

2019

# Global Mindset Strategies for Increasing Hotels' Performance

Robert A. Donato  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Robert Donato

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Walden University  
2019

Abstract

Global Mindset Strategies for Increasing Hotels' Performance

by

Robert Donato

MBA, Florida International University, 2013

BS, University of Phoenix, 2012

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

April 2019

## Abstract

Between 2010 and 2014 there was a 25% increase in international visitors to the United States, which signifies an opportunity for leaders and managers with a global mindset to take advantage of the opportunities derived from globalization to increase competitive advantage. However, some organizations have not prepared executives and managers to operate in a global environment, which can lead to business failure. The purpose of this multicase study was to gain an understanding of what global mindset strategies hotel executives developed to increase competitive advantage. The target population consisted of the general managers, directors of sales, and directors of catering from 3 full-service hotels at two international airports in the United States who have developed and deployed successful strategies reflecting a global mindset. Porter's 5 forces model served as the conceptual framework for this study. Data sources for this study included semistructured interviews, company websites, advertisements, franchise disclosure documents, and observations. Based on coding interview transcripts, creating mind maps using software, and methodological triangulation of the data, 3 themes emerged: leverage brand resources, personalize services, and leverage staff diversity for service delivery. The implications of this study for positive social change include the potential to create a multiplier effect starting with increased staffing due to increased business volume and profits. The potential increase in competitive advantage may also help hotels prosper and help to ensure funds are available for the hotels to remain contributing businesses for local communities' tax revenues to benefit citizens.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this study to the business professionals of all industries who wisely understand the benefits of globalization, and who strive to develop globally-centered business strategies within their organizations. To the thought leaders who understand the interconnectedness of people and cultures, and who work to share their perspectives to affect positive social change. I also dedicate this study to my parents, the late Mr. Robert A. Donato, Sr. and Mrs. Anita Heitmann, who through their support and love encouraged my independent nature, and gave me the perseverance to achieve my goals.

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I thank you, God, for bringing to fruition the dreams that you placed in my heart, and for you guiding my steps on the path of life. May I accomplish all the tasks that you intend for me to pursue. I would like to thank my research Chair, Dr. Tom Schaefer, DBA, committee member Dr. Jerry Franklin, III, Ph.D., and university reviewer Dr. Al Endres, Ph.D. for your patience, guidance, and support throughout the writing process. I certainly would not have been successful in this endeavor without your help. I acknowledge Mr. Tom Voss, CHA, Dean Emeritus at the Institute of Culinary Education in New York City, who despite my uncertainty, predicted that I would pursue a doctoral degree. I thank my friend and colleague, Ms. Maria Garcia, for introducing me to Mr. Voss, and for recommending me for my first teaching position at the Institute. I would like to thank all of my friends and colleagues for their encouragement and support during my doctoral study. Finally, I would like to thank the hotel executives who sacrificed their time and shared their insight on the topics of global mindset and competitive advantage.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

A global mindset is a perspective that enables managers to identify business opportunities through understanding diverse cultures and markets (Felício, Meidutė, & Kyvik, 2016). Porter (1991) explained that the success of a firm derives from the attainment of competitive positions resulting in sustainable financial success. My goal for this qualitative multicase study was to explore the global mindset strategies that hotel executives use to increase competitive advantage.

### **Background of the Problem**

Global demographic, technological, and economic changes are changing the hotel industry (Zaitseva, Larionova, Yumatov, Korsunova, & Dmitrieva, 2016). As tourism to the United States increases, hotel operators need to augment their business strategies to meet the new challenges brought on by globalization. Managers of hotels that operate around two international airports in the United States have a unique opportunity to take advantage of the continued influx of international travelers, but doing so requires planning to create a clear strategy. My objective for this study was to learn how successful hotel executives leverage their global mindset to develop strategies for increasing a competitive advantage.

### **Problem Statement**

Between 2010 and 2014 there was a 25% increase in international visitors to the United States (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2015), which signifies an opportunity for leaders and managers with a global mindset to take advantage of the opportunities derived from globalization to increase competitive advantage (Luo, 2016). However,

organizations have not prepared executives and managers to operate in a global environment (Javidan & Bowen, 2013), which can lead to business failure (Furusawa & Brewster, 2015). The general business problem was that some businesses are not adequately prepared to capitalize on opportunities in a global environment, and are losing market share and revenue because of executives' lack a global strategic mindset. The specific business problem was that some hotel executives of full-service hotels at U.S. airports do not have global mindset strategies to increase competitive advantage.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multicase study was to gain an understanding of what global mindset strategies hotel executives develop to increase competitive advantage. The targeted population was the general managers, directors of sales, and directors of catering of the 11 full-service hotels grouped around two international airports in the United States who have developed and deployed successful strategies reflecting a global mindset. The case study population comprised the general managers, directors of sales, and directors of catering from three full-service hotels.

I conducted a total of eight open-ended interviews with three executives from one of the full-service hotels at one international airport in the United States and with five executives from two of the full-service hotels at another international airport. The findings of this study may contribute to social change by increasing awareness of the benefits of globally-oriented business strategies, which may prompt executives to hire for diversity for top positions within their organizations. The potential increase in competitive advantage from using globally-oriented business strategies may also help

hotels thrive and provide jobs for the local population. Increased revenue from the use of globally-oriented business strategies may also ensure funds are available for such hotels to remain contributing businesses for local communities' tax revenues for benefitting citizens.

### **Nature of the Study**

The most effective methodology for this study was qualitative. Qualitative researchers explore the complexities of an issue or reexamine an issue from a different perspective (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Using a qualitative approach enables obtaining in-depth data by allowing participants to describe experiences in their words (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Pursuing a qualitative approach requires a method of data collection that helps identify and explore the underlying dynamics of an issue (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

McCusker and Gunaydin (2015) explained that in quantitative research, several features of the study are designed before the data collection process. The researcher understands the research objective and can remain separate and impartial from the subject matter (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). Quantitative data are precise but lack contextual detail (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015), which does not help the researcher deeply understand an issue. Therefore, the quantitative method would not have been appropriate for this study. Using a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative designs adds credibility to a qualitative study, but I did not seek to examine relationships or differences among variables.

A multiple case study design was the most effective design for this study. Using a multiple case study design enables the study of complex phenomena by focusing on a group to gain a holistic, real-world understanding of phenomena (Yin, 2018). If multiple case results are similar, the evidence for the validity of the answers to the research question strengthens (Yin, 2018). However, results require further inquiry when the cases do not share similar outcomes (Yin, 2018).

Principal alternatives to the multiple case study design include phenomenological, ethnographic, and narrative designs. Researchers choose to use a phenomenological design when studying lived experiences, and when studying intense or emotional human experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), which were not the focus of my study. An ethnographic approach to the study would also be ineffective because researchers use an ethnographic approach to study the social or cultural constructs of particular groups (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Lichtman (2016) noted that personal storytelling is the main characteristic of narrative inquiry. A researcher who uses the narrative design collects the first-person accounts of experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Learning the personal stories of individuals is unrelated to the business topic. I concluded that using a multiple case study design was suitable for my study because the other case study designs could have led to unnecessary and irrelevant data for exploring a business problem.

### **Research Question**

The overarching research question for this study was: What global mindset strategies do hotel executives develop to increase competitive advantage?

### **Interview Questions**

1. What global mindset strategies have you developed to target new markets?
2. How do you use your international contacts as part of your strategy to advertise or to contract new business for the hotel?
3. To what extent does brand (if branded) factor into strategy development for new international markets?
4. How, if at all, do you leverage overseas sales calls as a part of the strategy development process?
5. How do your marketing campaigns for international markets differ from domestic marketing campaigns?
6. What, if anything, do you take into consideration when planning an international marketing campaign?
7. How do you tailor strategies for international advertisements to suit the target market?
8. What, if any, strategies do you use to partner with international tour and travel affiliates?
9. How, if at all, do you leverage staff diversity as part of the hotels' strategy?
10. What strategies and processes do executives of the hotel use to communicate and build relationships with international clients?
11. What other key issues comprised your strategic approach to increasing competitive advantage for gaining the business of international clients?



## Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that I used for this study was Michael Porter's five forces model. Porter published his five forces theory in 1980 (Porter, 1991). Porter identified the two forms of competitive advantage as *product differentiation* and *cost leadership*. Executives use product differentiation as a means to attract new clientele and to build brand loyalty (Romão, Neuts, Nijkamp, & Van Leeuwen, 2015). Service differentiation is a form of product differentiation that can positively affect hotel performance (Urtasun & Gutiérrez, 2017). Cost leadership is the strategy of increasing sales volume by offering a certain product or service at a low cost (Rubach & McGee, 2015).

Porter (1991) identified the following governing forces of competition: (a) threat of new entrants, (b) bargaining power of customers, (c) threat of substitute products or services, (d) bargaining power of suppliers, and (e) industry competition. Porter explained that either form of competitive advantage counters the effect of these five external forces.

I focused on how executives of full-service hotels leveraged their global mindset to develop strategies to increase competitive advantage. I anticipated that the strategies developed and implemented by the respondents to mitigate a competitive market reflected Porter's suggested strategy of product differentiation. If executives develop global mindset strategies, they can counteract the potential negative effects of the forces that Porter defined by identifying new global business opportunities.

## Operational Definitions

*Brand:* Brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, or design intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition (Erkmen & Hancer, 2015).

*Cross-cultural competence:* Cross-cultural competence is the ability to communicate and respond effectively in a variety of cultural contexts (Sucher & Cheung, 2015).

*Cultural intelligence:* Cultural intelligence is an individual's capability to function and manage effectively in culturally diverse settings (Menon & Narayanan, 2015).

*Customer relationship management:* Customer relationship management is the process of building and maintaining customer relationships by delivering value and ensuring customer satisfaction (Soltani & Navimipour, 2016).

*Global mindset:* Global mindset is a skills set comprised of a leader's knowledge, cognitive, and psychological attributes that enables the leader to influence individuals, groups, and organizations of diverse cultural backgrounds (Andresen & Bergdolt, 2017).

*Knowledge management:* Knowledge management is the process of identifying, creating, collecting, organizing, storing, and disseminating knowledge within organizations (Masa'deh, Shannak, Maqableh, & Tarhini, 2017).

*Relationship marketing:* Relationship marketing is any marketing activity for developing relationships with customers (Jones et al., 2015).

## **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

The purpose of this qualitative multicase study was to gain an understanding of what global mindset strategies hotel executives develop and deploy to increase competitive advantage. In the following subsections I explain the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of my study. The assumptions section includes assumptions regarding participants' truthful responses, understanding of the questions, and the concept of global mindedness. The limitations section includes limitations that are not within my control as a researcher. The delimitations section includes delimitations regarding the limited sample size and the geographic location.

### **Assumptions**

Leedy and Ormrod (2016) stated that an assumption is a condition taken for granted that gives meaning to the study. Assumptions are foundational to the study and help those reviewing the study to consider the findings' relevance and validity (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). My first assumption in this study was that participants will understand the interview questions and the concept of global mindedness. My second assumption was that participants would respond truthfully to the interview questions. My third assumption was that the sample size was large enough to identify general themes in the research.

### **Limitations**

Limitations are potential weaknesses or problems with the study that are not within the control of researchers (Pai, 2017). The limitations of this study were that data would be collected from hotel managers in a limited geographic area and may not

represent the views and experiences of hotel managers in other geographical locations, the data included from interviews may have contained interviewer or researcher bias, and participants might have provided superficial responses to interview questions they felt may jeopardize organizational success by revealing proprietary strategies. To limit these possibilities, I interviewed each participant in a private setting and assured them that their responses were confidential and that their personal information will remain secure and confidential.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations are bounds placed on the research that set the limits of the study. Delimitations detail the elements that are not addressed in the study, or cannot answer the research question (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). The first delimitation was the restriction of participants to hotel employees and not hotel guests or clients. The second delimitation was the small geographic area of the study. All participants worked in full-service airport hotels located in adjacent market areas. Employees of limited service hotels or hotels at other airports in metro areas were not eligible to participate.

### **Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study may impact organizations and communities worldwide. Executives who include global mindset strategies into their operating and marketing plans may increase sustainability in an ever more interconnected world. Employees of organizations and guests of hotels who deploy global mindset strategies may influence the perspectives of individuals with whom they interact. Furthermore, this study can impact business practice and positively affect social change.

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

Javidan and Bowen (2013) concluded that global mindset strategies benefit the long term performance of an organization, and can be the key to international success. Executives who utilize global mindset strategies can increase performance levels because of their ability to adapt faster, influence others, and build relationships (Javidan & Bowen, 2013). Therefore, executives with a global mindset can create strategies that can increase market share and improve hotel profitability.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Organizations using global mindset strategies can affect social change in four areas: environmental, health, social and economic inclusion, and civic engagement (Stephan, Patterson, & Kelly, 2013). Organizations that establish cross-border connections may potentially improve the livelihood of hundreds of stakeholders within new markets (Stephan et al., 2013). Organizations can increase charitable giving and philanthropy of stakeholders (Stephan et al., 2013). Organizations can either directly contribute funds or can use their brands to bring individuals and groups together for charitable giving.

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

The purpose of this qualitative multicase study was to gain an understanding of what global mindset strategies hotel executives develop to increase competitive advantage. Between 2010 and 2014 there was a 25% increase in international visitors to the United States (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2015), which signifies an opportunity for leaders and managers with a global mindset to take advantages of the opportunities

derived from globalization to increase competitive advantage (Luo, 2016), thus improving business performance. However, some organizations have not prepared executives and managers to operate in a global environment (Javidan & Bowen, 2013), which can lead to business failure (Furusawa & Brewster, 2015).

I conducted searches for this literature review using library resources from Walden University and the University of Phoenix, and the databases EBSCOhost, ProQuest, Emerald Insight, and Elsevier. Keywords included: *competitive advantage*, *cultural intelligence*, *globalization*, *global mindset*, *global mindedness*, *internationalization*, *Porter's five forces model*, and *strategic management*. The literature review includes discussions related to five forces theory, defining a global mindset, competitive advantage, strategic management, cultural intelligence, customer relationship management, marketing across cultures, and organizational benefits. The literature review heading contains citations from 101 peer-reviewed articles, including 89 articles published since 2015. This study contains 159 sources, of which 137 were published since 2015, representing 86% of the references. One hundred and forty sources are from peer-reviewed articles, representing 88% of the articles in this study.

### **Porter's Five Forces Model**

Michael Porter's model of the five forces that shape strategy depicts threats to businesses in competitive markets. The purpose of the five forces model is to identify the elements that affect long-term profitability by analyzing the five forces as they affect organizations (Porter, 1991). Porter designed the five forces model to help understand industry strategy rather than as a method to measure industry desirability (Dobbs, 2014).

Porter's model comprises five dynamics of competition: (a) threat of new entrants, (b) threats of substitute products and services, (c) bargaining power of suppliers, (d) bargaining power of buyers, and (e) rivalry among existing competitors (Porter, 1991). Dobbs (2014) explained that academics and practicing managers alike often misapply Porter's theory because of their superficial knowledge of the theory. The lack of depth of knowledge can cause a misanalysis that could negatively affect an organization, while its often arbitrary application omits the rigor in the analysis that Porter intended (Dobbs, 2014).

Dobbs (2014) suggested that the practical use of the five forces model is more effective if measured by elements specific to each force. For example, under the threat of new entrants, Dobbs recommended managers should consider supply-side economies of scale, demand side benefits of scale, switching costs, capital requirements, incumbency, distribution channels, government policy, and anticipated incumbent response (Dobbs, 2014). Yunna and Yisheng (2014) posited that new entrants into a market increase competition and lower margins, causing some businesses to fail. Dobbs explained that when analyzing the bargaining power of customers, managers must consider buyer orders, buyer information, buyer backward integration, industry products, buyer switching costs, overall buyer costs, buyer profitability, and buyer product/service. Yunna and Yisheng explained that buyers have the power to bargain for lower pricing or demand higher quality goods, both of which affect profitability.

Buyer perception of value and access to substitutes affects competition levels and market share (Yunna & Yisheng, 2014). When analyzing the threat of substitute products

or services, managers should consider price/indirect costs, buyer price sensitivity, performance, buyer switching costs, buyer profile, substitute price, and performance trends (Dobbs, 2014). When managers analyze the bargaining power of suppliers, managers need to consider supplier concentration, supplier volume/profit, supplier forward integration, supplier products, industry switching costs, and supplier substitutes (Dobbs, 2014).

Yunna and Yisheng (2014) explained that suppliers could affect markets by increasing prices or limiting resources. When analyzing industry competition, managers should consider, existing customers, industry growth, fixed costs, product differentiation, switching costs, strategic stakes, capacity expansion and exit barriers (Dobbs, 2014). Yunna and Yisheng explained that the level of competition among firms depends on additional variables including demand and the ease of exiting the market.

Managers who analyze the five forces model by considering the indicators proposed by Dobbs can develop strategy from a holistic perspective. While the five forces that shape strategy can affect every business, Cheng (2013) posited that the global hotel industry is less affected by three of the five forces. Cheng stated that the hotel industry has a high barrier of entry, a low threat of substitute products, and limited threats from suppliers, but did indicate that the industry is susceptible to threats from buyers and rivals.

Organizations comprise multiple primary and support activities that create value for the customer (Ivanova & Ivanov, 2015). One option for hotels with low differentiation within a market of high competition is to focus attention on other market



segments until management establishes sufficient differentiation within their current market (Cheng, 2013). Cross-selling hotel amenities like food and beverage, catering, and meeting rooms; and accentuating hotel attributes like architecture, atmosphere, and decor can help to differentiate among products (Cheng, 2013). Porter's five forces model helps to analyze stakeholders within a value chain including customers, competitors, and suppliers (Ivanova & Ivanov, 2015).

Managers use Porter's five forces model to evaluate market competitiveness and create strategy (Kanuri & McLeod, 2016). Competitive advantage is the sum of several smaller decisions a manager makes designed to achieve the desired advantage (Porter, 1991). Porter tied success or failure to the methods of management, product differentiation, and the strategies developed to compete in the marketplace.

Successful firms use three types of strategies to counter market pressures. The first involves the inclusion of persons from multiple departments, each devising his or her way to contribute to defined goals (Porter, 1991). The second strategy is to align corporate goals with the strengths of its products and opportunities within the marketplace (Porter, 1991). The third strategy type is to achieve a competitive advantage based on identifying and addressing what will differentiate the product within the market (Porter, 1991).

Selecting the best strategy depends on the manager's expertise of the market and his or her ability to align the strategy with the competitive scope of the market (Porter, 1991). An organizational strategy must be fluid and evolve within a changing business environment (Porter, 1991). The current position of the organization in the market results

from past decisions regarding activities and skills improvement, as earlier choices were a reflection of the position of the market at the time (Porter, 1991).

Competitive advantage originated from intangible assets like skill sets and reputation (Porter, 1991). The market environment of the firm influences innovation and the acquisition of skills and resources over time (Porter, 1991). Managers who achieve a competitive advantage in their market became more efficient in managing product cost and adding value to their products or services (Porter, 1991).

Tavitiyaman, Qu, and Zhang (2011) applied the five forces model to their study of 317 hotels, composed of both independent and franchise properties, to explore the influence of industry forces on competition and their effects on strategy. Tavitiyaman et al. studied the effects on only three of the five forces: (a) threat of entrants, (b) bargaining power of buyers, and (c) rivalry of competitors. Tavitiyaman et al. disregarded the last two forces, regarding suppliers and threats of substitutes for the lack of influence on competitive strategy. Cheng (2013) also explained that along with barriers to entry, threats from suppliers and threats of substitutes have limited, if any, effects on the hotel industry.

Tavitiyaman et al. (2011) found that hotel managers who can increase brand loyalty decrease the bargaining power of buyers, thus allowing managers to implement competitive strategies, particularly in the areas of human resources and information technology. Because building customer loyalty takes time, Tavitiyaman et al. found no influences of potential threats of new entrants into the market. Also, Tavitiyaman et al. asserted that the influence of rivalry among competitors was difficult to measure because

of the ambiguous and inconsistent parameters set by each hotel in the authors' study and suggested that the use of inconsistent parameters was due to product homogeneity (Tavitiyaman et al., 2011). The same authors concluded that the hotel industry is subject to the forces defined by Porter (1991) and that the five forces model can be an effective tool in analyzing market competition.

### **Opposing Theories to the Conceptual Framework**

A researcher chooses the framework of a study based on his or her perspective of the phenomenon and the expected relevance of the selected framework to the study discipline (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Researchers like Higdon (2016), Thompson-Elliott (2016), and Yang (2016) chose to use theories for their framework that aligned best with their specific business problem. I also considered various concepts through which to view my business problem. Prior to choosing Porter's five forces model as my conceptual framework, I considered the theories of disruptive innovation, dynamic capabilities, and the resource-based view as possible options for my study.

**Disruptive innovation.** Disruptive innovation is a theory that was initially created by Clayton Christensen as a framework to address social issues, but the theory also helps to understand business failure (King & Baatartogtokh, 2015). A lack of academic research on the topic led King and Baatartogtokh (2015) to reexamine the validity of the theory by conducting a qualitative study of 77 cases cited as examples of disruption. Researchers identified four criteria to validate the theory: (a) incumbents in a market are improving along a trajectory of sustaining innovation, (b) incumbents overshoot customers' needs, (c) incumbents possess the ability to overcome disruptive

threads, and (d) incumbents flounder as a result of disruption (King & Baatartogtokh, 2015).

King and Baatartogtokh (2015) interviewed 79 experts on the 77 cases and concluded that only seven cases met the four validation criteria, and suggested that the remaining 70 experienced effects from other forces including changes in local economies, the number of competitors, and changes in social conditions. King and Baatartogtokh explained that the best approach for creating a sustainable business strategy is for managers to have a holistic view of their environment by considering forces other than business innovation. A lack of academic research on the use of innovation within the service industry (Gomezelj, 2016), and the inconsistent interpretation of the theory (Gomezelj, 2016; King & Baatartogtokh, 2015) influenced my decision not to use disruptive innovation theory to understand what global mindset strategies hotel executives develop to increase competitive advantage.

**Dynamic capabilities.** Dynamic capabilities refers to a firm's ability to restructure its resources to meet the changing needs of the business environment by creating value (El Akremi, Perrigot, & Piot-lepetit, 2015). Managers exploit their businesses' current resources or rearrange, and potentially, even eliminate resources to become competitive (Nieves & Diaz-Meneses, 2016). Sharing knowledge within the firm is one way to exploit capabilities (El Akremi et al., 2015; Nieves & Diaz-Meneses, 2016). Organizations that are successful in rearranging or augmenting resources share knowledge and information with the entire team to improve overall employee

competence and understanding of business goals (El Akremi et al., 2015; Nieves & Diaz-Meneses, 2016).

El Akremi et al. (2015) conducted a quantitative study of 189 retail and service chains in the United States to understand the structural differences that enable certain firms to outperform others. Using the lens of dynamic capabilities, the authors studied the effects of training, prior experience, franchise age, and contract terms on performance levels. The results indicated that training, prior experience, franchise age, and most contract terms had a positive effect on performance, but the amount of royalty fees and the length of the contract did not affect performance.

Nieves and Diaz-Meneses (2016) conducted a quantitative study of 109 Spanish hotels that had a minimum of 50 employees to analyze the influence on knowledge resources on marketing innovation. Nieves and Diaz-Meneses concluded that hotels that develop employees' knowledge elevate the collective knowledge of the business. Hotels that focus on learning can achieve marketing innovations to meet changing market and client needs (Nieves & Diaz-Meneses, 2016). The researchers did not evaluate the external forces that affect performance or competitive advantage. The theory of dynamic capability focuses on internal changes that a firm can make to improve performance, and also does not take into account any external forces that may affect performance. Therefore, I concluded that the theory of dynamic capability is too narrow a scope to be effective in understanding what global mindset strategies hotel executives develop to increase competitive advantage.

**Resource based view (RBV).** RBV is the theory that firms with resources that are scarce, valuable, and inimitable can gain a competitive advantage among competitors (Camisón et al., 2016; Nieves & Quintana, 2018). Firm resources that researchers identify as “inimitable” include human resources and organizational culture (Camisón et al., 2016). However, researchers argued that the effectiveness of these resources on creating competitive advantage vary by industry, and have posited that it is easier to duplicate a service innovation than it is to duplicate an industrial innovation (Camisón et al., 2016).

Camisón et al. (2016) conducted a quantitative study of 1019 Spanish tourism firms to examine the effects that resources, capabilities, and location have on firm success. Researchers found that a firm’s resources and capabilities positively affect competitive advantage, whereas location and other external factors had less of an influence on firm competitiveness (Camisón et al., 2016). Thus, the researchers found that competitive advantage was achieved through the use of resources and capabilities.

Nieves and Quintana (2018) conducted a quantitative study of 109 hotel management companies in Spain to analyze the effect of human capital on human resource practices and firm innovation. Researchers found no relationship between human capital and recruitment/selection practices, but a strong positive relationship between human capital and innovation (Nieves & Quintana, 2018). Researchers deduced that recruitment/selection practices alone do not improve the level of human capital, but rigorous recruitment practices do affect innovation performance (Nieves & Quintana, 2018). The use of the RBV theory helps researchers understand how a firm’s internal resources can be used to improve performance, but using this theory does not allow for a

holistic perspective of forces affecting businesses. Therefore, I concluded that the RBV would not be sufficient in helping me understand what global mindset strategies hotel executives develop and deploy to increase competitive advantage.

### **Defining a Global Mindset**

Despite the pervasive effects of globalization and the general understanding of the term *global mindset*, Andresen and Bergdolt (2017) found more than 25 unique definitions of the term through a review of the literature on the topic. For example, Herd, Alagaraja, and Cumberland (2016) explained that the term *global mindset* describes a skill set that includes a learner's mindset with knowledge of and interest in other cultures, the ability to assimilate into other cultures, and perceiving those of other cultures as equals. Felício, Caldeirinha, and Ribeiro-Navarrete (2015) stated that a global mindset refers to the acceptance of other cultures and markets and the ability to identify opportunities within complex patterns. Vuong and Napier (2015), and Ward and Ravlin (2017) explained that individuals with a global mindset have an openness to diversity and the ability to synthesize the diversity of cultures and markets.

A global mindset denotes a global perspective with an ability to view beyond the boundaries of nation or culture (Plakhotnik, Rocco, Collins, & Landorf, 2015). Felício et al. (2015) stated that a global mindset comprises three types of capital: (a) intellectual, referring to the ability to learn, global business acumen, and a cosmopolitan outlook; (b) psychological, referring to a manager's ability to change, a passion for diversity, and self-confidence; and (c) social, referring to the ability to develop trusting relationships with dissimilar individuals. A person with a global mindset is accepting of cultural differences

and understands how to meld the perceptions of the foreign culture with his or her perceptions (Ward & Ravlin, 2017). Doing so allows the manager to view situations in a new way that benefits both parties (Ward & Ravlin, 2017). A manager who possesses these skills considers the similarities of markets instead of differences, a perspective that gives the manager the ability to create business relationships within new markets (Felicio et al., 2015).

Research results on the effects of a global mindset on the success of businesses are inconclusive. Vogelgesang, Clapp-Smith, and Osland (2014) conducted a quantitative analysis of the results of 176 assessments taken by undergraduate and masters-level students. The test was a Global Competency Inventory assessment as part of their coursework in global leadership (Vogelgesang et al., 2014). The authors focused on the relationship between employee performance and four of the 16 competencies measured by the assessment (cosmopolitanism, cognitive complexity, global psychological capital, inquisitiveness, and nonjudgementalness). The authors found a positive relationship between cognitive complexity and nonjudgementalness; and between cosmopolitanism and inquisitiveness. However, the authors did not find a significant relationship between cosmopolitanism and performance. Vogelgesang et al. also found a positive relationship between psychological capital and nonjudgementalness, inquisitiveness and performance, but not between psychological capital and cognitive complexity.

In a study of 288 small to medium enterprises (SMEs) in Europe, Felício et al. (2015) found that global mindset mainly comprises an openness to ideas and cultures and the ability to set long-term goals (behavior) and international business experience



(knowledge), with cognition having a minimal effect. Similar to the characteristics of leaders with a global mindset, the attributes of ambicultural leaders include open-mindedness, the ability to embrace ideas and practices from other countries, and an understanding of the value of foreign business perspectives (Chen, 2014). Some firms incorporate the attributes of ambiculturalism into business practice (Chen, 2014).

Ambicultural leaders learn to balance the needs between opposing forces like competition and cooperation, privatization and state ownership, and individualism and collectivism (Luo & Zheng, 2016). A manager with a global mindset works with organizations, groups, and individuals with values, perspectives, and beliefs different from his or her own (Hassanzadeh, Silong, Asmuni, & Abd Wahat, 2015). For organizations to compete in a global economy, managers must prospect beyond their local markets and consider new opportunities in global markets, thereby enabling them to achieve a competitive advantage.

**Knowledge management and global mindset.** Top management teams who possess a global mindset shape the way organizations use knowledge management to foster business relationships. Sharma, Chadee, and Roxas (2016) conducted a quantitative study of 68 international service providers (ISPs) to study the mediating role that global mindset has on knowledge management and the client-vendor relationship. Sharma et al. found a statistically significant relationship between the effects that knowledge management has on the global mindset of top management of ISPs. Sharma et al. also found a statically significant relationship between the global mindset of top management and the quality of the client-vendor relationship.

## **Competitive Advantage**

The concept of a global mindset stems from competition among global companies and is fundamental to sustained competitive advantage (Felicio et al., 2016). Competitive advantage is the superiority of a product, service, or skill that one company has over the competition (Kanuri & McLeod, 2016). Sustained competitive advantage requires a comprehensive strategy that includes multiple business aspects like marketing, operations, supply chain, human resources, finance, and technology (Kuo, Chen, & Tseng, 2017). The way in which organizations use all available resources determines how well they compete in the market (Jogarathnam, 2017).

An indicator of competitive advantage is an increase in market share or profit as compared to other competitors in a market (Albu, 2015). An organizational team achieves competitive advantage by employing one of two strategies: (a) lowering the product cost to sell the product at a lower price or (b) differentiating a product to demand a higher price (Porter, 1991). Product differentiation is a way that businesses separate themselves in a market, which can increase business' competitive edge (Urtasun & Gutiérrez, 2017). Branding is a form of product differentiation that can influence a consumer's purchasing decision (Zhou, Qiao, & Ryan, 2017). Product differentiation is especially beneficial to mitigate direct competition and create new competitive advantages for clustered hotels (Urtasun & Gutiérrez, 2017).

Singal (2015) posited that the hospitality and tourism industry experiences higher competition compared to other industries because of high agglomeration, easy accessibility to inputs, high exit barriers, and consumers' low switching costs. Lee (2015)

conducted a quantitative analysis of 4,257 hotels in Texas to examine the relationship between quality differentiation among hotels and spatial price competition. Lee concluded that hotels in proximity to each other have a high degree of price competition if the hotels share similar levels of quality. However, the sphere of geographical competition expands when the quality level of a hotel limits product substitutability. Lee (2015) observed that the price competition among similar hotels occurred to a lesser extent than previously thought. Lee suggested that correctly identifying competitors would limit unnecessary price competition.

Factors that improve competitive advantage are often intangible and immobile, like skills and reputation (Porter, 1991). Thus, firms that focus on intangible assets instead of only material assets are more able to survive in the market (Jain, Vyas, & Roy, 2017). Human capital becomes a sustainable competitive advantage when managed through a strategic human resources management program, which includes strategies to motivate employees (Delery & Roumpi, 2017). Bontis, Janosevic, and Dzenopoljac (2015) conducted a quantitative analysis of 34 independent hotels in Serbia to study the effect of intellectual capital on financial performance. While knowledge is an intangible resource comprising factors like employee competence, client relationships, organizational culture with which organizations can leverage to compete, Bontis et al. did not find a statistically significant influence of intellectual capital on the financial performance of the subject hotels.

**Knowledge management and competitive advantage.** Researchers Kiseli, Senaji, and Eng (2016) found that creating a knowledge management structure does

improve competitive advantage. Kiseli et al. conducted a quantitative study of 172 managers of 5-Star hotels in Nairobi, Kenya to study the effect that knowledge management has on competitive advantage. Kiseli, et al. found that successful hotels in Kenya used technology to create infrastructure for employees to communicate easily across the organization. Sharing knowledge transparently promotes efficiency and innovation that spurs the development of new products and services for the hotels (Kiseli et al., 2016). The creation of new products and services through the use of knowledge management creates a competitive advantage for the hotel that first brings the product or service to market (Kiseli et al., 2016).

Managers affect the outcomes of company initiatives, therefore, informing employees about the goals of the organization strengthens the effectiveness of the initiatives. Avlonitis and Hsuan (2017) advised that managers should foster service innovation and create service initiatives to attain competitive advantage. Managers who consider the complexities of demand, competition, and change on the business environment can harness these dynamics to increase competitive advantage (Lakshman, Lakshman, & Estay, 2017).

Successful firms maintain a consistent message across all departments within an organization (Porter, 1991). The company message should align with the company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, with management focused on exploiting identified strengths essential for establishing competitive advantage (Porter, 1991). The market position of an organization may shape the management's decisions, but managers can restructure decisions to meet changing competition (Porter, 1991).

Creating training that aligns with the company's vision increases employees' skill sets and improves employees' ability to meet company expectations (Úbeda-García, Marco-Lajara, Sabater-Sempere, & Garcia-Lillo, 2013). Úbeda-García et al. (2013) conducted a quantitative study of 110 hotels in the southeast region of Spain to learn if training employees helped create sustainable competitive advantage among the hotels in the region. Úbeda-García et al. found that managers of hotels who had formal training on improving differentiation in service affected improvements in competitive advantage, customer satisfaction, employee performance, and financial performance.

Strengthening the global skill set of managers benefits both the employee and the organization. Narrow mindedness hinders the growth of organizations and limits opportunities for competitive advantage because executives fail to understand the difference between having a global footprint and having a global mindset (Bouquet, Birkinshaw, & Barsoux, 2016). For example, organizations with centralized operations are more likely not to consider the benefits of incorporating perspectives of global subsidiaries (Bouquet et al., 2016).

A global mindset is a cross-cultural competency essential for success when interacting with international business partners (Andresen & Bergdolt, 2017). Felício et al. (2015) explained that employees' global mindset composes a corporation's global mindset, which is necessary to compete in international markets. Therefore, utilizing the global mindset of employees can help build a strategy for increasing competitive advantage.

## **Strategic Management**

The objective of strategic management is to maximize operational, financial, and organizational performance (Sainaghi & Mauri, 2018). One of the measures of a strategic plan's quality is the number of information resources made accessible to the organization (Onkelinx, Manolova, & Edelman, 2016). These resources include accounting data, sales data, and organizational self-reporting (Sainaghi & Mauri, 2018). Hotel executives who adapt their business strategy to changes in demand may realize above average results and an increased competitive advantage (Sainaghi & Mauri, 2018).

Some organizations may engage in foreign expansion to address home country comparative disadvantages fueled by underdevelopment (Cuervo-Cazurra & Ramamurti, 2017). A person with a global mindset scans the world with a broad perspective, evaluating information regardless of origin to identify future trends and opportunities that may benefit the organization (Vuong & Napier, 2015). For example, an executive with a global mindset considers cross-border best practices to successfully integrate into culturally diverse settings (Andresen & Bergdolt, 2017). Managers exhibit a global mindset when they view the world as their marketplace, through their ability to identify international opportunities and their understanding of foreign cultures (Behyan, Mohamad, & Omar, 2015).

Felício et al. (2016) conducted a quantitative study of 526 SMEs in Norway, Portugal, and Lithuania to study the relationship between global mindset, corporate global mindset, and corporate internationalization. Felício et al. found a strong relationship between individual global mindset and corporate global mindset among firms

in all three countries and found a positive relationship between individual global mindset and the internationalization of firms. The results of the study indicate that the global mindset of corporate decision makers affects strategy, including expansion outside of local markets.

Organizations with internationalization strategies but with little international experience often seek employees with the international experience to fill the gaps in organizational knowledge (Onkelinx et al., 2016). Therefore, organizations with a global mindset recruit employees and prospect for business throughout the world (Vogelgesang et al., 2014). Obtaining this global business knowledge helps managers develop strategies that align with organizational international goals (Kim & McLean, 2015).

Managers can use a global mindset to enhance organizational performance (Andresen & Bergdolt, 2017). The global mindset of managers is a determining factor of their ability to seek out and exploit global opportunities (Vuong & Napier, 2015). To create a strategy for success when building new markets, managers should seek information on foreign markets through their international business partners (Charoensukmongkol, 2016). A manager can use this information to prospect for business by creating a marketing campaign to reach clientele of a specific culture. The cognitive complexity required to understand global issues and a cultural skill set facilitate managers' planning and implementing effective strategies (Charoensukmongkol, 2016).

### **Marketing Across Cultures**

Marketing managers want to gain insight into consumer behavior and learn about consumers' wants and needs to improve business performance in specific cultures

(Weaver, 2015). Freedman (2015) explained that success in marketing across cultures involves market research, cultural knowledge, and understanding message transferability. Freedman emphasized that ensuring that the message has appeal across cultures is vital to the success of a campaign (Freedman, 2015).

Nath, Devlin, and Reid (2016) conducted a quantitative study of 218 British university tourism students on campuses in the United Kingdom, Malaysia, and China. The scholars were seeking a better understanding of the role of culture in forming traveler expectations, in reference to advertising and price cues. The authors concluded that a tourist's culture, which includes factors like power distance and uncertainty avoidance, affected their perceptions of advertising strategies; like including a brand's service promise in advertisements. Therefore, the authors recommended that managers of hotels new to a market, especially hotels with little to no brand recognition, should design differentiated advertising strategies based on these cultural contexts to attract clientele (Nath et al., 2016).

Ijabadeniyi, Govender, and Veerasamy (2015) determined that a consumer's culture influences his or her perceptions of marketing communication because consumers derive their perceptions from their customs and beliefs. Ijabadeniyi et al. conducted a quantitative study involving 375 African and Indian shoppers at a major shopping mall in Durban, South Africa to examine the cultural values of Africans and Indians based on the cultural decisions of individualism and collectivism. Ijabadeniyi et al. concluded that although both African and Indian cultures are generally collectivist cultures, Africans and Indians exhibited distinct individualistic tendencies. Indian shoppers were more



individualistic than African shoppers. Ijabadeniyi et al. suggested that the reason for this difference was the influence of other cultures and stimuli due to globalization. Despite the individualistic tendencies of both groups, Ijabadeniyi et al. posited that both groups still shared a strong family collectivism value.

Ijabadeniyi et al. (2015) recommend that marketing managers study the cultural cues of targeted cultures before executing marketing campaigns, to ensure that the campaigns are culturally sensitive to prevent misunderstandings, and are used to increase competitive advantage. Similarly, Turner (2017) suggested segmenting the marketing communication process into four categories: (a) stakeholders, (b) content, (c) channel, and (d) results, to help managers create culturally targeted marketing programs.

Marketing managers should consider how diverse cultures might react to their marketing message (Ijabadeniyi et al., 2015).

Managers who use target marketing techniques can gain a better understanding of their customers and have more effective and financially efficient marketing campaigns (Weaver, 2015). The process of target marketing begins with a marketing manager creating a guest profile to identify the characteristics and demographics of the guest. Then, the marketing manager identifies the markets of focus, attracting that specific demographic (Weaver, 2015). Maintaining target markets brings stability to a marketing strategy, but the manager can shift focus to new markets based on changing trends, or to align with new organizational goals (Weaver, 2015).

Marketing managers who tailor messages that align with the target market culture can ensure that consumers receive the message as intended (Ijabadeniyi et al., 2015). For

example, explicit communication messages suit individualistic, low-context cultures; whereas inherent communication message suit collectivist, high-context cultures (Ijabadeniyi et al., 2015). A straight-forward advertising campaign typically succeeds in markets that represent individualistic cultures, whereas, in markets that represent collectivist cultures, managers must design campaigns that build relationships and trust (Seric, Gil-Saura, & Ozretic-Dosen, 2015).

Marketing managers also use slogans to communicate, through symbols and meanings, the characteristics of a brand or a destination to potential customers (Zhang, Gursoy, & Xu, 2016). Managers who are cognizant of symbols, and who communicate in the native language of target markets signal a willingness to satisfy customers' needs (Zeqiri, 2017). As part of an organizational marketing campaign, managers should consider the tone of the slogan and how potential guests interpret the message, as the culture of the target market affects consumers' responses to the marketing message (Zhang et al., 2016). For example, in collectivist cultures that value harmony and egalitarianism, a slogan with class distinctions and airs of superiority does not align with the cultural values of the location (Zhang et al., 2016).

Creating marketing campaigns that appeal to a broad customer base is a challenge to managers because organizations serve customers whose needs and perspectives often conflict (Livermore, 2015). Hotel operators run the risk of cultural clashes between incumbent and new guests when entering new markets (Ekpo et al., 2015). Marketing managers should consider how the diversity of the new clientele will affect the current guests' experiences and overall guest satisfaction (Ekpo et al., 2015). While managers

working in diverse environments should be cognizant of acceptable cultural norms, they should not make broad generalizations based solely on a person's behavior (Srinivasan, 2015). The attribute of open-mindedness, associated with managers who possess a global mindset, mitigates the propensity to unduly generalize cultural behaviors.

### **Cultural Intelligence**

Globalization increased the level of interactions with individuals from culturally diverse backgrounds, some of whom have fundamentally different values from one another (Menon & Narayanan, 2015). An attribute of a global mindset is the ability to understand and work with individuals of diverse backgrounds. Livermore (2015) shared that leaders of international organizations interviewed on the topic identified cross-cultural management as a major challenge of the millennium. Livermore explained that the reasons for managers to acquire cultural intelligence (CQ) include the diversity of markets and a multicultural workforce. CQ helps leaders retain and train top talent, and improve profitability (Livermore, 2015).

Organizations can attribute some international business failures to a lack of managers' cross-cultural competence (Korzilius, Bücken, & Beerlage, 2017). Andresen and Bergdolt (2017) explained that in addition to the cross-cultural competency of global mindset, cultural intelligence also affects managers' success. Cultural Intelligence (CQ) refers to an individual's ability to adapt to new cultural settings by relying on his or her skill set to appropriately respond in social settings (Daher, 2015; Groves, Feyerherm, & Gu, 2015). Young, Haffejee, and Corsun (2017) explain CQ as the ability to function

effectively in cross-cultural situations. Livermore (2015) explains CQ as the capacity to function across national, ethnic, and organizational cultures.

CQ comprises a multifaceted skill set, which includes cultural knowledge, mindfulness, and behavioral skills that enable interactions with those of other cultures (Crowne, 2013). Livermore (2015) identified four dimensions of CQ: (a) CQ drive, (b) CQ knowledge, (c) CQ strategy, and (d) CQ action. CQ drive refers to a person's willingness to learn and apply strategies to improve his or her CQ (Livermore, 2015). Livermore suggested that training employees who are not motivated to learn about other cultures is a waste of time and money.

CQ knowledge refers to a person's ability to understand cultural norms, and how cultural norms affect perceptions and beliefs (Livermore, 2015). Leaders with a broad understanding of cultural issues, as well as specialized cultural knowledge related to their field, are well positioned to lead with CQ (Livermore, 2015). CQ strategy refers to a person's ability to understand his or her mindset and the mindset of others, to develop successful strategies (Livermore, 2015). Livermore (2015) explains that planning, awareness, and checking are essential components of CQ strategy. Planning refers to the preparation conducted before an intercultural interaction (Livermore, 2015).

Awareness refers to how a person observes his or her actions and the actions of others during the intercultural interaction (Livermore, 2015). Checking refers to a person's ability to analyze the results of the interaction as compared to his or her expectations (Livermore, 2015). CQ action refers to the ability to discern which acts are most effective in a given intercultural interaction and includes verbal and nonverbal

actions (Livermore, 2015). Leaders who apply these four tenets to intercultural interactions will strengthen their CQ over time (Livermore, 2015).

Some CQ researchers examined the correlation between a person's CQ and emotional intelligence (EQ). EQ refers to the ability to effectively manage oneself and one's relationships with others (Goleman, 2017). EQ comprises four components: (a) self-awareness, (b) self-management, (c) social awareness, and (d) social skill (Goleman, 2017).

Self-awareness refers to the ability to understand and evaluate how one's emotions affect work performance and personal relationships (Goleman, 2017). Self-management refers to the ability to manage one's emotions, how well one adjusts to changing situations, and how much initiative one takes to achieve one's goals (Goleman, 2017). Social awareness refers to a person's level of empathy and his or her ability to understand and meet the needs of customers (Goleman, 2017). Social skill refers to a person's ability to lead, build relationships, manage conflict, and build teams (Goleman, 2017). Emotionally intelligent individuals are aware of their emotions and sensitive to the emotions of others, which improves cross-cultural effectiveness (Jyoti & Kour, 2017).

Crowne (2013) conducted a quantitative study of 485 students from a university in the Northeastern area of the United States, to examine the influence that exposure to other cultures had on EQ and CQ. Crowne found that those exposed to other cultures did have a higher level of cultural intelligence, but not a higher level of emotional intelligence. While the level of cultural exposure had no effect on emotional intelligence,

results indicated individuals exposed to a greater depth and breadth of other cultures increased their levels of cultural intelligence. However, later research negates this theory.

Hanek, Lee, and Brannen (2014) posited that individuals exposed to multiple cultures in their early lives found it difficult adapting to foreign cultures. Hanek et al. conducted a quantitative study of 99 MBA students who at one time lived in a foreign country. Hanek et al. found that students with a history of foreign residency (globals) in their teenage years found it difficult to adapt to foreign cultures. Hanek et al. suggested that this disconnect is the result of a lack of ability to recognize cultural differences and serves as a coping mechanism because globals often moved.

CQ skills are valuable for those in positions of sales, marketing, leadership, management, and customer service because it enables managers to identify the commonalities and the unique attributes of individuals and groups, providing for seamless interactions (Daher, 2015). For example, owners with a high level of cultural intelligence can identify factors that drive success in foreign markets (Charoensukmongkol, 2016). Charoensukmongkol (2016) conducted a quantitative study involving 129 SMEs in Thailand to explore the influence that cultural intelligence of executives had on the international activities of their firms. Charoensukmongkol found a positive relationship between the ability to acquire international knowledge and export performance, and a relationship between cultural intelligence and knowledge acquisition.

Livermore (2015) identified culture as a driving factor in a manager's ability to negotiate, innovate, and motivate. Managers who leverage their CQ improve business outcomes because of their improved ability to navigate complex global environments

(Charoensukmongkol, 2016). Brett (2017) posits that culture affects a manager's perception of the negotiation process. For example, Western cultures lean towards swift trust and an effort to seek cooperation, whereas Eastern and Middle Eastern cultures prefer first to build relationships before negotiating, which is considered a competitive exercise (Brett, 2017).

Groves et al. (2015) conducted a quantitative study involving 113 MBA students employed with full-time jobs to explore the relationship between cultural intelligence and negotiation effectiveness. Groves et al. posited that a person with higher cultural intelligence negotiates better than a person with lower cultural intelligence. Groves et al. found a positive relationship between CQ and negotiation outcomes, in that individuals with a high CQ seek cooperation when negotiating. Their desire to cooperate stems from their flexibility and ease to adapt to the behavioral style of their counterparts (Groves et al., 2015).

A manager with a high CQ is adept at recognizing cultural cues and can adapt his or her business approach to suit the situation (Ramsey, Abi-Aad, Jiang, Barakat, & Drummond, 2016). Strengthening a manager's cultural intelligence strengthens the skills of a global mindset, and improves competitive advantage because of a manager's ability to achieve goals on a multicultural and international plane. A manager's strong global mindset establishes the perspective from which he or she strives to meet customer expectations. The increase in customer-centric business models created new challenges for individuals interacting with those with diverse backgrounds (Menon & Narayanan,

2015). This increase requires managers to improve their skill sets to meet the expectations of customers of other cultures (Menon & Narayanan, 2015).

### **Customer Relationship Management (CRM)**

The products of the hospitality industry are intangible services that guests consume on premise, left with only the perceived experience of the service after use. Effective CRM improves guest satisfaction and builds long term client relationships, which improves customer retention and profits (Rahimi & Kozak, 2017). Managers of service organizations understand the importance of using relationship building to counteract the increase in competition (Kandampully, Zhang, & Bilgihan, 2015).

Hapsari, Clemes, Dean, Clemes, and Dean (2017) found that increased customer engagement increases the likelihood of customer return and increases the intent to recommend the company to others. Managers who understand the effect that customer loyalty has on business, seek to build relationships and create product and service value for their customers (Aksoy, 2013). Customer retention is equally important to new customer acquisition, as increased volume increases profitability (Aksoy, 2013). However, Rahimi and Kozak noted that in some cases a gap in perception could occur between managers' perception of service criteria and values, and those of their guests. Rahimi and Kozak (2017) suggest that managers strive to understand their guests' expectations to improve the perception of service, and to outperform the competition.

Hospitality managers seek to improve a guest's perceived value and brand image of their product through the use of loyalty programs (Kandampully et al., 2015). Aksoy (2013) conducted a qualitative study involving 92 senior level marketing managers of



various industries, to understand how managers develop and use loyalty program analytics to inform company strategy. Aksoy found that 87% of managers consider customer loyalty a strategic priority, and 45% say that customer acquisition is still a top goal. Often managers copy the loyalty measures of competitors and follow popular trends without applying critical thought to its effectiveness on their organization (Aksoy, 2013). Therefore, managers must first define customer loyalty as it relates to their business and then decide on the metrics that best measure it (Aksoy, 2013).

Managers who are mindful of the influence of culture and society on consumer decision-making check their perceptions and are not restrictive in their thinking (Kandampully et al., 2015). Meeting the expectations of culturally diverse guests is difficult since many use a different measure of good service and quality than those within the United States (Sun, Tong, & Law, 2017). Sun et al. (2017) studied the perceptions of branded international hotel chains experienced by Chinese tourists in China and abroad. After reviewing 13,204 reviews from multiple Chinese travel websites, Sun et al. found that cultural values and norms determine Chinese tourists' perceptions of service and value. For example, the concept of *face*, which refers to the level of prestige a person possesses, influences Chinese tourists' perception of the hotel stay, especially how the hotel staff treated them.

Understanding cultural differences related to service expectations is vital to meeting the needs of a diverse client base (Zhang, Li, & Law, 2015). Zhang et al. (2015) analyzed the reviews of 2236 guests of the Langham Palace Hotel in Hong Kong, the hotel with the most TripAdvisor reviews of all of the 384 Hong Kong hotels, to

understand the effect that culture had on the guests' perceptions of their hotel experience. Zhang et al. found differences in service expectations among participants of other cultures. For example, Western travelers from Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, and America tended to score satisfaction and value higher than Asian travelers. However, Zhang et al. expressed that the American scores were dissimilar to the scores of tourists from the Commonwealth countries, and closer to the average of the entire sample. The authors suggested that the disparity could be attributed to the Americans' multiculturalism, which shaped the tourists' perceptions of service and value.

The United States has a diverse population that shaped the perception of the U.S. traveler, in that the survey responses were more neutral on topics where other Western countries like Australia, Canada, and Britain yielded similar results (Zhang et al., 2015). Liat, Mansori, Chuan, and Imrie (2017) suggested hiring personnel with the knowledge and experience to handle customer care and service recovery to improve guests' perception of service quality. Alternatively, hotel managers can create cultural training seminars to teach employees how to meet the needs of guests with diverse backgrounds (Liat et al., 2017).

Tabari, Wilson, and Ingram (2016) conducted a phenomenological study of 36 managers, guests, and employees of hotels in New York, to explore the relationship between the nature of culture and the cultural sensitivity of hospitality management services. Tabari et al. found that there is no universal measurement of language, cultural constructs, and perceptions, explaining that certain constructs overlapped, but others did not. Tabari et al. explained that successful hospitality service management depends on the

ability of management and staff to interpret cultural emotion and sentiment. Rather than focusing solely on the transactional aspects of service, managers should ensure that the service delivered creates an exceptional experience based on universally accepted models of service excellence (Tabari et al., 2016).

Managers must focus attention on markets that provide the highest return on their advertising investment. Managers must identify the contribution of each market segment to customize campaigns and target each group with specific strategies and measure financial expenditures (Aksoy, 2013). For example, organizations interested in pursuing the multicultural customer should target this market segment with a multicultural brand positioning strategy (Seo & Gao, 2015).

Creating a multicultural branding strategy requires an open-mindedness approach to business practices. Managers with a global mindset are open to other cultures and practices and are willing to include selected foreign practices into his or her own (Vuong & Napier, 2015). Some of the tenets of Western competitive advantage align with ancient Eastern philosophies, which makes the idea of melding the best of both protocols seem like a natural evolution (Chen, 2014). Chen (2014) uses the term *ambiculturalism* to describe the melding of Eastern and Western business practices in which a person understands both the advantages and disadvantages of each and adopts the attributes of each for improved business practices.

### **Organizational Benefits**

The ability to compete in a global environment hinges on the leader's ability to create global awareness on multiple levels within the organization (Tung, 2016). Hotel

general managers' leadership responsibilities expanded from strategic leadership, to transforming the hotel by achieving long term goals, improving employee engagement, and enhancing the guest experience (Bharwani & Parvaiz, 2017). Employees with strong skill sets like global mindset are an implicit resource for organizations. The use of implicit resources creates a stronger competitive advantage because implicit resources are more difficult to duplicate (Huo, Han, Chen, & Zhao, 2015).

Successful organizations tend to invest more in employee training and development than their less successful counterparts (Úbeda-García et al., 2013). An indicator of the amount of emphasis organizations place on training and development is the amount of money allocated to the task (Sablok, Stanton, Bartram, Burgess, & Boyle, 2017). Felício et al. (2015) posited that organizations that wish to develop a corporate global mindset must invest in individuals with an individual global mindset to compete in global markets.

Daher (2015) concluded that there is a shortage of leaders with global leadership competencies and that some organizations do not have a clear understanding of how to develop these skills. Organizations with a lack of globally minded managers can hire foreign managers who fit in with the organizational culture, then train and assign them to global positions within the company (Luo, 2016). However, training foreign managers may require language sensitive recruitment and training to improve absorptive capacity, which is the ability to process and assimilate external information (Peltokorpi, 2017).

Innovative organizations must have human resource policies that align with knowledge creation and encourage cross-border learning (Moeller, Maley, Harvey, &

Dabic, 2016). Human resources managers can play an important role in preparing leaders to succeed in culturally diverse environments by learning and communicating acceptable cultural norms and by helping to create and test business principles to ensure broad acceptance and cultural sensitivity (Reilly, 2015). Also, skilled employees add value to a firm and improve organizational competitiveness (Úbeda-García et al., 2013). Therefore, training programs should include strategies for cross-cultural communication (Bohle et al., 2017).

Srinivasan (2015) explained that including diversity management into business strategy improves organizational effectiveness. Vuong and Napier (2015) found that a global mindset is one skill that improves with formal education, which contradicts research by Felício et al. (2015) who found that behavior, knowledge, and international work experience exemplify global mindset. Srinivasan noted that combination of both strategies might be the most effective method for improving global mindset including scholarship, studies, research, and interaction with other groups.

Employees can provide organizations with a sustainable and inimitable competitive advantage provided that human resources use strategic hiring and training practices (Delery & Roumpi, 2017). Once onboarded, managers can focus on developing human capital to differentiate their companies instead of using price differentiation strategies if they hire competent staff (Úbeda-García et al., 2013). Members of diverse teams share their knowledge and perspective with other team members, thus, creating new cultural and business knowledge among the team members (Mikhaylov & Fierro, 2015).

Increasing business knowledge mitigates the increased complexity of company-wide projects due to cultural differences like language, customs, and management style (de Waal & de Boer, 2017). Managers can gain intercultural competence through a combination of training by Human Resources and by traveling abroad, as international experience alone does not fully prepare managers (Townsend, Regan, & Li, 2015). Sucher and Cheung (2015) conducted a quantitative study of 738 employees working in internationally branded hotels in Thailand to learn how hotel employees' cross-cultural competence affected team performance. Sucher and Cheung found that cross-cultural competence has a positive effect on multicultural team performance, specifically when team members' skill sets include relationship building, cultural awareness, and cultural sensitivity. The authors advised that investing in formal cross-cultural training yields intercultural employees who excel in diverse environments because of their ability to build relationships with employees and clients of different backgrounds

Globalization requires organizations to design products that appeal to a diverse client base (Zhang et al., 2015). Plakhotnik et al. (2015) posited that organizations successful in creating a globally-oriented organizational culture integrated five essential dimensions: (a) global vision, (b) mindset, (c) values, (d) activities, and (e) globally-oriented leaders. Andresen and Bergdolt (2017) posited that individuals with a global mindset "recognize cross-border best practices" and understand how to apply these common practices in multicultural business environments.

A global mindset benefits managers' careers and the success of the company by spurring innovative performance (Vuong & Napier, 2015). Managers with a high level of

cultural intelligence performed better in international markets because of their ability to adapt to cross-cultural differences (Barakat, Lorenz, Ramsey, & Cretoiu, 2015). For example, managers who communicate effectively with multiple cultures improve their skill sets and productivity levels, with marked increases in the speed of problem-solving, quality of decisions, improved work flow, and effective relationship building strategies (Zheng, 2015).

Low productivity may have nothing to do with the lack of cultural intelligence. Hohenberg and Homburg (2016) suggested that employers consider how employees' culture affects productivity. Hohenberg and Homburg conducted a quantitative study of 406 sales representatives from 38 countries, to investigate how to motivate sales representatives who sell to different cultures. Hohenberg and Homburg found that a sales representative's culture affects the effectiveness of incentive programs designed to increase productivity.

Hohenberg and Homburg (2016) suggested that managers customize incentive programs based on the targeted culture. For example, Hohenberg and Homburg found that financial compensation is more effective in highly individualistic cultures than in less individualistic cultures, and supervisor appreciation is more effective in cultures with high power distance. Also, close managerial interaction improves outcomes in cultures with high power distance, while a focus on individual achievement is the best approach for motivating sales representatives of individualistic cultures (Hohenberg & Homburg, 2016). Alternatively, employers might improve productivity by improving employee engagement.

Haruna and Marthandan (2017) conducted a quantitative study involving 312 employees of SMEs in Malaysia to examine the influence of foundational competence on employee engagement. Haruna and Marthandan posited that employees who possessed relevant skills, knowledge, and abilities were more engaged in their work than employees who did not. Haruna and Marthandan (2017) hypothesized that four competencies predicted the level of employee engagement: (a) business management competencies, (b) interpersonal/personal competencies, (c) global mindset competencies, and (d) technology competencies. Haruna and Marthandan found a significant positive relationship between work engagement and interpersonal/personal, global mindset, and technology competencies. Researchers rejected the hypothesis that business management competencies improved employee engagement. Haruna and Marthandan suggested that managers organize training seminars to enhance their foundational competencies, thus, improving engagement and organizational outcomes.

Leaders who work in volatile times require a global mindset to adapt to the unconventional demands made by their multiple stakeholders (Yeo, Gold, & Marquardt, 2015). Because of globalization, managers must not only position their product to appeal to U.S. customers, but also must consider how consumers of other cultures perceive their brand position (Chua, Roth, & Lemoine, 2015). The U.S. is not the only country affected by globalization. Working in an international environment requires an extensive amount of resources, human and otherwise. Organizations that lack market knowledge can decrease the number of resources needed and mitigate new market risk through cooperative market entry (Laudien & Daxboeck, 2017).



### **Transition**

The goal of this qualitative case study was to gain an understanding of what global mindset strategies hotel executives develop to increase competitive advantage. Section 1 includes the background, the problem statement, the purpose statement, the nature of the study, the overarching research question, the conceptual framework, and the literature review on the topic. The review of recent studies and articles on the topic of global mindset explores the usefulness of the skill in the areas of competitive advantage, strategic management, cultural intelligence, customer relationship management, marketing across cultures, and organizational benefits. In Section 2, I provide detailed information regarding the research design and methodology for approaching the problem statement. In Section 3, I present the findings of this study and the significance of the study, as it relates to business practice.

## Section 2: The Project

Some authors of citations within the literature review addressed studies on global mindedness stressed the importance for executives to function in multicultural environments, whether within the organization or when pursuing new business opportunities. The literature illustrated that global mindedness is an essential skill required to achieve organizational goals. In Section 2 I explain my role as a researcher and the processes of data collection that I used to learn what global mindset strategies hotel executives develop and deploy to increase competitive advantage.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multicase study was to gain an understanding of what global mindset strategies hotel executives develop to increase competitive advantage. The targeted population was the general managers, directors of sales, and directors of catering of the 11 full-service hotels grouped around two international airports in the United States who have developed and deployed successful strategies reflecting a global mindset. The case study population comprised the general managers, directors of sales, and directors of catering from three full-service hotels at two international airports in the United States.

I conducted a total of eight open-ended interviews with three executives from a full-service hotel at one international airport in the United States and five executives from two of the full-service hotels at another international airport. The findings of this study may contribute to social change by increasing awareness of the benefits of globally-oriented business strategies, which may prompt executives to hire for diversity for top

positions within their organizations. The potential increase in competitive advantage from using globally-oriented business strategies may also help hotels thrive and provide jobs for the local population. Increased revenue from the use of globally-oriented business strategies may also ensure funds are available for such hotels to remain contributing businesses for local communities' tax revenues for benefitting citizens.

### **Role of the Researcher**

Researchers conducting qualitative studies collect data from multiple sources including interviews, text materials, and electronic records (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). However, the researcher must identify a sample that represents the phenomenon, and that aligns with the research question (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). Developing and following an interview protocol can increase reliability and are essential for multicase studies because using an interview protocol helps the researcher remain focused on the topic and anticipate potential problems (Yin, 2018).

In an interview protocol, the researcher identifies the instrument used, and details procedures and rules that guide the process (Yin, 2018). Researchers Higdon (2016), Thompson-Elliott (2016), and Yang (2016) all followed interview protocols when conducting their studies. Similarly, I followed an interview protocol when conducting my study (Appendix B). My role in this study was to select a study topic, methodology, and to follow interview protocol to ensure the accurate collection, analyzation, and presentation of data.

I have a professional history with the location of the study; specifically, I have been employed by some of the hotels within the geographical location. Prior working

relationships existed with some study participants, but my association was not a qualifying factor for participation. All participants currently hold positions at one of the airport hotels, and have demonstrated successful strategies reflecting a global mindset.

The 1979 Belmont Report ethical guidelines include three principles that researchers must follow to conduct research involving human subjects in an ethical manner. The three overarching principles are: (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice (Greaney et al., 2012). Yin (2018) explained that ethics protocols can include gaining informed consent, avoiding deceptive practices, protecting privacy and confidentiality, and selecting participants equitably. To ensure compliance, I followed the policies and procedures that Walden University has in place for conducting ethical research, which systematically prepares the researcher for the process (Walden University, 2017).

Threats of investigator bias include ignoring discrepant data and not considering alternative perspectives (Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001). To avoid bias, Yin (2018) suggested conducting interviews in the same manner and using the same set of questions for each interview. To mitigate bias, I conducted interviews by using the interview protocol in Appendix B, asked the same questions for each interview, and welcomed contrary evidence derived from the interviews. Barbosa-McCoy (2016), Higdon (2016), and Yang (2016) all followed interview protocols in their studies.

### **Participants**

Eligible participants for this study were current hotel executives working at full-service hotels at two international airports in the United States who have developed and

deployed successful strategies reflecting a global mindset. Researchers must select participants who have the information needed to enrich the understanding of the topic (Jahandideh, Golmohammadi, Meng, O’Gorman, & Taheri, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Morse, 2015; Robinson, 2014). The hotel general manager and the executive team are responsible for developing strategies to meet profitability goals (Bharwani & Parvaiz, 2017). Therefore, hotel executives were appropriate participants for this study, as they could answer my overarching question about the successful global mindset strategies that hotel executives develop to increase competitive advantage.

The target positions were the general managers, directors of sales, and directors of catering of each property. I used criterion-based selection to qualify potential candidates by selecting individuals who currently hold the positions of general manager, director of sales or director of catering, and who have developed and implemented successful global mindset strategies to increase competitive advantage. Barbosa-McCoy (2016), Thompson-Elliott (2016), and Yang (2016) all used criterion-based selection to select participants for their studies.

Yin (2018) suggested that researchers only collect minimal documentation when qualifying an individual to not unnecessarily extend the screening process. Merriam and Tisdell (2015), Robinson (2014), and Yin (2018) suggested qualifying individuals through mutual contacts, networking, and collecting additional data on the candidate through professional social media platforms like LinkedIn. In addition to the criteria of current position held, and a knowledge of global mindset strategies, I also qualified participants by using my professional network and through mutual contacts.

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) suggested that upon confirmation of participation, the researcher call each participant to introduce himself or herself as an initial step to build rapport, and to schedule an interview time convenient for the client. I contacted all prospective participants via telephone and email to introduce myself, build rapport, and schedule an interview time. Researchers Barbosa-McCoy (2016), Higdon (2016), and Yang (2016) all contacted their prospective participants via telephone or email.

### **Research Method and Design**

Researchers decide on the study method and design by considering alternative means for developing and obtaining data for addressing their research problem (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). Researchers use the qualitative method to understand participants' experiences, and how those experiences shaped their perspectives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Yin (2018) explained that a case study is best to use when examining phenomena in a real-life setting.

### **Research Method**

Clark-Carter (2018) explained that a method is a systematic approach to research. Quantitative, qualitative, and the mixed methods are the three methods of research analysis (Higdon, 2016; Yang, 2016). In quantitative research, surveys are used to answer research questions, and the data are analyzed using statistics (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In using the mixed methods approach, researchers combine both qualitative and quantitative research into a single study (Yin, 2018).

The mixed methods approach is appropriate when researchers can use the characteristics of both types of methods to understand complex topics (Goertz &

Mahoney, 2012). Researchers use qualitative research to understand actions from the perspective of the participants by interpreting and summarizing observations (Graziano & Raulin, 2013). In this study, my goal was to gain an understanding of what global mindset strategies hotel executives develop and deploy to increase competitive advantage. Conducting in-depth interviews, and later coding, analyzing, and interpreting the results, increased my understanding of their process.

The qualitative method was appropriate because I sought an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences related to addressing the research question. An in-depth understanding was not achievable by using a quantitative study questionnaire, and the subject matter was not complex enough to warrant a mixed-method approach. Researchers Barbosa-McCoy (2016), Higdon (2016), Thompson-Elliott (2016), and Yang (2016) also chose the qualitative method for their studies because using the qualitative method enabled them to gain an in-depth understanding of their respective business problems, and provide readers with detailed solutions to businesses afflicted with similar issues. Therefore, conducting open-ended interviews with hotel executives, and reviewing multiple sources of data from company websites and advertisements, helped to understand how they leverage their global mindset to develop new strategies for increasing competitive advantage.

### **Research Design**

Qualitative researchers typically choose one of five designs on which to base their studies: (a) narrative analysis, (b) ethnography, (c) grounded theory, (d) phenomenology, and (e) case study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Researchers select a specific design based

on which design can most effectively provide information for answering the overarching research question (Higdon, 2016; Thompson-Elliott, 2016; Yang, 2016). Investigators use narrative designs to study the lives of their participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Narratives are the oldest form of human communication (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Narratives are purposeful, in which participants recount events in sequential order (Silverman, 2016). Using a narrative design would not answer my research question, because I sought to learn effective strategies for multiple hotel businesses and not a recounting of any one experience. Barbosa-McCoy (2016), Higdon (2016), Thompson-Elliott (2016), and Yang (2016) also opted against a narrative design when researching their respective business strategies.

Ethnographic researchers use direct observation and analysis of a situation (Gobo & Marciniak, 2016) and ethnographic designs are a popular choice for those who study human society and culture (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Ethnography was not the best choice for my study because I did not observe interactions among participants. Researchers Barbosa-McCoy (2016), Higdon (2016), Thompson-Elliott (2016), and Yang (2016) concluded that an ethnographic study is more appropriate for studying culture and human interaction instead of a business problem.

In grounded theory, the researcher collects data and uses inductive reasoning to analyze the results (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) to develop theories from the data (Charmaz & Bryant, 2016). Grounded theory was not an option because my purpose was to present the themes derived from the research, and not to formulate a theory. Barbosa-McCoy (2016), Higdon (2016), Thompson-Elliott (2016), and Yang (2016) did not use grounded



theory studies in their business research. Instead the researchers decided to use case study designs.

Phenomenology is the study of meanings of participants' lived experiences, and researchers use phenomenological designs to study emotional and intense human experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I did not choose a phenomenology design because learning about the meanings of participants' experiences would not answer the research question. Barbosa-McCoy (2016), Higdon (2016), and Yang (2016) decided against a phenomenological study because of the required sample size and because a person's lived experiences do not facilitate explaining business strategy.

I conducted a multicase study to learn what global mindset-based strategies hotel executives use to create strategies that increase competitive advantage. The results of multiple case study designs are more compelling and considered more robust than a single case study (Yin, 2018). Researchers Barbosa-McCoy (2016) and Higdon (2016) used multicase study designs in their studies, which were similar to mine. Their choices of design substantiated my decision to employ a multicase study.

Higdon (2016) chose a multicase study to research the strategies successful coffee shop owners in Washington use to survive the first 5 years in operation. Selecting a multicase study for his research ensured saturation and sufficient data by studying multiple coffee shops instead of only one coffee shop. Barbosa-McCoy (2016) selected a multicase study to research the motivational strategies used by hotel managers to enhance employee performance. Similarly, I used a multiple case study design.

Data saturation is the point at which a researcher can no longer find new information or gain new insights on a topic (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Data saturation occurs in both the literature review (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) and in the interview process, when neither the review of further studies and the interview responses yield any new information (Dixon-Woods, 2016). Yin (2018) explained that some multicase studies are conducted with as few as two case units. Barbosa-McCoy (2016), Higdon (2016), and Yang (2016) all conducted studies using three or less case units.

I interviewed the executives of three full-service hotels at two international airports in the United States comprising a sample of eight executives. My sample size surpassed the researchers' sample sizes and the size suggested by Yin (2018). I used member checking to achieve data saturation, and I probed and clarified participants' responses until no new information emerged.

### **Population and Sampling**

The population for this qualitative multicase study was the general managers, directors of sales and directors of catering of full-service hotels at two international airports in the United States who have developed and deployed successful strategies reflecting a global mindset. I used criterion-based selection to select participants for this study. Criterion-based selection is used to ensure that the individuals interviewed have the most relevant insights on the topic (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Researchers Pai (2017), Thompson-Elliott (2016), and Yang (2016) also used criterion-based selection to select participants for their studies. The eight participants comprised three executive

members of a full-service hotel at one international airport in the United States and five executives of two full-service hotels at another international airport.

Researchers Barbosa-McCoy (2016), Higdon (2016), and Yang (2016) used a sample of five or fewer participants to achieve data saturation. Yin (2018) urged a minimal regard to sample size in a qualitative study, rather that the sample should be sufficient to, “illuminate the theoretical propositions of your case study” (p. 42), and explained that researchers might conduct multicase studies with a sample size as small as two. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) suggested selecting participants based on their ability to add insights for understanding the phenomenon. I selected participants whose experience in their positions will help me understand the phenomenon.

As suggested by Merriam and Tisdell (2015), and by both Higdon (2016) and Yang (2016), I continued interviewing the participants until no new insights emerged, and the data became redundant. Implementing member checking by presenting results to study participants confirms the data and probes for additional insights. Researchers Barbosa-McCoy (2016), Higdon (2016), and Yang (2016) all used member checking in their studies. Likewise, using member checking in my study helped me to confirm the data, identify insights, and confirm data saturation. If data saturation was not reached, I would have continued member checking until no new information emerged.

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) explained that researchers use multiple types of data in qualitative research to increase the depth and validity of studies. Through using methodological triangulation, I reviewed multiple types and sources of data including: (a) company websites, (b) advertisements, (c) franchise disclosure documents, and (d)

observations, to expand my understanding and to validate the emerging themes. Barbosa-McCoy (2016), Higdon (2016), and Yang (2016) all used multiple types of information to confirm and enrich their findings.

### **Ethical Research**

Once I received written approval under the reference number 03-28-18-0545690 from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University (Walden University, 2017), I conducted interviews (see Appendix A) for the study. In addition, the participating organizations signed letters of agreement prior to the interview process. Informed consent is a process whereby each participant signs a statement agreeing to participate in the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The informed consent form informs participants of any risks or conditions involved in the research (Yin, 2018). Participants received an email with information regarding informed consent.

At the start of each interview, participants received an informed consent form, along with verbal and written requests to record the interview session. Administration of a consent form is consistent with requirements for Walden University doctoral studies (e.g., Barbosa-McCoy (2016), Higdon (2016), and Yang (2016).) I used an informed consent form to explain to participants the voluntary nature of the study and their right to withdraw from the study at any time, as suggested by Graziano and Raulin (2013). Researchers Barbosa-McCoy (2016), Higdon (2016), and Yang (2016) all administered informed consent forms in their studies. Participants could have notified me face-to-face, by telephone, or via email of their decision to withdraw.

I informed participants that there was no compensation for their participation in the study, and I used a coding system (J1G, J1S, J1C, L1G, L1S, L1C, and so forth) to maintain confidentiality of participants as suggested by Saunders, Kitzinger, and Kitzinger (2015), and as used in similar studies by Barbosa-McCoy (2016), Higdon (2016), and Thompson-Elliott (2016). Researchers Barbosa-McCoy, Higdon, and Yang (2016) all assured their participants of their efforts to ensure confidentiality and informed them that participation was voluntary and without compensation. Secured study information using coding keys will remain on a password protected storage device and locked in a safe, and voice recordings on a password protected server to which I only have access. I will destroy the study's records after 5 years as required by Walden University (Walden University, 2017). Researchers Barbosa-McCoy, Higdon, Thompson-Elliott, and Yang all followed the same procedure.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

The researcher is the primary and most common data collection instrument in qualitative research (Barbosa-McCoy, 2016; Higdon, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Yang, 2016). I conducted face-to-face semistructured interviews (see Appendix A) with participants. Semistructured interviews provide flexibility in the manner and order of the questions asked (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

In similar studies, Barbosa-McCoy (2016), Higdon (2016), and Yang (2016) used face-to-face interviews as a method of data collection. Using open-ended questions enables researchers to gain insights into participants' worldview on the topic (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) by permitting participants to speak freely (Higdon, 2016). I used a digital

voice recorder and later transcribed each interview. I also used a pad and pen to note any body language or emotion, which aided my analysis of participants' responses. Barbosa-McCoy, Pai (2017), and Yang used similar collection methods.

Assuring study reliability is a concern in all research studies. The goal of ensuring study reliability is to minimize errors by meticulously documenting the steps taken in completing the study. Yin (2018) explained that future researchers who follow the steps taken by previous researchers can expect similar results. To ensure reliability, I developed and followed an interview protocol (see Appendix B). Also, the use of member checking ensured correct transcription and interpretation of interview data. Researchers Barbosa-McCoy (2016), Higdon (2016), and Yang (2016) all employed similar interview protocols in their studies.

### **Data Collection Technique**

Techniques to collect data depend on assessing the relevance of the conceptual framework and the problem and purpose statements of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The primary technique for data collection that I used in this multicase study was face-to-face semistructured interviews. Interviews are an important source of evidence, which researchers commonly use in case study research (Yin, 2018). I will ask a series of 11 open-ended questions (see Appendix A) of each study participant and used instruments like interview questions, a digital voice recorder, a notepad, and pen to document observations like body language. Researchers Barbosa-McCoy (2016), Higdon (2016), Pai (2017), and Yang (2016) asked interview questions and used multiple recording devices in their studies.

Upon receiving study approval from Walden University's IRB, I contacted each participant and sent them an informed consent form. The consent form included a background of the study, an explanation of their rights, and a statement of confidentiality. I conducted each interview in accordance with the established interview protocol (see Appendix B). Each participant was interviewed in private and in a location of his or her choosing. After introductions, I reminded the participant of the reason for the interview and the topic of discussion. I confirmed permission to record the session with the participant, turned on the recorder, announced the participant's identifying code, and the date and time of the interview. I obtained responses to the initial 11 questions and to any follow-up questions, and noted any nonverbal cues expressed by any participant.

All data collection methods have advantages and disadvantages that researchers must consider before deciding on the method (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). However, researchers frequently use interviews as a method of qualitative data collection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Higdon (2016) explained that an advantage to conducting face-to-face interviews is the ability to clarify ambiguous responses, and to deduce meaning from the participant's movements and behaviors. Interviewing is useful for learning participants' perspectives, facilitating immediate clarification to responses, and facilitating validity checks and for methodological triangulation (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Thus, conducting interviews to collect research data can be both targeted and insightful (Yin, 2018).

A disadvantage to the interview method is that researchers can cause bias by poorly communicating questions. Also, interviewees may only tell the interviewer what

he or she wants to hear (Yin, 2018). Marshall and Rossman (2016) explained that data may be affected by the researcher's presence, and by the openness of the participants. I did not conduct a pilot study, as pilot studies are more commonly used for large scale studies and clinical trials (Thompson-Elliott, 2016).

Upon completion of the interview, I transcribed the data using Dragon Naturally Speaking software. I e-mailed each participant their transcript for review to verify the accuracy of the recorded responses to the interview questions. I requested that the participants return their verification or comments of the transcript within 5 days of receipt. Barbosa-McCoy (2016), Higdon (2016), and Yang (2016) employed similar protocols in their studies.

### **Data Organization Techniques**

Creating a case study database is essential to organizing the various forms of data collected during the data collection process (Yin, 2018). I used a coding system (J1G, J1S, J1C, L1G, L1S, L1C, and so forth) to maintain confidentiality of participants as suggested by Saunders et al. (2015) and as used in similar studies by Barbosa-McCoy (2016), Higdon (2016), and Thompson-Elliott (2016). Saved, password-protected materials will remain stored in a safe that is only accessible by me for 5 years. Barbosa-McCoy, Higdon, and Yang (2016) secured all data, notes, and artifacts related to their studies for 5 years and then destroyed all related information.

### **Data Analysis**

Yin (2018) explained that data analysis involves the examining, categorizing, and testing of evidence to reach empirical conclusions. The researcher must conduct a



thorough analysis by accounting and reviewing all the evidence, presenting all rival interpretations (Yin, 2018), and reviewing all available literature. I use methodological triangulation to verify the data collected from face-to face interviews. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) and Yin suggested that researchers compare initial data with information from multiple sources, including archival records, industry websites, company websites, and journal articles to substantiate case study findings. Researchers Barbosa-McCoy (2016), Higdon (2016), and Yang (2016) all used multiple sources of data to assure the validity of their findings.

Researchers follow a structured process of data analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The data analysis process includes six phases: (a) collection of all data and archival documents, (b) reading for thorough understanding of the data, (c) generation of case summaries, (d) creation of codes to map repeated words and themes, (e) interpreting the themes derived from the codes, and (f) searching for alternative meanings to mitigate researcher bias (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I conducted my data analysis in the same structured fashion as suggested by Marshall and Rossman, and as used in similar studies by Higdon (2016), Thompson-Elliott (2016), and Yang (2016).

Computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) helps researchers to code data and to identify emerging patterns (Yin, 2018). Researchers Barbosa-McCoy (2016), Thompson-Elliott (2016), and Yang (2016) all chose to use NVivo software to help organize, code, and derive meaning from their collected data. I also used NVivo software to code data, and to create a mind map from the themes derived from the codes. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) explain that CAQDAS software like

NVivo helps researchers to combine research data into on database organized by files and categories for easy retrieval. Additional benefits of using CAQDAS include a concept mapping feature that creates a visual model of the relationship between codes and themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

I began the data analysis process by using key expected themes from the literature review and any related conceptual framework constructs to code the data. The initial potential themes included Porter's five forces model, global mindset, competitive advantage, strategic management, CQ, CRM, marketing across cultures, and organizational benefits. Creating potential themes from the literature review and conceptual framework helped me to correlate the interview data with the research, including new studies published after writing the proposal. I also used CAQDAS software to create a mind map of themes derived from emerging data *not* related to the literature review or conceptual framework. Researchers Higdon (2016), Thompson-Elliott (2016), and Yang (2016) used similar processes to analyze multiple types of data.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Reliability refers to the consistency and repeatability of research procedures (Yin, 2018). Demonstrating reliability makes it possible for other researchers to garner similar results if they follow the same procedures (Yin, 2018). Study validity ensures that the observations and interpretations made by the researcher are correct within the context of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Researchers consider a study to be dependable if the results from the study are stable over time, and if future researchers can easily follow the decision trail of the original researcher (Elo et al., 2014).

## **Dependability**

Dependability is the extent to which the findings from replicating the study are reliable over time, and across researchers (Yilmaz, 2013). Dependability in qualitative research has a similar use as reliability in quantitative research (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). Reliability refers to the replicability of the research process and the findings (Leung, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Yilmaz (2013) explained that a study is dependable if the methods and procedures used have been evaluated by a researcher, and can be confirmed by an auditor.

Using interview protocols provides a step-by-step account of the interview process, which strengthens study reliability (Yin, 2018). Researchers Barbosa-McCoy (2016), Higdon (2016), and Yang (2016) all used interview protocols in their studies. Likewise, I detailed my research steps, and use interview protocols to strengthen the dependability and validity of my study.

## **Credibility**

Study credibility refers to the level to which the data accurately addresses the intended business problem (Elo et al., 2014). Marshall and Rossman (2016); Merriam and Tisdell (2015) suggested using member checking and data triangulation to ensure credibility. Member checking is a process that involves presenting a participant with the researcher's initial analysis of the interview, to ensure that the interpretation is accurate (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

In addition to member checking, I used methodological triangulation to compare data from participant interviews with additional sources of information including

supporting documents (like franchise disclosure documents), industry articles, Internet advertising, and brand websites. Higdon (2016), Thompson-Elliott (2016), and Yang (2016) used member checking and methodological triangulation to ensure the credibility of their studies.

### **Transferability**

Transferability refers to the extent to which the study findings can be applied to other situations or groups with respect to future research (Elo et al., 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Although transferability of a study is subjective, using descriptive data provides clear descriptions of the study's context and participant's selection criteria (Elo et al., 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The use of rich description allows the readers to determine to what extent the study supports their investigation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Using descriptive data can also assist the reader in developing insights or alternative interpretations of the findings (Elo et al., 2014; Higdon, 2016). Therefore, I used rich descriptive data to ensure other researchers can make objective determinations of transferability. Researchers Barbosa-McCoy (2016), Thompson-Elliott (2016), and Yang (2016) all used similar methods to ensure transferability.

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability refers to the accuracy of the data (Houghton et al., 2013) and the extent to which researchers can confirm data by following an audit trail (Higdon, 2016). Using methodological triangulation and an audit trail strengthens confirmability (Higdon, 2016; Morse, 2015). Researchers Higdon (2016), Thompson-Elliott (2016), and Yang (2016) used methodological triangulation and kept an audit trail to ensure confirmability.

Similarly, I used methodological triangulation, peer debriefing, transcript review, and an audit trail to confirm my findings.

### **Data Saturation**

Data saturation occurs when adding further data becomes repetitive, and no new themes or data emerge (Houghton et al., 2013; Yang, 2016). Higdon (2016), Houghton et al. (2013), Thompson-Elliott (2016), and Yang (2016) indicated that data saturation occurs when participant responses become redundant, and no new information is learned. To ensure data saturation I (a) interviewed participants until no new data emerged, (b) conducted member checking to verify the accuracy of the transcripts, and (c) methodologically triangulated participants' data with additional sources of information. Researchers Higdon, Thompson-Elliott, and Yang used member checks and methodological triangulation to ensure the data saturation in their studies.

### **Transition and Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to gain an understanding of what global mindset strategies hotel executives develop to increase competitive advantage. Section 2 included the details of how I conducted the study. Topics discussed include the role of the researcher, participant selection, research methods and design, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection instruments and techniques, data analysis, and study reliability and validity. Section 3 includes the study findings, applications for business practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action, suggestions for future research, and my conclusions.

### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Social Change

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative multicase study was to gain an understanding of what global mindset strategies hotel executives develop and implement to increase competitive advantage. Guided by the overarching research question, I conducted semistructured face-to-face interviews with eight hotel executives working at hotels at two international airports in the United States. Using a structured process of data analysis (collecting, organizing, coding, and interpreting data), and methodological triangulation of collected data, (interview transcripts, hotel websites, brand websites, social media, franchise disclosure documents, advertisements, and site visit observations), I identified and verified three themes that the hotel executives use to increase competitive advantage (a) leverage brand resources, (b) personalize service, and (c) leverage staff diversity for service delivery.

#### **Presentation of Findings**

The overarching research question that guided the study was: What global mindset strategies do hotel executives develop to increase competitive advantage? Three multifaceted themes that emerged from the research were (a) leverage brand resources, (b) personalized service, and (c) leverage staff diversity for service delivery. I established the three emergent themes by coding, analyzing, and organizing participants' transcribed interviews. I grouped similar responses into categories and then reviewed the responses within each category to identify a common strategy, which became the emergent theme. The subthemes derived from the manner in which participants applied each emergent

theme. The conceptual framework used in this study was Michael Porter's five forces model (199). The emergent themes align with Porter's model for competitive strategy through product differentiation.

### **Theme 1: Leverage Brand Resources**

Leveraging hotel brands' resources as a competitive advantage aligns with Porter's strategy of product differentiation. Tavitiyaman, Zhang, Wei, and Saiprasert (2018) posited that hoteliers should look toward differentiating factors; such as brand image. Hotel owners pay franchise fees to be part of a brand. In return, the brand provides support and resources to franchisees, which include access to brand central reservations systems, loyalty programs, global distribution systems, marketing resources and brand awareness (Hua, O'Neill, Nusair, Singh, & DeFranco, 2017). I found that executives of all three hotels included in my study leveraged brand resources to improve performance. Six of the eight executives interviewed leveraged brand resources by using marketing campaigns, brand differentiation and brand recognition, and brand distribution channels to secure base business and repeat clientele.

**Marketing campaigns.** Hotel brands include marketing and advertising fees as part of the licensing agreements with franchisees. Depending on the brand, hotel owners are either mandated to strictly adhere to brand marketing standards or willingly participate in brand marketing campaigns. Six executives commented on the use of brand marketing campaigns in their business strategies. In the case of hotel J1, J1G explained that the hotel does not do much advertising at the property level, instead J1G takes advantage of the power of the brand to market the property both internationally and

domestically. J1G explained that brand marketing also manages the hotel's website. J1S confirmed J1G's comments and added that all advertising materials or promotions must be approved by the brand. J1S explained that independent marketing campaigns at the property level are strictly monitored and are often rejected by the brand. J1S expressed that they "...are not allowed to do anything; we can't put their logo anywhere without their permission."

Executives at hotel L1 shared similar experiences with brand marketing. L1G explained that, "Brand dictates, pretty much, how they would like to address the global market..." and confirmed that all marketing initiatives were part of the licensing fees. L1S explained that the licensing agreement with their brand also restricted them from creating large independent marketing initiatives and stated, "The brand is pretty serious about staying within the guidelines."

Hotel L2 is an independent property and is part of what L2G called a "soft brand." L2G explained that their brand does not require the hotel to adhere to any strict codes, as was the case with hotels J1 and L1. The brand provides data analysis and makes suggestions about where and how to advertise to reach a specific market. L2S called the brand a "...representation company" that is globally based and on which the hotel relies for international exposure. Aside from required participation in campaigns, executives have the autonomy to opt-in to certain market-specific campaigns. Brand L1 termed such initiatives as "clusters" which allow hotel operators to join other hotels interested in advertising in a specific area, like South America or a specific segment like airports.



Regardless of brand restrictions, executives of all three hotels understood the benefit of aligning property level marketing efforts with the brand to achieve desired results. L1G explained that brand marketing is at the forefront of predicting market trends, stating “I don't compete with what's out there from brand. I try to align myself and leverage brand tools in marketing.” The executives of hotel L2 shared a similar perspective and identified the ability to use of the brand’s sales force and global reach as additional benefits. L2G explained that the brand has salespeople in all areas of the world; global salespeople who are able to drive business to the hotel. However, L2S shared that because the hotel is not located in Manhattan, the bookings received through the brand are limited to guests on a budget or those traveling in and out of the airports. J1G opined that hotel J1 works with the largest brand in the industry, which garners attention and brand recognition that benefit the hotel.

**Differentiation and brand recognition.** Hotel brands’ abilities to offer unique products and experiences is what differentiates one brand from another in customers’ minds (Dwivedi, Nayeem, & Murshed, 2018). Foroudi (2019) posited that consumers who recognize a brand’s logo or name make purchase decisions based on product familiarity and perceived quality. Seven executives commented on the power of using brand differentiation and brand recognition in their business strategies. J1C opined that brand recognition and the perceived quality of the brand, factor into management’s ability to drive business to hotel J1. J1G echoed a similar sentiment and explained they use the power of the brand to generate business. The following subthemes are brand differentiation approaches, which were shared by the indicated interviewees.

***Loyalty programs.*** Hotel loyalty program memberships topped 300 million in 2015, the benefits of which include increased profitability, willingness to pay more, and word of mouth advertising (Hua, Wei, DeFranco, Agnes, & Wang, 2018). J1G opined that members of the loyalty program utilize the brand's website to search for branded hotels in the area. L2S also suggested that hotel L2's brand loyalty program may motivate guests to book a stay at hotel L2.

***Service Culture.*** Brand culture distinguishes service among hotels and influences customers' perception of value, which can be used as a competitive advantage (Dirisu et al., 2018). L1G explained that the brand identified hotel L1's guests as those who like social interaction, but may not necessarily want to be part of a group. L1G posited that brands align hotel design and service level, with the needs and expectations of the targeted market members. Although hotel L2 operates as a soft brand, L2G considered that an advantage. L2G stated that the upscale design of the hotel is unique to the area and gives the traveler a similar luxurious experience, normally found at properties in Manhattan. L2G cited the flexibility that the hotel's brand provides, which allows the hotel to "...be a bit more formidable in dealing with the international crowd versus brand."

***Establishing base business.*** Executives use differentiation and brand recognition as part of the strategy to secure base business; contracted room blocks that guarantee the hotel a specific number of rooms per night. J1G explained that securing a guaranteed amount of base business is "almost like shrinking your inventory" by decreasing the number of available rooms by the number of rooms in the block. One of the segments

targeted by airport hotels is airline cabin crews. J1G posited that every hotel at the airport seeks crew business because all hotels “need that base every single day” and shared that airline crew rooms comprised almost 30% of total available rooms. Market factors like increased competition, could also influence the desire to pursue crew room contracts. L1S explained that the new hotels coming into their market, increased competition and spurred their decision to “make the base of our hotel crew.”

Hotels create a competitive advantage in this segment by increasing the amenities offered to airline crews. While providing discounts on food and beverages is standard, the percentage of the discount is not. Some hotels even reconfigured hotel space to accommodate the international crews. For example, J1S explained that ownership built a dedicated crew lounge, because one particular crew “wanted a place where they could gather” since their layovers lasted 2 to 3 days.

An additional benefit of pursuing airline crews for a base business is the incremental revenue realized from this segment. L1S cited that the food and beverage revenue derived from the crews makes the crew business more lucrative than any other type of group business. L2S added that hotel L2 sought referral business from airline crews, stating “We take advantage of trying to get their leisure travel and their family travel.”

**Brand distribution channels.** Hotel executives in the study agreed that a contributing factor pertaining to the success of the hotel was the affiliation with brand distribution channels like central reservations (CRES) and global distribution systems. Distribution channels connect producers and consumers of goods and services (Le,

Pearce, & Smith, 2018). Affiliation with a brand provides access to international marketing networks and multiple distribution systems (Le et al., 2018). Four executives commented on the advantages of brand distribution channels. J1G posited that a hotel needs the power of a major brand to fill the hotel. One of the main reasons why hoteliers choose to affiliate with a brand, is the level of exposure that affiliation brings to a property.

L2G opined that a property must be affiliated with some sort of global distribution, because it is difficult to be successful as a “lone wolf” in the marketplace. L2G expressed that the benefits of brand affiliation were marketing the hotel through global distribution systems and providing a global network of sales contacts, which are benefits not afforded hotels without an affiliation. In addition to a global reach, L1G explained that the brand is continually innovating and is “...at the forefront...” of global trends and planning initiatives that are supported by market research.

Another added value that distribution system affiliation provides hotel operators is, the ability to generate statistical reports reflecting the origin of hotel bookings in the local market. L1G shared that one report used, identifies the global travel agencies that book the most rooms in the area, which L1G uses to help shift market share. L1S added that the brand also provides statistical reports that the hotel uses to make local marketing decisions.

## **Theme 2: Personalize Service**

The strategy of personalizing service as a competitive advantage also aligns with Porter’s strategy of product differentiation. Hotels that meet and exceed guests’

expectations gain advantage over their competitors (Wang, Hung, & Li, 2018).

Personalizing experiences is one strategy that proved successful for boutique hotels, guest houses, and residential rentals like Airbnb (Manning et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2018).

Branded hotels must include personalized service in their business strategy to remain competitive (Richard, 2017). I found that executives of all three participating hotels developed strategies to personalize service. All eight executives interviewed personalized guests' experiences by using CQ, relationship building, and communication skills.

**CQ.** Managers and employees with direct guest contact must sufficiently develop cross-cultural skills (Andresen & Bergdolt, 2017). Suthatorn and Charoensukmongkol (2018) found that employees with a higher CQ met the needs of foreign guests better than their lower CQ colleagues. Five executives in the study understood that guests' expectations differ, depending on guests' national origin. However, hotel executives' strategies to increase CQ differed by market area and by level of brand involvement.

Hotel L1 is a branded hotel located in the Chinatown section of the city, therefore, in addition to participating in brand wide initiatives like: providing collateral in Chinese, welcome letters in Chinese at check in, and making slippers and a Cup of Noodles available for Chinese guests, L1G and L1S also take cultural cues from the local clientele and from the Chinese hotel staff. L1G explained that the brand designed these initiatives to provide the Chinese customer with "...some of the comforts of home." L1S created a culturally diverse sales team and leveraged their knowledge of other cultures to meet clients' expectations.

L2G ensured that hotel L2 meets the expectations of future international guests by researching the culturally related needs of expected guests. This strategy required L2G to research the needs of the “...Abu Dhabi crowd...the Saudi crowd...the Chinese crowd...so we make sure that we’re able to market the hotel to each one of those individual markets.” L2C explained that when planning events with clients, understanding how clients executed similar events in their home countries helped L2C to design events at hotel L2 that meet the clients’ expectations.

Similar to hotels L1 and L2, executives of hotel J1 demonstrated CQ by incorporating familiar cultural foods into the catering offerings. For example, J1C works in conjunction with the hotel kitchen staff, to create menus that meet the needs of a diverse clientele. J1C explained “We do our absolute best to ensure that we can accommodate that”; designing culturally familiar menus for clients.

**Relationship building.** Building long-term relationships with guests helps hotel executives customize the service experience (Richard, 2017). Five executives commented on the importance of relationship building. J1G explained that networking is one way to learn customers’ needs and to develop strategies to meet those needs. A second strategy is to become personally involved when hotel sales teams conduct site visits for premier clients. J1G said that for a hotel executive to join a site visit conducted by sales, well this “sends a very powerful message” to the potential client that the hotel values his or her business. A third strategy involves creating personalized business cards for each staff member who has direct guest contact. The staff member is instructed to present each

guest they come in contact with a business card, to ensure the guest has multiple points of contact during his or her stay.

L2G used a similar strategy when interacting with very important guests or potential groups. L2G stated “I do believe it is very important [that] when somebody is coming into my house, that they get a chance to meet who I am and a chance to meet my team.” L2G also provides each guest with a business card and invites them to reach out for any reason. L2C explained that oftentimes frequent guests build close relationships with hotel staff. L2C cited one example of a group of guests who have stayed at the hotel every September for the last 20 years while attending the U.S. Tennis Open. L2C said that the guests “specifically request [to be served by] certain servers and bartenders...and they look for them.”

L1G attributed the service delivered and the relationships built between the guests and the staff as the reasons why the 25-year old hotel still ranked within the top quarter of the brand’s hotels in the United States. L1G explained that employee engagement is “...a very warm and welcoming feeling...and to feel that the associates really do look you in the eye and smile, and say, “how was your day?”, they want to know if there is anything [that] they can do to make it better...” L1S concurred and added that the competitive advantage derived from the relationships between guests and the hotel staff supersedes the effects of a brand new property, entering into the market area. L1S explained why, saying:

...it’s going to be the person that they've seen at the front desk for the last 10 years that knows when they come in, what it is they [want]...the person in the

club lounge, that as soon as they walk in, knows exactly how they like their coffee...

**Communicating with guests and the use of social media.** As competition increases, it becomes essential for hotels to include effective communication strategies in the hotel's business strategy (Kharouf, Sekhon, Fazal-e-Hasan, Hickman, & Mortimer, 2018). Executives of hotels that serve an international clientele must address any foreseeable language barriers that hinder the flow of information to the guest. Six executives shared their communication strategies, which included (a) employing bilingual staff and (b) use of social media.

**Employing bilingual staff.** Four executives in the study shared that they staff their respective hotels with individuals who speak more than one language, to streamline communication with nonEnglish-speaking guests, and to make international travelers feel welcomed. L2G explained "If I know that I am going to have a particular customer on an ongoing basis, then I am going to look for somebody to be able to facilitate communication with that customer." L2G cited the hiring of a Korean speaking desk clerk to help facilitate communication with a contracted Korean group, as an example of the strategy. L2S added that the sales team leverage Spanish speaking salespeople when networking with Spanish speaking organizations or clients. L1G expressed that having associates who can communicate in other languages is not a requirement, but is "...just good business sense based on our demographics and our location."

J1S uses the employees' abilities to speak multiple languages as a selling point when meeting with foreign clients. J1S posited that J1S's ability to speak Spanish was the



reason why a particular client from Latin America decided to work with the hotel. J1C opined that having a staff member who can communicate with a foreign guest is “the best thing that you can offer...”, explaining that it helps facilitate the sales process when an employee can speak to the guest on the salesperson’s behalf.

*Use of social media.* Social media changed the way that hoteliers communicate with guests and changed the marketing strategies designed to increase hotel performance (Garrido-Moreno, García-Morales, Lockett, & King, 2018). Two executives discussed brand social media communication strategies. L2S stated “...the whole digital side of things is a whole new job; in many hotels, it is a full-time position.” Aside from communicating with hotels via email and telephone, L1G shared that some of the hotel’s Chinese clientele communicate with the hotel through the social media application WeChat. L1G said that the sales team makes every effort to personalize communication with each guest, instead of offering a “canned response.” L1G added that the brand is more effective in conducting a global social media campaign because the brand “...has entire teams now focused on how to connect with the travelers in all different countries...each country communicates differently.”

### **Theme 3: Leverage Staff Diversity for Service Delivery**

The strategy of leveraging staff diversity for service delivery as a competitive advantage, also aligns with Porter’s strategy of product differentiation. Some hoteliers believe that a diverse workforce is a competitive advantage (Gajjar & Okumus, 2018). Cultural awareness results from an effective diversity management program (Gajjar & Okumus, 2018). Cultural awareness improves service delivery, thus profitability, because

employees are more sensitive to guests' needs (Velten & Lashley, 2018). In addition to having a multilingual staff who can communicate with an international clientele, five of the eight hotel executives participating in the study leveraged employees' cultural backgrounds to expand into new market segments, which increased market share.

Executives of hotel L1 use the diversity of the sales staff to secure business in multiple new markets. L1G opined that a level of comfort is established if the client and the salesperson share a similar background. L1S shared that the sales team consisted of individuals from various backgrounds and cultures including: Philippines, India, Venezuela, and China. L1S posited that understanding each culture's unique needs has led to improving meeting space usage. For example, certain cultures preferred to hold events earlier in the week, which are traditionally slower days for catering.

L2S shared that the sales department might reach out to staff members for advice, on selling or servicing a particular group, providing the following example:

When you have a Quinceañera, you might ask one of our female moms [*sic*] who have had a Quinceañera, "what's something special that we can do that will make us stand out above the competition?" When it comes to the Indian weddings, "what's something that would make us stand out above the competition?" We certainly rely on those...one of our assistant managers is of a Greek heritage. Obviously, whenever we are talking to a client that is from a Greek church, we try to bring her in and let them get the language [*sic*] so that there is a comfort zone - that they feel comfortable talking to us.

L2G and L2S agreed that the ability for the staff to communicate with foreign hotel guests, enhanced guest service. L2G shared an example of a Russian speaking bellman who calmed a Russian mother with two small children, who had her purse stolen. L2S added that it was “great when people can connect” and cited an observation made of a Filipino security guard, who conversed with a Filipino group in the lobby that morning. Executives of hotel J1 do not use staff diversity in the same fashion as hotels L1 and L2; however, J1C explained that if an international client came to the hotel with a specific cultural need, then J1C would “tap into the staff” to learn how to better serve the client.

### **Summary of Findings**

The findings of this study support Porter’s (1991) strategy of product differentiation as a means of overcoming competitive forces in the market. Each of the participating hotel executives identified the needs of their target markets and created competitive advantages, through strategies and services provided, that set their respective hotels apart from others in their markets. Though the methods used by each hotel varied, the strategies that each created focused on the tangible and intangible resources unique to each property, which aligns with Porter’s (1991) suggestions and findings by Jain, Vyas, and Roy (2017), that organizations utilize both tangible and intangible resources to create sustainable competitive advantage.

Tangible resources leveraged by every hotel were brand related products and services. The sharing of knowledge between the brand and the hotel is a strategy consistent with the findings of Kiseli et al. (2016), that sharing knowledge promoted efficiency and innovation. In addition to knowledge sharing between the brand and the

hotel, hotel executives also leveraged their hotels' intangible resources, such as the cultural intelligence of employees, to meet the needs of international clients. This strategy aligns with findings by Suthatorn and Charoensukmongkol (2018), who found that employees with a higher level of cultural intelligence were more successful in meeting the needs of foreign guests.

A hotel's managers' ability to personalize service further increases its competitive advantage and aligns with Porter's (1991) theory of competitive advantage through differentiation and the findings of Kandampully et al. (2015), who concluded that organizations can use relationship building to increase competitive advantage.

Participating hotel executives deployed CRM strategies designed to build relationships and strengthen customer loyalty, which aligns with the assertions of Rahimi and Kozak (2017), who stated that CRM improves satisfaction and strengthens relationships.

Furthermore, Richard (2017) explained that relationship building is an essential component of the ability to personalize service.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

The findings provide hotel executives with proven strategies for success, which can distinguish a particular hotel in a competitive market. Hotel executives can use the strategies of leveraging brand resources, personalizing service, and leveraging staff diversity for service delivery to further differentiate their respective products, from others within the market. Hotel executives can customize the following three applications to address the needs and decrease the current limitations of their hotels' business models.

### **Application of Leveraging Brand Resources**

Most hotel executives realize the obvious benefits of partnering with a brand, which include: market knowledge, service experience, brand recognition, service quality standards, and operating manuals (Ivanova & Ivanov, 2015). Executives who proactively manage that relationship, ensure that they are informed of all brand resources available and are kept abreast of initiatives that can increase hotel performance. For example, brand distribution management systems and brand sponsored sales programs allow branded hotels to achieve higher occupancy rates (Carvell, Canina, & Sturman, 2016).

The participants considered all brand related opportunities that may drive business to the hotel. The executives' strategies for leveraging brand resources include (a) aligning the hotel's marketing plans with brand marketing campaigns, (b) utilizing brand sales and marketing teams to extend the hotel's reach into global markets, (c) leveraging brand recognition and initiatives, like loyalty programs and service culture programs, to further differentiate the hotel from other hotels in the market, (d) leveraging brand recognition to establish long term contracts and base business for the hotel, (e) employing brand distribution channels to drive reservations, and (f) utilizing brand generated reports to create strategies to increase market share. Hoteliers who follow these successful strategies may also realize improvements in their hotels' performance. Therefore, hoteliers should a) evaluate these brand leveraging strategies through the lens of their hotel's business model, to decide which have the highest potential to implement, and b) establish closer bonds with brand managers to learn and take advantage of brand initiatives.

### **Application of Personalized Service**

Personalizing service is a broad strategy applicable in ways large and small. Hotel executives can use multiple sources of data to better understand and meet guests' needs (Richard, 2017). Hotel brands can use data to improve brands' signature experiences (Richard, 2017), which helps to differentiate the hotel from competitors. In addition, managers can create training programs that include service strategies designed to meet and exceed guests' expectations.

Sun et al. (2017) found that personalized service was a prime factor that shaped guests' perception of quality. This study's executives' strategies for personalizing guest service include (a) meeting guests' cultural needs and expectations, (b) relationship building, (c) communication using social media, and (d) employing bilingual staff. Hoteliers who concentrate on these strategies to increase guest satisfaction, may realize an increase of repeat stays and referrals, thereby increasing hotel performance. Sustained guest satisfaction from highly personalized experiences may also increase hotels' competitiveness within their respective markets.

### **Application of Leveraging Staff Diversity for Service Delivery**

Kenesei and Stier (2017) explained that employees with knowledge of various cultures, including customs and language speaking abilities, are more likely to meet foreign travelers' needs, thus improving guest satisfaction. The executives' strategies for leveraging staff diversity for service delivery include (a) the sales and marketing team learning about cultural norms of incoming international guests from the hotel's diverse line staff, and (b) strategically scheduling employees who speak the same language as

incoming groups, to ensure groups' members are comfortable and can communicate with the staff during their stay. These strategies help to build relationships with guests where cultural gaps could exist. Hoteliers who establish strong relationships with guests create a deeper connection and loyalty to the hotel and the brand (Casidy, Wymer, & O'Casey, 2018). Therefore, developing a cultural connection through staff diversity should improve the hotel's ability to meet international guests' service expectations, and ultimately positively affect hotel performance.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The implications for social change apply on a micro and macro level, and may positively influence the lives of people in other parts of the world, and the communities in which they live. At a micro level, hoteliers may realize an increase in volume and profits, which may require employers to increase staffing levels. Hospitality related firms that leveraged staff diversity to achieve desired goals, like customer satisfaction, increased competitive advantage, and innovation, have realized an increase in financial performance (Manoharan & Singal, 2017). Hiring diverse staff is one of the identified strategies for success; therefore, employers may provide opportunities to minorities and culturally diverse members of local communities. Establishing a multicultural workplace improves cultural awareness, which may improve cultural tolerance in the communities where employees live.

At a macro level, global hotel brands that adopt the strategies identified in this study can improve cultural awareness and tolerance in all countries in which the brand operates. Demangeot et al. (2018) opined that brands have the ability to shift individual

and societal mindsets through marketing communications. Also, a multicultural staff can influence the perspectives of the international guests they serve, to reduce stereotyping, prejudice, improve conflict resolution, and facilitate more comfortable interactions with culturally different persons (Demangeot et al., 2018). The international guests may share their positive experiences with individuals of other cultures, with individuals within their spheres of influence and within their local communities for reducing inherent bias and provide more opportunities for individuals from different cultures.

### **Recommendations for Action**

Based on the discussion of findings, I recommend four actions that hotel executives consider, to increase competitive advantage and hotel performance. The first action is to utilize staff diversity to establish a presence in new markets. The second action is to embed CQ initiatives in business strategy. The third action is to focus on building client and guest relationships. The fourth action is to increase brand resources related to global advertising, marketing, and cultural understanding.

#### **Utilize Staff Diversity to Establish a Presence in New Markets**

Hotel executives should identify employees who are members of ethnically diverse communities, to act as representatives for the hotel within their communities. Ojo (2018) explained that ethnic communities generally utilize a small network of vetted local vendors that they know can meet the communities' needs. Therefore, hotels can use their employees to network with community leaders to establish a presence as a potential new vendor. Once the hotel is selected for an event, executives and their teams can



demonstrate their ability to meet the cultural needs and expectations of communities' cultures.

### **Embed Cultural Intelligence Initiatives in Business Strategy**

Hotel executives should consider embedding CQ initiatives in their business strategies, especially within marketing plans and training programs. For example, the hotel marketing plan clearly outlines objectives for the operating year. The marketing plan includes details of how sales and marketing are to execute each initiative and campaign, as well as the associated costs. Funding requirements defined in the marketing plan are incorporated into the hotel operating budget. Once ownership approves the plan and budget, sales and marketing can work to execute their marketing plans.

Organizations can leverage human resources to reach organizational goals, by ensuring that human resource strategies align with business strategy (Alon et al., 2018). For example, Human Resources can hire employees with CQ or provide the knowledge and training needed to improve current employees' CQ (Alon et al., 2018). Human Resources can work with the executive team to embed CQ training into departmental training programs. Human Resources can work with sales and marketing to learn the hotel's guest mix and expectations. Human Resources can then work with each department head to identify and address departmental specific training related to the cultural needs and expectations of the hotel's guests.

### **Focus on Building Client and Guest Relationships**

Establishing and maintaining customer loyalty is a long-term endeavor, the efforts of which yield a loyal customer base who are emotionally bound to the business

(Kandampully et al., 2015). Loyal customers become brand advocates through word-of-mouth and on social media (Kandampully et al., 2015). The hotel executives who participated in this study understand that building strong guest and community relationships strengthens brand loyalty, and is essential to establishing repeat business.

To ensure that each client and guest is equally made to feel important, hotel executives should establish guidelines for staff to follow, centered around verified best practices for relationship building and relationship management. While I suggest that executives make use of CRM technology to help manage this task, CRM cannot be a substitute for face-to-face interaction. The strategies of relationship building and improving CQ is the foundation on which executives can personalize the guest experience.

### **Maximize Brand Resources Related to Global Advertising, Marketing, and Cultural Understanding**

As previously stated, most hotel executives have a general understanding of the brand resources available to them as franchisees. However, hotel executives should make every effort to ensure they have identified and prioritized they key brand resources for driving performance improvements for their target markets. For example, only one of the eight executives interviewed mentioned the importance of aligning with brand initiatives, which denotes a proactive approach to the brand-franchisee relationship. Naturally, the brand has a greater influence than any single hotel. Therefore, hotel executives should strategically plan initiatives with brand managers to improve efficiencies and effectiveness of all key business processes.

Hoteliers operating properties in highly competitive markets should benchmark against the global mindset strategies used by successful hotel executives who operate hotels in similarly competitive markets. It is important to note that many of the strategies identified in this study are relatively inexpensive and easy to implement. Hoteliers should consider adopting and adapting these proven strategies to suit their specific market environments.

Hospitality related conferences, chambers of commerce, and hotel associations are organizations that can distribute the findings of this study. Colleges and universities can develop curricula based on the strategies identified in this study, to ensure graduates have the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in the industry. Hotel human resources departments can incorporate study findings into organizational culture training, sales training, and customer service training. Hospitality and business students could cite the information for academic research and hospitality publications can share the study findings with readers. I will provide each of the eight participants with a summary of the study results and findings, and possibly present these findings at future conferences, symposiums, seminars, and to current and future hospitality students.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Recommendations for further research include (a) designing and conducting a quantitative study and applying a different conceptual framework to the topic, to examine the relationship between the emergent themes with related factors for predicting hotels' performance and (b) studying how global mindset strategies improve performance of businesses within other industries. The limitations of this study can be addressed by (a)

expanding the geographical area of the study, (b) conducting the same study using only limited service hotels, (c) expanding the study to airport hotels in other states, and (d) conducting the same study using full service hotels in urban areas. Incorporating future findings with the strategies identified in this study, may provide executives in other industries a holistic approach to increasing organizations' performance.

### **Reflections**

I can hardly believe that I completed a doctoral research study. It was never my intention to surpass a master's level business degree, but life events and several individuals encouraged me to strive for a terminal degree. Although I began my doctoral journey with no preconceived notions, I did not fully grasp the rigor of the process or the level of commitment required to complete the program. However, the DBA faculty at Walden University, especially my doctoral committee, worked closely with me and successfully guided me through the process.

In completing my research, I learned that successful hotel executives applied global mindset strategies by (a) leveraging brand resources, (b) personalizing service, and (c) leveraging staff diversity for service delivery. I am encouraged to build upon the knowledge gained from conducting interviews and extensive literature reviews to develop training programs to help hoteliers incorporate global mindset strategies into their business and marketing plans. I am confident that hoteliers who pursue global mindset strategies will improve hotel financial performance, but more importantly, can increase acceptance and appreciation of other cultures in both local and global markets in which they operate.

## Conclusion

Competition is a constant force within the marketplace. Therefore, executives must continually monitor their respective markets for changes in trends and consumer preferences to identify and create new strategies for meeting changing market needs. I identified three strategies that hotel executives used to increase competitive advantage: (a) leverage brand resources, (b) personalize services, and (c) leverage staff diversity for service delivery. These strategies can serve as a universal foundation upon which executives can create a structured model for innovation and continuous improvement to meet the needs of their respective hotels' clients. I used Porter's five forces model as the conceptual framework for this study; however, researchers may gain additional insights into competitive advantage by exploring the relevance and applications of other conceptual frameworks to future studies.

Despite a high barrier to entry, construction of new hotel projects at two international airports in the United States continues to saturate the market with hotel rooms, as noted by J1G, L1G, L1S, and L2G. Potential oversaturation in markets such as the markets of two international airports in the United States should force hoteliers to consider new ways to differentiate their products in the marketplace. This requires hotel executives to take an active role in shaping hotels' competitive strategies. The three strategies employed by the hotel executives in the study indicate that a strong competitive advantage derives from a relationship with a brand, strengthened by a diverse staff's ability to build relationships and deliver personalized service. The consistent execution of

the three strategies requires executives to take a proactive approach to ensure guests' memorable experiences.

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## Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What global mindset strategies have you developed to target new markets?
2. How do you use your international contacts as part of your strategy to advertise or to contract new business for the hotel?
3. To what extent does brand (if branded) factor into strategy development for new international markets?
4. How, if at all, do you leverage overseas sales calls as a part of the strategy development process?
5. How do your marketing campaigns for international markets differ from domestic marketing campaigns?
6. What, if anything, do you take into consideration when planning an international marketing campaign?
7. How do you tailor strategies for international advertisements to suit the target market?
8. What, if any, strategies do you use to partner with international tour and travel affiliates?
9. How, if at all, do you leverage staff diversity as part of the hotels' strategy?
10. What strategies and processes do executives of the hotel use to communicate and build relationships with international clients?
11. What other key issues comprised your strategic approach to increasing competitive advantage for gaining the business of international clients?

## Appendix B: Interview Protocol

**Interview:** What Global Mindset Strategies do Hotel Executives Develop to Increase Competitive Advantage?

- A. I will meet the participant and set up the interview at a location of his or her choosing.
- B. I will begin the interview with introductions and thank the participant for taking the time to meet with me.
- C. I will remind the participant of the reason for the interview and the topic of discussion.
- D. I will remind the participant that the interview will be recorded, and the data collected will remain confidential.
- E. I will turn on the recorder and announce the participant's identifying code, as well as the date and time of the interview.
- F. The interview will last between 30 and 45 minutes to obtain responses to 11 interview questions and follow up questions.
- G. During the interview I will ask follow up questions to further probe for clarification, and note any non-verbal cues expressed by the participant.
- H. After the participant answers all initial and follow-up questions, I will conclude the interview with closing remarks.
- I. I will inform the participant of the member-checking process, and explain that I will e-mail the transcribed interview to the participant for verification of the



accuracy of the interview. I will request that the participant confirms or advises of revisions within five days of receipt.

- J. I will inform the participant that he or she will receive a copy of my findings at the conclusion of the study.