

AUTHOR ORIGINAL

Leadership style of Myanmar hotel managers: Culture as a hindrance in moving towards democratic/participatory style from autocratic style

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Abstract: This research investigated the leadership styles of hotel managers in Yangon, Myanmar. Since this research can be considered as one of the pioneer studies in the selected subject, it is exploratory in nature. The main purpose was to provide an overview of manager leadership styles from the perspective of the research participants. This research used attributes and aspects of three leadership styles - Autocratic, Democratic and Paternalistic as a base to determine the manager leadership styles. The research adopted a qualitative approach and Semi-structure interview method was used in collecting data. In total, 9 managers and 24 employees from 7 different organizations participated in the research. The research found the leadership style of managers reflects the attributes of the “Autocratic style” and “Paternalistic style” overwhelmingly.

Keywords: Myanmar; leadership style; hotel management; hospitality culture

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Biographical notes:

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1 Introduction

Myanmar, previously called Burma, was ruled by successive dictatorial governments for decades. However, in 2011, a new government assumed administrative power replacing the previous military government. That government, headed by President Thein Sein was considered semi-democratic, and did gradually adopt democracy and liberal market principles. In November 2015, a general election was held, with Daw Aung San Su Kyi and the National League for Democracy (NLD) Party utterly decimating the Thein Sein led government. The NLD formed a new government in April 2016, promising to continue the reform process initiated by the preceding government. Since then the NLD government has been rolling out several progressive policies, country wide strategies for the betterment of its citizens.

Since 2011, the overall economic situation of the country has improved gradually, mostly boosted by Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Expanding Tourism industry. So far, the hotel industry has benefitted the most from this new economic and political liberalisation.

Several ethnic groups and sub-ethnic groups live in Myanmar while ethnic Burman make up over 60% of the total population – that is about 52 Million (“Myanmar Census”, 2014). Democratisation in the country has been a sketchy process, even after the military government gave up power in early 2011, which raised hopes for democratisation and reconciliation. The situation in the country remains volatile, as fighting between the military and armed ethnic groups still continue (Federalism Debate, 2013; Oo & Brennan, 2016).

2 Literature Review

Literature about Myanmar and its people is limited in scope, both in public and academic spheres. A search through the usual search engines reveals that the literature is mainly about the political, social and economic issues related articles, books and reviews written from the viewpoints of public policy, political science and humanitarian and development lenses. When added words such as leadership” and leadership style to Myanmar the search produced written works that are related only to the country’s political leadership.

While there are predominantly research covering the leadership and organisation related topics of Myanmar's neighbouring countries and many other countries, the leadership study at the organisational level in Myanmar's context has been under-researched. Therefore, the topic and place of this study has significant potential to fill this gap.

Leadership is defined as the ability of an individual to influence the behaviour of people in achieving organisational goals (Ababneh & Lockwood 2010; Ray & Ray, 2012; Northouse, 2004; Lester, 1975; Kim & Mauborgne, 1992; Kurfi, 2011).

Kurfi (2009) and Lester (1975) suggest that the correct style of leadership depends on the nature of the job, the preference of followers, the leader's attitude and the situation at the time. Therefore, it is important to know when, how and how much of what leadership style is needed in a given situation (Rad & Yarmohammadian, 2006; Maqsood, Bilal, Nasir, & Baig, 2013; Hofstede, 1983; Yousef, 2000; Rowley & Ulrich, 2012). Leadership means different things to different people. Essentially, leadership involves the process whereby the leader exerts intentional and/or unintentional influence over followers, whether in a formal or informal setting. To date, numerous leadership models have been developed to define leadership behaviour. Leadership has been explained in terms of character, mannerism, influence and persuasion, relationship patterns and administration relationship (Jayasingam & Cheng, 2009; Yukl, 2009).

There is a challenge in adopting leadership styles discussed here across cultures (Jenkins & Chan, 2004; Hofstede, 1983; Yukl, 2009; House et al., 2002; Bass & Stogdill, 1990; Dorfman, Howell, Hibino, Lee, Tate & Bautista, 1997). Deciding on one model is an impossible task because these models have been proven empirically in various contexts.

Three leadership styles are discussed in this section, namely autocratic, democratic and paternalistic leadership.

Autocratic: In this style, the leader makes decisions without consulting with subordinates or others. Input from staff and colleagues are not appreciated (Lewin, Lippitt and White, 1939). It is found that this caused the most level of discontent (Lewin et. al, 1939). An autocratic leader is very strict and directive, and uses his or her power and position to control rewards and force the followers to comply with what s/he says (Jogulu and Ferkins, 2012; Jogulu & Wood, 2006). The key characteristic of the autocratic style is that the leader takes decisions without the employees' participation (Mullins, 1999; Tannebaum & Schmidt, 1973), thereby limiting the employees' creativity and innovativeness. The usage of authority and power is the main essence of autocratic leadership, therefore, many use autocratic leadership and authoritarianism as interchangeable terms (Avolio, Bass, and Jung, 1999; Bass, 1990; Choi, 2007). In view of examining the autocratic leadership approach, the aspects of decision

making/use of authority, participation and supervision, and control are used as factors in this study.

Democratic: In this style, the leader involves employees in decision-making. Contributions from staff and others are sought and appreciated. The democratic leader offers suggestions and encourages employees to express their ideas (Lewin et al., 1939; Ray & Ray, 2012). This style supports teamwork and leads employees to achieve the organisational goals. Members and subordinates take greater responsibility and feel they have a stake in the organisation (Lester, 1975). Decisions are often made by consensus (Goleman, 2000; Kim, 2002; Lewin et al, 1939). The common characteristic of this leadership is that leaders create a vision and establish it in the minds of subordinates (Bass, 1990; Ray & Ray, 2012). According to Bass and Stogill (1990), participation is the major characteristic of a democratic leadership style. For this study aspects such as decision making, employee participation, task orientation, supervision, and control will be used as factors to express the manager democratic leadership style.

According to some scholars, there is a valid inter-relatedness between autocratic, democratic and paternalistic systems. Schein (1981) notes historical progress from a period of autocracy to a period of paternalism toward the present consultative and participative models. Ouchi (1981) also claims that there is a full range of dimensions between the autocratic

and democratic ends, and that overwhelming paternalism is not necessarily incompatible with bottom-up, consensual decision making, which is relatively in line with what Schein suggests (1981). However, some researchers assert that paternalism is a unique system despite its relatedness to autocratic and democratic models. According to Aycan (2006), there is plenty of theoretical and some empirical literature suggesting that paternalism is strictly and genuinely benevolent and that it is distinct from autocratic system.

Paternalistic leadership:

At the initial stage of reviewing the literature for this study, priority was given to the aforementioned two leadership styles for the proposed study in Myanmar. Over time, the broader literature on the paternalistic leadership approach emerges as more specific to the Asian context. This style has been closely associated with the social context of Asian countries (Dorfman & Howell, 1988), and is born out of the country's culture and tradition. According to Dickson, Den Hartog, and Mitchelson (2003), the developing countries' cultures share characteristics such as being high on power distance, having strong family bonds and expecting organisations to take care of workers and their families. Paternalism is claimed to be an effective leadership style in many non-Western cultures (Farh et al., 2006; Martinez, 2003).

The term *autocratic and autocratic leadership style* will be used in this research to describe elements of authoritarianism, bureaucratic behaviour

and a more direct approach of the managers as many use autocratic leadership and authoritarianism as interchangeable terms (Avolio, Bass, and Jung, 1999; Bass, 1990; Choi, 2007).

Autocratic leadership represents control over the employees. Managers often make decisions without consulting the employees. Paternalistic leadership is portrayed as like a relationship between parents and their children. From an employee/manager perspective, all employees have to act upon what the leader/manager says. In fact it is expected that employees will follow every single one of the manager's instructions exactly. The employees can express their opinions and ideas, but the final decision will be the leader's (Cheng, 1995; Farh & Cheng, 2000).

Benevolence means having a good relationship with employees and having concern for their well-being. The manager will try to help if the employees have problems either at work or outside work. This relationship is about care and kindness. Paternalistic leadership with benevolence entails a bond with the manager whereby the employees are motivated to work with commitment (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2006).

With moral leadership, a manager follows society's norms and principles and makes fair and ethical decisions encouraging others to do likewise. The manager is the role model, and employees emulate or imitate his or her attitudes and actions. The whole organisation operates in an ethical manner and employees are happy at work (Farh & Cheng, 2000). Aycan

(2006) says, in this leadership context, the manager acts as a father figure, inherently having authority over every decision. Padavic and Earnest (1994) argue that paternalism as an unequal power relationship still continues today and meets important material and psychological needs of workers. In paternalistic cultures, people in authority consider it an obligation to protect those under their care and expect loyalty and deference in exchange (Aycan, Kanungo & Sinha, 1999; James, Chen & Cropanzano, 1996).

Components of Paternalistic leadership style (Managers Vs Employees)

Managers

Autocratic Leadership	Benevolence	Moral Leadership
1. Maintain authority and control through - top down communication - tight control 2. Hold a low view of employees' competence 3. Exhibit didactic behaviour - insist on high performance - reprimand employees for poor performance - provide guidance and instruction for improvement	1. Treat employees as family members 2. Provide job security 3. Provide assistance in social needs 4. Protect even grave errors of the employees 5. Show sincere concern	1. Are fair and trustworthy 2. Put collective interest as a priority 3. Act as role models

Employees

Autocratic Leadership	Benevolent	Moral Leadership
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<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Show compliance (avoid expression of dissension) 2. Demonstrate obedience (accept leader's directives unconditionally, are loyal to leader) 3. Respect and fear leader (show deep respect, take leader's instruction seriously) 	<p>Show gratitude (never forget leader's favours, strive to reciprocate, sacrifice self-interest for leader, meet leader expectations)</p>	<p>Identify with leader (internalise leader's values and goals, imitate leader behaviours)</p>
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Derived from Farh & Cheng (2000, p.98)

Leadership Vs Management

Leadership is one of the crucial factors in the success or failure of a state or organisation (Bass & Stogdill, 1990, Spisak, O'Brien, Nicholson & Van Vugt, 2015). In order to understand the type of leadership styles among hotel managers of Yangon, Myanmar, it is first necessary to consider the broader notions of leadership and management. The literature suggests that these need to be considered as separate ideas and concepts, although management and leadership overlap (Bass & Stogdill, 1990). Leadership is said to be a process of influencing others to achieve the organisation's long-term goals (Lester, 1975; Yukl, 2009) while managers need to embrace process and seek stability and control and should therefore try to resolve problems quickly (Zaleznik, 2004). Leaders, in contrast, may tolerate chaos and a lack of structure, and may create uncertainty and change in an organisation (Kotter, 1987). According to Kotter (1991a:

1990b), the leadership process includes developing a vision for the organisation, aligning employees with that vision and using motivating tactics and other skills to help employees achieve organisational goals. This is about tapping into individual motivation to further an organisation-wide goal.

Leadership is the ability to instil confidence in and support the subordinates who have to achieve the organisation's goals (Dubrin, Dalglisg & Miller, 2006). Dorfman and Evans (2002) suggest that leadership involves leading, conducting, escorting, guiding, tracing, steering and managing others. A leader is a person who guides a group that has work tasks and social functions to perform. Leadership is “a matter of setting direction, being clear about where you want to go, creating alignment.” It also involves “getting and keeping everyone on board, and facing the adaptive challenges that arise” (Dorfman & Evan, 2002, p.19). Leadership is defined as the ability of an individual to influence the behaviour of people in achieving organisational goals (Ababneh, 2013; Ray & Ray, 2012; Northouse, 2004; Lester, 1975; Kim & Mauborgne, 1992; Kurfi, 2009).

Bass & Stogdill (1990, p.19) defines leadership as:

An interaction between two or more members of a group that often involves a structuring or restructuring of the situation and the perceptions and expectations of the members. Leaders are agent of change persons whose acts affect other people more than other people's acts affect them. Therefore, with this broad definition, any member of the group can exhibit some amount of leadership, and the member will vary in the extent to which they do so.

The definition of leadership changes all the time. It has been defined in many ways using several categories. Yukl (1989, p.5) sees leadership as:

the process wherein an individual member of a group or organization influences the interpretation of events, the choice of objective and strategies, the organization of work activities, the motivation of people to achieve the objectives,.. or organization.

Again, Yukl states “leadership involves a process whereby intentional influence is exerted over other people to guide, structure and facilitate activities and relationship in a group organisation” (2009, p.9).

In general, managers and leaders have different roles ((Kotter, 1990b; Zaleznik, 1997). Organisations need managers and leaders to successfully reach their goals together. An organisation definitely needs the support of both management and leadership, two distinct but complementary systems

of an organisation (Kotter, 1990a: 1990b), to successfully achieve organisational goals.

Several authors such as Bennis,(1989), Bennis & Goldsmith(1997),Chapman (1989), Certo (1997), Kotter (1990a), Lunenburg (2011), Northouse (2007), and Zalennik (1977) proposed and highlight differing characteristics ,perceptions, attitudes between leadership and management in an organizational setting. In here, the Lunenburg (2011) work is used as a model and shown in the following table.

Comparison of Leadership and Management (*Taken from Lunenburg (2011, p.2)*)

Category	Leadership	Management
Thinking process	Focus on people Looks outwards	Focus on things Looks inwards
Goal setting	Articulates a vision Creates the future Sees the forest	Executes plans Improves the present Sees the trees
Employee relations	Empowers colleagues Trusts and develops	Controls subordinates Directs and coordinates
Operation	Does the right things	Does things right

	Creates change Serves subordinates	Manages change Serves superiors
Governance	Uses influence Uses conflict Acts decisively	Uses authority Avoids conflict Acts responsibly

Several scholars have explored the difference between leadership and management. For instance, Bennis & Nanus (2007) states that managers do things right, while leaders do the right things (p.12). The literature suggests that a person can be both a good leader and good manager, but that good managers are not necessarily also good leaders (Lunenburg, 2011) if they do not display the leadership qualities of communicating vision/ideas to their subordinates (Zaleznik, 2004).

A manager's main responsibility is to ensure compliance and stability while leaders transform stability to challenge, change and progress. Therefore, it is possible that a manager may lean more heavily toward either leadership or management at different times depending on the situation. However, most tend to operate primarily in terms of either the leadership or the management paradigm (Lunenburg, 2011).

Moreover, each manager has a unique style of leadership. Some are more open and participative while others are very assertive. There are a number

of leadership styles such as transformational, transactional, laissez-faire, participative, democratic and autocratic. The fact is that leadership styles are not fixed and may depend on a situation (Northouse, 2004). Therefore, it is important to recognise the differences between good leadership and good management. Good leadership requires that the goals be achieved in a timely manner so the business can grow in the marketplace. Good leaders should have five main characteristics: creativity, inspiration, entrepreneurship and portrayal of a sense of achievement and a shared sense of commitment (Bartol et al., 2003). It can be argued that good management is unattainable without good leadership. Good management requires good goal setting and then the leading of subordinates to achieve the organisation's goals (Bartol et al., 2003).

Good leadership must maintain a balance between vision, strategy and results (Dumaine, 2004). Managers and leaders, and their subordinates, must know where their organisation is going and what it must do to get there. Leaders need to brave any challenges and obstacles and help their subordinates resolve problems. There needs to be clear communication to inspire their teams to meet objectives and goals. Leadership styles affect organisational effectiveness, performance and employee job satisfaction; therefore all managers require good leadership skills because they need to motivate their subordinates to adopt good work practices (Swamy, 2014). Also managers need people skills to gain the workers' confidence. To achieve better results when managers give instructions they must have the

influence, power and motivational techniques to instil confidence so that subordinates feel good about the task (Bartol et al., 2003).

Among varying behaviours and attitudes of managers shown in the above table, the main constructs used for this study are decision making, supervision and control, task orientation, inspiration, and empowerment.

Culture

Culture has been an important element for the study of leadership. Because, people's tradition, belief and behaviour are very much influenced by his or her cultural setting (Hofstede, 1991; Pizam, 1993; Swamy, 2014). Also Brodbeck et al. (2000) and Hofstede 1991:2011) claim *culture* is important contextual factor for the study of behaviour.

The detailed understanding of the cultural differences and perspectives are not necessary for this paper. The interest is not to focus on the diversity between the western, Thai, Chinese or Myanmar. The interest in this research is only in whether some particular cultural aspects have an influence on the perspective of leadership style. Many leadership and organisational studies suggest that culture and, leadership cannot be studied separately. For instance, Schein (2004) states, that culture and leadership are two sides of the same coin. Similarly, Dorfman et al., (2012) suggests that a culture's expectations of leader behaviour are the most accurate predictors of leadership style as they have a direct influence

on leader conduct and the expectation of society on leadership are driven by cultural values (House et al., 2013; Überbacher, Jacobs & Cornelissen, 2015). Recent literature suggests that the managers' understanding and adaptation of cultural aspects that appear contradicting are important (Chen, 2014). Further, culture could be viewed as a resource that is instrumental in the field of leadership studies but also in the field of organisational development and change (Rindova, Dalpiaz & Ravasi, 2011).

Myanmar is a collectivist country, like most Asian countries, where the society is family and community oriented (Aung, 2014). Myanmar is a relationship-oriented society (Welford & Zieger, 2013). Therefore, group harmony, relationships and a strong sense of belonging in a group (Hofstede, 2011) are high. This agrees with the Dickson, Den Hartog & Mitchelson (2003) finding of the country having strong family bonds, and expecting organisations to take care of its workers as well as their families.

Myanmar is high in terms of uncertainty avoidance, the indicator of how willing a society is to accept risk, perhaps even higher than in neighbouring countries (Rarick & Nickerson, 2006). This could indicate people in Myanmar are not open to new ideas and are reluctant to take different or unfamiliar approaches. People in Myanmar are happy to work within clear guidelines and procedures and can tolerate unpleasant situations; in cultures with high uncertainty avoidance, the people or

employees assume that the teachers or leaders have all the answers (Hofstede, 1983; Hofstede, 2011).

On the other hand, Myanmar is a moderately long-term oriented country similar to other ASEAN member countries such as the Philippines and Singapore (Aung, 2014; Rarick & Nickerson, 2006). The prevailing political and economic condition of the country may have been the influencing factor of this tendency.

Leadership style in Myanmar's neighbouring countries

A brief overview of the leadership style of Myanmar's neighbouring countries is described to see whether there are similarities in leadership approaches among them.

Vietnam: The leadership style in Vietnam's organisations is more autocratic and paternalistic (Quang & Vuong, 2002). A recent study by Gutterman (2011) indicates a rather similar finding that suggests organisations in Vietnam typically follow a top-down structure, and employees generally agree to and accept the leader's decisions without question. In general, employee participation in the decision-making process was assessed as very low across industries. There is a common practice of strict control and close supervision among Vietnamese managers.

Paternalism is prevalent across industries and organisations as a result of well-preserved family values in Vietnamese culture. The managers are often involved in the employees' family lives and even provide social support. In fact, it is quite common for managers to provide funds to employees facing financial difficulties.

China: A study of the leadership style in China found similarities with Vietnam's top-down approach. Decisions, orders and procedures flow through strict hierarchies (Kerr & Woods, 2011). The parental style was used when describing management. Another study by Wong & Kong (2014) also finds that Chinese managers show paternalistic behaviour.

Thailand: An autocratic leadership style has prevailed in Thailand, which has a high power distance. People have less freedom in this country's top-down decision-making processes (Raoprasert & Zeidan, 2006). Thailand is characterised as having a strong collective culture (Wattanasupachoke, 2006), where people believe the needs of the group supersede the needs of the individual. Emphasis is placed on group orientation and teamwork. This pervades all aspects of life in Thailand; individuals must conform to this cultural ideal and change their perspective or face social ostracism.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are (1) to identify the (perceived) leadership styles of hotel managers in Myanmar; (2) to explore these manager leadership styles from the perspectives of autocratic, democratic and paternalistic styles; (3) the characteristics of managers such as gender, age and experiences and the potential influence of those characteristics on the managers' choice of leadership style and (4) to identify differences (if any) in the leadership styles between managers of international and domestic hotels.

Several guiding questions are developed to respond directly to the objectives of the research and to extract data: The main research question is:

“What are the perceived dominant leadership styles of hotel managers in Myanmar?”

3 Methodology

The research uses a qualitative approach because the main objectives are to explore the leadership styles of managers within the hotel industry in Yangon, Myanmar. It adopts the epistemology of constructionism, which aims to understand a person's interpretation of reality in a given social context. A view of this research is, that truth depends on individual perspectives and social circumstances in a given situation. The main focus of the research is to explore how the managers perceive and portray their own leadership styles and how the employees view the managers' leadership styles. This approach involves a series of perceptions and reflections on the experience. The employees who participated in this research are not necessarily under direct supervision of the managers.

A semi-structured interview data collection method is used with two international hotels and five domestic hotels participating. In total, 33 people participated in the interview nine holding managerial positions, the rest are the employees who report to the managers.

Cohen et al (2007, p.29) suggests that interviewing is "a valuable method for exploring the construction and negotiation of meanings in a natural setting". Similarly, DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree (2006), Berg (2004) and Maholtra (2014) suggest that the individual interview allows the interviewer to delve deeply into social and personal matters.

4 Findings and Discussion

As evident in the literature review, there are various elements evident in the leadership styles of Myanmar hotel managers. These may be the managers' actions, attitudes, behaviours and personality.

Manager leadership style

The results generated from the data analysis section indicate that managers are using the aspects of various leadership styles discussed in this research project. Nevertheless this study tries to find what aspects of those leadership styles are most prevalent among the managers by comparing the attitudes and behaviours of the managers with some of the major attributes of selected leadership styles.

Based on the framework (constructs) developed for this study, most of the managers' behaviours, actions and attitudes could be placed under the attributes of both the autocratic and democratic leadership styles. The most frequent autocratic leadership behaviours are:

1. Managers alone make decisions.
2. Managers demand that employees comply with rules, regulations and task requirements.

3. Managers control and supervise.

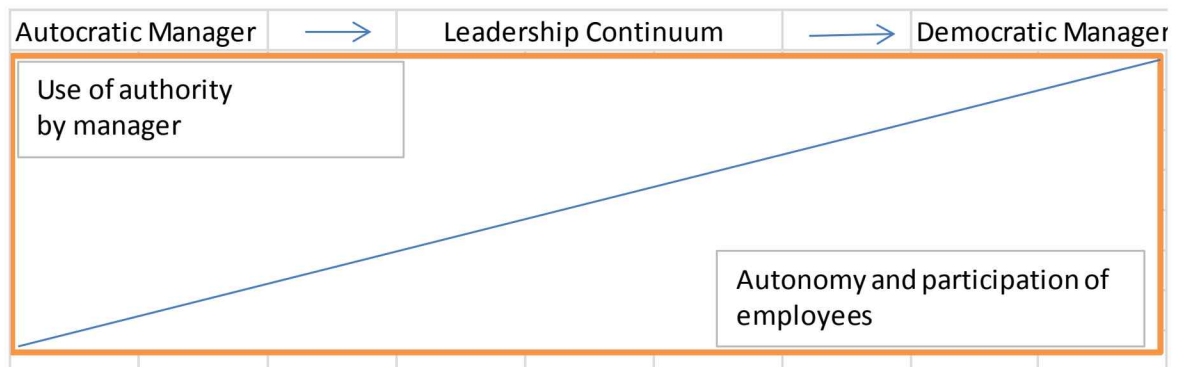
Managers' behaviours and actions that have democratic attributes are:

1. Encouraging employees to make suggestions.
2. Accepting employees' input.
3. Allowing some degree of autonomy.
4. Showing consideration and concern for the employees.
5. Having regard for employees' capacities.

It emerges that managers use many aspects of the autocratic and democratic leadership styles when interacting with their employees. However, according to existing literature, the essence of autocratic leadership is a centralisation of power where the leader unilaterally exercises all decision-making authority (Bass, 1990; Mullins, 1999). Bass (1990) suggests that *participation* is the main characteristic of the democratic leadership style.

Similarly, a leadership continuum model, developed by Tannebaum & Schmidt (1973), depicts autocratic type and democratic type leadership in terms of the use of the authority by the manager and, level autonomy the employees have and their participation in decision making.

Figure :Leadership continuum



Derived from Tannebaum & Schmidt (1973)

Comments from the managers and employees indicated that the decision-making authority lies solely with the managers. The managers have the final say and power is centralised; the employees are not involved in the decision making process. Therefore, the manager leadership style in Myanmar's hotel industry is closer toward an autocratic leadership style.

In addition, there are four other factors that strongly support this assumption. There are (1) conducting meetings, (2) employees' participation, (3) selection of the interview participants and, (4) the view on managers' leadership styles at other organisations. The first two dimensions highlight the managers' views and actions regarding elements of decision-making and participation very clearly. The 3rd and last factors reinforce the notion of prevailing leadership style of the hotel industry of Myanmar and, across the country.

Concerning the first factor, the employees are rarely included in the meetings. In fact, three out of seven hotels participating in this research project do not hold staff meetings. The remaining hotels have occasional staff meetings, but those are mostly attended by those in managerial or supervisory-level positions, not regular employees. It means the input from the regular employees is not appreciated. This illustrates the core concept of the autocratic leadership style, suggested by Lewin et al. (1939) because the employee participation in decision-making is almost non-existent.

All managers claim they value inputs and suggestions from the employees. Some even say employees are encouraged to come up with some suggestions. There may be some sincerity from the managers, but in reality employees rarely make suggestions as shown in the following comments: Despite the managers claim of *employees are asked to express their views*, the employees rarely offer inputs. This could be partly attributed to the managers not giving sufficient autonomy to the employees, which is an important factor to induce employee input (Richardson & Taylor, 2012). Further, Milliken, Schipani, Bishara & Prado (2015) suggests a democratic type style and voice-enabling organisational practices are important for employee willingness to express concerns and views.

Thirdly, the managers insist on selecting the employees who were to participate in the research project despite the researcher's request for employee participation to be voluntary. The participant selection method reveals that the managers at the hotels used positional power when asking employees to participate in the research project. The key characteristic of the autocratic style is that the manager making decision and, tell the employees what to do. (Mullins, 1999; Tannebaum & Schmidt, 1973)

Fourthly, both the managers and employees who participated in the research project believe that the prevailing leadership style of managers in Myanmar is more of the autocratic type.

Therefore, considering all the points discussed above, it is suggested that the managers' leadership style is significantly closer to that of autocratic leadership. Indeed, this research project initially expected that the prevailing leadership styles of managers in Myanmar would tend toward autocratic leadership. The researcher expected the managers to have tendencies such as centralised power, enforce strict rules, be heavily task oriented and prone to making decision alone—typical autocratic leadership attributes. It was also the assumption that the managers would have little concern or care for their employees and would show very little regard for the employees' capability.

As expected, the managers overwhelmingly exhibits various aspects of the autocratic leadership type, but they also shows care and concern for the

employees' welfare which was not expected. Both managers and employees occasionally use terms such as family, brotherly, and friendly when describing the managers' leadership, their relationship and interaction between them. This reveals the paternalistic nature of leadership and relationship (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2006; Cheng, 1995) is prevalent in the organisations. As discussed earlier, the aspects of autocratic leadership and benevolence (care and concern) shown by managers are two of the main facets of the paternalistic leadership style.

In fact, none of the managers or employees says the managers' attitude in their own organisation is autocratic type. It is highly possible that these managers simply want to portray themselves as more democratic, which they know is a more plausible leadership approach, even though they are prone to act and behave like autocrats in reality. From the employee ends, the assumption 'making the managers look good' also applies to the employees. Most if not all employees mentions their relationship with respective managers is good, no one said the contrary. The country's paternalistic culture seems to discourage the employees from expressing undesirable behaviours of their respective managers. Indeed, in paternalism, compliance and showing deep respect to leaders are very important (Farh and Cheng, 2000). It is reasonable to assume that the employees, especially those from domestic hotels, would have mentioned more attributes of autocratic style than they did in the interviews if they

had not been influenced by the paternalism culture that admires showing deep respect to the leader, no matter what.

All the above facts render the researcher to believe that autocratic leadership behaviour is more common than the participating managers and employees would like to portray. Concurrently, and also importantly, the managers also show the caring and benevolence tendencies for the employees as well. There is evidence that paternalism progress from a period of autocracy and moving toward the democracy historically and, there is a full range of dimensions between the autocratic and democratic ends, and that overwhelming paternalism is not necessarily incompatible with bottom-up, consensual decision making. However, responses from neither managers nor the employees fail to show an existence of “moral leadership” among the managers.

Therefore, as a conclusion, this study would like to suggest that the prevailing leadership style of hotel managers in Myanmar is closely in line with the two primary facets of paternalistic leadership style – autocratic leadership tendency and Benevolence (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2006:2008, Pellegrini, Scandura & Jayaraman, 2010 and Aycan, 2006). The authoritarian attributes such as - maintaining authority and control, top down communication, unwillingness to delegate and, benevolence attributes such as treat employees as family members, provide job security, show sincere concern and provide assistance in social needs are

emergent attitudes and behaviours of the managers (Farh and Cheng, 2000). Myanmar's social, political, and cultural settings are indeed shaping the managers to have tendencies toward the paternalistic leadership style. As shown in the literature review, Myanmar's high collectivism reveals strong family bonds, and organisations are expected to take care of their workers and the workers' families. Moreover, Myanmar's society accepts that power is distributed unequally; influential power and referral power is high in Myanmar (Aung, 2014). This is consistent among Asian cultures where the leaders or managers have autocratic like power (Hofstede, 2011) and the employees are willing to comply with what leaders and managers want without questioning. Hotel managers also illustrated paternalistic benevolence in their treatment of employees. The reason leaders have a paternalistic leadership style is because, in some Asian countries, benevolence shows a leader's soft side, revealing his or her care and personal concern for employees and their welfare (Farh & Cheng, 2000).

International versus domestic hotels

When the researcher was preparing for this project, he expected to find different leadership styles between the two types of hotels. Not only that, he also assumed the managers at the international hotels might apply more of a democratic/participative leadership style than that of their domestic peers. However, the result undermines that assumption as basically there

seems to be no significant leadership style differences between managers at the international hotels and the domestic hotels.

Among nine managers, three were from international hotels and the other six were from domestic hotels. All managers showed tendencies toward autocratic, democratic and transactional leadership styles. While all managers used different combinations of leadership styles, they all have basically two tendencies in common.

The common tendencies identified in the managers are the centralisation of authority and decision-making and concern for the employees' welfare. These are two of the main characteristics of the paternalistic leadership style. From another angle, the study identified some degree of variances of other leadership styles' attributes, organisational characteristics and situations between two international hotels and five domestic hotels. Therefore it is rather difficult to compare the two kinds of hotels, as the contextual differences require different leadership behaviours (Fielder, 1971; Whitelaw, 2013). By saying that, the views of employees from both domestic and international hotels also indicated that there is no significant leadership style difference among managers, except that the domestic hotel employees commented much less on the autocratic attributes. However, the definitive elements of the autocratic leadership style—no participation in decision-making and centralisation of power—appear equally presented in both domestic and international hotels. Therefore, this

research project finds that being a domestic or international hotel has very little or no effect at all on the managers' choice of leadership approach and his or her tendencies.

Gender, Age and Experience versus the leadership Style

Most managers who participated in the research are fall age group between 30- 45. Among the 9 managers three are female. This research could not identify differences in behaviours, actions and the leadership style based on gender and age. An interesting finding is that most managers believe their experiences contribute greatly to who they are today despite the data analysis result shows no significant different behaviour among them.

Most managers who participated in this research project assert that their experiences shape them into who they are today and influence how they carry their leadership responsibilities. Researchers such as Dai et al. (2010), Lester (1975), and Swamy (2014) also assert that the manager's background, experience and values are likely to generate a perspective that influences his or her leadership approach. In a similar tone, Morgeson, Mitchell & Liu (2015) state that "the things that happen to us—the events of our work and personal lives—form the core of what is called 'experience'. "Events occur over time, playing a major role in shaping thoughts, feelings, and actions" (p.515).

Leadership style change: Barriers of tradition and culture

Discussion in an earlier section, it shows that Myanmar is a paternalistic society sharing similarities in aspects of culture, values and relationships with its neighbouring countries.

One of the assumptions of the paternalistic view that agrees with that of Myanmar's values and culture is that the manager or leader acts as a father figure while the employees are treated as children, and the employees accept that notion; the employees try to conform and comply with what the manager says or wants (Hodgetts et al, 2003). Myanmar's cultural values endorse, and instil into the population, the existing social and political hierarchy. As the power index is high, the inequality and unfairness seen in everyday life is simply viewed as no big issue, a normal part of life . Very few people question the country's existing social and relationship system. The main goal of the community, religious associations and formal education establishments is to instil the culture of conformity and preserve existing social norms such as –*“do not question the parents and teachers”* and *“do as you are told.”* This attitude is one of the main characteristics that is seen in a paternalistic society (Hodgetts et al, 2003; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2006; Pellegrini, Scandura, & Jayaraman, 2010). Innovative ways of doing and thinking are not tolerated but suppressed, partially because of the desire of the middle and ruling class's

desire to maintain the status quo and remove uncertainty. In a sense, it seems society wishes to maintain the autocratic culture and hierarchical social order, and that remains the goal of most organisations in the country regardless of the nature and type of business. The schools and religious organisations teach and demand total obedience. There is a perception that the institution (Cerviño & Bonache, 2005) and religion (Chan-Serafin, Brief & George, J. M. 2013) greatly influence both manager and employee behaviour. In fact, the same paternalistic value system dominates all state and private organisations. The government and organisations treat the citizens and employees as children, that is in fact much of paternalistic view (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2006). Therefore, all participating managers say that the attitude seen in their environment is *more autocratic and demanding* than that of other leadership styles.

The employees and managers alike are surrounded and bombarded from birth and throughout their working lives with beliefs and values of this nature. The impact on their value and belief systems is deep and enduring. At the same time, some managers state that they believe employees' suggestions are important and often seek input and suggestions from them. It is very likely that the managers would have acted that way at least in few occasions; however, the actual number of employees that offered suggestions or came up with new ideas is very few. A good example of the paternalistic value's influence on the employees' mindset is perfectly portrayed by comments of the managers and employees. When the

researcher asked the managers how often the employees voice their own ideas and give suggestions, they say very rarely.

It is obvious that the hierarchical relationship, that is one indications of a paternalistic system (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2006; Farh & Cheng, 2000), exist in the country where the employees will follow every single one of the manager's instructions exactly without objecting unnecessarily. Even well-loved and respected opposition leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi could not escape from the influence of this paternalistic and autocratic culture and values. There is no doubt she adheres to and promotes democratic principles and values, but the hero-worshipping paternalistic society elevates her beyond reproach. People in Myanmar sincerely believe she can do no wrong. Everything she does and says must be true. No questions asked, whatever she does and says is accepted as absolute truth. This shows that paternalism as an unequal power relationship (Padavic and Earnest, 1994) is widely seen in Myanmar. Therefore, Chakma (2015) and Kurlantzick (2016) suggest that this is a worrying fact the supreme power she has might be an obstacle to democratic reform in the country. Now she is referred to as the mother of the country. Many of her followers are even willing to sacrifice their lives for her, an extreme form of commitment and obedience only seen in medieval era paternalistic societies.

This research therefore proposes six constructs of leadership styles of Myanmar hotel managers.

1. Decision making
2. Participation
3. Supervision and control (or) degree of autonomy
4. View on the capability of the employees
5. Elements of benevolence, i.e. concern and care for the employees' well-being
6. Aspect of moral leadership in the manager

Constructs 1–3 shall be used for identifying the attributes of the autocratic and democratic leadership styles. All the constructs listed here shall examine whether any indications of the attributes of the paternalistic leadership. The researcher is aware that the constructs used in defining the leadership styles are not independent (Rowold & Borgmann, 2013). Some of the constructs and attributes could be seen in two or more leadership styles (Bass, 1985; Tsai & Su, 2011).

5 Conclusions

This research found the prevailing leadership style of managers in Myanmar is overwhelmingly leaning to both Autocratic and Paternalistic leadership style. The country prevailing political, socio-economics and cultural circumstance does not allows changing from the “autocratic tendency” toward more “democratic & participative style”. It will take longer than one would like to think.

Limitation of the Research

Like any other research, there are various limitations faced in this research project. These limitations may potentially affect the findings and final conclusions. This section presents the limitations related to this research.

The first is the interpretation and translation of work from Myanmar to English. There were limitations in translation of audio files of the transcripts and translating some interview records. One of the biggest challenges and limitations was that Myanmar does not have proper terms and business related words and concepts in its own language. The second limitation is lack of literature on leadership and business related issues in the context of Myanmar on which the research could be based. While this points to a research gap in the literature and, thus justify the importance of the project, it also limits the researcher’s understanding of leadership styles in Myanmar and its hotel industry. The third limitation in this

research is that its primary aim was to examine the leadership style of the hotel managers in Yangon, the capital city of Myanmar, the data may not be an adequate representation of Myanmar hotel managers as there are a large number of hotels in the country. The fourth is the significant difference between sizes of the hotels, the scope of the selected managers' job, and his or her span of control, and the treatment of these as a homogenous group. Moreover, combining senior position holders like general managers and departmental managers in the same study may affect the reliability of the data because of differences in terms of the participants' responsibilities and capabilities. Finally, the focus of the research is the managers and employees who are always busy and thus it was difficult to access what might have been a more representative sample. There were challenges in getting access to these managers and employees and, those who did respond may not be necessarily the most suitable persons for this research project.

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