

**The aspect of mobility in the career paths of hotel managers of one  
hotel chain in Helsinki**

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Thesis

Degree Programme in Hotel,

Restaurant and Tourism

Management

03.05.2011



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<b>Title of report</b> The aspect of mobility in the career paths of hotel managers of one hotel chain in Helsinki	<b>Number of pages and appendices</b> 84 + 3
<b>Teacher/s or supervisor/s</b> Eija Kjelin	
<p>The changes in the modern environment happen constantly. Individuals and organizations try to cope with the changes. The hotel industry has been showing good economical results globally and in Finland during the recent years, and therefore it is an attractive working environment.</p> <p>The purpose of this qualitative research was to understand the role of mobility in the career paths of the hotel managers in Helsinki. The hotel managers of only one company were interviewed, therefore the results describe the situation in the company X.</p> <p>The data for this research was collected through literature review, collecting the information about the case company through publicly available sources and through informant interview with the company's representative, and through conducting the interviews with eight hotel managers employed by the company X in the Helsinki region. The main research question was: What paths hotel managers of the chain X go through in their careers? Three supporting research questions were set as well: What role career mobility plays in the career paths of the hotel managers? What types of career mobility are prevalent in the career paths of the hotel managers? What is affecting the individual's decision towards change in the career?</p> <p>Findings of this study showed that career mobility in career of the hotel managers is represented by developing universal skills, loving own job and networking. Career mobility is rather perceived positively by the hotel managers. The types that are prevalent in the career paths of the hotel managers are physical and psychological mobility, vertical mobility, moving across the hotel functions and moving across industries. The main affect on the changes in the career have organizational intent and willingness to learn and improve oneself.</p> <p>It is an interesting topic for the future professionals who are planning to work in Finland in the hotel field as well as for professionals already working in the industry. They can learn from the results of the research that mobility plays an important role in the career paths. Future professional can also see that universal skills acquired especially through experience in front office and food and beverage departments of a hotel are helpful for the development of a career. Constant learning and improving oneself are also essential characteristics of career path and should be considered by future professionals.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> career, career path, career mobility, hotel manager, boundaryless career	

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## Introduction

The hotel industry is a part of modern dynamic environment. People looking forward to building their careers in the industry should be prepared for quick changes in the working conditions, for dealing with new career requirements as well as adapting to a constantly developing industry. Career mobility is an important issue in career development (Ladkin 2002). Career mobility does include movement between the functional areas, between organizations, countries, working conditions, and upwards in the organizational hierarchy (Ladkin and Riley 1996, 443–452).

The aim of this research is to understand the role of mobility in the career paths of hotel managers of one of the hotel chains in Helsinki with particular focus on the career mobility. As long as the career paths might reveal plenty of aspects of the career development, I wish to concentrate on one of them – the career mobility. Therefore, research question is: What paths hotel managers of the chain X go through in their careers? There are several supporting questions that need to be answered in order to address the main research question: What role career mobility plays in the career paths of the hotel managers? What types of career mobility are prevalent in the career paths of the hotel managers? What is affecting the individual's decision towards change in the career?

I have set four objectives for the current work. I wanted to understand what possible paths a hotel manager goes through the career. I wanted to investigate the career paths of the hotel managers working in Helsinki and in the company X, because this is where I am working too. As the third objective, I wanted to know if the career mobility plays a positive or a negative role in career development. As a learning objective, I wanted to apply all skills that I have obtained during my studies of the hotel management and therefore logically finish the studies by completing this research.

To understand the core terms of my research I shortly defined them here, and then further in the theoretical part I opened them up.

Career is the unfolding sequence of a person's work experience over time (Arthur, Hall & Lawrence 1989, 8).

Career path is a linkage of jobs that one performs throughout the career (Garmon, 2004).

Career development is a continuous process of learning new skills, obtaining knowledge, interests, values, beliefs, and talents that support the on-going process of obtaining and maintaining the jobs along a career path (Garmon, 2004).

Career mobility is ability to move in career as a result of individual's career planning and support and opportunities provided by an organization, which at its best a collaborative process (adopted from Simonsen 1997, 6–7 and Oxford advanced learner's dictionary of current English. 2005, 983).

Hotel manager is responsible for day-to-day operations of a hotel and its staff. An organization makes a hotel manager accountable for budgeting and financial management, planning, organizing and directing all hotel service. (from a hotel manager's job description by Baxter 2010.)

Boundaryless career theory is determined by independence from traditional organizational arrangements (Arthur & Rousseau 1996, 6). Three main concepts that the theory is based on are: co-operation, control and continuous learning (Arthur, Littleton & Rousseau 2000, 101–115).

In order to address the research questions qualitative type of research methods was used. The hotel managers of 11 hotels in Helsinki were interviewed. The chosen hotels are a part of a Finnish hotel chain that includes 47 hotels and 260 restaurants all over the country. The choice fell on that company, because it could be a good representative of the Finnish hotel market. It also became a company of my choice, because I am one of its employees. The company offers opportunities for its employees to discover and improve their experience in different occupations while still staying in the same chain. However, in this case I am only looking at the story of one

hotel chain, which cannot represent the whole Finnish hotel market, and the results of the research cannot be always generalized to a bigger sample. Therefore, this is one of the research limitations.

The motivational background to the thesis is lying in the willingness to know how current students of the hotel and restaurant programs in the professional schools can plan their careers in order to achieve the position of a hotel manager. Examples of career paths of the hotel managers who have gone all the way up to their positions might give some insight to what the future professionals should do and where to direct their efforts.

In order to understand how the hotel industry is important in the global market, I have made a short overall industry review. The hotel industry is one of the most career attractive industries. It has been developing through the 20<sup>th</sup> century and was constantly growing. The industry provides a great number of jobs for different professionals and creates good opportunities for successful career.

According to The Pegasus view which is a processor of the global reservation systems (GDS), the hotel industry has shown growth during the year 2009 and will be growing in future (Hospitality trends 2010). The ADRs (average daily rates) has increased in Europe by 5,7% (in Euro), comparing with the last year's number (STR Global 2011b). In Northern Europe, the numbers have increased since last year as well: occupancy rate by 0,7%, ADR by 4,3% and RevPAR by 5% (STR Global 2011a). Increased average length of stay and booking lead times were also observed, which indicates the market confidence. All this shows that a hotel industry is rapidly recovering after the economic crisis and is stabilizing its position on the market.

Stability of the industry is one of important factors that affect the choice of the profession among the future professionals. In the hotel industry, they may see good opportunities for applying their personal potential and developing their careers. History of the hotel industry shows good examples of successful managers who were able to work in the industry all their life without being stuck at one job for many years. (Hospitality trends 2010.)

Representatives of the hotel industry may find it useful to be aware of what the important components of the hotel managers' careers are. This information can help understand how to train and lead the personnel in order to get great professionals who can run a hotel. A person who just enters the work life and does not know which skills to develop, what environment gives more valuable experience, what responsibilities help develop one's career needs assistance of professionals. The knowledge that can be acquired from this research can be used for this purpose.

By this research, I was not trying to understand all aspects of career paths. I have chosen only one aspect – career mobility, while I did not try to cover other aspects, such as competencies and skills important for a manager's career, personal traits in relation to career path, and predicting factors of career success and other. I did not analyze the career mobility and career paths from all possible perspective, I have only included analysis of those aspects that were discussed during the interviews with the hotel managers. The interviews themselves create a potential limitation, as they are reflections of a person's memory and honesty; in addition the interviews' analysis has a subjective influence of my personality as a researcher. The non-random sampling also creates a limitation. As the research only focuses on career paths of hotel manager, it probably cannot be applied to all professions. The previously mentioned choice of the company also limits the generalization of the research results. One of the limitations was also the language. The mother tongue of the participants is Finnish, and my Finnish skills are not sufficient for conducting the interviews. All of the interviewees had good command of the English language. I have encountered difficulties due to the language with only one interviewee. We overcame the obstacle by using some of the words in Finnish, and later on I have translated them into English.



# 1 Career and career paths

In this chapter, I look at different understandings of the term “career”. I compare different definitions and choose one that is more appropriate for my research. Further I continue with introducing the boundaryless career and career path. These theoretical aspects are part of the theoretical background to my research.

## 1.1 Career

The term *career* is used in many disciplines and serves many different purposes. In many cases ‘careers’ and ‘occupations’ are used as synonyms, if ‘careers’ understood as the patterns and sequences of occupations and positions occupied by people across their working lives (Collin & Young (Eds.) 2000, 3). Collin and Young (2000, 3) discuss the term of *career* referring to different meanings of career, appliance in different disciplines and referring to works of authors contributed to their edition. Below I will try to point out some of their considerations.

*Career* can be used in academic and professional context, as well as in “organizational and social rhetoric”. It may have motivational effect on employees; differentiate some employees or groups of employees from others making them more respected. Sometimes, *career* can be even discriminative in its sense when description of career excludes some social classes or genders. The rhetoric meaning of career was very important in bureaucratic organizations, where people thought any of them is able to reach higher rungs in the career ladder, and it had a great motivational effect. Nowadays, some organizations have removed many of the organizational barriers towards the career ladders, and it seems to be more realistic in compare with bureaucratic organizations to reach them. Some authors identified forms of career that do not belong to occupations anymore, like professional and entrepreneurial forms of career. (Collin & Young 2000)

This new notion supports the idea that career can be more than membership in employing organizations, it can stretch further, and therefore Hall’s definition

of *career* is applicable: “the individually perceived sequence of attitudes and behaviours associated with work-related experiences and activities over the span of the person’s life” (Hall 1976 in Collin et al. 2000). This definition is no more limited by working in an organization, holding one profession or having one position over the whole life-span. It gives more freedom to consider any kind of experience that can then be related to work, as some useful or necessary skills become acquired. Sociologists, such as sociologists of the Chicago school, even used *career* in their researches to describe processes other than occupational careers, for example, the marijuana users’ careers. (Collin & Young 2000)

As Collin and Young (2000) continue, careers can be also understood in two different perspectives: subjective and objective, which were described by Goffman in 1959. Referring to *subjective career*, he says that it is linked to “internal matters held dearly and closely, such as image of self and felt identity”. As for *objective career*, it is described by “official positions, jural relations, and style of life and is part of publicly accessible institutional complex”. Concluding everything said, Collin et al. (2000) give a definition of career that was described by Young and Valach in 1996: *career* is a subordinate construct that allows people to construct connections among actions, to account for effort, plans, goals, and consequences, to frame internal cognitions and emotions, and to use feedback and feed-forward processes.

Collin & Young (2000) in their discussion of the different career meanings mention bureaucratic type of career. As my research is done among the hotel managers of one Finnish hotel chain, some extent of bureaucratic career may take place. In a modern working environment, many bureaucratic rungs have been removed in an attempt to make work more efficient. It had an effect on employees’ careers as well – movement upwards became faster. Although people do not stay at the same job or property all their working life, they may remain in the same company. Therefore, nowadays people have more opportunities in development of their careers and it is an ongoing process, however they still have a choice to stay with the same employer while changing something else about work (location, position, functional area etc.). (Collin & Young 2000)

Crompton and Sanderson also observe that “in everyday language” career is understood as “a continuous period in the labour force, with the same or different employment or seeking work, during which the individual does his or her best to make rational decisions which advance their employment career” (Crompton & Sanderson in Arthur et al. 1989, 438). This observation rises a notion that individual’s career is not necessarily developing in the same organization, location, or even as a process of working. Therefore, it is important to understand that mobility plays a certain role in development of the person’s career.

*Career* is the unfolding sequence of a person’s work experience over time (Arthur, Hall & Lawrence 1989, 8). This definition includes time, what gives to career-concept changing nature and emphasizes that it is not something that once established remains the same.

All definitions can be applied in practice, their authors have put a meaning in each of them that is important in a particular context they had in mind. I agree with and apply the last definition given by Arthur, Hall, & Lawrence (1989, 8) in my research, because it covers not only an upward career in a particular organization, but includes all the work experience possible. This definition does not limit time, so it is a continuous process that still takes place even when a person is already satisfied with the achieved career success.

## **1.2 Boundaryless career vs. other types of career**

Although traditionally it was thought that a person working in an organization follows a bureaucratic career path, it is not quite the same anymore. In bureaucratic career, only one type of mobility was emphasized – upward mobility within one functional area of work and established lines of career advancement (Walker 1992). However, now a person might need to work in different units of an organization, do different types of job, even work in different organizations without getting a better position. There are different types of mobility that can be observed – downward or lateral (Kuchta 1988, 28–32). Applying Kuchta’s (1988, 28) vocabulary, there might be career tracks that “point down or sideways, not simply up”. More than twenty years ago

Kuchta (1988) talked about a new career planning system complimenting upward mobility. The rationale for this system became obvious nowadays: The amount of experienced, but retiring people, who used to occupy higher positions, is more than amount of new professionals able to replace the retired managers. Therefore, it is worth considering other than upward move possibilities for those who want to succeed in their careers. An innovative idea in a new career planning system is that not all people see career success in being promoted or occupying a high position. Moreover, a dream of an ideal career may change during the life. So, Kuchta (1988) emphasizes that downward and lateral mobility may be as advancing and as desirable as upward mobility.

In my research, I use a boundaryless career theory as a theoretical framework. Arthur and Rousseau have first defined the concept in 1996 (Arthur & Rousseau 1996). They have described six different meanings of a boundaryless career, which are:

- career that moves across the boundaries of different employers
- career that is valid and marketable outside the present employer (e.g. academics' careers)
- career that is sustained by external networks or information (e.g. real-estate agents' careers)
- career that breaks traditional assumptions about hierarchy and career advancement
- career of an individual who reject career opportunities for personal or family reasons
- self-interpreted career that exists in a boundaryless future regardless of structural constraints.

One common factor for all these definitions is independence from traditional organizational arrangements (Arthur & Rousseau 1996, 6). These different boundaryless career possibilities probably do not exist in their pure forms; they are combined with each other in real life. It is possible to imagine a person who has to make different career decisions in his/her life depending on the context. Some authors

also noticed that there can be other boundary-crossing possibilities, for example, occupational or cultural (Arthur & Sullivan 2006, 19–29).

The boundaryless career theory supports the idea that a person is not limited in his/her career by one organization, a job, an educational degree and a certain number of skills. Three main concepts that the theory embeds are: co-operation, control and continuous learning (Arthur, Littleton & Rousseau 2000, 101–115). In the traditional organization, where the system is organized and well-structured, where rules play important role, and where there is not much space for individual freedom, the boundaryless career would not exist. In the situations, where the environment is created by individuals, and therefore they start organizing themselves according to rules they have created, and furthermore create new environments based on the previous one. The current life with all its continuous changing nature does require that from people, if they want to remain in the career world. (Arthur, Littleton & Rousseau 2000, 101–115)

However, if we look at my case, the hotel industry, it looks like the hierarchy still remains there and there is as little freedom as in a traditional bureaucratic organization. Although, division into departments and rungs exists in hotels, a high level of co-operation among them is necessary. The head of a department is no more sitting in the office and creating more rules for the personnel to follow. He/she has to be with the employees and take leadership of them while be performing some of their duties as well. Departments as well have to stay in close co-operation with each other to be able to react quickly to any changes. So, we see co-operation as a part of working organization in a hotel. As for control, it is not control performed by the boss or by the system, it is control performed by an individual. An individual is the one who can make decisions in different situations and his/her career as well. Hotels are functioning 24 hours, and the personnel that keeps them functioning is able to take control, and there is no other choice for them.

Another type of career that is discussed in the literature is protean career (Arthur & Sullivan 2006, Greenhaus & Singh 2004, Hall 1996). *Protean career* means a self-directed pursuit of psychological success under the control of the individual rather than a particular employer (Greenhaus & Singh 2004, 199). Interestingly, different authors

have different views on boundaryless career in relation to protean career. As Sullivan & Arthur notice (Arthur & Sullivan 2006, 19–29), some authors differ boundaryless career concept from protean career concept in a way that the first one includes only physical changes in work arrangements, and the latter involves only psychological changes. In contrast, Singh and Greenhaus (Greenhaus & Singh 2004, 198–221) think that boundaryless career concept is consistent with Hall's (Hall 1996, 8–16) concept of a protean career. The process of managing career by an individual consists of all the person's work-related experiences (education, training, working in different fields etc.). Self-fulfilment and person's career choices are going hand in hand with each other according to the protean career theory (Boston College 2004). The criterion of career success is not external (such as a high rung or a salary), but internal (psychological success).

When the moment comes, a person might think that a position he/she occupies does no more fit the personal feeling about his/her career, and then he/she is seeking learning from a different environment. It can be the same functional department, the same hotel, or different ones, or not even hotels. With this acquiring new knowledge, learning new skills and practicing new responsibilities, a person reaches that advancement that he/she is seeking. These highly experienced in many different areas people become good leaders for those who are still at the beginning of their way.

### **1.3 Career path**

In an attempt to define the *career path* term I could not find a definition among the works done by authors doing research in career paths (Cheramie et al. 2007, Juwaheer & Ladkin 2000, Ladkin 2002, Ladkin & Riley 1996, Kuchta 1988). In order to understand what is meant by the term, it is useful to look into history of it.

During the American industrial era at the end of the nineteenth century, more and more people were moving away from farms to the industrial hubs. The understanding of working lives has changed, and people were no more occupied in small family-owned businesses (usually based on a particular craft that family was good in) or farms, instead they tried to secure their employment in big, bureaucratic organizations. The

career was predictable and followed the movement in the upward direction along the organization's ladder. That was time for the metaphor *career path* to emerge. (Savickas 2000, 53–69)

As Savickas (2000) continues, from that time a bureaucratic career became the only way of the individual advancement. Organizations at the beginning of the twentieth century were hierarchical, and therefore, individuals could only move vertically. The positions at different levels in an organization were linked to each other, and a person was moving from one to the next one, which had more responsibilities and better rewards. In the twentieth-century it was thought that it was possible to identify person's abilities and interests to then match them with occupations that suited a person the best. This paradigm served people and organizations well, but as Savickas (2000) points out, the paradigm relies only on “stable organizations and predictable career paths”.

The similar way of thinking is shared by Garmon (2004, 31). In the world of hierarchical organizations, the progress in career could be described as a linear career ladder. A person was expected to go through the ranks upwards.

At the end of the twentieth century new technologies emerged, information flow grew, and organizations tried to alter themselves to cope with the changes. As a consequence, not many organizations were able to offer life-time employment following the career path. As Savickas (2000) notices, without a hierarchy in organizations and a bureaucratic system, that were shaping careers, career paths seem to be disappearing. After all people do not follow prescribed career paths, but manage their career on their own.

Cohen & Mohrman (1995) describe organizations in a new society as smaller, flatter workplaces, where control is decentralized and employment tend to be temporary and contingent. As Garmon (2004, 31–32) points out that in such organizations career progress can be described as nonlinear moves space- and time-wise. As Garmon continues, “career paths” is more appropriate term for such career progress than a term career ladder.

In my research, and as many researches still use the term, I will use the term *career path* for the people's careers that already exist, the phases and changes that have already happened while a person is still currently developing his/her career. I do not see it as a strict sequence of positions along the career ladder, which is shaped by organization and followed by each employee of that organization, but I accept that it is an individual way of shaping a career. A quite similar idea I saw in the Garmon's work (2004, 32), where he notes that career paths are not known until they are experienced, and they can be only analyzed after they had happened. Garmon (2004, 32) also notices that there are no two similar career paths. There are conditions that are different for every individual: initial conditions, and then the following external and internal conditions, which shape the career path.

What makes term *career path* different from the term *career* is the way of looking at work experience. By career I understand time that is spent by an individual on work, while career path are actual jobs connected into a sequence in the order of their appearance in career. For understanding a career path the order of jobs is important. On the other hand, for career the order is not as important as the presence of work experience. Although the terms are slightly different, in some cases they can be used as synonyms.

I am not going to study the initial conditions for each of my interviewees, but the phenomenon is discussed in the literature. The notion in the literature is that conditions in the early life of an individual may affect some changes in the future (Garmon 2004, 32). Different opportunities and social environment might affect the entry point to career. However, it is hard to predict the future career path of a person by analyzing these initial conditions, as their combination is what most probably shapes the person's life. (Garmon 2004, 32–33.)



## 2 Career mobility

*Career mobility* – the ability to move from one job to another (Oxford advanced learner's dictionary of current English. 2005, 983). This definition is not quite satisfactory, because it covers only one type of career mobility – occupational or job mobility. There is also organizational mobility, geographical mobility, and other types of mobility that can be observed in relation to career (Ladkin & Riley 1996, 443–452).

Comparing with the career path, career mobility addresses different opportunities that are in the career world. These opportunities can then become person's jobs, which in turn form a career path. Career path represents something that has already happened as a result of person's career decisions. On the other hand, career mobility is ability that is owned by a person and has or has no effect on the person's career path, depending on the person's career plan, career opportunities and organizational support.

Researchers are talking about psychological and physical mobility (Arthur & Sullivan 2006, 19–29), boundaryless (Inkson 2002, 25–34; Mallon & Pringle 2003, 839–853) and protean (Briscoe, Hall & DeMuth 2006) career theories, a bureaucratic career concept (Grandjean 1981; Ladkin 2002), and subjective and objective career success (Arthur, Khapova & Wilderom 2005, 177–202). I have discussed some of these ideas in the previous chapter and below I will describe some types of career mobility.

In her study about hotel general managers in Australia Ladkin (2002, 379–388) has explored career mobility as one of important issues in modern careers. She has differed four aspects related to career mobility that she tried to investigate: stages or levels of a hotel manager's career, job moves by function, use of the labour market and the initiator of the job moves, and working abroad.

The study (Ladkin 2002, 379–388) revealed that a high percentage of general managers worked as an assistant manager or the department head before they became general managers. Around 11% of the respondents have worked their way up from the operational level to become a general manager. Therefore, it shows that it is possible to

start from a very low level and reach a high position in future. It sounds quite optimistic as not everyone is able to start his/her career straight at the managerial level.

Also the study (Ladkin 2002, 379–388) showed that quite many managers come to the hotel industry from some other industry, therefore, experience in other industries might be very useful in the hotel industry and in the managerial work as well. The results are corresponding with the results of the author's previous study in Mauritius and in the UK (Juwaheer & Ladkin 2000, Ladkin & Riley 1996).

As for the second aspect, Ladkin (2002) notices that in the hotel industry and in the general manager's job it is very important to have experience in sometimes absolutely different areas, however, the functional areas in a hotel are essential. The majority of respondents have worked in the food and beverage function, which is corresponding with previous studies as well. Some of the managers have worked in other departments, such as housekeeping or human resources, but the numbers are not high enough to say that those functions are important in the general manager's career. Some of the professionals came from other industries and have learned the hotel industry from practice.

I cannot expect the same results from my research, as the research itself is smaller and concentrates on one hotel chain. Finland is also different from other countries in a way that there are not so many hotel giants that are present in the rest of the world. In big hotels and hotel chains the patterns of the career might be slightly different. Ladkin's (2002) research showed a somewhat high number of general managers who have experience in the front office function. It is not as high as in food and beverage function, but higher than any other functions in a hotel. It can be the second most important function for the general manager's career.

The last aspect that was discovered by Ladkin (2002, 379–388), presence of international working experience, has shown high results. Almost a half of the respondents have worked at some stage abroad. That one more time proves that the hotel industry is a global industry, and boundaries are not as clear as before. These results not only show that a person, who has international experience, can easily work

in another country as well, but also it shows that knowledge of different languages and cultures is important for a general manager's career.

Ladkin's (2002) research is very important for my research, as the author's view is close to mine and the topic is very alike. In my research, I wanted to consider the same aspects of career mobility that Ladkin does in her research: a length of career till achieving the hotel manager's position, career stages, functional areas of work, and working abroad.

## **2.1 Career mobility and changing environment**

A person enters working life with intention to achieve something, to try new activity or just to follow the common logic: school – work. Work has different meaning for different people, and they do it for different reasons: for someone it is achieving a particular status, for someone it is achieving a certain level of financial stability, and for someone it is an attempt to realize personal potential. Somehow everyone goes through changes in their career. Depending on the goals a person may agree to be flexible in order to advance his/her career. The above mentioned researchers show that people have flexible careers, and there are different reasons, why people choose to have them.

For many people it is important to improve their status and pay during their careers. They are looking forward to being promoted, to get rewards according to achievements and to be financially stable. On the other hand, some people prefer following the flow of life by accepting opportunities that emerge on their way, but not actively looking for them. Nowadays, for both of these types it is a basic requirement to be able to cope with the changing environment and therefore requirements of the working life. It might be needed to accomplish different types of education, to learn several languages and cultures, to acquire different skills and to be able to work with different personalities.

As it was mentioned before, many researchers consider the bureaucratic career model as a basis of career theory. Ladkin & Riley (1996, 443–452) argue that it cannot be

universally applied to any setting. In case of a bureaucratic career, an individual is required to have certain qualifications, his/her skills and knowledge are being improved with initiation of an organization, and there is some degree of certainty in the career future of the individual. However, the authors (Ladkin & Riley 1996, 443–452) describe a form of career that depends on the individual's initiatives, and that requires different types of mobility: occupational, organizational and geographical.

As Rice (2005) well noticed, it is no more guaranteed that if a person has done all the same steps that used to lead in a bureaucratic world to a successful career (an MBA degree, for example), it will give the same results. The world has changed, and requirements to a person have changed. So, now getting a professional education will only help a person get a job, but not necessarily right at a desired level. From the organization's point of view it is also not easy to change together with the changing environment. Of course, the main asset a company has is its people, and it does not want to lose them, but wants them to develop. Organizations want to use their staff more efficiently; therefore, they require universal skills and flexibility. (Rice 2005.) Organizations do not want to hire professionals with their degrees, if they have not worked in the company for some time. The best learning is nowadays practice, and organizations rather promote their experienced staff than hire new people straight to managerial positions.

Arthur and Sullivan (2006, 25) talk about different career competencies that lead an individual in a certain direction in his/her career, which in turn initiate the moves. There are three “ways of knowing” describing career competencies: knowing-why, knowing-how and knowing-whom. These competencies are interdependent, and if one occurs, it results in the other one. I compared them with the Rice's (2005) view of characteristics of mobile behaviour below.

No one can guarantee that a person will stay at the same job (or in the same organization) for the entire career life-span. In the end, those people who are willing to move are more secure about a job. (Rice 2005.) Many people are willing to see changes in their career, because they want to learn and improve themselves. Arthur and Sullivan (2006, 25) call this career competency “knowing-how”. This career competency relates

to skills and knowledge that a person needs to perform in his/her job. It is closely connected with another competency – “knowing-why”, which involves an individual’s motivation towards gaining fresh experience. When one job or a part of a job had been learned, a person starts feeling a need to learn something new, to have new challenges (Rice 2005). In case of a hotel manager, it is also true. Even after reaching the hotel manager’s position, a person needs some change when he/she knows perfectly the job he/she was doing, therefore, a change of a hotel, change of location, change of type of a hotel gives new insight for a career.

People who are excited about what they are doing, who do work because of the work and not some rewards, easier adapt to new or changing conditions. In contrast, those who are stuck to an idea of getting higher, those who are searching for job security in its traditional understanding and those who are willing to autonomously achieve success in career are not so flexible, and it is harder to survive and be successful in a changing world. (Rice 2005.) For an organization it is also important that a person loves what he/she is doing, because then it is easier to find understanding when changes are needed. A person full of passion will do work as for his/her own company, will take responsibility and will be willing to help when organization is coping with changing environment.

As Rice (2005) also mentions, networking is one of the important qualities that a person developing his/her career can add to adapt even better. Networking can also be seen as going hand in hand with mobility. It plays a certain role in people’s moves, as it not only allows people being aware of other existing opportunities, but also using those opportunities. Many organizations take care of networking inside their company or with their partners. They create meetings, internet communication platforms for employees, and sessions of experience exchanging. Therefore, people can once again learn from other people and be aware of opportunities around them. (Rice 2005.) Arthur and Sullivan (2006, 25) call this career competency “Knowing-whom”. It involves connections with colleagues, professionals and friends, and widens the perspective of the working opportunities as well as it is a source of information.

Eby, Butts and Lockwood (2003 in Arthur and Sullivan 2006, 25) found a connection between the above mentioned “knowings” and perceived career success and internal and external marketability of a person. Those individuals who have greater levels of these competencies usually also have greater levels of perceived career success and internal and external marketability of a person.

## 2.2 Types of mobility

In this chapter, I describe different types of mobility that were studied by researchers. The major ones that I have identified are physical mobility, psychological mobility, and vertical mobility. When studying the vertical mobility it is interesting to notice who express the intent for the vertical move – an organization or an individual.

Greenhouse & Singh’s view (Greenhaus & Singh 2004, 198–221) is directed by the idea that both boundaryless career in a boundaryless world and protean career in the Hall’s understanding are managed by the individuals themselves. While discussing the concept of a boundaryless career further, Sullivan and Arthur (2006) encourage that physical and psychological mobility cannot be separated, as in reality they are always present together. However, to understand what is meant by each of these types of mobility they still need to be separated and defined.

Arthur and Sullivan (2006) define *physical mobility* as the transition across boundaries, and *psychological mobility* as the perception of the capacity to make transitions. This view is close to my understanding of the reality in the career world. People are always human beings, and there is a psychological aspect in everything they do. So, even if the moving across the physical boundaries probably supports the development of a career, a person also considers psychological factors, such as less stressful working environment, opportunity to meet more people, opportunity to advance his/her personal development and so on.

Coming to the labour market it is interesting to look if an individual changes jobs mostly within the same organization or moves happen more often outside the organization. Ladkin’s research (Ladkin 2002, 379–388) shows that most of the moves

are done inside the organization, even though the number is very close to 50%. Therefore, there are opportunities for development within some organizations, especially if it is a hotel chain, and people do not intend to change the organization. But then there is another question, who decides whether the move will be done: an organization or an individual? Intuitively, people, if they are promoted by the company to a better position, stay within the organization. However, Ladkin's (2002) results prove the opposite: Most of the decisions are made by the individuals themselves. Therefore, it gives an idea that many people prefer managing their own career instead of waiting for the organizational promotions.

Many authors associate career mobility with career success (Eby, Feldman, Ng & Sorensen 2005; Cheramie et al. 2007). When doing so, they are mostly talking about upward mobility, that means that an individual moves upwards in his/her career, and that for most of the people indicates career success. The researchers are aiming to find a predicting factor for career success. Eby et al. (2005, 367–408) differs two types of upward mobility: contest- and sponsored-mobility, meaning that they might have different consequences for a career. Contest-mobility is related to performance on the job and adding value to the company. If considering this type of upward mobility, it is possible for anyone to become successful by giving necessary time and energy for it. On the other hand, there is a sponsored-mobility that is observed if “established elites pay special attention to those members who are deemed to have high potential and then provide sponsoring activities to them to help them win the competition” (Eby et al. 2005, 367–408). Therefore, it is not possible for anybody to take advantage of sponsorship, but only for those who are chosen by elite. Eby et al. (2005, 367–408) do not deny that both types of mobility can be present simultaneously.

It is worth considering these types of mobility, as many people decide to put all their efforts in moving upwards. In addition, big companies that are planning careers for the employees are, probably, also following the bureaucratic career model, picking up successful individuals and helping and being mentors to them through their careers. Other people who were not chosen by elite are still able to reach their career goals by putting enough effort. The contest-mobility is closer to individually managed career, where an individual decides in which direction to put the efforts and whether to do so.

Whereas sponsored-mobility should be quite dependent on organization or other powerful structures that by helping an individual actually decide in which direction he/she should be moving.

### **2.3 Factors affecting the career mobility**

Cheramic, Sturman & Walsh (2007, 359–374) are talking about changing organizations and reasons causing these changes. They are considering executives in their research. As my research is also about people occupying high positions, it is worth considering the findings of the above mentioned work. Ceramic et al. (2007) questioned, why people who have already achieved high status and who is receiving a good compensation still change their place of work. On the individual level people compare their status and their level of compensation with the status and level of compensation of an executive in a different organization. If subjectively they seem better than the present ones, a person may start considering moving to a different organization.

Therefore, some organizations may keep these things in mind and increase the level of compensation in order to avoid the moving of an executive. The results of the research also showed that the health of an organization affects positively changing an organization as well. If a person sees that there are problems in the company, it experiences decline, then it is more probably that an executive will be looking for another work option. All these findings support boundaryless career theory. Moreover, further analysis showed that career movements can be used as a useful strategy for executives. (Cheramic, Sturman & Walsh 2007, 359–374)

The Ceramic's et al. (2007) research does not show if during the executives' careers job movements are useful for the development of career. From the organizational point of view the moving of an employee from the operational or middle management level might be not as harmful as moving of an executive. On the other hand it is always harder to find a new employee than to keep an old one. In my research, I can compare the findings of the Ceramic's et al. (2007) research with the situation among the executives in the Helsinki hotels.



Another study was made by Donohue (2007, 259–276) without focusing only on the executives and even on any particular industry. He tried to examine whether the Career Attitudes and Strategies Inventory (CASI) is useful for predicting career persistence and career change. The inventory was designed by Hollad and Gottfredson in 1994 and aims to assess the likelihood of job stability or change. To differentiate career changers from career persisters Donohue (2007, 259–276) used 4 criteria. Therefore, after strict selection *career changers* remained only those who intended to change their careers, not only in terms of occupational level or organization, they were active in their intent and were not intending to change their careers within the same Holland's Occupational Code. The rest were identified as *career persisters*. The results of Donohue's study are very interesting and can be used in my research. Based on Holland's expectations (Holland 1996, 397–406) Donohue has designed few hypotheses for the research. In the end some of them were confirmed, e.g. career changers (expressed intent to change career) are looking forward to skill development more than career persisters (expressed intent to remain in current career).

Unlike Donohue (2007), I am not aiming to find predictors of career change or persistence; however I can use his findings. As he explains further in his work, the results can be interpreted as following: Those individuals who change career do so, because they see opportunities for acquiring new skills. If a person does not have a certain motivation towards learning, getting new training and further education, he/she is not likely to change career. (Donohue 2007.)

I assume that for a person aiming to become a hotel manager it is essential to be motivated towards constant learning and acquiring new skills. In current situation in the career world it is not enough to have just one type of education (meaning: having a degree, having an additional training or acquiring work experience in one functional area or at one position). It does not always mean that a person needs to change organizations, but many times that is the case. During school years, an individual might get different trainings for his/her future career, there are plenty of international programs for getting international experience and learning languages, in addition organizations might support training and education within the organization.

### 3 Company's profile

Below I present the information about the case company X. The data presented in this chapter was received through an informant interview with a company's representative with an addition of the facts gathered from the publicly available sources (the Internet and brochures). For my research, I have chosen one Finnish company that specializes in the hotel and restaurant business. It is one of the biggest and one of the leading hotel chains in Finland. The company operates hotels all over Finland, and specifically has 11 hotels in the Helsinki area (capital and Vantaa area), which became the target of my research. The hotels are represented by six different brands, among which two are international. In Helsinki area five brands are present. The hotels operated by the company X include city hotels, airport hotels, nature and activity hotels, spa hotels, and conference hotels.

The interviewed managers operate hotels ranging from medium-sized (between 100 to 300 rooms) – seven interviewed managers, and large (over 300 rooms) – one interviewed manager.

The organization is managed by the President. It is divided into hotel and restaurant divisions, which are managed by division directors. Furthermore, the hotel division is divided into six areas which are associated with the geographical districts in Finland. Each of the areas is managed by an area director. In my case, I did not follow the chain's area division and have included both Helsinki and Vantaa in the Helsinki region. The hotel managers report directly to an area director.

The career of the hotel managers in this company is different from the hotel general managers in other international companies. The hotel managers do only the day-to-day operations, and major decisions are made by an area director and the President. Therefore, the general managers are called hotel managers (toimitusjohtaja in Finnish) who receive directions from the organization.

Some of the decisions are made inside the management team, which includes both an area director and hotel managers. They discuss the business that is offered by other departments (sales department, marketing department, revenue management) and decide if they can take it and at which conditions.

As for the hotel managers' careers, the personnel department or human resources department together with area directors are responsible for that. The company offers studies to its managers. All current or future duty managers, hotel managers and area directors have to go through the courses. There are three stages in those studies: vuoropäällikkö (duty manager), päällikkötutkinto (manager) and aluejohtajatutkinto (area director). Each course lasts one year with only a few sessions through the year, where workers learn how to be managers in the company X. After each course a person has to get a degree, which then allows being a manager in the company X. Usually, the courses are offered to an employee who shows good results in his/her work and is seen as a potential manager, however, sometimes an employee can show intent to attend the course on his/her own.

While going through the studies the employees have discussion with a human resource manager about the future plans of an employee in the company X. The collected information is stored in the database and allows keeping the employees' wishes on track, which then helps find the right person for a certain position in the company. The company takes advantage of all the people it has all over Finland, therefore many times people can be moved from one hotel to another, from one function to another, from one area to another etc.

Due to the tight control of the labor hours, many of the managers perform different functions in a hotel. Some of the hotel managers sometimes work also at the front desk, substitute other managers and do their own duties as well. Therefore, the hotel managers in the company X know a way beyond their own duties.

## 4 Research design

The purpose of this study was to understand what career paths hotel managers go through in the company X. Specifically, I wanted to answer the following questions: What role career mobility plays in the career paths of the hotel managers? What types of career mobility are prevalent in the career paths of the hotel managers? What is affecting the individual's decision towards change in the career?

### 4.1 Choice of method

A method for the research was chosen to be a qualitative method. It is different from quantitative by presence of a researcher in the process of conducting the study. Qualitative research allows collecting the data not only from dry numbers or answers, but also from the context where the data is collected. As long as results of a research are to be interpreted, there is less of a fantasy that may arise from the subjective interpretation by a researcher. (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, M. & Tindall 1994, 49–54)

The qualitative and quantitative research differ by the analytical objectives, the way questions are designed, instruments by which the data is collected, and the form of data these researches produce. But the main difference is the flexibility of the qualitative research. Although quantitative research is also fairly flexible, it does not allow spontaneous questioning and adaptation of the interaction between a researcher and a participant. The questions are open-ended, and answers are to be more than just “yes-no”. (Guest, Mack, MacQueen, Namey, & Woodsong 2005, 1–12.) It was more suitable for my research, because I could get answers more detailed and elaborated than they would be in a quantitative research. I could also adapt quickly and ask some questions based on the respondent's answers. Although both qualitative and quantitative methods are good, they serve different purposes and create different kind of understanding (Guest et al. 2005, 1–12). In my research, I was seeking to understand the meaning behind a person's behavior and the circumstances that behavior happened in.

Interview has been chosen as a type of qualitative research for the current study. The sample of the research was planned to consist of only 11 respondents. In fact only eight hotel managers were interviewed. Interview allows collecting data enough for interpretation and drawing certain conclusions out of it. It also helps clarify the meaning of certain respondents' answers, whereas a quantitative research does not allow that. In an interview motivation and interest of a respondent may be stimulated by a researcher who has a great interest in the research process and its results. (Banister et al. 1994, 49–54)

Reflecting the main reasons to conduct an interview that were identified by Banister et al. 1994, 49–54, I have set the aims for the current qualitative research:

- to consider a subjective meaning of the respondents' answers
- to investigate certain areas that are difficult to investigate by a quantitative method (such as individual choices in career)
- to be involved in the process, when an interviewee can feel that there is someone else present and the answers cannot be generated by one person only, but through interaction between two persons
- to maintain relations with an interviewee, which can be productive for the results of the study.

In the “Data collection” section I described how the interviews were implemented and how the aims presented above were reached.

In order to collect the relevant information about the case company the key informant interview was conducted. The informant interview is done with those individuals who are thought to provide needed information and views on a particular subject (USAID Center for Development Information and Evaluation 1996). It is important that information is received directly from a person involved in the researched field. The information is highly reliable, because a person belongs to the case company himself.

Answers received from the informant interview are not used in the main research analysis, but only help understand the context in which the topic is investigated. The information received from the informant interview gives additional insights on the problem and allows seeing it from different perspectives (USAID Center for Development Information and Evaluation 1996). It is also very useful when objective information cannot be collected from the publicly available sources.

The questions for the informant interview were prepared in advance and delivered to the interviewee; however during the actual interview they were not followed. The questions were designed only to give some idea of the topic I was interested in. The interview became more a conversation type, and I asked questions according to the interviewee's answers. Due to the circumstances described above, the informant interview questions became irrelevant, and therefore are not attached to the thesis.

Interview has been conducted with direct personal contact with the interviewee. The data was tape-recorded, and afterwards analyzed and presented in the current report at the company's profile section.

## **4.2 Sample selection**

For selecting a sample, I used the purposive method of sampling. In my research, I had a strictly defined criterion and therefore could not use other sampling methods, e.g. quota sampling method. I have chosen a criterion that all the participants had to satisfy – being a hotel manager in one of the chain X hotels in Helsinki area (Helsinki and Vantaa) in Finland. The participants were chosen regardless gender, age, income or other criteria.

The criterion was chosen according to my thesis topic. I was interested in the chain X, as it is one of the biggest hotel chains in Finland and could be a good representative of the hotel market in the Helsinki area. The chain X in the Helsinki area represented by 11 hotels, therefore, I have included 11 hotel managers in the sample.

First of all, I have contacted the human resource department of the company X by e-mail and asked for permission to conduct the interviews. I found out that my request was discussed at the management meeting and did not meet any obstacles. After that, I was assigned a person who I could stay in contact with from the company's side. The company's representative has contacted the prospective participants and has received their agreement to participate in the research. After that, we have signed the commission agreement between the student, thesis supervisor and the commissioning party.

Since the agreement was signed and the questions for the interviews were ready I have started contacting the interviewees. In the "Data collection" section I described how I collected the data.

### **4.3 Data collection**

In this section, I described how the qualitative data was collected. I have conducted one pilot interview before starting actual interviews and the process and outcomes of the pilot interview are presented below. Further I describe how the actual interviews with participants were conducted.

#### **4.3.1 Pilot interview**

After having done the theoretical analysis of the literature related to the topic, I have prepared the interview questions. In the interview questions, I tried to reflect my research questions. The interview questions appeared to be discussion topics, that I wanted to cover with my interviewees and that I could be more flexible with than with the strict interview structure.

In order to test the questions, to practice interviewing and to identify the mistakes, I have taken a pilot interview. For the pilot interview I have chosen a person who works in the same company as the hotel managers and who has done her thesis work as well. This person could give me critical feedback about the interview questions, interview process, and general understanding of the purpose of the research.

I have informed the interviewee why I need to interview her and I have provided the questions to her beforehand. I have also explained that the answers will not be a part of the main research, and will be used only for practicing the analyzing process.

From the pilot interview, I have made several notifications:

- It is very important to explain clearly what the main topic of the research is and what is needed from the interviewee. It has to be done in a very beginning, so that interview takes the right direction and questions are understood in a correct way.
- It is useful to know some professional terms in the mother tongue of an interviewee (in this case – Finnish), because for an interviewee it is more natural to use them like that, without struggling to translate them into English.
- As interviewer I have to try not to help the interviewee answer the questions. I can ask more questions, but not help find the right words or explanations.
- The interview topics were fine: they help get enough information and do not make the interview too long.
- The recording equipment works well and does not require special training.
- It was easy to establish atmosphere of trust with the interviewee, because we have known each other for a while. However, it might be harder when an interviewee is a hotel manager. Such relaxed and trust atmosphere helps an interviewee open up his/her mind and give as complete answers as possible.

These notifications helped me think more thoroughly through the interview process and prepare myself for the real interviews. The answers from the pilot interview allowed me practicing in the analysis of the data. I could identify categories that might be valid also in the actual interviews, as well as I have learned to look at the answers as a source of information for my research.

#### **4.3.2 Conducting the interviews**

I have contacted each hotel manager by e-mail. The message that was sent to participants is presented as an attachment. I have explained why I am doing my



research and why I need them to participate. To each e-mail, I have attached the interview questions (see attachment). We agreed on time for the interviews, and the place was usually their working place. I did not manage to agree about the interview with all the contacted managers. Three of the managers could not participate due to business. Two of them initially did not answer my e-mail at all, and I had to contact them by phone. I could never reach one of them by phone, because he/she was not in the office at the times I called. I have left messages and sent another e-mail, but never got an answer. The other manager answered my phone call and we agreed that he/she would check the schedule and reply to my e-mail, which I had to send to him/her repeatedly. However, I have never got an answer back. Therefore, in the actual interviews only eight hotel managers participated. Each of the interviews lasted from 40 minutes to one hour.

At the beginning of each interview, I have explained again, more thoroughly, why I am writing my thesis, what the thesis topic is and why I have chosen their company. I have also explained the purpose and the structure of the interview. As I said earlier, I had a flexible structure of the interview, so the interviewee could decide on his/her own how to answer the interview questions. As my aim was to collect the hotel managers' stories, so it was logical to let them tell about it in the chronological order. So, the interviewees told me about their careers starting from the professional education and first job and until the present state. It was naturally to ask my career mobility related questions in between their various jobs. Therefore, I could direct the interviewees to the focus of the interview while allowing a comfortable process of remembering the past. I have asked in detail about the nature of the decisions in each case of career change, the motivation and ambitions as well as dreams and hopes.

In addition to this, I was also interested in other career intents and any reasons for that. That would help me understand how a person happened to be in the hotel career, if there are any similarities in the hotel managers' intents at the beginning of their professional life etc.

I was not so much focusing on the personal qualities or skills of the managers that were important during their careers, because it is a different edge of my thesis research

which I am not focusing on. However, I have asked one question related to personal qualities in order to highlight the manager's personality, which helped me understand his/her career moves better. It is also a good addition to the picture of successful hotel career that might be interesting to a thesis reader as well as future researchers.

Therefore, at the end of each interview I had a somewhat clear picture of a hotel manager's career in the order it was developing. I have also got an idea what kind of mobility he/she had experienced during the career and what were the factors supporting it, including the career ambitions, the company's impact, and family reasons and so on.

I always remembered that my research is qualitative as well as the research method, so I tried to collect as much qualitative information as possible. That included the hotel managers' personal thoughts and considerations about their career, their own understanding of career mobility and its role in the career, their ambitions and dreams towards the career success etc.

#### **4.4 Data analysis**

The process of analyzing the data was difficult for me, because I have never done it before. I have learned that there are two approaches to analyze the qualitative data: inductive and deductive. The deductive approach assumes that collected qualitative data is organized according to categories derived from the theory. According to the inductive approach the categories are derived from the data itself. In my research, I had to use both approaches. Some of the categories I have chosen basing on the theoretical part of the research, and some were identified after going through the data. However, I could not find the themes in the interviews that would be corresponding with the theory completely though I found some that were. Therefore, I have chosen some categories that were discussed in the interviews, but were not discussed in the theoretical part.

After recording all the interviews, I have listened to them several times. First, I have made a table that would help me see the whole picture of collected data. I have

included all the interviewees with the main points of their careers. After that, I have made transcripts of all the interviews; each of the transcripts was from seven to fourteen pages long. It helped me analyze the data using the analysis methods described above. I read through the transcripts several times while grouping the data and choosing the categories. I have made several mind-maps for visualizing the grouped data. I have used my mind-maps during the whole time of analysis.

I was considering my research questions while trying to identify the categories. Some topics that I have at first chosen as a category did not have enough weight to help answer the research questions. Therefore, I had to critically evaluate the categories and improve them. Finally, I have divided the results into three sections corresponding with the number of my research questions, and I have identified eleven categories.

The theme of the first section is the role of mobility in the career paths of the hotel managers. As I have described in my theoretical part, career mobility goes hand in hand with changing environment and adopting people to it. I have chosen the categories based on the theory: developing universal skills, loving one’s own job, and networking. I have also derived one category from the qualitative data – perception of mobility. In the second section, I tried to identify the types of career mobility that were prevalent in the career paths of the hotel managers. Therefore, I have chosen the categories: physical mobility, psychological mobility, vertical mobility, moving across hotel functions, and moving across industries. In the third section I described the factors affecting decisions of the hotel managers towards change in their careers. In this section, I have identified the themes: nature of intent and willingness to learn and improve oneself. In the table 1 I have presented the categories used for analyzing the data.

Table 1. Categories and properties derived from the theory and qualitative data.

<b>Research questions</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Properties</b>	
Role of mobility in the career paths	Developing universal skills	Experience related to	Other experience

		hotel field	
	Loving one's own job	Liking job	Disliking job
	Networking		
	Perception of mobility		
Types of career mobility prevalent in the career paths	Physical mobility		
	Psychological mobility		
	Vertical mobility	Upward mobility	Downward mobility
	Moving across industries		
	Moving across hotel functions		
Factors affecting decisions towards change in the careers	Nature of intent	Own intent	Organizational intent
	Willingness to learn and improve oneself		

When presenting the results of the qualitative research I used letters in order to identify the interviewees. As I had eight interviewees, I had letters: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H. The letters have nothing to do with the actual interviewees' names or their personalities, and were used only to mark the respondents and make the description of the results easy to read.

## 5 Research results

In this chapter, I presented the results of my study. They are organized according to the categories that I have presented before. Three main sections are corresponding with the research questions: the role of mobility in career paths of the hotel managers, types of career mobility prevalent in the career paths, factors affecting towards change in the careers.

### 5.1 Role of mobility in career paths of the hotel managers

During the interviewees, I was focused on the moments when a person was talking about mobile behavior. I tried to find out what role mobility was playing in the career. As I learned from the reviewed literature, mobility helps adapt to changing environment, and therefore there are three themes that can be analyzed in the data collected from the interviews: *developing universal skills*, *loving one's own job* and *networking*. I have concentrated on these themes, because all of these support adapting to the constantly changing job requirements, situation inside and outside the organization and therefore make a person mobile.

In addition to that, I have chosen one more category that relates to the role of mobility, and it is *perception of mobility* by the respondents. This category is related to those parts of the interviews where respondents were talking about changes in their careers and their feelings about that.

#### 5.1.2 Developing universal skills

While the interviewees were talking about their careers, I tried to pay attention to those different areas and jobs where they had to develop *different kinds of skills*. A person learns something from every job performed. I wanted to see if it was useful experience that can be applied in the future jobs, or experience that is not so applicable in the future.

I have divided all the experiences into two big themes: experience related to the hotel industry and all other experience. The majority of hotel managers have more or less similar experience in the hotel related industry.

Concerning different functions of a hotel, seven of the respondents had experience at the front desk, six respondents have experienced restaurant function (A, D, E, F, G, H), and four interviewees had experience in housekeeping cleaning services (A, B, F, G). One of the respondents has also worked on a cruise ship.

One of the interviewees has worked at the front desk in different hotels of the chain X at the same time, as an extra worker. The same interviewee never worked in the housekeeping department, because he/she did not want “to clean a single room [him/her]self”. He/she talked about the usefulness of such experience, when he/she revealed that he/she misses that experience, because he/she would like to know how a room has been made. In addition, while being a receptionist the same interviewee always wanted to learn more than an average receptionist should have been.

One of the interviewees has experienced all the main functions of the hotel: front desk, restaurant function, housekeeping and even worked at a cruise ship. This interviewee did not mention how all that kind of experience was important for his/her career, but every time he/she learned something new. By being different from work in a hotel working at a cruise ship gave a chance to learn something new: “I wanted to learn how the life is there and how you can manage it, because it’s quite different [from a hotel]”.

Interestingly, another interviewee who never worked for other employer than the employer X expressed his/her opinion about different experiences in such way: It gives wider prospective on what is happening.

One of the interviewees does not have experience in the restaurant field and thinks that it does not mean that a person without such experience cannot manage a hotel. One more interviewee agreed with him/her: “it’s good to know from all the sides, it helps, but you can manage a hotel, even if you don’t know anything about the

restaurant”, however that interviewee had mostly restaurant experience, but never worked at the front desk before becoming a hotel manager.

Two of the interviewees who had experience in housekeeping department think that it is useful for their work as a manager. One said that he/she knows exactly where to look when inspecting the rooms, and he/she can give recommendations to housekeepers. The other one thinks that everyone working in a hotel should experience “the whole building”.

When talking about the types of hotels, all of the respondents have worked under the Finnish brands, while seven of them also worked in hotels under the international brands (at the moment four are still working under the international brands and four – under the Finnish brands).

One of the interviewees wanted to be in an international hotel, because then he/she could apply his/her language skills. While working at the Finnish brand-hotel he/she “was a little bit concerned, because [he/she] couldn’t use the language”. Two of the interviewees said that they feel good in an international environment.

One of the interviewees currently working in a Finnish brand-hotel wants to change to an international one, as he/she had experience in both international and Finnish brand-hotels. He/she mentioned that before coming to the current hotel he/she had to manage an international brand-hotel. Although he/she wants to work in an international brand-hotel, he/she described previous experience in such hotel as not very favorable, because the requirements according to the international standards were very hard to meet, and they were strictly monitored by the franchiser, and all that made the job very stressful: “very hard one and a half years, because the [franchiser] really got strict with the standards, they were really focusing...” The same happened a while before that, when he/she also had to manage an international brand-hotel, and it was hard time too, and he/she had to escape for a different hotel and even for a different employer.

One more interviewee has described somewhat similar feelings, when he/she had to manage an international brand-hotel. After that he/she only worked in Finnish brand-hotels up to now and does not want to change it.

Six respondents had experience in a city hotel, five managers worked in an airport hotel and three experienced a conference hotel. I have noticed that there are two opinions about work in an airport-hotel in comparison to a city-hotel. Two respondents said that there is no difference in working in an airport-hotel and in a city-hotel; work is about customer service in both cases. Two other respondents said that work in these two settings is not the same: "The area makes it different. It's the airport; it has totally different cycles of working. You have certain busy hours, the rest of the hours are quiet. It's like in and out. It's totally different world." I have heard three times that work in a hotel in a big city is more complex and demanding than in a small city. In a small city and a smaller hotel a hotel manager needs to perform several functions: managing the hotel (sometimes without restaurant facilities) and performing the sales manager's duties, and once in a while helping at the front desk as well.

As for experience in a conference-hotel, one interviewee said that it is "on-off" work, meaning that cycles of work are very different from any other hotel type. It happened often in his/her experience that suddenly a conference hotel gets full and all personnel need to work hectically and then again suddenly it is empty, and there is nothing to do. It was work on extremes.

While being working in the hotel industry, three of the interviewees has experienced an opening of a hotel (one of them has experienced it twice), two respondents have participated in the renovation of a hotel and one respondent had experience in building a hotel. All of these interviewees said that opening a hotel was very useful experience. One of them said: "I liked the renovation and I liked building up a hotel. There were new things for me. I learned many new things." Opening a hotel was different from just managing a hotel, there were many things that needed to be solved, personnel needed to be hired and trained, new customers needed to be brought in. One interviewee mentioned that he/she would like to have that kind of experience, so that



he/she could learn the hotel management from a different side: interior design, human resource management.

There are other useful experiences that the hotel managers mentioned during our interviews. I identified five skills closely related to a hotel manager's job: administrative work (mentioned by six interviewees: B, C, D, E, F, G), managing personnel (mentioned four times: A, D, E, H), training other people (two managers had experienced: B, G), customer service (mentioned two times – E, H) and leadership (mentioned one time – H). Administrative work was associated with preparing reports, planning the budget, following the international standards, and taking care of supply.

Though managing personnel was mentioned only four times, it was considered as one of the most important skills for a hotel manager. One interviewee said that that is what he/she is good at, and some of the people he/she had hired have already become hotel managers themselves. He/she added that a manager is judged by the staff: "You are as good as your staff is. That is how they are, what results they produce, so you get to be judged by them." He/she also mentioned that it is something that a person learns while working. One interviewee had to experience difficult situations with new personnel when changing from one hotel to another. He/she said it is something that always happens when a new manager starts at a hotel with the old personnel, and a person just needs to accept it. He/she also admitted that it is easier to hire and teach new personnel than to try to re-teach the old staff.

Leadership was mentioned once. The interviewee said that his/her superior had noticed him/her as a good employee and had offered opportunities for career: "I was quite lucky with having superior that wants to give you opportunities and push you further with your career". Now this manager is trying to do the same with his/her employees in order to find good managers and give them opportunities to develop.

Besides those that I have mentioned already, there are some skills that were obtained from the tourism industry: work in a tourist office (two interviewees), work as a tour guide (mentioned by the same two interviewees), handling luggage in the airport (one person) and pre-seating passengers in the airplane (one person). One of the

respondents explained the choice of the job in a tourist office: “I was studying Finnish tourism, so I was supposed to become some kind of communal city tourist worker”.

I identified skills that can be applied in the hotel setting as well: direct selling (five interviewees) and IT-skills (two persons). Working in IT had always been part of one interviewee’s career: “I have been always involved in IT somehow. It’s like next to my normal job. I’ve been working in a sort of area support organization. We meet a couple of times per year and do some projects”.

I have recorded those experiences that are not directly related to the hotel industry, but could have had an impact into the personality of interviewed managers. Four managers had experience in the garden works in the past, three respondents have done the baby-sitting, two interviewees had experience at a factory, two were drivers for some time in the past, and one interviewee also had experience in the newspaper delivering. Two times I have heard that this experience non-related to the hotel industry was useful in a way that a person learned hard working. In most of the times (A, B, C, D, G) these temporary jobs (usually summer jobs) were a good source of money for a young person. For one interviewee job could fill time before being accepted to the university.

### **5.1.3 Loving one’s own job**

The second theme that describes mobility is *the loving one’s own job*. Before, I have explained that people who like what they are doing are more likely to accept changes. Also those people who work because of work and not just in order to get a better position or extrinsic rewards understand better the need for changes in the company. In this category, I found two different ways respondents expressed their opinions about their jobs. Some jobs were satisfying and people liked them and sometimes rejected other offers because of the job they liked. I also paid attention to those cases when a person was not happy about what he/she had been doing, and therefore some change happened, e.g. a person wanted to escape the job, and sometimes made decision never do that job again. Therefore, below I highlighted two properties of this category: *Liking job* and *disliking job*.

Six of the interviewed managers (A, B, E, F, G, H) have mentioned that they enjoy work when they see new things, get new experience, usually when they just start on a new position or a new place. Two respondents (D, E) also felt good when they have changed the environment – from a smaller town to a bigger one; from being at home with kids to going back to work. Finally, two managers like their jobs no matter in which property they are.

Six of the respondents (A, B, D, E, G, H) liked their jobs because of the hotel – it was a good place to work. Three of the managers (C, D, G) liked their places, because they had a good impression from them though one of them has left the place, because his/her opinion had changed. Two managers (F, G) felt that they could relax at those places where they felt good, and the place fitted the life rhythm of one (A) of the interviewed managers. Three managers (A, C, F) said that they could be themselves in those places where they also liked to work. They did not need to pretend something else, they could just express their own personality. One respondent also mentioned that he/she started feeling good when a superior he/she did not like left.

As for consequence of being happy with the work, six respondents (A, C, D, E, F, G) have made the decision of working in a hotel and not somewhere else (a restaurant, a cruise ship). Five of the respondents (B, C, F, D, G) realized that they prefer working in certain company's hotel brands to others (e.g. international brands to Finnish ones). Three of the interviewees (D, E, F) admitted that they feel their working place is the right place for them. Three hotel managers (B, E, H) did not feel bored at those places where they liked to be, and three said that they feel satisfied. Only one respondent (A) thinks that you get more interest in the whole picture, if you like to work in that place.

As I said there were certain things that made people not like their jobs and therefore seek changes. Reasons of different kinds were mentioned by different interviewees, therefore all the facts that I described in this paragraph were mentioned only once during my interviews. A person had to put too many efforts towards work, and therefore felt that the place does not fit him/her. Another manager mentioned that a town was too small, there were little people, and therefore it felt boring. A person did not have enough support from a superior, and because of that did not feel good in that

place. The job did not fit a personal rhythm of one interviewed hotel manager, and that is why the person decided to change the job – started working in a hotel in the chain X. One person also mentioned that when he/she does not enjoy the job, then he/she feels that a change is needed.

#### **5.1.4 Networking**

The last category in this section is *networking*. The knowing some people sometimes becomes useful for career. In the interviews, people talked about relatives, friends, former colleagues, and people from the industry who might have played a role in choosing a direction for the career, they could give opportunities for development or they could offer a better position.

Six of the hotel managers (A, C, D, F, G, H) had connections with those people who they met during their studies or work. They helped them get a job in the industry, gave them other contacts, gave support and confidence or helped with work-related issues. As one of the interviewees talked about a person from the company: "...he was a general manager there [the newly opening hotel N]. He was before at the hotel Y when it opened, and then I actually applied job there when they were opening. And I didn't get the position, so then I called him: "Hey, now I'm interested, will you take me now?" Or another hotel manager had got her job through his/her former colleague: "I was a hotel manager in Turku. And I had a colleague there, who came to this hotel [current working place] as a duty manager. And then the hotel manager left to open another hotel, and my old colleague said to the area director that she knows the best hotel manager for this hotel. Then I came here."

Five respondents (B, D, E, G, H) have mentioned their superiors, who could offer development opportunities or give support or help. One of the respondents also noted that he/she had a superior who they have established trust with, so that they both knew that they can rely on each other in their work.

Family members or relatives of four of the interviewees (B, C, F, G) played a role in the hotel managers' careers. They gave suggestions about work or study places, gave

information about a certain place or a job, helped get a place or employed a person. For one of the respondents, a family member was an example of a career-oriented person; however, he/she admitted that he/she does not consider him/herself to be like that. He/she preferred a different way of career, where he/she feels more comfortable “drifting”.

Three of the respondents (A, B, F) had contacts in the industry, which then helped them get a job, gave a job or gave information about the company. Three interviewees (A, G, H) also mentioned their human resource department (which is the same for all of the interviewees, as they all work in the chain X). It offers opportunities to people working in the company and who expressed the intent to have development inside the company. It also spreads information about the opportunities and open positions inside the company; it recruits people to the managerial positions mostly from inside.

### **5.1.5 Perception of mobility**

When analyzing the interviews, I looked at the managers’ perception of mobility. I did not directly ask what they think about mobility in their careers, but I tried to understand it through different expressions in relation to the moment of change in the career.

Though everyone has his/her own reasons for accepting or refusing a change, I noticed a positive attitude towards it among half of the interviewees. I realized that one interviewee mentioned challenges while talking about a change. He/she saw a change as a new challenge: “Then I was offered this hotel, and then I said: “Of course, yes.” It was a challenge; it was a new hotel, almost new hotel, a new brand and everything.” From expressions concerning challenging situations I understood that a person likes them: “I always liked challenges”, “I took that right away, because I thought it was a challenge”. He/she also said that if challenges would not be offered to him/her, he/she would be looking for them.

The same notion I have noticed in the interviewee with another manager. He/she also said that challenges are important for him/her. He/she also found the changes in

career interesting and a chance to learn something new. What was special in his/her case comparing with others is that relationships played a very important role in his/her life. Several times the change was made due to relationships, when the boy/girlfriend had to move and the interviewee moved with him/her. Several times the interviewee had positive feelings about a change: “I was excited, that’s for me!”, “I was lucky to get a better job”, “I knew that I had to take the chance”.

One more interviewee considered changes in the career as good. He/she relates several changes to being in a right place in right time. He/she also thinks that superiors played an important role in his/her career, since opportunities were offered to him/her by a superior: “I was quite lucky with having superiors that want to give you opportunities and push you further with your career.”

One of the interviewees thought that offers or changes in the career were interesting or fun, so he/she took them. According to his/her words, if a place where a person works becomes boring, it is a reason to change it. Although he/she was after changes, they were not always easy. It took time to get used to a new place, or he/she had to be a superior to his/her colleagues with a new position or deal with new responsibilities. This respondent has never worked abroad, but he/she thinks that working abroad is good for career.

Two of the respondents were quite positive about the changes in their careers, but they perceived it as something natural in their careers. Many times changes in the career of one of the interviewees were initiated by him/herself. He/she thinks that if there was a chance for a step up in the career, he/she had to take it. As for another manager, he/she was not aiming for something particular in his/her career, as he/she explains: “I’ve been drifting.” Moving was not a problem for him/her, as during the childhood he/she was moving several times. What is more important for him/her is not going against him/herself. He/she mentioned that if a job becomes something that he/she is not happy about, he/she will do anything to change it. On the other hand, being happy at a work place is a good enough reason to refuse other offers: “I think that’s a problem or a reason that I felt or feel good here.” This interviewee also had a chance

to work abroad, but due to difficulties with getting a working permit abroad, it did not happen.

Quite different perceptions had two interviewees. One of them in most of the situations made changes in his/her career, because he/she had to: “I thought that I have to do something anyways”, “I started thinking that I have to get some kind of degree and study something”, “I had to think of doing something”. At the same time, this interviewee considered changes interesting and a possibility to learn something new. Just like the interviewee I mentioned above, this manager did not try to get a job abroad when there was a possibility due to difficulties with receiving a working permit in that country. However, when he/she tried to apply for jobs in a second country, he/she realized that salary was not as good as in Finland, since he/she had been working in one hotel already and had achieved quite a good level.

Exceptionally, one of the interviewees did not show positive feelings about changes in the career. He/she did not try to “push” him/herself forward and was not looking for changes. Both times when he/she was promoted it was the company’s intent, and he/she only accepted the offers, since he/she felt capable for those positions. I have noticed that two times in his/her life he/she was happy that opportunities that were in his/her life were not taken. For example, when choosing education, he/she applied for three completely different programs, and he/she happened to be accepted in the tourism school. So, later on he/she admitted that he/she is happy for not being in the other two fields now. There is also one thing that this interviewee regrets in his/her life, it is that he/she never went to work or study abroad. Now it is no more possible, as he/she cannot leave his/her family.

## **5.2 Types of career mobility prevalent in the career paths**

In this section, I present five categories that I have chosen based on the data from the interviews and the literature review. The first two categories are *physical* and *psychological mobility*. Then I present *vertical mobility*, which includes both *upward* and *downward mobility*. After that, I describe the *movements across the hotel functions* and *movements across the industries*.

### 5.2.2 Physical mobility

With the *physical mobility*, I mean those cases when a person moved physically: changed a location, changed a hotel, moved abroad and so on. The data is presented based on the interviewees' answers. I have identified seven themes that were discussed by the interviewees in relation to the physical mobility. They are: experience abroad, moving from one city to another, changing the industry, changing the employer, moving between hotels, moving between the hotel departments, experiencing the hotel re-branding.

Most of the interviewees during their career have experienced moving across industries, moving from one city to another, changing the employer, and some changes inside the company. Four of the interviewed managers (A, B, E, G) have worked or studied abroad. One of the interviewees had realized from that experience how to take care of her/himself. It was a good school of how "to live in a strange country", "to speak strange language" and to be with "strange people". One of these interviewees had worked abroad in several hotels. It was good time to use the language skills and get practice from the industry though there was a psychological reason to be abroad as well – a boy/girlfriend was working there, I tell about it in the section "Psychological mobility". One of these four managers had concluded that working and living abroad would never feel the same as in one's own country. A foreigner will always be a foreigner and will never be treated the same way as other employees. Three of the interviewed managers (C, D, H) have not worked or lived abroad, but would like to. Two managers still consider it. Finally, one manager sees it to be no more possible due to family reasons: "I was maybe in first 30 years too shy, and after that I was already settled here with the family, my wife and kids".

Most of the interviewees (A, B, C, D, E, F, G) have moved to different cities in Finland during their life. It happened from one to seven times for each of these interviewees. All of the interviewees moved from a smaller city to a bigger one at least once. They were looking for better opportunities in a bigger city, moved because of the better position, wanted to have more satisfying personal life. For example, one of the



interviewees said: “Then I decided to come to Helsinki area, because I knew that I had better chances, there are many possibilities in Helsinki; and my parents live in Espoo. Actually, I was also born in Helsinki, so this area is familiar for me.” Some moves (B, G) were made after being offered to work in a different hotel inside the chain X, but in a different city. Finally, two of interviewees found a better position inside the chain by themselves and therefore had to move to another city.

Seven respondents (A, B, C, D, E, G, H) have changed an employer during their career from one to five times. Most of the changes happened before the hotel career had started. Four of the interviewees said that they like the employer X and consider it a good employer. One of the interviewees had changed the employer during his/her hotel career, and first change was, because he/she “wanted to try something different and how things are done at a different company”. After trying two different companies, the interviewee came back to the company X. One of the interviewees, whose career in the hotel industry was only with the employer X, has said that working for a different employer would be a good experience and would widen the perspective in the industry.

Six of the interviewees (B, C, D, E, H, G) have tried working in other industries than the hotel industry. It happened one to two times for each of the interviewed manager. In the section “Moving across industries” I presented in detail what experience the interviewees had.

The majority of the interviewed managers (A, B, D, E, F, G, H) have experienced moving from one hotel department to another. Three interviewees have changed the department once, three respondents did it twice and one of the respondents has worked in four different hotel departments. I have done deeper analysis of the answers concerning the changing of the hotel functions in the section “Moving across the hotel functions”.

The last theme that I have chosen is the hotel re-branding. Interviewees expressed through their answers that re-branding had effect on their careers, even though it did

not involve the moving of a person, but it changed the working environment. Four of the interviewees (A, B, F, G) have experienced re-branding of a hotel. In all of these cases changing either to an international or from an international brand was involved. Those who experienced the change to an international brand expressed negative feelings about it. The franchiser of an international brand had set strict standards that a hotel was supposed to follow, and many of them were not easy to implement. At the time one of the interviewees was already a hotel manager, therefore he/she had to take the responsibility of following new standards. It turned to be very stressful for two of interviewed managers, and they had to change the hotel. The manager who experienced the change from an international brand to a Finnish brand had only positive feelings about the change. He/she did not have problems of adapting to a new brand as he/she worked with that brand in the past: “This was a Y hotel, but last year the company decided to re-brand this hotel, to X hotel. So, now I’m again a hotel manager in X hotel, which is also nice. This is a big hotel, so still I like my job very much.” He/she also mentioned positive effects of the change on the hotel: it became more attractive for Finnish customers while the old international guests remained.

### **5.2.3 Psychological mobility**

On the other hand, *psychological mobility* addresses those moments when a person makes or does not make changes due to some psychological reasons, such as family reasons, willingness to study and not to work, willingness to find more comfortable working place and so on. In this category, I have identified seven themes that were discussed, they are presented below.

All of the interviewed managers have mentioned their family members who were affecting the decision of a change in the career. Three of the interviewed managers (C, E, H) have mentioned their families, when I asked if they would like to work abroad. Their families are a factor that is keeping them here. Though, two of the managers would consider going abroad still, but then they would take into consideration their families: “it [going abroad] would depend in what country and what kind of culture it would be... And, of course, I have family; I have to take my family with me...” Three of the interviewed managers (A, D, G) had to make decisions of moving and therefore

change working places due to their boy/girlfriend. None of them minded the change, because they made a choice to keep the relationships: "...and also my boy/girlfriend had a chance to work in Germany. Actually, it was after he's got a job for summer. We knew the place... so, then I started to look for places, hotels in the same city." Two of the managers (B, G) mentioned their relatives who helped them find a job or were involved in the process of applying for a job. Also two managers (C, F) said that they were trying to keep the job, because they already had families and had to support them.

Another the most mentioned psychological reason that caused changes is opportunity to advance personal development. All of the respondents have talked about it. They have mentioned that they made a choice towards a job, because they saw a challenge in it, opportunity to learn new things. Three of the interviewees (E, F, G) also value an opportunity to meet new people. One of the managers has introduced an idea that aiming higher was taught by parents. A person should at least reach what parents have achieved and try to improve: "I think my generation has always been brought up, like you always have to aim higher and always search for the highest possible position. That's how I was brought up. Maybe, you always have to exceed at least your own parents." Two of the managers said that they felt that, if an opportunity is offered (even if it is not a promotion to a higher position), it is not useful to reject it. A company can offer to change a hotel, to manage an opening of a hotel or a renovation, and it might not be offered the second time.

Six of the interviewees (A, B, C, D, F, G) have changed the jobs to ones with more fitting working rhythm. At some point they started feeling that a job does not fit the personal rhythm, or they realized it when a new job was offered. The managers were talking about different working cycles in different hotels – for instance, a city hotel and an airport hotel. They were also talking about the pressure from two sides – the Finnish operator of a hotel and the international franchiser – that had different requirements from each side. One of the interviewees worked in a hotel where he/she could not be with his/her family as much as he/she wanted, therefore was happy when an opportunity to be closer to the family was offered: "All the time I knew that I'm not going to do this forever, because my home was here. It was kind of difficult to have two homes, and then my boy/girlfriend [was] here, and the distance and everything..."

And then there [was] one position open in X hotel, and they [were] looking for a hotel manager. So, of course, I was excited, that's for me! And yes, I've got the place there.” Three of the interviewees (A, B, G) also made a choice towards more satisfying personal life, when they had to decide about a new working place.

When talking about working rhythm five of the managers (B, C, E, F, G) also mentioned working environment. The choice of a working place or a working environment was towards less stressful. Stress was related to a pressure from the local and international standard requirements or from a superior whose view was different. Also it is less stressful to manage one hotel instead of two, what one of the managers has experienced. One of the managers had mentioned a burnout that he/she experienced during his/her career. It was a new position with much more duties, and he/she as a responsible worker wanted “to learn everything at once”. However, it was not possible and the amount of work was too big. After a burnout, he/she had to take a rest to recover, and after that he/she tried to separate work and free time and be realistic about the amount of work that can be done.

Five respondents (A, B, C, G, H) have expressed somewhat negative feelings about some places where they worked. In relation to psychological mobility, these people mentioned that they could stay in those places, only because they knew it was temporarily. For example, one of the interviewees was asked by a superior to manage a hotel where the person worked before: “...after the X-hotel project... I really liked the hotel and I only had a year and a half as a GM after the opening. So, maybe that was the only time that I thought: “Maybe, I'm not that keen on going back to Y-hotel and do the refurbishment of the hotel.” But I didn't want to let my area director down also...” It was not any new experience and was not so attractive, but the fact that it was only for a while made a difference. Another manager was offered to manage a hotel while the actual hotel manager was on her maternity leave; it was not attractive, because the hotel was far and there was stressful working environment. Despite that, the interviewee agreed to take an offer, because it was only for some time and it was one step up in on the career – from a front office manager to a hotel manager.

#### 5.2.4 Vertical mobility

The next category is *vertical mobility*. This category represents those movements that were made along the career ladder: either upwards or downwards. Careers went gradually *upwards* along the career paths of the interviewees. This category is closely related to the *moving across the hotel functions*, as the lion part of the interviewees' careers belongs to the hotel industry. In that section, I will describe in detail how the managers were moving from the lower career levels to the upper ones though with one exception.

There was one exception in the career in terms of vertical mobility. Only one of interviewees revealed that he/she decided to do a step back, or move *downwards* when he/she had reached the hotel manager's position already. Then after being for seven years a front office manager and trying to work in different locations and hotel chains, he/she once again reached the hotel manager's level and remains there by now.

When this interviewee decided to change from the hotel manager's position to a front office manager's position, he/she was offered that by a former superior who left for a different company: "My area manager left to chain Y. I really liked her, and then I was so many years only with chain X, and the new boss I didn't like very much, so that was maybe the main reason to change to Y – to see something else and learn something new as well." The new job was not only in a different company, but also in a different city. After a while, the interviewee had realized that he/she was not satisfied with his/her personal life in that different place, so he/she went back home "without knowing what to do".

The interviewee was talking about planning his/her future working life, when he/she told me about a relative who had told about working at a cruise ship: "I didn't have any job, and I had to think of doing something... And my brother-in-law worked for [the cruise company] then for three-four years." My interviewee considered it interesting; he/she wanted to know how it would be to manage at a cruise ship, because it was different from the hotel work. So, he/she started as a hotel manager at a cruise ship. So, the career went *upwards* again (front office manager – hotel manager). Then he/she

talked about the nature of work and the difference between working atmosphere: The work there was more administrative than in a hotel, and the interaction with customers had almost disappeared; also the rhythm at the ship was very different from the work in a hotel, work was more intensive. After a while, he/she felt that the job was not for him/her. The idea to go back to the hotel business was not prevalent, but more important was just to change to something different than a cruise ship.

He/she thought that the only thing he/she knows how to do is the hotel business; in addition he/she had some connections in the industry from the old times, which relates to *networking* as one of the characteristics of mobility. Both of these factors affected the decision of getting a job in a hotel and in a familiar chain X, where career of the interviewee had started: “When I left [the cruise company], my main focus was to get back to the chain X, I didn’t mind very much about the positions.” In order to reach the level of a hotel manager the interviewee worked for five years as a front office manager.

There were no more actual examples of downward mobility among my interviewees. However, one of the interviewees showed readiness to move downwards. He/she would accept a lower position if he/she moved to work abroad. He/she admitted that hotel manager’s position in Finland is not corresponding with the hotel manager’s position in other countries. He/she would probably not have sufficient experience and skills to manage a big international hotel abroad though he/she is ready to develop, if there would be an offer for a lower position. One more interviewee also admitted that he/she would consider moving abroad for working in an international hotel though he/she would not accept a lower position than he/she has now.

I would also like to mention the movements done neither up nor down in the career. Seven of the interviewees (A, B, D, E, F, G, H) have experienced moves without changing a hotel manager’s position. They were asked to move to a different hotel, where they would continue being a hotel manager. In five cases (B, E, F, G, H) the move was also associated with moving to another city, while three of them (B, E, H) were inside the Helsinki area (Helsinki and Vantaa), and two managers (F, G) moved beyond the Helsinki area. The reasons why the managers were asked to manage a

different hotel were: a new hotel was being opened and a new hotel manager was needed (B, H), renovation was started at a hotel and should have been managed (B, H), the former hotel manager took the maternity leave (E, G, H), or the former manager had left (A, B, D, E, F, G).

As I understood, after asking what the managers are dreaming about now, no one wants to change the career from the hotel industry. At the same time, most of the managers (B, C, E, F, H) see the hotel manager's position as the highest they want to occupy. The next step would be the area director, but only three (A, D, G) of the interviewees expressed willingness to do that job. Basing on the answers, the area director's job is more administrative and does not require a contact with customers, which is valued in their current job by the interviewed hotel managers. So, many of the respondents (A, B, D, E, F, G, H) said that changing a hotel would be another challenge for their career and is a good chance to advance the career without changing the position: "Maybe, another hotel some time, if I feel that this hotel is already seen. And I really think that I always have to have some challenges. So, if I feel that the work is boring, I'm looking for the next step."

### **5.2.5 Moving across industries**

The next theme that I open up in this chapter is *moving across industries*. This category is related to both *universal skills* and *physical mobility*. During my interviews, I noticed that people worked in other industries than the hotel industry before their hotel career. Some of them just tried other industry, and then realized that it was not what they wanted to do. Below I present the interviewees' answers.

All of the respondents have tried working in other companies before getting in the chain X. This work experience also covers the summer periods between studies during the school years. The majority of the interviewees (A, B, C, D, F) have tried the tourism industry, which also includes hotel and restaurant fields, already before starting at the chain X. Most of the jobs done before getting in the chain X were only summer jobs, i.e. none of them was a permanent job.

Three of the interviewed hotel managers (A, B, E) had work experience abroad working as baby-sitters. One manager had also worked abroad in the hotel industry; the decision of going abroad was made due to the respondent's partner and was described in the section "Psychological mobility". Four of the respondents (A, E, D, G) had garden work as their summer jobs in their life, while two of them said that they liked that job. Three interviewees (A, E, F) worked as sales-people in a grocery store, a kiosk or a market; none of them considered that as a permanent job.

Two of the interviewed managers (D, H) have been drivers, while one of them was doing it for two years and thinks that it was his/her first real job: "I did that before going to school. It was actually my first real job that I did not beside school, but at that time I still had the idea of continuing my studies at the university." Two worked (B, C) at a factory; both of them worked there because of the good money and never wanted to work all their lives there. Particularly, one of the interviewees really did not like work at a factory and said that if he/she did not go to a tourism school, he/she would still try to escape from the factory-job and find something else. The other interviewee learned hard working from the factory-job.

Two interviewees (C, H) worked for the airlines (handling luggage, pre-seating) and liked their jobs, but again did not consider them permanent. Three (B, D, G) of the respondents have also tried jobs of other kind, such as working as a newspaper deliverer or a cleaner. In the section "Universal skills" above, I have described more what thoughts my interviewees had in relation to their work experience.

### **5.2.6 Moving across the hotel functions**

The last theme in this section is *moving across the hotel functions*. Like the previous category this category is also closely related to *universal skills* and *physical mobility*. Through analysis of this data, I wanted to see in which of the hotel functions the future hotel managers had experience. Also changes between different types of work add to the mobility in the career paths.



Corresponding to the data presented in the table 2 below, seven interviewees first started at the front desk in the chain X and worked there for a period from seven months to six years. Two of these seven interviewees saw working at the front desk a better option than working in the restaurant department. One of them thought it was different kind of job (he/she had experience in a restaurant during the school years), because a receptionist sees more customers, work at the front desk is easier, and for a young person receptionists' appearance was more favorable than restaurant workers' have. The other one had experience in both front desk and restaurant before starting at the chain X, and receptionist's job was more appealing: "I had a chance to get to know the restaurant part. That was something I didn't like that much. And after one summer I knew this is not my thing. I like the hotel business. After that, I have been focused more on the hotel."

For two of the interviewees, the job at a hotel front desk became the first experience in the hotel industry, and they came to that through school training. One of the respondents has got a receptionist's position through school as well, but it was suggested for him/her by a teacher: "One of my teachers worked there long time ago, and she knew some staff from there. She said: "We have one project you can do. You don't need to be at school, you can do it while working and then make a report of how it went." And I went there... I ended up at reception." One of the interviewees was not looking for any job in a hotel, but was offered a receptionist's job after visiting a hotel with a family member who studied design. One interviewee was offered a receptionist's job at a hotel, where he/she worked before in the restaurant department, when he/she was looking for a job after a period of not being working: "I was looking for a position in any hotel that was based in Turku. Then, of course, nothing came up; nobody had vacancies or wanted anyone at reception... After one week the hotel manager of [the hotel X] called me: "I have a position as a night clerk. Are you interested?"

Table 2. Experience in the different hotel functions in the chain X. The number of interviewees is shown in parentheses.

Various hotel functions	Interviewed managers
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	(100%=8 of the interviewees)
Front desk	87.5% (7)
Hotel restaurant	50% (4)
Housekeeping	25% (2)
Training for other employees	25% (2)
Marketing	12.5% (1)

Two (D, G) of these seven have also done some work in the restaurant before or at the same time as working at the front desk. For one of them it was the first job ever after school and he/she applied for it, because one relative was working in the same hotel. The job was a way to fill in time while the interviewee was deciding what to do in life: what to study, where to work. The other respondent was offered to work in a restaurant when he/she was training at the front desk of a hotel, because he/she had some experience in the restaurant field from before.

Six of these interviewed managers became front office managers after working at the front desk. The remaining one exceptionally moved straight to the level of a hotel manager in the chain X: “I worked there as a receptionist, and then I saw in the [chain’s] magazine that they were looking for a hotel manager in the hotel X in Kotka. And first I thought that I don’t have any other experience than the receptionist, but I sent my application. They invited me to the interview, and after that I was very surprised that I’ve got the job.” Four of the six above mentioned interviewees who became front office managers stayed in the same hotels where they worked as receptionists, while two other interviewees have found their new positions as front office managers in different hotels within the same chain X. Therefore, they changed both the position and the hotel.

One of the interviewed managers by the time he/she was about to finish studies at a polytechnic started looking for a new position, which would be corresponding with the degree: “I knew that I am graduating as a bachelor, so I would like to get a position of a duty manager, at least. To have some... where I can show my knowledge and what I had been studying. And there were two duty manager positions opened in this hotel,

and I applied.” He/she went through an interview and was offered a front office manager’s position in one of the hotels. One more interviewee has got a front office manager’s position in a different hotel after working for six years as a receptionist; he/she found information about an open position through internal company’s informational channel. A new position was opening a possibility for more experience and was desired by the interviewee.

Four of the interviewed managers (B, C, G, H) stayed in the same hotels where they worked as receptionists and replaced old front office managers, when they left. It was logical development, and they felt that it was right time for new responsibilities. One of them was offered a new position after working in the hotel for one and a half years and after graduating from the tourism school: “I was actually asked directly if I could take a job of a front office manager, directly from school. And I’ve been already working there for one and a half years while studying, so I was quite familiar with the place. They had some quite big changes there with the organization, so I was kind of lucky to be available at the very right moment there.” So, changes happened on the right time, when the hotel needed a new front office manager and when the interviewee was ready to move on with the career. One more interviewed manager was offered a new position after working for four years as a receptionist and studying hotel management for two and a half years in between.

One of the interviewees has got a new position after being a receptionist for a year when the old front office manager was offered a hotel manager’s position in a different hotel. This interviewee revealed that he/she always wanted to be the best receptionist and he/she tried to give suggestions for improving the receptionist’s work to the management. The last interviewed manger has got his/her new front office manager position after working for about two years as a receptionist in the hotel (while for one year it was owned by a different owner than the company X).

Two interviewees (B, G) also worked as trainers to other employees of the chain X, they taught new operational systems to the employees of hotels belonging to the chain X all over Finland. One of them was always in touch with IT functions in the chain, so when a new training program started he/she was to be a trainer. During these training

sessions, he/she visited different hotels of the chain X and got to know people from them; and in the future he/she went to work to one of the visited hotels. The other interviewee was training other employees how to use a new hotel property management program, which was already being used in the hotel he/she was working. He/she also visited many chain's hotels and was training people on behalf of the company.

One of the respondents also had some working experience in marketing at the same time while working as a receptionist. He/she was the only worker in that department in the hotel, and it was a job he/she did not like: "it was a job I didn't like. And I wasn't given any training, I was just appointed to be a marketing manager of that hotel. So, visit customers and all that... But it was horrible." He/she had to work in a small town, meet with people and represent the hotel.

### **5.3 Factors affecting decisions towards change in career**

In each of the cases when a change was taking place in the careers of the interviewed hotel managers I looked at the factors that affected the decision towards change. Basing on the literature review and the collected data I identified two themes that belong to this section: *nature of intent*, either individual's or organizational, *willingness to learn and improve oneself*.

#### **5.3.2 Nature of intent**

The first category that I present below is *nature of intent*. In this category, I identified two sub-categories: *individual's* or one's own intent and *organizational intent*. I have looked at those moments when the changes in career paths were made – a new position, a new organization, a new hotel, going to study etc. – and identified whose intent – organizational or personal – it was.

I looked at the time-spans that I have designed to illustrate all the changes in the interviewee's lives regarding career starting from the moment when their secondary school/high school was over. For four of the managers (A, B, C, F) it was time when

they started studying to get a profession. For the other half of the respondents (D, E, G, H) it was the time when they had got their first job.

As we know, not all of the interviewed managers has started at the chain X from his/her first days of the career. Therefore, I looked at the whole time-span and calculated how many times a person had made a change due to his/her own intent and how many times it was organizational intent. Then I did the same, but only for those years when a person was working in the chain X. By doing this, I could see how a person behaved generally in his/her career and what role the chain X played in each of the manager's career paths. I also paid attention to the point when each of the hotel managers first became hotel managers, so that the connection between a role of organization and career success would be visible.

The figure below shows the results of my investigation. As shown in the figure, each of the interviewees' career-span was evaluated upon two categories: the first column symbolizes the whole career-span, and the second one – the time spent in the chain X. Figures inside the columns mean the number of changes occurred during the career path. Apparently, five of the interviewed managers were more active in their careers than a company – they showed their own intent to have changes in their career paths (Interviewees A, C, D, F, G). However, when we look at the time that the same interviewees spent in the chain X, the situation is different. Only two of five interviewees (A, F) showed their own intent more often while working for the chain X, in other cases the company's intent (C, D, G) was prevalent. For the rest of the interviewees (B, E, H) in both cases the company was playing a more active role in the career.

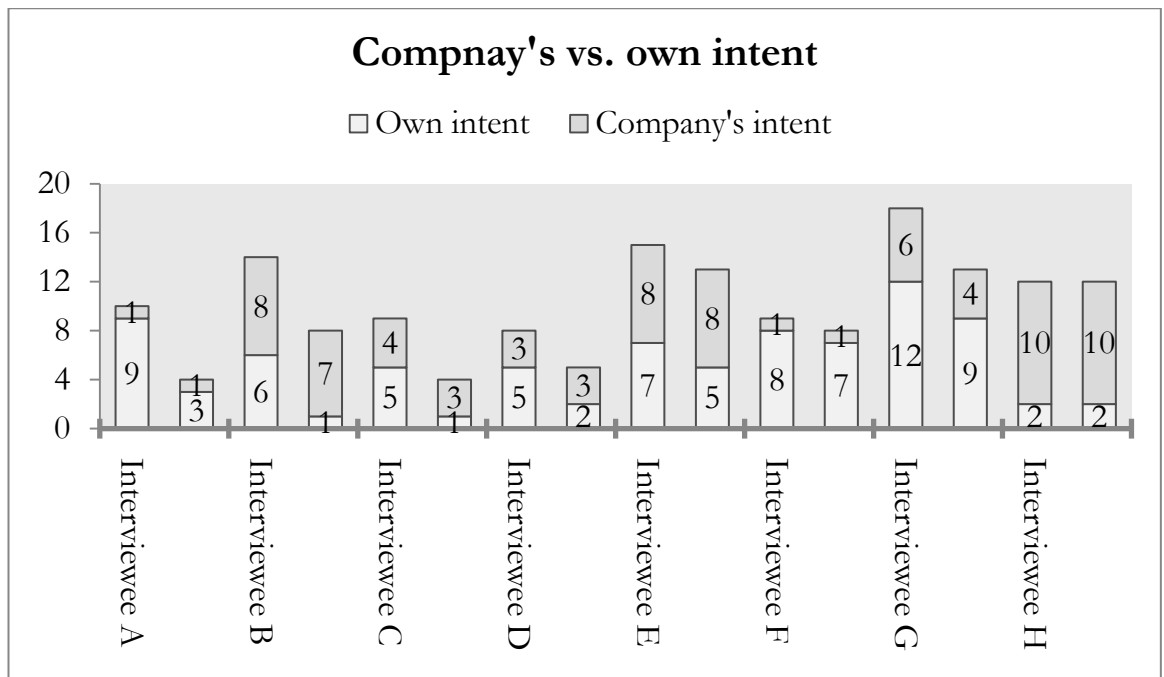


Figure 1. Career directed by company or individual. The first column for each interviewee states for the whole career-span, and the second one – for the time spent in the chain X. Figures inside the columns mean the number of changes occurred during the career paths.

Then I would like to look at the turning point of the interviewees' career paths – at the moment when they have got their first hotel manager's position. The length of the career path before getting the first hotel manager position varies between six and a half and sixteen years among the interviewed hotel managers. In most of the cases, the company played the decision-making role. The company offered a hotel manager's position to six interviewees (B, C, D, E, G, H), and two remaining interviewees (A, F) were looking for a new position and applied for it when it was available. However, I would like to point out that two of the six respondents (B, E) who were offered the hotel manager's position also had their own intent to change the position – they were ready for new responsibilities and wanted some development.

### 5.3.3 Willingness to learn and improve oneself

As a second chosen category in this section, I discuss *willingness to learn and improve oneself*. In this category, I first talk about the professional education of the interviewed managers, and then other cases when a respondent was involved in a learning process.

Half of the interviewed managers (interviewees A, B, C, H) have graduated from the same tourism school in Porvoo, one hotel manager had studied hotel management abroad, one studied tourism in Pori, one studied to be a receptionist in a vocational school and one had graduated as a trade technician. All of those managers who studied tourism did not know that they would be working in the hotel fields before they went to the school. One of the interviewees (F) noticed that the school was opening many doors in the travel industry: working in a travel agency, travel bureau or other travel organizing enterprises, another opportunity was to be working in a restaurant, and a graduate could also be working in a hotel. Two of the managers who went straight to the hotel related education (C, H) did so without a clear picture of the future career, however after working in the field felt that it is what they wanted to do. As one of them remembers: “I liked it. Basically, the business and the environment, interacting with people, and I didn’t know anything else. The main reason was that I wanted to get some kind of degree, and also I was interested in international aspect.”

One of the managers is standing out, because his/her profession is a trade technician. However, he/she had a dream of being a maitre de hotel even before going to any school or trying a job in any tourism related field: “When they asked me: “What are you going to do when you are grown-up?” I said I want to be a maitre de hotel. And they told me: “You cannot be, because you are woman.” I said: “What? That’s not true. I’m from Finland, and there you can be a maitre de hotel.” Well, that was my first dream. Maybe, I got hungrier then.” The educational program for a trade technician was recommended by the employer, which was already at that time the employer X. At the beginning of the studies, he/she was a duty manager in a restaurant, after completing the school he/she was appointed as a restaurant manager.

In addition, all of the managers have been to the business school organized by the employer X. The school is meant for already working employees and those who are willing to proceed in their careers. It is necessary for anyone who wants to proceed in the company. The school helps future managers address the managerial duties, provides necessary skills and allows people building their networks. Some of the managers went to the business school while performing the duties already. One of the

managers has skipped the first degree of the business school, because he/she went straight from the receptionist level to a hotel manager level.

Some of the managers had other professional intents in their lives besides the travel industry (B, G, H). One of the managers was thinking about marketing or retail business while choosing the education. However, he/she found that those fields do not involve as much of the interaction with people than the tourism industry. They seemed more administrative rather than customer related fields, therefore the choice fell on the hotel industry.

One more manager always wanted to study foreign languages and has several times tried to get into the university to get appropriate education. However, following the sister's recommendation decided first to get a faster degree in the tourism school and then go back to the studying of languages. That would give a possibility to be working in the tourism field between the studying periods at the university. After finishing the tourism school, getting some international experience abroad and trying work in a hotel, he/she never went back to the languages-studies. There was intent to do so again when the hotel career was not showing any development after being a duty manager for a while, but then he/she was appointed as a hotel manager, and a dream about the languages-studies became the history again.

Another example of making a choice towards the career in tourism is a third manager. He/she intended to study international politics and tried to get into the university two times. Both times he/she was not accepted. Then he/she tried to enter the tourism school and was accepted. After finishing that and trying the industry, he/she is still there by now.

Five of the interviewed managers (A, B, C, F, G) have got positions as receptionists after completing the school. However, they all have different stories. Interviewee G was already working as a receptionist when decided to complete the professional education, and after completing the school came back to his/her old job. Interviewee F has done his/her professional education in the hotel and restaurant vocational school, which had its own hotel and was providing the training for its students during the



studies. He/she applied for a receptionist's position in one of the hotels belonging to the chain X and has got a job. Interviewee A has completed her training periods included in the studies partly in Finland and partly abroad. He/she worked as a receptionist, has performed some duties at the housekeeping as well as tried to work in the restaurant. Last months of the studies he/she was working as a receptionist in a hotel abroad. After completing the school, interviewee A has applied for a job in Finland and has got the receptionist position in one of the hotels. Interviewee C first has done the training at reception in one of the chain's X hotels, where continued working afterwards. The last manager, interviewee A, during the studies has completed the training periods in the tourism industry. After school, he/she decided to go abroad and stayed there for two and a half years. After coming back he/she was offered a job at reception in a hotel.

Two interviewees (D, H) have got front office managers' positions after graduating from the school. Interviewee H has done his/her training periods included in the studies in one of the chain's X hotels as a receptionist and continued to work there for the last school years. After completing the education, he/she was offered a front office manager's position in the same hotel. Interviewee D had also worked in one of the hotels that belong to the chain X, where he/she performed his/her training periods, worked at reception, restaurant, night club and pub. After graduation, he/she applied for a front office manager position in a different hotel of the chain X and has got the place.

Starting from the time when respondents were thinking about their future life four of them (C, D, F, G) mentioned that they had a feeling that they need to study something; therefore they started changing their lives. All of them had applied to tourism schools and were accepted. After studies, all of them have got a job in the industry.

Three of the respondents (A, B, G) at some point of their careers thought that there was a possibility to learn new things, get new experience or practice, and therefore they made a decision in that direction. Two of them (A, B) have chosen their work placement based on this factor, and the third one (G) had changed his/her working place from one Finnish town to another though still within the chain X.

Half of the respondents (B, D, E, G) admitted that their new job was something totally new to them. It was a new position (front office manager or hotel manager), new responsibilities, a new way of operations, or a new brand. One of the interviewees mentioned: “Of course, it was a good luck for me and I was happy that I got a good position of my studies. There was really a lot to learn, because I’ve been in a small hotel in Rauma, and then, when I came here, it’s much bigger scale. ...from Finnish chain to an international chain, where most of the customers are from abroad... So, that was quite a change of environment.”

Five of the respondents (A, D, E, G, H) were interested when they were offered to change a hotel. They saw a possibility to learn something new in there, to see new property, a chance to see things in a bigger scale, to try a different type of hotel (e.g. conference hotel), to learn new useful skills (e.g. recruiting people).

Six of the respondents (A, B, C, D, E, H) had time when they felt that they are ready to move on with their careers. It was after they worked for a while at one position, one function or one hotel. Four out of these six (A, C, D, E) felt that it is the right time for a change when they were offered a new place, for example, to work on the same position but in a different hotel. The remaining two (B, H) informed their superiors about their feelings, and in a while they were offered a new position, which logically continued their careers (e.g. from front office manager to hotel manager).

Four of the respondents (A, B, E, H) have made a decision, because they considered the opportunity being challenging. One of respondents (E) has taken the new position right away, because it was a challenge, he/she also mentioned that working life would be boring, if it would not be challenging. Two of the respondents (D, E) told that they are open for new challenges, and two interviewees (A, E) also said that they would be looking for challenges, if the company did not offer them.

Three hotel managers concluded that work teaches the most. Even if a person is not familiar with the job or place, he/she can learn how to be there and what to do to perform the duties. One interviewee was talking about willingness to try new duties

regardless absence of some skills: “I was keen to have a new job when I was a duty manager. I started feeling that it was almost two years in the same position and I know quite a lot of things already. I was young and I was hungry to learn more, to study more, to get more. It would be good to have a GM who could teach how to run a hotel... but you do and you learn. It takes a lot of yourself, but you can manage.”

Two of the respondents (C, G) also mentioned that they felt that they wanted to know more, try more new things while they were proceeding in their careers. So, once they have learned everything for their job, they wanted to go further and try other things.

I also consider important to mention that two (B, H) of the interviewees said that once in their careers they felt that they do not want to come back to the place where they worked before. On the other hand, as I already mentioned before, two (G, H) of the interviewees will not mind lower positions, if it helps develop their careers (e.g. in a hotel abroad).

## **6 Discussion**

In this chapter, I tried to interpret the results of the research. I have presented my considerations concerning the results gained from the theory and the qualitative data I had gathered. Furthermore, I evaluated reliability and validity of the research. In the last section I have explained ethical considerations I had to take into account while making my research.

### **6.1 Interpretation of the results**

Although every person collects memories about all the jobs performed and carries that knowledge through the whole his/her career, it is not necessarily used directly in the professional life, but it has effect on the personality. Collecting skills of a different kind and networking gives more flexibility to a worker: he/she can adapt quicker to the changing conditions, can learn new things or search for useful experience at the previously performed jobs, and can find information about job opportunities quicker. Companies are also interested in those people who have experience obtained in different fields, can perform many different tasks, can learn quickly new things and can adapt to changes. For a manager of a hotel that is also true, because working with people, different functions of a hotel, local and international standards as well as everyday pressure makes it difficult to cope, if a person has not tried other jobs or is not familiar with the situation.

As far as every person is living in constantly changing environment, some of the adaptation measures are natural, because there is no way to avoid them. That is why I consider the results showing the presence of the development of universal skills, networking and loving one's own job in the interviewees' careers very natural. It has been said many times in the theoretical review, that for surviving in the changing environment the above mentioned factors are important, and the interviewed managers have not only survived, but also have achieved a high level in their careers, therefore I think the results logically prove the theory.

The research did not convince me if mobility is good or bad for career. As I can conclude from the expressions about changes in the careers, some of the changes were positively affecting the career and some were not. The results are also affected by how an individual perceives a change. It is only a subjective opinion and cannot be applied to anyone. I have noticed that sometimes it was difficult for interviewees to describe the feelings about a change, they tended to tell more about the context, in which the change happened: if it was offered by an employer or how a new work place was different from the old one, for instance. From those descriptions, I could not objectively say if it was positive or negative change. What I can say for sure is that mobility takes place in the career paths of the hotel workers.

As for the physical and psychological types of mobility, they are closely related. It is hard to imagine a situation, when physical mobility would not involve some psychological considerations as well. I have not made so many connections between these two types when presenting the results, due to little information. It is possible, that some of the psychological reasons have lost their significance with time and comparing with some more important events in the interviewees' lives. Most of the examples of physical mobility are stated on their one as an occurred fact.

I did not expect that there would be so few examples of deviation from the upward direction in the career, because it is a characteristic of the bureaucratic world. Probably, due to certain stability of the employing company and gradual development of it on the Finnish market, it was able to offer development opportunities and support to most of the interviewed managers on time, before they started to look for new challenges. Also, great development of the hotel industry in Finland in the 90's, when many hotels were just opened, some of the smaller companies disappeared and less successful brands were given up, had an effect on the career paths. The fact that the company has both hotels and restaurants and quite many of them are all over Finland can also be a reason for the interviewees to stay with the same employer. The company can satisfy a need for development, acquiring new experience, and at some extent freedom of choice. That made it possible for the interviewed managers to gain experience from different hotel functions and different locations though just in Finland.

The prevalence of the company's intent in the career changes of the interviewees can also be explained by the active position of the company X towards the employees' development. It probably understands that it is more efficient to train the company's own employees for the managerial positions than to hire someone from outside the company. As many interviewees mentioned, there is an opportunity for development for everyone in the company, if only a person is willing to improve and develop in his/her career, works hard and produces good results for the company. The hotel managers in the company X are well directed by the organization, and therefore, if the directions are followed, a person can be secure about the working place in the company.

## **6.2 Reliability**

Reliability of interview as a method "refers to the degree of consistency that the interview has for the person or persons interviewed" (Keats 2000, 76). I needed to determine the dependence of the qualitative research results over time and space in order to identify how reliable they are (Brotherton 2008, 213). I have controlled the reliability while interviewing different people. The interview questions used were the same for all respondents, and the degree of awareness about them was the same among the interviewees. I have used the same way of approaching the respondents, giving the information before meeting and presenting the interview in the beginning of each session. I used for that prepared introduction for the interview, which I designed beforehand. As I was collecting the data by myself, there should be a minimum of variations between the processes of data collection: I tried to use the same questions, keep the focus of the interview, consider possible biases related to the subjectivity of both an interviewee and the interviewer, be neutral to the responses and keep the same length for each interview. I was also using an mp3-recorder for recording the responses, which helped avoid the inconsistency in recording and a chance to leave out some of the details.

To check reliability during the interviews, I tried to clarify the same facts or opinions on different stages of the interview by asking the same questions but in a different form. In order to confirm that previous answer or fact was not mistakenly

remembered or affected by emotions of the moment, I had to reformulate the question or ask about the fact in a different context. I also tried to let respondents think and express all their thoughts without limiting or rushing them.

There is always a bias in interviewing to a certain extent. It is a free flow of thoughts and expressions, which can be valuable for discovering the phenomena. It is not possible to avoid subjectivity for 100%, because people are not prepared with a model answer to each question. That gives an advantage to the interview as a research method while at the same time it makes it more difficult to group, analyse and use the collected data. I was trying to reflect my subjective views and beliefs while analyzing the data, so that it would be visible where it could affect the interpretation and presenting of the results.

### **6.3 Validity**

To identify how valid the results of the research are their authenticity and credibility need to be considered - in other words, I need to consider if the results can be believed (Brotherton 2008, 213) and interview method serves the purpose of the research.

In order to assure the validity of the interview questions I was designing them according to my research questions and the theoretical constructs I wanted to investigate. On the other hand, I left the questions as discussion topics, so that they could be used more flexibly during the interviews and could be altered. A role of the interview questions was just to create a scheme of the interview, to describe the area of interest. So, they were supposed to show the interviewee what I need to know, but at the same time there was freedom for the flow of thoughts.

While designing the questions I aimed to create them such that an interviewee can understand the question and can understand what the purpose of each question is. I also had to prepare introduction explaining the main purpose of the interview, the meaning of the thesis topic, my main focus on that topic and how the interview would proceed. That was done to make sure that we keep the interview within my research interest and the responses would be valuable for the future analysis.

During the interviews, I tried to control my possible willingness to transform my own ideas into the interviews. I also tried to avoid questions that consisted of some direction for an answer. This way of self-control helped me maintain objectivity when analyzing the data.

Interviewing allows going in depth of the data as the respondents are not restricted to a certain answer. However, it also creates problems, because it becomes very difficult to compare different answers. As I was researching the careers of the managers, each of the interviews represents an individual story of life. It made it possible to look at problems I was researching from the different angles, to see how people's careers develop in real life, and that helped me understand better the ideas I was trying to investigate.

Interviewing is a qualitative method of research, and any detail, a personal view or opinion of the interviewee, ideas emerging during the interview might be important. It is also a process that is created and developed while the interview proceeds. To say that a certain question or answer will appear or will be valuable for the future is not possible until the data is collected and processed. The data gathered by a qualitative method cannot be generalized in the same way as quantitative. What is learned from the analysis of the qualitative data should be possible to transfer to another situation. In order to enable a reader to apply the data to a different situation, the descriptions of analysis should be very detailed and rich. Comparing different contexts of the data occurrence should also help a reader match the results with appropriate context of the situation. I tried to make my descriptions and analysis detailed and easy to understand.

I did not use different methods for collecting the data, for example combining qualitative and quantitative research methods. It would increase internal validity. I did not ask the interviewees either to check my interpretation of the data, so that they could confirm if I understood their word correctly. It could also raise internal validity. I will consider these ways to increase validity in my future researches.



## 6.4 Research ethics

In my research, I had to consider ethics as I interact with interviewees who occupy high positions and work for a company that is well known. Prior starting to collect any data I have contacted the human resource department of the company and asked for permission to conduct the research among its employees. I have explained the topic, purpose and idea of my research. I have also described how the data collecting would be implemented. I also identified the number of interviewees I needed for my research and what employees were at my interest.

Then I was given a contact person details, also employed in the company, who had got permissions from the potential interviewees to participate in the research. After that, I have prepared a written agreement which included three parties: a researcher, commissioning party and a supervisor of the research. In that agreement the researcher and the commissioning party have written their contact details, after that all the parties agreed on the conditions of the agreement and signed the agreement. All parties have received a copy of the agreement.

During the research process, the student or researcher was responsible for completion, contents and the results of the thesis. The commissioning party has committed to provide all needed information and resources agreed upon for the thesis; it also had a right to assess the usefulness of the results for the company's activities.

After completing the research, the student has copyright on the thesis results. But, as I am employed by the commissioning party, copyright is determined on the basis of terms of employment. The commissioning party can use the results of the thesis and has got a copy of the thesis.

The thesis was conducted with consideration of confidentiality. Neither the company's name nor the participants' names or any information that could reveal their person were not used in the thesis. All of the parties have been keeping confidentiality of all confidential information or documents available during the thesis process before,

during and after the thesis process. The parties cannot use confidential information given by other parties without permission of the party.

All of the participants have agreed to participate in the research voluntarily, and those who disagreed were not forced to participate. I have personally described the process of conducting and purpose of the research as well as using the data obtained to each of the interviewees.

## 7 Conclusions

In this chapter, I answer the research questions and evaluate the degree of achieving of the objectives. I also compare the results of my research with the previously done studies that I have presented in the theoretical part. Finally, at the end of the chapter I describe the practical implications of the research results and make suggestions for the future research.

### 7.1 Answering research questions

The first research question was: What role career mobility plays in the career paths of the hotel managers? Through analysis of the related literature and the qualitative data I have identified those behaviours that support mobility in the career choice. They are: developing universal skills, loving one's own job and networking. Universal skills were acquired through various experiences that the interviewees had. They have worked in different industries, which include some jobs from the hotel related industries. Most of the interviewees during their careers in the hotel industry have worked in at least two different hotel departments. Moving between the hotels has also created new insights on the profession. The loving one's own job definitely had a positive effect on the willingness to keep that job. On the other hand, not liking the job was mentioned as a reason to escape or avoid the job. Networking was mostly seen with the professionals employed by the same company or with the family members. The role of family can be also seen as one of the important psychological factors affecting a change in the career. Analysis of an additional category – perception of mobility – showed that there is no one opinion about the role of mobility in career. It was perceived positively, as something natural for career, as a necessity and neutrally.

The second research question was: What types of career mobility are prevalent in the career paths of the hotel managers? This question has created the most of the categories drawn from the analysis. The types prevalent in the careers of the interviewed managers were: physical mobility, psychological mobility, vertical mobility, moving across the hotel functions and moving across industries. These types of

mobility can be combined with each other (except that the last two are excluding each other) and are analyzed separately only for convenience of analysis. The presence of all these types of mobility proves the importance of the role of mobility in the career paths though the range of the moves is not so wide. Concerning physical mobility, only half of the hotel general managers have worked abroad, among which only one in the hotel industry. However, most of the managers have moved around Finland and worked in different cities. As for the vertical mobility, most of the moves made by the interviewees were upwards with one exception and two potential downward movers. In addition, the majority of the hotel managers have experienced changing the hotel without changing the hotel manager's position. In other words, horizontal moves and upward moves occurred more frequently, than downward moves. Experience in different hotel functions is considered useful by the most of the interviewees, while only three of the interviewees have worked in three main hotel functions: the front desk, food and beverage and housekeeping.

The third research question was: What is affecting the individual's decision towards change in the career? I have identified two main factors that affect the decision of moving: willingness to learn and improve and either individual's own or organizational intent.

Learning possibilities were not only presented by professional education though all of the interviewees have completed the professional education as well as the studies provided by the company. Many of the respondents have made a choice towards those changes where they could learn something new or challenge themselves. As for the nature of intent, the company's intent was prevalent in the career changes in most of the cases; and during the career in the company X, career changes of five interviewees' careers were mostly directed by the organization.

My main research question was: What paths hotel managers of the chain X go through in their careers? There is no one way that would describe all career paths of hotel managers overwhelmingly. There are no two similar career paths. I have identified major similarities and difference between the career paths of the interviewed hotel managers. The hotel managers spent from six and a half to sixteen years working at

various positions before getting the first hotel manager's position. All of the hotel managers have completed the professional studies and the studies offered by the company X. Most of the interviewees had experience in the front desk, some also had experience in the food and beverage department and fewer had worked in housekeeping and other hotel departments. Not all the hotel managers had worked abroad, but only a half of them. Mostly due to opportunities provided by the company X the interviewed managers have moved across the hotel functions, from a hotel to a hotel, from a city to a city and have gathered various experiences. The company also supports networking among its employees, which allows obtaining new information easier and quicker. In majority of the cases changes in career are initiated by the company, not by an individual, and most of these changes are in an upward direction or across the hotels.

## **7.2 Comparison of results with the previous studies**

Further I compared the results received from my research with previous studies. First of all, the results support boundaryless career theory. The careers of the interviewed hotel managers do not fit into the bureaucratic career's description. In bureaucratic organization, movements happen only upwards (e.g. vertically), only within one functional area and along established line of career advancement. What I saw in the respondents' careers were movements in different directions: upwards, downwards, across the hotel functions and industries, and there was no prescribed career path for everyone. Therefore, it fits into career that is described by boundaryless career theory: career is not limited by an organization, by a job, by certain education or certain number of skills. I could also observe independence from traditional organizational arrangements, as along with the organizational leadership interviewees make decisions on their own, and in the end they choose career that fits them.

Some of my findings are similar to the results of Ladkin's research (2002, 379–388). All the hotel managers that participated in my research worked their way up from the operational level, which was similar to Ladkin's research. Also interviewees in my research had experience in other than hotel industries, and the majority of the managers had experience in other hotel functions. However, Ladkin's research showed

that experience in the food and beverage department was prevalent among the hotel general managers, which is different from the results of my research. In the Helsinki region hotel managers employed by the company X mostly have experience at the front desk, and the food and beverage department is the second place popular. Also Ladkin's research showed that most of the hotel general managers previously worked as assistants of department head, and only one interviewed by me managers has occupied such position. In fact, in the hotels where the hotel managers are working now, the position of an assistant of a hotel manager does not exist. That once again proves that traditional organization has flattered. The majority of the managers participated in Ladkin's research had worked abroad, which is not quite the same in my research. Only three of the hotel managers had work experience abroad, among which only one worked in the hotel industry.

Based on the Ladkin and Riley's (1996, 443–452) division between bureaucratic and boundaryless career that they have made in their research, I can call my findings a combination of both. For a bureaucratic career it is common that career is directed by an organization, certain qualifications are required and there is a degree of certainty in the career future. On the other hand, a boundaryless career is directed by an individual and different types of mobility can occur. From the results of my research, I could see that most of the respondents have initiated changes in their careers (five out of eight), but in the company's context (during the years spent in the company X) most of the changes were initiated by the organization (also five out of eight respondents). Of course, there were different types of mobility present in the respondents' careers, which supports the boundaryless career. However, all of the interviewees had to go through the courses organized by the company in order to occupy their positions. Also some degree of certainty exists in the managers' careers, as most of them have not changed the employer since they had started at the company X. So, in a way the investigated careers are bureaucratic, but with some degree of freedom and individual choice, which creates space for mobility.

### **7.3 Achievement of set objectives**

As for the objectives that I have set at the beginning of the research, I think I have achieved the first two by answering the research questions. I wanted to understand what possible paths a hotel manager goes through the career and I wanted to investigate the career paths of the hotel managers working in Helsinki and in the company X, because this is where I am working too. I now have a clear picture of the careers of the hotel managers in the company X in the Helsinki region. This research also helped me learn more about my employer, the industry where I work, specific arrangements made for career in the company X, as well as I met several new people who create an image of where I should go in my career. I hope this work showed the same for my peer colleagues – students and young professionals. As for the role of mobility in career, my third objective, I cannot say whether it is positive or negative. It has a certain role and it is present in the careers of the hotel managers, but as I did not look at careers of those people who could not reach high levels in their careers, I have nothing to compare with. During the research – from the literature review and from the subjective opinions of the interviewees – I have got an impression that mobility supports career in a positive way. Coming to the last objective – to apply the obtained during the studies skill, I have done my best to do that. During the research process, I had to do the planning of the research, co-operating with the thesis supervisor, searching for the theoretical data and analyzing it, establishing connections with the industry representatives, meeting people in the business settings and discussing business related topics, collecting, analyzing and presenting qualitative data, and preparing and presenting the report. During this process, I have found several weak points in my activities, which I tried to overcome and which helped me see where I need to improve. They were: underestimating my ability to do the research with a certain time frame, sometimes my unwillingness to listen to my supervisor, and inability to put the research as a main priority.

### **7.4 Suggestions for further research and practical implications**

Further I would like to make suggestions for the future research. First of all, a quantitative or combined research can be done in order to study the career paths of the hotel managers in hotels in Helsinki area or in Finland. That kind of research would

provide statistical results allowing the analysis of the current situation on the bigger scope. From the statistical results, some predictive conclusions to careers of the future professionals can be drawn. The same kind of research can be done in other areas or in other fields as well – at the interest of the students or working professionals. The factors affecting the changes on the managerial level can be studied more in depth though it is sensitive area and not many people want to reveal that information. Some of the factors suggested, for example, in the Cheramie's research (Cheramie et al. 2007, 359–374) – health of organizations and willingness to move due to better compensation - can be studied among the managers in Finland. A research can also be done in an attempt to learn more about other aspects of career other than career mobility. The aspects can be: competencies important for a hotel manager, role of education, a role of conditions foregoing the career, a role of motivation in career and many others. Similar to mine studies can be done among other hotel chains in Finland, in order to see how careers develop in other companies comparing with the company of my research.

As for the implications for practice, the research can be used by both future professionals and already working professional. Through this research a student planning to work in a hotel industry can learn that with accomplishing the studies he/she is not guaranteed to find a job fitting the degree. The changing environment does not guarantee either a job that can be occupied through the whole life. This research can give a thought to a student that mobility is one of the important parts of professional career. Readiness for constant learning and development secures employment better than a degree. A student can also learn how experience in different areas of the industry is useful for a hotel manager's work. Understanding of the presence of different types of mobility that exist in the career can help prepare for the changes in the future career. Though results of the study showed that many times career can be directed by an organization, it is the case of only one company. An individual should take an active position in his/her career and be ready for both searching for development and accepting offered opportunities.

The professional working in the human resource field can apply the results of the research as well. They can consider that many workers are ready for changes in their



careers, and therefore the company's internal human resources can be used more efficiently. Some of the changes that people are to go through in the careers are quite stressful (e.g. re-branding of a hotel), so workers should be taken care of and given better support from the organizational side. The human resource professionals can also learn more about employees, as some of them might have useful skills and experience that can be used for the company's needs as well as help develop the individual's career.

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## **Attachments**

### **Attachment 1. The template of an e-mail message to the prospective interviewees.**

Dear ,

My name is Nadja Pinigina, and I am a student of Haaga-Helia University of Applied sciences. You might have heard about my thesis research among the hotel general managers in Restel. I am working at the hotel X, and my manager, X, has asked you earlier, if you could participate in the interview for my research. I have prepared the interview questions, and they are attached to this e-mail. Would it be possible to meet with you some time on the next week (10-14, January)? The interview will take about one hour.

I am looking forward to hear from you soon.

Best regards,

Nadja Pinigina

## **Attachment 2. Interview questions delivered to the interviewees.**

### Interview questions

The topic of my thesis is “The career paths of the hotel general managers in Helsinki”. What I would like to focus in this research is the career mobility. Nowadays not so many people stick to one job only, and therefore the reality requires being mobile and flexible. I would like to see if career mobility actually supports career success and why it takes place in the hotel general managers’ careers. In order to complete a good research, I need your help in collecting the information on my research topic. I have chosen you as my respondent, because I think your career is remarkable and it is in my particular interest. You are representing one of the biggest hotel companies in Helsinki and you are occupying one of the most responsible positions in it, therefore, I invite you to discuss with me your career success.

1. Please, describe your educational experience:
  - which areas of study
  - degrees
  - when did you start your professional education and its length
  -
2. When did you start your working life? At which age it was? Which job was it?
3. Please, describe your work experience, following the scheme when describing each job:
  - what sphere
  - what function
  - what position
  - for how long you had occupied that position
  - at what age you had started this job
  - what is the most useful experience you have received from the job
4. What was happening between jobs:



- Why you had decided to change the previous job?
  - What were the circumstances for changing a job?
  - Whose intent was it: yours or organization's?
  - Please, describe your feelings, hopes, and needs while you were changing a job.
  - Please, describe your searches and aims while you were changing a job.
5. Could you describe what kind ambitions you had through your career:
- What needs were emerging in different periods of career?
  - What dreams did you have?
  - What are you dreaming about now?