'Employees are the brand' becomes increasingly important in times of the 'war for talent'. Employment branding comprises an important factor for competitive advantage. Especially in the hospitality industry, the right engaged employees are crucial for the company's success. HRM and the employee's manager have a variety of available tools and strategies to increase talent flow, development and retention. In order to create an optimised workforce performance, employment branding is still an underutilised tool (Gehrels and De Looij 2011). Employment branding is a powerful driver of global talent management and an important part of the employment philosophy. As workforce studies show, the reputation of a company as a good employer is an important driver for recruiting the right people, keeping them, and securing their engagement (Auger et al. 2013).

Employment branding
Company X explicitly mentions on its career website: career development, mentoring, coaching and a career tailored to one's own abilities and growth for all levels, from graduates to experienced managers, aiming to be acknowledged as the preferred upscale hospitality employer. But does this really differentiate Company X from other hospitality employers and why do employees choose to work for the company? The hospitality industry has a high turnover (Hemdi and Rahman 2010) and some employees leave the industry because of limited salary opportunities. Company X as an employer tries to distinguish itself with defined opportunities for career growth, supported by strong learning and development initiatives for its employees, with a hospitality management graduate programme and strong cross area career planning. In addition, a transparent, market competitive, and performance-based compensation strategy provides equal opportunities to each employee, ensuring an environment of trustful relationships. Compensation should, however, be improved as part of the employment branding strategy implementation.

Lastly, due to the changing needs of generations, how and what employees' roles and responsibilities are must be more clearly defined in a broader context and amended to specific labour supply and demand.

Next to developing a compensation strategy, the company's biggest challenge is its recruitment strategy. In a highly competitive labour market, it needs to be clear which attributes are the most important for attracting employees. It is important for Company X to deal with different generations. Currently, most senior leadership positions are held by Baby Boomers and Generation X, while in the future Generation Y will be taking these roles. These generations (Holroyd 2011) hold different perceptions and expectations of leadership and development. Even if senior management is developing strategies to keep up with the employment value proposition, the biggest challenge is the implementation.

Communication within the organisation is complex and often strategic initiatives go a long way to reach the end user, the frontline employee. Part of the problem that is causing the potential tension between strategic implementation and practical execution is the company's decentralised structure. Each geographical area has its own 'corporate centre' and is responsible for cascading information down to hotels within their area. Therefore, the employment value proposition is not always delivered in the same way, which results in a less aligned workforce and differences in understanding the brand recognition value. Company X leaves compensation and benefits to each area office (as they have their own profit and loss responsibility and often legal requirements) to competitively benchmark market salaries. It is the responsibility of the area offices to ensure that their hotels are actually offering a competitive benefits package. The strategy is not to offer the best benefit package in the industry, but to offer more benefits in terms of career growth. The redevelopment of the brand promise presents a perfect opportunity to re-align and strengthen the vision, values, expected behaviour and strategic objectives properly with the external customer brand promise. At the core of the strategy will have to be the internal brand message. What this means for the employees needs to be defined and be in line with how that affects customer value creation. This core element, which was previously not considered, will bring in line the competencies, needs and requirements for all new hires and current employees to deliver the new brand promise. A key component will be how to keep the best employees and align them with the requirements of a high quality service culture and a strong focus of being intuitive and authentic. It is key for Company X not to introduce new verbiage for defining company culture but rather to simplify the expected behaviour and values and further define them through brand trainings. Also core to the brand is the uniqueness of each property. Instead of having mandated standard operating procedures, there should be room for each property to develop their own unique personality.

Diversity management and business success
Currently, diversity is addressed as part of a global sustainability programme which was launched over the past few years. The company's code of conduct was re-worked and includes statements on Company X's stand on discrimination and harassment, along with definitions of both. The

employer sustainability programme encourages the hiring and retention of a diverse workforce, states that the organisation stands for equal opportunities, and that it works to maintain the highest level of employee engagement and job security. In addition, the company commits itself to a code in order to apply fairness in terms of hiring, promotions and compensation in line with the company's corporate regulations and guidelines. The hospitality industry typically is represented by a very diverse workforce (Forbes 2012). In the frontline, which is Company X's core human capital and of strategic importance, incorporating ethnic minorities, religious beliefs, sexual orientations and cultural origins is crucial. The perception of each hotel and therefore its success in the local market and brand value recognition is very much based on high quality and reliable interactions between employees and customers, vendors and local communities. A diverse workforce is an important factor for the success of the brand. Negative perception of stakeholders about the company's ability to manage and respect diversity and inclusion would have a direct impact on results, and potentially trigger a loss of business.

Although the hospitality industry may look diverse, senior management composition in Company X is more homogeneous. Most senior management in the hotels is male, older than 40, European and holds a degree in hospitality management. Furthermore, there are many male Europeans managing the corporate office and area offices. This means that a homogenous senior management team will benefit less from individual perspectives, creativity, innovation, enhanced problem solving and organisational flexibility than a more diverse leadership team. Company X's management may find it challenging to understand and meet the expectations of a variety of customers and hotel owners/investors. It is crucial to recruit a diverse workforce group for running the company's business, which will be hindered if there is a perception of limited career development perspectives and non-inclusive company culture and management style. The policies themselves, however, will not transform the organisation to become more diverse and change its management and leadership style. In order to make progress, the senior management team must increase awareness and understanding of diversity, its growing importance in today's highly competitive market and how it supports the business strategy as well as its ultimately positive impact on Company X's performance. Management needs to demonstrate with actions and choices that it truly endorses diversity, and that it is not just because of the current trends to promote diversity. For the company it will be crucial, in order to deliver the brand value and become the leading company in the hospitality upscale market, to embrace diversity, implement it successfully and live it every day.

Putting diversity management into practice
As Company X's diversity and inclusion practices are on a level that can be further developed, the following initiatives should be implemented. First of all, Company X needs to increase measuring workforce demographics with the focus on managerial roles and key positions in order to get a current picture of how diverse groups are represented within the organisation's 20% best paid jobs. The metrics to evaluate the workforce diversity demographics could be included in the monthly key performance indicator reporting. Company X's recruiting strategy needs to be aligned with the new requirements for employees delivering the brand promise to customers. The company culture must increase diversity and demonstrate why a diverse workforce is needed in order to deliver on the brand identity. For example, vacancies should also be advertised through alternative media and a variety of posting possibilities, reaching a more diverse labour pool, and ensure equal opportunities. Another key initiative could be to launch diversity training in the framework of the leadership programme. It is important that senior management and managerial leaders of the organisation thoroughly understand the impact of being an inclusive business and what the company's risks are if it ignored the fact that diversity is going to be a competitive element in the future.

Furthermore, a diversity council should be set up, chaired by a member of senior management and formed by employees with various demographics, from across the organisation (corporate, area offices and hotels), working at various hierarchical levels, of all ages and genders, and of diverse educational and cultural backgrounds. The major task of the diversity council would be to help develop and maintain a relevant diversity strategy and policies. Due to their engagement and impact on the organisation's diversity agenda, members of the diversity council would also function as diversity champions and be liaisons in their area office or hotel. All Company X leaders need to be trained in understanding how people have various cultural and educational backgrounds and therefore may perceive or send information differently in conversations. In order to understand others, the organisation should have its leaders understand how their own national culture is made up in terms of stereotypes, wrong and right, basic laws and manners, power distance, and concept of time. In these times of 'Generation Y', discussions and exchange on generational behavioural differences within the 'home culture' are crucial. A teamwork culture needs to be further developed and promoted within Company X and multicultural, diverse, cross-area and cross-departmental teams should be encouraged.

Concluding remarks
In this chapter, an open-hearted analysis is provided of how Company X over previous years has been considering and developing its brand. The notion that changes are triggered by senior management demonstrates that there is an awareness that innovation is needed in human resources management to remain an important player within the world-wide hospitality industry. For practitioners and future practitioners in the hotel industry (e.g. students of hospitality management programmes), this case study serves as 'food-for-thought' about how a successful company such as Company X is consistently seeking further development. This chapter will assist the worlds of practice and (hospitality management) education to engage in discussing the fascinating business of international hotel management.

Upgrading the role of students in hospitality research

Based on observations over the years of teaching and researching in higher education, there appears to be a certain unwritten paradigm in education and research about the

roles of student and teacher/lecturer. An obvious distinction is made between students and lecturers/researchers, which seems to be logical because of the educational context and school environment. Students enrol for a programme and until the moment they graduate are considered to be in a learning position, while lecturers, also in their role as research supervisors, are expected to facilitate the learning process. Having said this, comments can be made about exactly what the different roles entail, particularly when it comes down to working on research. Students engage in research projects in the final stages of undergraduate programmes (usually third and fourth year) or throughout the one or two years of master's programmes. In many cases students have a particular drive to take their research efforts the 'extra mile' because of the potential it has for entering a career or because the specific interest they have in a topic. In Table 1 an overview is provided of the elements and phases that can be taken into account when researcher and student interact. As phases, 'before enrolment', 'in programme', 'fresh graduate', and 'mature alumni' can be distinguished. Just as important are the elements that influence the relationship: 'education', 'employment', 'research', 'background' and 'individual'.

To build an effective research relationship between student and researcher, it is valuable to take all the elements and phases into account. In the most common and traditional educational setting for research the supervisor/lecturer will only look at the 'in programme phase' and consider research as an 'in programme' element (B-1). Supervisors who produce research for dissemination purposes will probably also look at what a student has done before entering the programme and see if elements of experience such as employment and country of origin can be put to work in the research (A/B-1/2). Especially in part-time programmes, mature students bring their work and background to the research and use these if alerted to this by the researcher/supervisor. When this is the case, student research becomes more than just a project to fulfil the requirements of a particular degree programme. Examples are plentiful in which student research involves fieldwork that taps into highly relevant and innovative content. Still, in the strict definition the projects are considered 'student work'. New directions for research and education can be explored by looking at all elements 1–5 in all phases of contact. The different phases can follow each

other in some cases in a relatively short time-frame. For example, a current student who has previous work experience and relevant education may quickly find an interesting position as a fresh graduate. If such a graduate is already involved in research and has established a productive relationship with the researcher, it may be a natural next step to prolong the joint research efforts. In line with the first section of this paper about the relationship between higher education and industry, this would create potential partnerships at the intellectual level for both.

If as a future direction in education and research, a different approach can be taken, one that considers students to be 'partners in research' liaising with their supervisor, the output will be different. Working with a definition of being partners in a research project opens directions for an innovative kind of engagement. If students are introduced early on in their programmes to the notion of becoming a partner in research, this will offer opportunities for many of them to profile themselves when their final research projects are done. Obviously, this means that as a lecturer or educational professional, a different position needs to be chosen, which will not always be easy. Sharing, discussing and debating research topics and methods with students on the basis of being 'partners' in the process will surely provide a notion of vulnerability on the side of the lecturer/researcher. It will require a different involvement and not just telling the student what is right or wrong. If students sense the potential benefits of becoming involved in the process on a more equal basis they will 'buy into' the research exercise more fully than just to complete a compulsory part of the curriculum. This change in defining the relationship between student and lecturer in research will take a lot of effort because it touches the core of the educational system. The second example of research presented in this paper was produced in cooperation between a student and the researcher/supervisor, and was built on the student's interest and previous work experience.

Example 2. Employees' employer brand perceptions: a case comparison of similar-scale hotels in different cultures

In this research example, the student came with a strong motivation, based on the experience of having worked in the

Table 1: Elements and phases in contact between student and researcher (Gehrels 2015)

Elements		Phase contact with prospective student/student/fresh graduate/mature alumni			
		A	B	C	D
		Before enrolment	In programme	Fresh graduate	Mature alumni
1	Education	Previous education	In programme	Further study (Master's, PhD)	Further study (Master's, PhD)
2	Employment	Previous employment	Internship or part-time work	Work position or post-programme internship	Senior position
3	Research	Bachelor project	Project & thesis	Company research or project	Company research or project
4	Background (country, culture)	International experience	International knowledge & skills	Working in international industry	Extensive experience internationally
5	Individual (interest, motivation, skills)	Awareness and interest for research	Motivated for research, skills present	Appreciation & acknowledgment for research	Appreciation & acknowledgment for research

hospitality industry in two countries, to research her specific topic of interest in cooperation with the supervisor/researcher. Together they decided to work towards a publishable output that would generate value for both knowledge on employer branding and as a result also for industry professionals. The student as researcher travelled back to her home country to collect data. This research, although limited in scope and sampling, provides valuable content that will allow practitioners to better understand their specific context and practice.

Precis
Global unemployment has been on the rise in recent years (International Labour Organization 2014). Interestingly, employment in the hospitality sector is growing, which is aligned with higher labour turnover, however (Bares 2013). Consequently, implementing dedicated human resources strategies helps hotel companies to cope with this issue (Samuel & Chinpunza 2009). Gehrels and de Looij (2011) explain the benefits of implementing employer branding in the hospitality industry, which refers to the association between employees and their organisation, including potential strategies companies can use to attract and convince prospective employees. Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2009) emphasise that employer branding helps companies to increase employees' brand commitment, making it more likely that they will stay longer.

This study focuses on employees with different cultural backgrounds and their perceptions of the employer brand, and was conducted in similar scale four star hotels in Bangkok and Amsterdam. The research aims to find out how the employer brand was communicated to employees, how employees perceived it, and to what extent cultural differences were of influence. Although small and content bound, the study adds value to the human resources perspective within the hospitality industry. The hotels' recruitment practices were assessed to illustrate their effectiveness. The results provide a source of knowledge essential for contributing to the development of global hospitality industry human resources practices. Research questions guiding the research address: the communication channels hotels use to communicate with their employees in terms of employer branding; how employees perceive their hotels as a place to work; whether employees' perceptions are aligned with the employer brand; what the similarities and differences between countries in terms of employee's perceptions of the employer brand are; what the factors are that contribute to the differences in employee's perception; and what the hotels could improve in terms of employer brand, according to employees.

Background
Wilson et al. (2012) call front-line employees 'boundary spanners in the service experience', and Hur and Adler (2011) add to this that when purchasing products, customers most of the time base their perceptions of the products on their tangible features. When purchasing service products, however, customers perceive the practices of service employees as the key factors when evaluating the service provided. Kotler et al. (2008) claim that most successful service companies are likely to pay more attention to the employees than is suggested in traditional management approaches. As a result, providing care to employees becomes

one of the effective tools to stimulate service profits and growth since the employees are perceived as the key determinant of service companies. Defined as the 'war for talent', it has been predicted that a scarcity of qualified staff will arise due to globalisation, and demographic and economic changes (Beechler & Woodward 2009). This notion was echoed by Dobbs et al. (2012), who claim that in major countries, such as China, India, some parts of Europe and North America, a lack of higher-skilled employees is becoming clearly visible. Tag-Eldeen and El-Said (2011) claim that the employment structures of the tourism and hospitality industry make the situation more critical than for any other industry.

One of the human resources strategies available to deal with the emerging HRM situation is to present an employer brand. Wallace et al. (2014) define employer branding as a combination of marketing and recruitment practices allowing customers, employees and other stakeholders, to recognise the desired organisation image. In other words, the employer brand represents an organisation's image as perceived by actual and prospective employees. A company with an effective employer brand is more attractive among potential employees than those with lower employer brand perception (Wallace et al. 2014).

Cultural differences strongly influence human resources practices, and various definitions of culture can be found in different contexts (Greckhamer 2011, Kongtawelert 2010). According to Wilson et al. (2012, 247), culture has been casually defined as 'the way we do things around here'. Culture refers to the thinking patterns and what people believe in a society. Wursten (2007) warns that not every profile of desired competencies can be used everywhere. A management style that is used effectively in one place does not necessarily work elsewhere. In this study, employees from different cultures' perceptions of employer branding is compared between the Netherlands and Thailand.

Method
Qualitative research was conducted in order to collect the required data and it focused on '… discovering and understanding the experiences, perspectives and thoughts of participants … ' (Harwell 2011, 148). Interviewing was employed in this study because of its openness and flexibility. Two series of ten semi-structured interviews each, were carried out among managers and employees in two four star hotels, one in Bangkok and one in Amsterdam. The collected data was transcribed verbatim, coded and analysed. Anonymity of the interviewees was maintained throughout the research.

Findings and conclusions
Six key findings were discovered from the analysis of the twenty interviews conducted in the two hotels. The outcomes reveal that the most popular communication channel used in recruiting in both countries is personal connection. In Bangkok, the hotel usually posts its opening vacancies on a number of hotel job websites that are comparable to the Dutch hotel job websites and as a result a number of respondents found their job this way. As part of the recruitment process, Dutch hotels often make use of social media platforms such as LinkedIn and Facebook in the search for employees. In addition to that, a number of trainees are

recruited through the various Dutch hotel schools. The Thai hotel makes use of newspapers when staff is needed for work like gardening or cleaning. Social networking websites do not play any role in recruiting candidates in Thailand.

The perceptions of employees about the employer brand were clustered into six major themes. (1) job characteristics (JobChar), (2) physical environment & atmosphere (PhyEnv&Atm), (3) colleagues (Colleag), (4) leadership & management style (LeadMan), (5) organisational culture (OrgCult), and (6) salary & benefits package (Sal&Ben).

The priorities of the respondents in descending order are shown in Table 2.

The Dutch respondents defined their hotel as a good work place because of its personalised service, which mainly relates to job characteristics. This concept of personalised service gives them a chance to establish personal contact with the guests, which is one of their fundamental desires when applying for a job. Teamwork, working independently, being direct, and employee involvement are defined as prominent aspects of organisational culture. Half of the respondents define good colleagues as an essential element of working in a good place. The majority of Thai respondents perceive a competitive salary and benefits package as what makes the hotel a good place to work in. The respondents define good colleagues as being friendly, helpful and sympathetic. Two other important aspects about colleagues that the Thai respondents expressed are about being close to each other, and being able to fill in for each other. Most Thai employees include the location of the hotel and its accessibility, and particularly the family-like feeling at work in the definition of working in a good company. Working with supportive and listening managers who always give people an opportunity also defines a good employer in the Thai respondents' views. When comparing employee's perceptions vs. employers' of being a desired brand, it can be said that the greatest part of employees' perceptions of the employer brand align with the employer desires. The fact that Thai respondents focus more on the salary and benefits package is supported by Buripakdee (1988) who found that Thai employees perceive working as a means to yield income more than making a career.

As points of improvement for the employment brand, the Dutch interviewees named the salary and the limited career growth in the hotel. Furthermore, the hotel could be more flexible when assigning staff per shift. A number of respondents in the Thai hotel would like to have their basic salary increased. Improving the staff canteen and providing more professional training to the employees are two of the most important points named. Several respondents in both hotels said that the hotel should consider hiring better employees, which in this regard means candidates with job knowledge and working background in the direct or similar field. Remarkably, the need for prospective employees to have a hotel school educational background or similar was not referred to during the interviews.

Recommendations

The Dutch hotel is advised to:
• review salaries and compensation schemes for employees periodically
• realize that not every employee appreciates the additional training or educational programme that they are entitled to. Therefore, it is wise for the hotel to set up a compensation plan with two possibilities with a choice of salary raise or additional training. This will strengthen commitment to the hotel and keeping talented employees
• ensure that all candidates are aware of the limited career opportunities in the hotel from the beginning and agree to that
• be more flexible when setting up the work schedules and have an effective plan for manpower that corresponds with the hotel occupancy.

The Thai hotel is advised to:
• consider salaries that in Thailand usually consist of an basic salary amount plus service charge. When comparing only the basic salary with other industries, the average amount is therefore relatively low. The hotel should ensure that its employees truly receive a competitive salary and benefits package and these should be reviewed annually, which will help to retain talented employees
• review the service charge. The hotel currently pays 90% of service charge to its employees and is advised to increase this to 100%
• add a provident fund to the employees' benefits package
• urgently improve the staff canteen in its atmosphere and quality of service
• provide more professional training to employees. This will not only enhance the hotel's professionalism, but is also a way to show that management is interested in the development of employees
• raise the required professional qualifications for new staff, which will help to get the right employees for the work.

Rounding off

The contemplations about innovating partnership between higher education and industry on the one hand, and the relationship between supervisor/researcher and students on the other are intended to stimulate discussion about future directions for education and research in hospitality. This paper does not assume there to be a single option that will be successful. A lot of potential future results will depend on how flexible and willing representatives of different communities (academia, industry and students) are to engage in the discussion. As Gehrels (2013) asserts, a lot is about the language that people speak and the culture that has shaped their thinking processes.

Table 2: Priorities of employees in a Dutch hotel compared to the Thai equivalent

Priority	1	2	3	4	5	6
Dutch	(JobChar)	(OrgCult)	(PhyEnv&Atm)	(Colleag)	(LeadMan)	(Sal&Ben)
Thai	(Sal&Ben)	(Colleag)	(OrgCult)	(PhyEnv&Atm)	(LeadMan)	(JobChar)

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