

**Perceptions of Perceived Organizational Support and Affective  
Organizational Commitment in Radisson Blu Seaside**

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<p>Understanding the dynamics of employee-employer relationship and how to recognize and influence employee perceptions through supportive HR practices, are essential tasks for a manager, to ensure positive outcomes for the organization as well as the employees. Moreover, it has been acknowledged that strategic HRM, including organizational commitment, are especially important in the fields where successful service delivery is dependent on the behaviour of committed front-line employees, such as the hospitality industry (Swales 2002, 165-166).</p> <p>Therefore, the interest of this study was to examine the perceptions of front-line employees on the two aspects, perceived organizational support (POS) and affective organizational commitment (AC), to discover possible new information regarding the commitment process and also to discover, how it could be affected.</p> <p>The qualitative study was done by using a phenomenographic research approach, which aims at discovering individual perceptions of particular aspects of the world rather than generalizations on the matter. The research data was collected through six thematic interviews, which were conducted in two weeks time during October 2012. The interviewees were front-line employees of the front office and the food and beverage departments of Radisson Blu Seaside.</p> <p>The study showed that there are a number of categories that were perceived as both positive and negative contributors to POS. The main categories discovered included personified support, organizational policies and support in personal life. However, the subcategories, which contributed to POS and also affected AC were supervisor support, favorable job conditions, flexibility, favorable discretionary treatment and growth opportunities. These were also perceived as contributors in both positive and negative sense.</p> <p>Consequently, the study could suggest that supervisors and the organization as a whole should focus more attention on the categories that were discovered in this study in order to have affectively committed employees and ultimately to gain business success.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> Perceived organizational support, affective organizational commitment, strategic human resources management, employee-employer relationship, hospitality industry	

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# 1 Introduction

The hospitality industry is facing a number of challenges when it comes to attracting and retaining skilful front-line employees. Consequently, the employee-employer relationship has been an interest of study during the recent years. The nature of this relationship has changed as most employees are no longer interested in staying in just one organization for the rest of their lives and thus, are not guided by commitment, i.e. “a force that binds an individual to an entity or course of action” (Meyer & Herscovitch 2001 in Luchak & Gellatly 2007,786), when it comes to their careers. (Yoshimura 2003, 1.) Moreover, a number of studies have indicated that the hospitality industry continues to undervalue the effects of strategic human resources management (HRM) to their business success (Umbreit and Sweeney 1995, in Kusluvan et al. 2010, 192).

Three reasons have been presented why it is essential to study commitment as an indicator and predictor of employee behaviour:

First, organizations are not disappearing...they must still maintain a core of people who are the organization...Second, organizations that contract out work to other companies or individuals will still be concerned about commitment of these others...Third, commitments develop naturally. (Meyer & Allen 1997, in Yoshimura 2003, 1.)

The interest for this study rose from the researcher’s own perceptions from the industry as there have been a number of instances where a colleague has lacked support from the organization and this has led to various negative outcomes. Consequently, the interest rose to study key issues in strategic HRM. In this study, the focus is on the perceptions of front-line employees in the hospitality industry on perceived organizational support (POS), i.e. the concept that “employees develop global beliefs concerning the degree to which the organization values their contributions and cares for their well-being” (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison & Sowa 1986, 503), and on affective organizational commitment (AC), i.e. an emotional attachment to an organisation (Meyer and Allen 1997, in Tumwesigye 2010, 942-943). The study aims to understand how front-line managers and supervisors, including the researcher, can recognize and potentially influence employee perceptions that can consequently lead to positive outcomes for the organization as well as the employees.

A number of studies have noted that perceived organizational support and affective organizational commitment are connected to positive outcomes for both the organization and its employees. Hafer & Martin (2006, 2) point out that managers should focus on understanding, predicting and improving employee behaviours. Understanding the importance of this can help managers to keep their employees motivated to perform at a high level, to reach organizational goals according to the organization's strategy, and ultimately gain and maintain competitive advantage. Moreover, the research can have positive effects on the industry as well as the commissioning party, as it has been acknowledged that strategic HRM, including organizational commitment, are especially important in the fields where successful service delivery is dependent on the behaviour of committed front-line employees, such as the hospitality industry. (Swales 2002, 165-166.)

Firstly, the study will look into the key issues concerning the hospitality industry. Then, the concept of perceived organizational support will be introduced, followed by introductions on organizational commitment and affective organizational commitment. In addition, the relationship between POS and AC will be described. The focus of this relationship will be on studying the antecedent role of POS on AC. This will be followed by a brief look at the possible outcomes of the before mentioned relationship. However, the thesis will not go further into detail of the possible outcomes of this relationship as it would be too comprehensive for a Bachelor's thesis. The aim is to gain new information on how employees' perceptions differ on the main concepts discussed in the theoretical part of the study and compare the discovered categories with the existing theory and ultimately draw conclusions on how to utilize the information in practise.

Several studies have indicated that e.g. job satisfaction or perceived supervisor support have mediating effects between perceived organizational support and organizational commitment. However, these are not considered in this study, as it would be too comprehensive to include a mediating dimension to a Bachelor's degree thesis. Thus, this thesis focuses solely on examining the relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational commitment in a direct way. However, this

can be considered as a limitation to the study. Consequently, further studies could focus on the mediating effects.

The empirical part will focus on describing the research approach and methods, i.e. phenomenographic research approach, which focuses on describing the ways people perceive different aspects of the world. This will be followed by the introduction of the participants and procedures. Then, the discussion part will focus on comparing the empirical results with the theory base. The reliability and validity of the study will also be considered. Finally, conclusions are drawn.

## **1.1 Radisson Blu Seaside**

The commissioning party is Radisson Blu Seaside, which is one of the three Radisson Blu hotels situated in Helsinki. All in all, there are six Radisson Blu hotels in Finland. The Radisson Blu Seaside Hotel is located in the Ruoholahti business district. The hotel has 336 rooms which have all been renovated fairly recently. The rooms include Standard, Superior and Business Class rooms as well as five Junior Suites. The hotel also offers meeting services with 12 meeting rooms for up to 150 delegates. In addition, the hotel has a Coffee Bar, located in the lobby, Seaside Hall for Super breakfast and special events as well as Restaurant Viola, an Italian a la carte restaurant. The target customers for the hotel are mainly foreign business clients during the business season, as well as foreign and domestic individual and group travelers including families during the summer season.

In addition to offering a unique service experience for guests through the Yes I Can! service attitude and 100% Guest Satisfaction Guarantee, Radisson Blu is also environmentally aware of the effects of the accommodation industry on global warming. Thus, they have been very keen on adopting operations that are more environmentally friendly. Consequently, Radisson Blu Seaside was the first hotel in Helsinki to get the Nordic eco-label - the Swan Label.

As the research focuses on front-line employees, both front office and food and beverage department personnel were interviewed excluding housekeeping front-line

employees as they are outsourced and kitchen staff as they are not part of the front-line staff. The number of staff in these two departments is approximately 25 employees including front-line personnel and supervisors.

### **1.1.1 Radisson Blu**

Radisson Blu, a part of the Rezidor Hotel Group, is a first class full service hotel brand with such key differentiators as 100% Guest Satisfaction Guarantee and Yes I Can! spirit of service, which is also the company's vision. (The Rezidor Hotel Group – Radisson Blu)

The company's aim is to create value for all their stakeholders through respect, empowerment and profitable, sustainable growth. Rezidor has three core values consisting of being host, living trust and fighting Z-pirit. Being host means being professional, responsible and focused on qualitative service as well as delivering the brand promises and providing memorable experiences. They aim at living trust through honesty and integrity and by empowering employees at all levels as well as delivering what has been promised. Finally, fighting Z-pirit translates to being entrepreneurial, innovative, pro-active and quick. (Rezidor Fact Sheet - English)

In addition, responsible business operations are fundamental to the operations of Radisson Blu hotels. Within the Responsible Business program, Rezidor is dedicated to three main areas of responsibility, including taking responsibility for the health and safety of its employees and customers; respecting social and ethical issues in the company, as well as in the community and finally reducing the company's negative impact on the environment. (The Rezidor Hotel Group - 3 Pillars of Responsible Business)



## **2 Human Resources Issues in the Hospitality Industry**

Numerous studies have acknowledged the importance of human resources as a critical asset when considering aspects such as service quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty, competitive advantage and ultimately organizational performance in the context of the hospitality industry. (Kusluvan, Kusluvan, Ilhan & Buyruk 2010, 171.)

The human element is especially critical when considering the nature of services, i.e. that services are intangible; produced and consumed simultaneously; and that customers are present and interacting with the service providers (Kusluvan et al. 2010, 172). Therefore, the service provider plays a critical role as a part of the product or service provided by also representing the organization, and influencing the image developed of the organization (Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault 1990; Hartline and Jones 1996, in Kusluvan et al. 2010, 172). Moreover, understanding how to manage the critical asset of employees, which can ultimately lead to competitive advantage and high level of organizational performance, should be a crucial aspect to consider for managers in the hospitality industry (Bitner et al. 1990; Nickson, Baum, Losekoot, Morrison & Frochot 2002; Schneider 2003, in Kusluvan et al. 2010, 172-173).

During the recent years, there has been some development moving towards a strategic approach to HRM, i.e. that the organizations view their employees as strategic and valuable assets to be invested in, developed and empowered. The employees in return will show commitment, involvement, and motivation, which can ultimately lead to competitive advantage and sustained business success. (Storey 1995, in Kusluvan et al. 2010, 176.) However, a number of studies in Kusluvan et al. (2010, 177) have shown that in general, HRM practices in the hospitality industry are still considered to be highly unprofessional and underdeveloped when compared to other industries, i.e. the importance and contribution of effective HRM to organizational performance is still undervalued in the hospitality industry (Umbreit and Sweeney 1995, in Kusluvan et al. 2010, 192). Moreover, HRM is practiced in a way that does not develop employee commitment, satisfaction, or motivation (Kusluvan et al. 2010, 177). Consequently, studies show that the hospitality industry has a reputation for poor human resource practices and managing people in an authoritarian and exploitative way (Kusluvan et al.

177, 180). Still some exceptions do exist that do have highly effective HRM practices, e.g. Four Seasons, Kimpton Hotels, Marriott International, and Starbucks are listed in “100 best companies to work for” in various business magazines (Kusluvan et al. (2010, 180).

Numerous studies show that hospitality employees feel that they are undervalued and that their efforts are not recognized, respected, or rewarded accordingly (Kusluvan et al. 2010, 198). Kusluvan (2003a, in Kusluvan et al. 2010, 198-199) suggests that the low status connected with hospitality jobs explains this partially. Moreover, Kusluvan et al. (2010, 198) point out that poor employment conditions and HRM practices are the second part influencing the employees’ feelings of inferiority. Consequently, Kusluvan et al. (2010, 198) point out that by expressing appreciation, recognition, and respect; satisfaction, commitment, and performance can in return be increased. Especially, managers and supervisors perform a key role as representatives of the organization in recognizing and respecting employees and their efforts (Kusluvan et al. 2010, 199).

The concepts of “service culture” and “service climate” indicate how HRM should be practiced effectively by an organization in the hospitality industry. Grönroos (1990, in Kusluvan et al. 2010, 181-182) defines service culture as “a culture where an appreciation for good service exists, and where giving good service to internal and, ultimately, external customers is considered a natural way of life and one of the most important norms by everyone.” The definition of service climate states it as “employees’ perception that (a) practices and procedures were in place to facilitate the delivery of excellent service, and (b) management rewarded, supported, and expected excellent service” (Schneider and Bowen, in Kusluvan et al. 2010, 182).

Both of the definitions imply to the reciprocative nature of service delivery, i.e. that the organization and management are expected to enable the employees to perform their jobs as well as to communicate what is expected of the employees, and as the service is delivered, the employees can expect recognition of their input accordingly. Ultimately, this will create a chain of events where the employees will perform for the good of the organization as they recognize that they will be compensated by the organization according to their efforts.

When discussing the issues concerning HRM practices in the hospitality industry, the concepts of perceived organizational support and affective organizational commitment are highly important to consider for managers. As pointed out by Kusluvan et al. (2010, 171-199), there are critical issues to deal with when considering the HRM practices in the hospitality industry. Focusing on strategic HRM, including POS and AC, will potentially lead to positive outcomes for the organization as well as the employees.

### 3 Organizational Support Theory

The concept of perceived organizational support is of high interest to this study as a crucial part of employee-employer relationships as well as a part of strategic HRM. Numerous studies have applied the widely recognized definition by Eisenberger et al. (2001, 42), who define perceived organizational support as "an experience-based attribution concerning the benevolent or malevolent intent of the organization's policies, norms, procedures and actions as they affect employees."

Moreover, perceived organizational support is defined by using organizational support theory as the basis, which suggests that "in order to meet socioemotional needs and to assess the organization's readiness to reward increased efforts, employees form general beliefs concerning how much the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being" (Eisenberger et al. 1986; Shore & Shore 1995; in Rhoades, Eisenberger & Armeli 2001, 825.), i.e. employees perceive that the organization's evaluations of them and treatment towards them are consistently favorable or unfavorable to a high or low degree (Eisenberger et al. 1986, 501). Consequently, Shore and Tetrick (1991, in Junak 2007, 2) note that POS is a response to the organization as a whole, i.e. that POS is influenced by e.g. the organization's policies and procedures.

#### 3.1 Related Concepts

Psychological contracts are presented as a similar, yet distinct employee-employer relationship to perceived organizational support (Aselage & Eisenberger 2003, 491). The two concepts are also suggested to be interdependent (Aselage & Eisenberger 2003, 491). Both organizational support theory (OST) and psychological contract theory (PCT) are based on social exchange theories (Blau 1964; Homans 1974, in Aselage & Eisenberger 2003, 491), i.e. employee's increase their loyalty and effort towards the organization in relation to the level that the organization is perceived to be willing to reciprocate these efforts with desirable material and socioemotional resources (e.g. Levinson 1965, in Aselage & Eisenberger 2003, 491-492).

PCT focuses more on the specific obligated resources owed by the employee as well as the organization to each other (Rousseau 1989, 1995, Morrison & Robinson 1997, in

Aselage & Eisenberger 2003, 492). Perceived failure by the organization to fulfil these obligations to the employee, i.e. contract breach, would possibly lead to negative results for the organization, e.g. dissatisfaction and consequently lowered level of performance as the employee's perceived obligations to the organization would decrease (Aselage & Eisenberger 2003, 492, Coyle-Shapiro & Kressler 2002, and Morrison & Robinson, in Aselage & Eisenberger 2003, 496). However, when these contracts would be fulfilled, the norm of reciprocity would suggest that the employee would fulfil one's contractual obligations to the organization accordingly, thus, resulting in positive outcomes for the organization (Aselage & Eisenberger 2003, 497).

OST then focuses more on the norm of reciprocity, POS and its consequent result – a generalized felt obligation, i.e. when employees perceive that the organization offers them high level of support, they are likely to reciprocate this support by increasing their efforts in order for the organization to reach its goals. (Aselage & Eisenberger 2003, 492, 494) Moreover, Aselage and Eisenberger (2003, 494) point out that felt obligation; affective commitment and performance-reward expectancy would contribute to high performance by the employees.

The focus of the study will be on organizational support theory and consequently perceived organizational support as a number of studies have indicated to the positive effect of POS on AC.

### **3.2 Perceived Organizational Support (POS)**

As employers are concerned with committed employees, so are the employees concerned with the commitment of the organization towards them (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002, 698). The concept of social exchange, which “involves a series of interactions that generate obligations” (Emerson 1976, in Cropanzano & Mitchell 2005, 874) and those “interactions are usually seen as interdependent and contingent on the actions of another person” (Blau 1964, in Cropanzano & Mitchell 2005, 874), has to be considered when describing the motivations for employees to display unrequired, i.e. not contractually required, positive behaviors towards their organization (Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002, Settoon, Bennett, & Liden 1996, in Perryer, Jordan, Firms, & Trava-

glione 2010, 913). Social exchange theory by Blau (1964, in Perryer et al. 2010, 913) suggests that generally people will tend to respond positively when they feel that the other party will act favorably towards them, i.e. the employee will reciprocate in a positive manner benefiting the organization when the organization has acted in positive way towards their employees (Bateman & Organ 1983, Eder 2008, in Perryer et al. 2010, 913). Moreover, Blau (1964, in Eisenberger et al. 1986, 501) suggests that “POS would be influenced by the frequency, extremity and judged sincerity of statements of praise and approval.”

In addition, Gouldner’s (1960, in Cropanzano & Mitchell 2005, 876) reciprocity theory, i.e. “reciprocity as interdependent exchanges”, should be discussed as the norm of reciprocity is presented as the basis of employee-employer relationships, i.e. when favorable treatment of one is returned by the other (Eisenberger 2002, 698). Eisenberger et al. (2001, 42) suggest that the obligation to reciprocate received benefits would also help to strengthen interpersonal relationships. POS would also increase AC to the organization by meeting needs for e.g. esteem and affiliation, which should ultimately lead to social identification, i.e. “the incorporation of organizational membership and role status into social identity” (Armeli, Eisenberger, Fasolo & Lynch 1998, in Rhoades et al. 2001, 825), which is considered to be an important part of AC (e.g. Allen & Meyer 1996, Mowday, Steers & Porter 1979, in Eisenberger et al. 2001, 50).

However, Eisenberger et al. (2001, 50) suggest that employees’ responsiveness to the reciprocity norm has influence on how employees differ in their reciprocation of favorable treatment, i.e. their perception of the organization’s favorable treatment differs according to their perception. Consequently, also the level of affective commitment and the final outcome differ according to employees’ responsiveness to the reciprocity norm.

In addition, the concept of felt obligation, i.e. “a prescriptive belief regarding whether one should care about the organization’s well-being and should help the organization reach its goals”, is essential when discussing POS (Eisenberger et al. 2001, 42). Eisenberger et al. (2001, 42-43, 48) indicated that POS would be positively related to employees’ felt obligation to care about the organization, its welfare and to help the or-

ganization reach its goals, i.e. felt obligation would be satisfied through greater affective organizational commitment and greater efforts to support the organization (Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli & Lynch 1997, Eisenberger et al. 1986, Shore & Shore 1995, in Eisenberger et al. 2001, 42). They indicated that felt obligation would act as a mediator to strengthen affective commitment, i.e. POS would contribute to AC through a reciprocation process. Moreover, Eisenberger et al. (1986, 503) suggest that POS would increase an employee's expectancy that by putting in greater effort to reach organizational goals, one will be rewarded.

Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002, 698) suggest that POS is considered as an assurance that the organization will provide financial and emotional support to employees when needed to face the challenges presented by their job. They also suggest that POS is developed when employees' often personify the organization and its agent's actions towards them (Levinson 1965, in Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002, 698). Thus, employees connect their favorable or unfavorable treatment by supervisors, the representatives of the organization, as an indication that the organization either favors or disfavors them. As supervisors act as organizational agents, their favorable treatment to employees, should thus contribute to POS (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002, 698).

Social exchange theorists also suggest that when organizational rewards and favorable job conditions, including e.g. pay and job enrichment, are divided to employees, they feel that they are more valued and thus this contributes more to POS. This is the case especially if the employees feel that these are voluntary actions from the organization rather than regulated by external constraints, such as union negotiations. (Eisenberger et al. 1986, Eisenberger et al. 1997, Shore & Shore 1995, in Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002, 698.) Brinberg and Castell (1982, in Eisenberger et al. 1986, 501) also point out that rewards, such as pay and influence over organizational policies, would be perceived as the organization's positive evaluations of the employee and would consequently affect POS.

The core idea of POS is then that the employee has a felt obligation or a need to reciprocate perceived positive organizational actions in a positive manner. The next chap-

ters will look at the antecedents of POS, i.e. which organizational actions contribute to the development of POS, as well as the possible outcomes of POS, including AC.

### **3.2.1 Antecedents of POS**

There are several antecedents of POS, including "(1) perceptions of the organization, such as justice and politics, (2) job conditions, (3) supervisor support, (4) personality, and (5) human resource (HR) practices" (Allen, Shore & Griffeth 2003, 100). The focus from the antecedents will be on HR practices as with Wayne, Shore & Liden (1997, in Allen et al. 2003, 100).

Allen et al. (2003, 100) suggest that POS is positively related to commitment. Researches by e.g. Huselid (1995) and Shaw, Delery, Jenkins & Gupta (1998, in Allen et al. 2003, 102) have argued that supportive organizational practices, which signal investment in employees and contribute in their development, should be important in contributing to individual POS. Consequently, the results by Allen et al. (2003, 114) indicated that when HR practices are perceived as supportive by employees, there will be an increase in POS, which will lead to affective commitment as the employees perceive that the organization supports and cares for them.

Consequently, Allen et al. (2003, 100, 102) suggest that employee perceptions of supportive organizational practices that imply investment in employees, appreciation of their contributions, and are discretionary rather than obligated, should be positively related to the development of POS. The HR practices suggested by Allen et al. (2003, 100, 102) are participation in decision making, fairness of rewards and growth opportunities. Eisenberger (2003, in Junak 2007, 3) however, suggests that the main factors contributing to POS are favorable discretionary treatment, effectively communicated upper management support, supervisor support and monitored procedural justice. Moreover, according to organizational support theory three forms of perceived favorable treatment received from the organization should increase POS. The highest contributor should be fairness (e.g. procedural justice, perceived organizational politics), followed by supervisor support and organizational rewards and job conditions. (Eisen-



berger et al. 1986, in Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002, 699-701.) Consequently, this would also suggest to the crucial role of HR practices as an antecedent of POS.

### **3.2.2 Outcomes of POS**

The main focus of the possible outcomes of POS in this thesis will be on affective organizational commitment mainly on the basis of the reciprocity norm, i.e. POS should first create an obligation for the employee to have the organization's best interest and welfare in mind, which should then result in enhancing employee's affective commitment to the personified organization. (Eisenberger et al. 2001; Foa & Foa 1980; in Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002, 701.)

Other outcomes of high POS presented by Eisenberger (2003, in Junak 2007, 3-4) include reduced tardiness, absenteeism, turnover, and negative reactions to job stress, e.g. negative mood and emotionality. Moreover, Eisenberger (2003, in Junak 2007, 4) found that high POS increased inrole and extra-role job performance. Other consequences with strong relationships with POS presented by Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002, 709) include job satisfaction, positive mood at work, desire to stay and turnover intentions.

Tumwesigye (2010, 943) presented that Eisenberger et al. (1986) and Eisenberger, Fasolo and Davis-LaMastro (1990) discussed perceived organizational support by noting that employees who perceive that their organization offers them support and cares for their well-being are less likely to express negative behavior and in turn more likely to exert greater effort to achieve organizational goals. Moreover, Eisenberger et al.'s (1986, in Tumwesigye 2010, 943-944) organizational support theory indicates that "if employees perceive more support from the organization, they are likely to develop more positive attitudes towards the organization."

On the other hand, Allen et al. (2003, in Tumwesigye 2010, 944) and Wayne et al. (1997, in Junak 2007, 13) suggested that when employees do not perceive support, they are likely to express withdrawal behavior, e.g. intentions to leave the organization. These outcomes are possible subjects for further research.

According to meta-analytic results by Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002, 709) affective commitment had a strong, positive relationship with POS. It also had the strongest link to POS (Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002, 710). This would indicate strongly to the reciprocity norm, i.e. employees are highly likely to return favorable treatment, such as caring by the organization, by increasing their emotional bond to the organization (Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002, 710). Other consequences with a strong relationship with POS included desire to remain, turnover intentions, job satisfaction, and positive mood at work (Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002, 710).

Mediational study by Wayne et al. (1997, in Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002, 710) indicated that POS mediated the relationship of HR practices with affective commitment as well as turnover intentions. Moreover, Rhoades et al. (2001, in Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002, 710) found that POS had a positive relationship to temporal changes in affective commitment. Their conclusion suggested that POS leads to affective commitment.

Eisenberger (2003, in Junak (2007, 4-5) noted that POS will benefit the organization best when felt obligation and AC are directed towards organizational priorities, i.e. that employees are aware of these priorities and that they are effectively implemented by e.g. rewarding and recognizing employee loyalty and dedication. All in all, it is acknowledged that support contributes positively to an individual's level of well-being and psychological health (Jain and Sinha 2005, in Junak 2007, 5). Consequently, it can be suggested that POS plays a major role in contributing to the development of AC towards the organization, which will ultimately lead to positive outcomes for both the organization and its employees.

## 4 Organizational Commitment

Allen and Meyer (1990, 14) discovered that “commitment refers to a psychological state that binds the individual to the organization.”

The concept of organizational commitment has been researched a great deal, as there is much interest to understand the nature of employee dedication in an organizational setting (Eisenberger et al. 1990, in Junak 2007, 8). Mowday, Porter & Steers' (1982, in Swailes 2002, 159) definition of ‘attitudinal’ and ‘organizational’ commitment has been influential in numerous researches. Organizational commitment is also defined “as the relative strength of an individual’s identification with, and involvement in, an organization” (Mowday et al. 1979; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch and Topolnytsky 2002; in Perreer et al. 2010, 912).

This definition has however been criticized for presenting consequences of commitment rather than its motives. (Peccei & Guest 1993; Reichers 1985, in Swailes 2002, 159) Moreover, Swailes (2002, 160-161) suggests that a single universal definition of organizational commitment has not yet been accepted.

Randall and Cote (1991, in Swailes 2002, 156) suggested a model according to which employees can have various commitments at various levels. These commitments are not strictly limited to work. Cohen (1995) and Van Dyne, Graham and Dienesch (1994, in Swailes 2002, 157) point out that non-work commitments can be as or more important to individuals as commitments related to work.

Meyer and Allen (1987, in Allen & Meyer 1990, 3) on the other hand presented a model consisting of three approaches to commitment, affective, continuance and normative commitment. This approach has received the most support (Yoshimura 2003, 7). Allen and Meyer (1990, 1) have found out that affective and continuance commitments are empirically distinguishable but affective and normative seem to be related to each other. There is a vast support for their model (e.g. Dunham, Grube & Castaneda 1994; Hackett, Bycio & Hausdorf 1994; in Swaines 2002, 161).

Affective commitment was defined by Meyer and Allen (1997, in Tumwesigye 2010, 942-943) as “an emotional attachment to an organization; a strong belief in, and acceptance of the organizations goals and values which results in willingness to exert optimal effort to achieve the organizations goals”.

Perryer et al. (2010, 913) refined the definition of affective commitment (AC) as “an attachment based on a sharing of values with other members of the organization” while they defined continuance commitment to be “based on the perception that an employee has no realistic choice or viable alternatives other than to remain with the organization.”

Allen and Meyer (1990, in Tumwesigye 2010, 943) noted that “continuance commitment refers to the desire to maintain membership in an organization for fear of forfeiting valued rewards.” Finally they defined normative commitment to be “defined as an employee’s feeling of obligation to continue working for an organization.” (Meyer & Allen 1997, in Tumwesigye 2010, 943.)

It has been indicated that it is difficult to differentiate between affective and normative commitment, thus, only affective and continuance commitment would be considered (Allen and Meyer 1990, 1). However, as a number of studies (e.g. Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch & Rhoades 2001; and Rhoades et al. 2001) have focused mainly on affective commitment, this will be the main focus of this thesis as well. Moreover, the definition that will be applied in this study is the widely recognized three approach model to commitment by Meyer and Allen (1987, in Allen & Meyer 1990, 3).

It was suggested that all three approaches of commitment are components of attitudinal commitment. Employees can experience these psychological states varyingly, i.e. one might feel both affective and continuance commitment, while another might feel a strong normative commitment. (Allen & Meyer 1990, 3-4, 13) Moreover, Meyer and Allen (1997, in Swailes 2002, 161) point out that an employee’s commitment can be based on all three of the components, i.e. they are not mutually exclusive.

Each of the three components has different antecedents (Allen & Meyer 1990, 4). For affective commitment the strongest antecedent has been according to Meyer and Allen (1987, in Allen and Meyer 1990, 4) those work experiences that fulfill employees' psychological needs to feel comfortable in their role and in the organization as well as competent in the job. Continuance commitment on the other hand would develop on the basis of the level of investments employees make, e.g. the employee's job skills cannot be transferred easily to another organization, or a perceived lack of alternatives (Becker 1960, in Allen & Meyer 1990, 4). Allen and Meyer (1990, 13) concluded that even though their results indicated that the above mentioned antecedents for continuance commitment were valid, their relationship was not as strong as the one between affective commitment and its antecedents. Thus, as mentioned earlier in this thesis, the main focus of this research will be on affective organizational commitment rather than all three dimensions of organizational commitment as in a number of similar studies (e.g. Eisenberger et al. 2001; and Rhoades et al. 2001).

However, it has been challenged whether organizational commitment exists as a whole. Consequently, according to Gouldner (1960, in Swailes 2002, 162) "Commitment to the specific values of an organization is distinct from commitment to the organization as a whole, and . . . commitment to one organizational value is sometimes independent of another."

Becker (1992) and Becker and Billings (1993, in Swailes 2002, 162) have continued to research the reasons behind organizational commitment. Four patterns of commitment were suggested. Locally committed employees were committed to the supervisor or work group. Globally committed employees were committed to top management and the organization. The committed employees were both locally and globally committed while there were employees who were committed to neither. Hunt and Morgan (1994, in Swailes 2002, 162) on the other hand saw top management as the organization, i.e. that by being organizationally committed one would be committed to whatever the top management would be committed to.

As there are a number of reasons affecting organizational commitment, Swailes (2002, 162-163) suggests that an individual's organizational commitment can change accordingly when a change occurs to a particular aspect of the job or the organization.

However, Swailes still criticizes the relevance and value of committed employees to organizations. He points out that the labor market has become more dynamic since the 1970s, when the concept of organizational commitment became a relevant issue of research (Swailes 2002, 160). Swailes (2002, 160) challenges whether employers want turnover rather than tenure from their employees at a time when job cuts are a relevant organizational strategy to stay competitive.

However, Swailes (2002, 165) does acknowledge that commitment is an important goal for managers especially when considering strategic HRM, where employees are considered as a source of competitive advantage. Strategic HRM focuses on the core competencies and capabilities of employees as source of organizational performance (Hamel & Prahalad 1989, 1993, in Swailes 2002, 165). Swailes (2002, 165-166) suggests that employee commitment sustains the employee skills that cannot be copied by others in the short run and thus, are the source of competitive advantage for the organization. Strategic HRM and therefore organizational commitment as well, are especially important in the fields where successful service delivery is dependent on the behavior of committed front-line employees (Swailes 2002, 165-166). As previously discussed, it has been noted that strategic HRM is crucial for the hospitality industry to gain competitive advantage and business success.

#### **4.1 Job Involvement**

Both job involvement and affective commitment are considered as work-related attitudes, i.e. they are relative concepts (Hafer & Martin (2006, 2). They differ from each other in that whereas employees with high levels of job involvement identify with their job, employees with high levels of affective commitment identify more with their organization (Hafer & Martin 2006, 3), i.e. that employees with high job involvement can find a similar job in another organization as employees with high affective commitment are committed to the present employer and organization.

According to the model presented Blau and Boal (1987, in Hafer & Martin 2006, 3-4), employees fall into one of four categories according to their work-related attitudes. Institutional stars have high job involvement as well as high affective commitment. Lone wolves have high job involvement but low affective commitment. Corporate citizens have low job involvement but high affective commitment. Finally, apathetics are the employees who have low job involvement as well as low affective commitment. Apathetics are presented as the group, which is most disadvantageous for an organization. (Hafer & Martin 2006, 3-4.)

Hafer & Martin (2006, 14-15) studied how to move employees from Apathetic to the other groups. Their findings suggested that in order to do that managers should focus on increasing employees' affective commitment rather than job involvement. This would then result in positive changes in employee attitudes and ultimately outcomes as well (Hafer & Martin 2006, 16). Consequently, this would suggest that affective commitment is also a more relevant concept in this study rather than job involvement. Still, the focus of this study is more on employee perceptions rather employee attitudes.

## **4.2 Loyalty**

Loyalty has also been considered to be closely related to commitment. Mueller, Wallace and Price (1992, in Swailes 2002, 159-160) defined loyalty as "an affective response to and identification with an organization based on a sense of duty and responsibility". Mueller et al. (1992, in Swailes 2002, 160) suggest that loyalty and intent to stay, which is connected to commitment, are conceptually and empirically distinct.

Swailes (2002, 160) points out that the reasons behind an employee's decision to stay with the organization, reflect whether the employee is going to be loyal or not. This presents a problem as employees' loyalty is limited to the beholder's perception of it. Even though, loyalty represents similar antecedents as affective commitment, it is more focused on the employees' sense of duty rather than the reciprocative nature of POS and ultimately AC. Thus, considering AC is more relevant to this study than loyalty.

### 4.3 Affective Commitment (AC)

Employees with affective commitment, i.e. an emotional bond to their organization, are considered to have an increased involvement in the organization's activities. In addition, as they are highly likely to identify with the values of the organization, it is considered that they are more willing to pursue the organization's goals and more likely to stay with the organization. (Meyer & Allen 1991; Mowday et al. 1982; in Rhoades et al. 2001, 825; O'Driscoll and Randall 1999; in Junak, 2007, 9.) Rhoades et al. (2001, in Junak 2007, 9) have also suggested that employees' affective commitment to their organization is an important determinant of their dedication and loyalty.

Meyer and Allen (1997, in Rhoades et al. 2001, 825) suggested that work experiences including organizational rewards, procedural justice and supervisor support have strong associations as antecedents of AC. They also suggest that work experiences have a stronger relationship with AC rather than e.g. structural features of the organization or personal characteristics of employees.

Consequently, previous studies have found various outcomes for high levels of affective commitment. Mainly, a relationship between AC and turnover has been indicated but also relationships between AC and absenteeism as well as performance have been discovered (Mathieu & Zajac 1990; Meyer & Allen 1997; Mowday et al. 1982; in Rhoades et al. 2001, 825). Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002, 712) also acknowledge the effects of high level of affective commitment. It has been suggested that emotionally committed employees are likely to show higher levels of performance and reduced absenteeism. In addition, those employees are consequently less likely to leave the organization. (Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002, 712.)

As the industry issues concern with retaining skillful front-line employees, the focus will be on the connection and relationship of POS and AC, as previous studies have suggested that these concepts are connected with positive outcomes for both the employee as well as the organization by strengthening the employee-employer relationship from an emotional point of view.



## 5 Perceived Organizational Support and Affective Commitment

Numerous studies in Rhoades et al. (2001, 825) have found a strong association between POS and AC. Moreover, studies have concluded that POS and AC have similar antecedents. Still, the two concepts are empirically distinct. (Allen, Shore & Griffeth 1999, Eisenberger et al. 1986; in Rhoades et al. 2001, 825.)

Results by Rhoades et al. (2001, 832-833) indicated that POS had a strong positive relationship with AC. This has then been confirmed by Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002, 710). Moreover, Junak (2007, 1) suggests that organizations obtain favorable outcomes when employees perceive their treatment in the organization as favorable. Rhoades et al. (2001, 835) noted that employees who perceive that they are treated favorably are more likely to be affectively committed to the organization and in turn less likely to express negative behavior towards the organization, such as withdrawal. Eisenberger, et al. (1986, 503) indicate that “employees develop global beliefs concerning the degree to which their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being.” This would suggest that the global beliefs that employees form would be either positive or negative in a larger sense including both their contributions and welfare (Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002, 699), i.e. the employee would come to anticipate a degree of support from the organization in various situations, e.g. future illnesses, mistakes and superior performance (Eisenberger et al. 1986, 501).

Perryer et al. (2010, 912) suggest that creating a working environment that is positive and supporting, is one of the aspects that help to retain current employees. Perceived organizational support is included in this environment. Thus, the research focuses on the effect of the organizational environment, in this case POS, on an employee’s affective organizational commitment, as POS is considered to be a key predictor of affective organizational commitment (Eisenberger et al. 1986, Eisenberger et al. 1990, in Tumwesigye 2010, 943).

Moreover, the results by Rhoades et al. (2001, 832-833) indicated to the antecedent role of POS in the commitment process. Rhoades et al. (2001, 832) pointed out that changes in POS precede changes in AC, i.e. POS is an antecedent of AC and conse-

quently contributes to AC. This contribution by POS to AC should happen through the fulfillment of socioemotional needs, such as affiliation and emotional support (Armeli et al. 1998; Eisenberger 1986; in Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002, 701). According to the organizational support theory, POS should strengthen AC, which would result in reduced negative behavior, such as turnover, as employees' sense of belonging or emotional bond to the organization and identification with the organization increase. (Meyer & Allen 1991; Mowday et al. 1982; in Rhoades et al. 2001, 832) Moreover, Rhoades et al. (2001, 834) suggest that when employees perceive that the organization values their contributions and cares for their well-being, AC will increase and consequently this negative behavior will decrease.

Tumwesigye (2010, 943) indicates that in organizational settings, POS triggers affective commitment when there is a desire to repay benefits offered by the organization, i.e. POS increases AC partly by creating a felt obligation to care about organization's welfare (Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002, in Junak, 2007, 10).

According to Mowday et al. (1982, in Eisenberger et al. 1990, 51) affective attachment, the emotion-based view of organizational commitment, is influenced by personal characteristics, job features and work experiences, which in turn, affect the outcomes, such as job performance, absenteeism and turnover.

The norm of reciprocity by Gouldner (1960, in Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002, 698) is to be considered here as discussed earlier. It suggests that there is a moral obligation to reciprocate positive actions by the organization. In addition, it was suggested that especially positive discretionary actions by the organization that benefited the employee, were considered highly, i.e. the organization was seen to care about the employee's well-being (Eisenberger et al. 1990, 51).

A study presented by Eisenberger et al. (1990, 57) suggested that employees who perceived high support would express strong feelings of affiliation and loyalty to the organization. Additional studies also made similar findings resulting in greater emotional involvement (Buchanan 1974; Pearce & Porter 1986; and Steers 1977, in Eisenberger et al. 1990, 57). Other results indicated that that there was also strong exchange expectan-

cy, i.e. that organizational commitment is highly connected with social-exchange approach. Affective attachment would then increase employee's performance. Moreover, perceived organizational support would affect positively to both attitudinal and behavioral measures of affective attachment. (Eisenberger 1990, 57)

Both POS and AC have been found to have positive relations with organizational rewards. Consequently, it has been suggested that POS mediates the relationship between organizational rewards and AC. Eisenberger et al. (2001, in Rhoades et al. 2001, 827) suggest that "POS increases AC by creating an obligation to care about the organization's welfare."

Rhoades et al. (2001, 827) also suggested that "POS may also increase AC by incorporation of organizational membership and role status into social identity." Employees with high POS, will have a greater sense of purpose and meaning through their affective commitment to the organization (Junak, 2007, 21).

Junak (2007, 13) suggest that human resource practices might not have a direct impact on the outcomes of POS. However, communicating to the employees that the organization values and cares about their well-being and contributions could have favorable outcomes for both the organization and its employees (Wayne et al. 1997, in Junak 2007, 22). Still, Shore and Shore (1995, in Junak 2007, 22) noted that if an employee's history has indicated a lack of support, the benefits of establishing supportive HR practices will not show immediately.

Swales (2002, 165) suggests that despite the general assumption in the HRM literature that there is a positive correlation between organizational commitment and performance, aspects such as poor organizational policies, systems and poor management skills can prevent highly committed employees from converting their commitment into positive performance outcomes.

Ultimately, for an organization to have affectively committed employees, there has to be the right kind of antecedents (e.g HR practices and supervisor support) for POS to exist and consequently for AC to develop from that.

## **6 Empirical Study**

### **6.1 Perceptions as a part of phenomenography**

According to Uljens (1992, in Syrjälä, Ahonen, Syrjänen & Saari 1994, 117) a perception is an image of a phenomenon formulated through experience and thought. Inevitably, perceptions differ from person to person but the variation is in the content rather than quality. This variation of perceptions strives from experience rather than age. (Syrjälä et al. 1994, 114.) Häkkinen (1996, in Toivonen 2008, 26) points out that formulating perceptions can be considered a constructive action, i.e. the perceptions act as pre-perceptions that define how one will formulate perceptions in the future as well. (Syrjälä et al. 1994, 114.) Syrjälä et al. point to the role of interaction when perceptions are formulated, i.e. perceptions made by experts can have an effect on novices' perceptions, e.g. student-teacher relationship. (Vygotski 1934/1982, Carey 1985, in Syrjälä et al. 1994, 118.) However, the case could also be of employee-employer relationships, where perceptions could be developed in interaction.

As perceptions are considered to be dynamic, over time one can have various perceptions of a particular aspect as one's perception is changed. Perceptions are built through reflecting one's experiences of the surrounding environment. Consequently, a person is seen as a cognitive creature building perceptions of phenomena. This aspect is utilized in phenomenographic study, i.e. the study approach aims at direct interaction with the subjects. (Ahonen 1994, Toivonen 2008, 26.)

Consequently, the aim of this phenomenographic study is to discover how a particular group of people, i.e. front-line employees of Radisson Blu Seaside, perceive particular aspects of the world. The aim is to understand and to describe the varying perceptions as they are and ultimately give them meaning and categorize them (Ahonen 1994, in Kauppinen & Niemelä 2000, 10).

### **6.2 Phenomenography**

The approach of study is phenomenography, an approach that focuses on studying perceptions of a particular phenomenon. Phenomenographic study aims to answer

questions concerning thinking and learning (Marton 1988, in Toivonen 2008, 26). As mentioned earlier, the focus of the research approach is on the everyday thoughts of the subjects rather than discovering scientific truths (Häkkinen 1996, in Toivonen, 2008, 26). Moreover, phenomenography aims to research and describe how the surrounding world and people's experiences are built and expressed through people's perceptions, i.e the interest is not ultimately in what people think and experience, but instead on the various perceptions of people of a particular aspect of the world (Ahonen 1994, in Kauppinen & Niemelä 2000, 8; Mann).

The aim is to discover various ways to think when it comes to a particular aspect, i.e. to discover new individual information. The variation will be discovered from the phrases of the subjects. Those phrases entail meanings that are the various perceptions of a phenomenon. The research approach will then aim to depict, analyze and interpret the perceptions to enable the formulation of the key results as well as categorization. (Häkkinen 1996; Uljens 1989; in Toivonen 2008, 26-27.) The categorization should be based on the collected material (Toivonen 2008, 27). However, limitations on the analysis might be that the researcher must remain objective by keeping one's own experiences and any preconceptions or theories of the situation under study separate from the collected material (Sandberg 1997; in Mann).

### **6.3 Thematic interview**

The chosen method of study is qualitative as the aim of the study is to gain improved understanding of the complex research subject rather than to form generalizations on the matter (Martin 1996, 3). This will be done by collecting data from front-line employees of Radisson Blu Seaside through individual thematic interviews. The method chosen to gather empirical data, i.e. thematic interview, was chosen, as through interview, the researcher is better able to gain an idea of the thoughts, perceptions, experiences and feelings of the interviewee (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2010, 41). Especially in thematic interviews, which are semi-structured interviews, it is essential that the interviewees have experienced the situation themselves that is under research.

In phenomenographic research the aim of the interview process is discover new information as the interviewee will become conscious of one's perceptions on the aspect under study. The interview process enables direct interaction with the subject and provides opportunity to specify certain aspects with follow up questions. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2001, in Toivonen, 2008, 29.)

### **6.3.1 Participants and Procedure**

As the desired outcome of a phenomenographic analysis is variation in the ways the interviewees experience the phenomenon under study, purposive sampling is used (Cohen, Manion et al., 2000, in Reed 2006, 6). The aim of the purposive sampling approach is for the researcher to use one's own judgment to select 'critical cases' to the sample (Reed 2006, 6), i.e. for the researcher to actively select the most productive sample to obtain as much variation as possible in the experiences of the subjects (Martin 1996, 2; Mann). The basic group of the sample will be constructed of front-line employees of Radisson Blu Seaside.

The sample size was kept small consisting of six people to ensure a deep analysis of the material collected rather than finding a generalization of the population. The small size of the sample is also explained by the aspect that theoretical saturation, i.e. "when no additional data are being found... [and] the researcher becomes empirically confident that a category is saturated" (Glaser & Straus 1967, in Reed 2006, 6), is not necessarily applicable in a phenomenographic research as the aim is to study individuals' perceptions rather than to ensure that all data of the subject under study will be discovered (Reed 2006, 6). Still, the aim is to ensure enough variation exists in the data collected during the interviews (Reed 2006, 6). Trigwell (2000, in Reed 2006, 6) argues that the minimum amount of interviews would be between fifteen and twenty to ensure enough variation in the data. On the other hand, Dahlgren (1995, in Reed 2006, 6) suggests that as long as the variation is ensured, ten interviews should be enough to have enough variation. The adequacy of the number of interviews to ensure variation will be discussed later on.

The thematic interviews were based on five pre-determined questions and when necessary, they were followed by follow up questions for the interviewees to elaborate on their experiences. The interviews aimed at a discussion between the researcher and the interviewee, where the interviewee would be able to freely discuss and express ones' own perceptions.

The interviews took place during day time between 1pm and 6 pm. All of the interviews were conducted during October 2012. The interviews were conducted in various public places agreed upon by the both the interviewee and the researcher. Still, the aim was to ensure a quiet surrounding where the interviewee could express one's experiences and perceptions freely without interruption and fear of being overheard. Limitations of the time and place of the interviews will be discussed later on. All of the interviews were recorded with the permission of the interviewees to ensure accurate trans-literation. Time used for the interview was from twenty minutes to approximately forty minutes. The table below will indicate the basic group of the interviewees and will indicate also the time spent for the interview, as well as the department of the interviewee, either front office (FO) or the food and beverage (F&B).

Table 1. The basic group of subjects.

The ID of the interviewee	Time spent on the interview (minutes)	Department (FO/F&B)
I1	41	F&B
I2	41	F&B
I3	27	FO
I4	37	FO
I5	30	FO
I6	18	F&B
	average 32 minutes	FO/F&B 3/3

The other diversity criteria is only briefly presented to ensure anonymity of the interviewees. The age of the interviewees ranged from 20 to 35 years. There were two male and four female subjects. Moreover, all of the interviewees were Finnish nationals.

Moreover, the tenure of the interviewees ranged from approximately six months to five years. Tenure is considered later on in the study and it is divided in either short, under a year, or long, over a year. Two of interviewees had short tenure and four had long tenure.

The interviewees were given a general idea of the aspects under study when they were asked to participate in the interviews. Consequently, they had some time to prepare on the interview topic, if they wished to do so. The questions or statements of the interview focused on encouraging the interviewees to express their experiences and perceptions of the main concepts under study, i.e. perceived organizational support and affective organizational commitment. First, the interviewees were asked to reflect upon their experiences on how they have perceived organizational support. Then they were asked to reflect upon situations where they had experienced organizational support or situations where organizational support was lacking when it would have been needed. Finally, the interviewees were asked to reflect upon their commitment to the organization and its various levels.

One pre-interview took place to test the method and relevancy of the interview before the actual interviews. However, the pre-interviewee was not from the same line of work as the actual interviewees, which could be a limitation. Moreover, the aim of the pre-interview was to discover whether the statements or questions represented to the interviewees were understandable and would create conversation. Another limitation for the study is that the interviews took place in Finnish, the mother tongue of the interviewer and interviewees, and thus, something might have been lost in translation from the theoretical base and also from the material collected from the interviews.

#### **6.4 Phenomenographic analysis**

The interviews were gone through as soon as possible after the actual interviews. Transliteration was used to transform the interviews into written form. The transliteration, which consisted of 36 pages, focused mainly on the thematisation of aspects of the subject's experience that came up during the interviews. Full transliteration was



done from word to word, excluding pauses and irrelevant sounds. While doing the transliteration, reading and analyzing of the material begun.

Phenomenographic analysis is an inductive way of working from the data to the results, rather than constructing and then testing a hypothesis (Green 2005, in Mann). Consequently, the material was described. Then, the material was categorized through themetisation by felecting on the essential concepts from the theory base as well as discovering new categories. This was followed by the categories being combined again with the aim to describe qualitative similarities and differences across the transcripts (Mann).

When the material was combined again, it was essential to discover if there were similarities, abnormalities, regularities or normal variations between the categories. Consequently, the material was interpreted to gain comprehensive view of the subject under research and to understand the social implications of the phenomena under research.

## 7 Results

As mentioned before, the interviewees were encouraged to speak freely of their perceptions and experiences after the topic of discussion was presented. Some follow up questions were presented when necessary. Consequently, as the objective was to obtain thorough answers from the interviewees, some of the paragraphs presented as examples from the interviews are quite elaborate explanations on the subjects' perceptions rather than short dialogues.

### 7.1 Aspects perceived as POS

The table below will give a summary of the aspects perceived as POS that were discovered from the interviews. Moreover, the interviewees are divided according to their primary place of work or unit, i.e. either front office (FO) or food and beverage department (F&B). Table 2 entails all aspects that were perceived to contribute to POS either in a positive or negative sense.

Table 2. Aspects perceived as POS categories.

Aspects perceived as POS	FO	F&B	Total
Support in sick leaves		1	1
Support in mistakes	2	2	4
Organizational rewards, e.g. pay and influence over organizational policies		2	2
Favorable job conditions, e.g. job enrichment	1	2	3
Open communication	1		1
Equality		1	1
Effectively communicated upper management support	2	2	4
Personality		1	1
Supervisor support	3	2	5
Growth opportunities	3	3	6
Favorable discretionary treatment	2	3	5
Participation in decision making	2	3	5
Balancing work and private life	2	2	4
Support from colleagues or the work community	3	2	5
Flexibility		1	1

The different aspects perceived as POS by the interviewees are discussed more thoroughly below. Moreover, aspects where POS was needed, but lacking are also discussed. The aspects are presented as categories that are partly reflected on the theory base and partly discovered from the transcripts by the researcher. Finally, the categories are placed under larger categories that describe the group of subcategories in a hierarchical form. The interviewees are indicated by the previously presented indicators I1, I2 etc. to ensure anonymity and when necessary the researcher is indicated by the letter A according to the researcher's first name. The categories are discussed by presenting paragraphs as examples from the interviews in Finnish, as the interviews took

place on the mother tongue of both the researcher and the interviewees, followed by translations in English made by the researcher.

### 7.1.1 Personified support

Personified support is first of the main categories discovered from the transcripts. Table 3 below will list the subcategories collected under the main heading.

Table 3. Personified support as a source of POS.

Personified support	Supervisor support
	Personality
	Support from colleagues or the work community
	Effectively communicated upper management support

**Supervisor support** produced a lot of answers. However, only two of the interviewees considered that in this case supervisor support contributed positively to POS. One of the interviewees considered supervisor feedback as support.

I3: Oon mä silleen just tai esimies tullu pari kertaa just toimistosta sanoon, et toi oli hyvä, ku se kuulee siitä.

[I have or my supervisor has come a couple of times from the office to say that hey that was good, when he/she hears about it.]

The other interviewee focused more on personifying organizational support to one's supervisor as well as pointing out that the supervisor can be very encouraging in doing things independently.

I4: Mä ainaki ite koen sen niin, että yrityksen tuki on oman esimiehen tukee.

[At least I experience it so that organizational support is the support of one's own supervisor.]

I4: Mut muuten siis mullahan itselläni on hirveen rohkaseva esimies. Et rohkasee tekeen kaikkee ja on silleen, et saa aktiivisesti tehdä ite niin paljon ku haluu, et tuol ei tarvi

niinku ite jäädä miettiin et mitähän mä nyt tekisin... Sit taas, joskus sitä kaipais vähän semmost ohjausta, että hei, et sä oot keskittynyt vähän liikaa tähän juttuun, että haluisit sä vaikka opetella tätä juttuu.

[But otherwise I have a very encouraging supervisor. He/She encourages to do everything and so on that you can actively do as much as you want that you don't have to stay and think what you could do now... Then again sometimes one would need a little bit of guidance that hey, you have now focused too much on this thing, would you like to learn this thing.]

However, the other answers, by both employees of F&B and FO departments, ranged from the supervisor not understanding the content of their work, to not being interested in helping when needed.

I5: Sit mä kysyin just tuolta esimieheltä, et jos se haluis tulla tekemään niinku yövuoron meijän kanssa, et se näkis vähän, et mitä siellä tehdään ja sit ois helpompi ku iteki tietäis, et voisko tehdä jotain lisää tai tehdäänks me jotku asiat väärin. Mut ei se koskaan tullu tekemään niin siinä oli vähän ehkä sellanen, et tuntu, et vaikka mä pyysin ihan suoraan, et jos vois tulla tekemään ja se lupas, et se tulee tekemään, ni ei kuitenkaan tullu. Niin se oli, se oli tosi ikävää.

[Then I asked that supervisor if he/she wanted to come and do a night shift with us that he/she would see what is done there and thus it would be easier if I would know if there was something I could do more or if we're doing some things wrong. But she never came to do it so there was a kind of feeling that even though I asked directly that if he/she could come and do it and he/she promised that he/she would come and he/she did not come. It was really unpleasant.]

Moreover, aspects such as being interested in the career paths and development of one's employees were perceived to be neglected.

I5: Se on vähän niin, että esimiehelläkin on niin kiire tai sit sitä ei kiinnosta tai ajatteleeks se sit, ettei sitä hirveesti kiinnosta sen työntekijöiden niinku se kehittymismahdollisuudet. Tottakai sillä on jotain niitä omia juttuja, mitä se aina sanoo, et oppikaa uutta [asioita] siellä hotellin sisällä, mut se ei oo ylenemistä eikä tällasta.

[It's like so that the supervisor is so busy or then he/she is not interested or does he/she think that he/she is not very interested in his/hers employee's possibilities to develop. Of course he/she has some own things that he/she always says that learn new [things] inside the the hotel but it's not promotion or anything like that.]

I4: Ilmaissu siitä niinku esimiehelle, et hei mä oon nyt hakenu tällast paikkaa ja tämmöst paikkaa, et niin mitä mieltä sä oot. Et joo ne ois sulle tosi hyviä, et tsemppiä, et onnee vaan hakuun. Mut ei oo missään vaiheessa niinku, et hei mä voisin, vaikka soittaa tonne ja suositella sua ja niinku ne soittaa mulle ja kysyy multa, et onks tää hyvä tyyppi. Et no, se on ollu mulle silleen ainaki vähän pettymys.

[I have expressed it to my supervisor that hey, I have applied to this and this kind of place. What do you think? That yes they would be really good for you, good luck. But at no point like that hey, I could call there and recommend you and they will call me and ask me if this person is ok. Well that has been a little bit of a disappointment to me.]

In addition, lack of supervisor support was mentioned in doing daily routines and during rush hours, i.e. that it was perceived that there was a need for the supervisor to be physically present rather than on call, especially when the supervisor should be up to date on situation of the daily reservations.

I2: No, periaatteessa se, että omalta osalta on tietenki se, että mäki oon tottunu siihen, et esimiehet myös itse tulee hätätilanteessa osallistumaan ja tulee siihen apuun. Et siinä ehkä se apu ja tuki vois olla niinku ehkä parempi niinku tulla siihen apuun ku vaan istuu siellä. Osallistua niinku fyysiseen työhön. Ja sit aina pitäs olla soittamassa ja sit on soittamassa, ku oikeen kiire rysähtää niin ei ees käydä katsomassa välttämättä, et miten se tilanne, et tullaan vähän kattomaan, et miltäs täällä näyttää.

[Well, basically that for my part of course that I'm used to it that also supervisors take part and come to help when there is an emergency. That there help and support could be better, like come to help rather than just sit there. Take part in like physical work. And then you always have to call and when it's really busy, they don't even necessarily come and see that how the situation that they come and take and take a look how the situation is.]

Other aspects mentioned were lack of motivation, not being able to handle critique, lack of focus, e.g. there should be more focus on doing the work schedule, as well as delivering what has been promised.

Only one person mentioned **personality** when considering POS. Allen et al. (2003, 100) also point to personality as an antecedent for POS. However, the perception was

mentioned in a negative sense, i.e. that receiving POS is dependent on the person rather than the organization.

I1: Joo, et se [tuki] on enemmän niinku henkilöistä kiinni tuntuu tällä hetkellä meidän yrityksessä se. Et ei ehkä oo sellasta yrityksen puolesta jotain toimintamallia tai ainakaan se ei tuu esille.

[ Yeah, that it [support] depends more on the person it feels like that in our organization at the moment. That maybe there isn't some standard model from the organization or at least it doesn't show.]

The category of **support from colleagues or work community** was also discovered during the interviews as the interviewees perceived it to be a part of POS. All except one of the interviewees mentioned it as a positive contributor to POS.

I6: Enemmän koen, et se tulee vuorossa olevilta kollegoilta ja niiltä mä sitä enemmän lähtisin hakeenki, ku sitte lähtisin esim. esimieheltä kyseleen mitään. Että kyllä ensikädessä pyydän apua niiltä, jotka on samaan aikaan vuorossa. Silleen, et kaikki tsemppaa toisiaan, et siel on tosi hyvä yhteishenki. Et siinä mielessä niinku tuetaan toisia.

[I experience that it comes more from the colleagues who are working the same shift and from them I would seek it rather than going to ask anything from e.g. the supervisor. That yeah first hand I will ask help from them who are working at the same time. Like that everyone are encouraging each other, that there is a good team spirit. So in that sense we support each other.]

I4: Kaikist tärkeimpänä mä iten koen mun kollegoiden tuen silleen, että mä tiedän, että mä voin luottaa, et meillä ei silleen niinku osotella sormea.

[I experience that the most important is the support from my colleagues that I know that I can trust that we don't point fingers.]

Only one person mentioned colleagues as a negative contributor to POS. However, the question was only of one colleague. Still, even one colleague can potentially have an effect on the entire work community or at least to one person's wellbeing at work.

I2: Onhan tietenki kollegoillakin väliä. Jos ensimmäisenä aamulla sulla on vastassa kollega, jonka naamasta jo näkee, että kaikki ei oo menny putkeen. Joka kerta, ku sä oot työs hoitanu ja oot katsonu, että tarvitaan ja, että mikä kaikki on hänen mielestään hyvän laadun takeeksi, ja sit sä saat kuitenkin seuraavana päivänä kuulla, et joku asia on

puuttunu tai on kirjotettu vihkoon, niin en mä tiä niin se on, ettei mikään tavallaan riitä sun kollegalle.

[Of course colleagues matter as well. If the first thing in the morning is that you are greeted with a colleague whose face shows that something has gone wrong. Every time that you have taken care of and looked what is needed and that everything according to him/her to ensure quality, and still the next day you hear that something has been missing or it has been written down. Well, I don't know, it's like that nothing is enough for your colleague.]

**Effectively communicated upper management support** was considered to be lacking when considering POS by everyone who mentioned it, both by F&B and FO employees. Moreover, many of the interviewees wished more input from especially the upper management as they were considered to be fairly invisible in the everyday work of the interviewees.

I5: Et se on ehkä hankalaa sit saada sieltä ylempää hirveesti palautetta, ... Et joskus tietysti jossain, ku meillä on niitä meetingejä niin niissä sit sanotaan, et hyvä homma, mut ei kyllä silleen hirveesti henkilökohtasta kiitosta hirveesti tuu.

[That it's maybe difficult to then get a lot of feedback from high up there, ... That sometimes of course somewhere when we have those meetings then in those it is said that good job but there isn't that much of personal thank yous.]

### 7.1.2 Organizational policies

The second of the main categories discovered was organizational policies. Table 4 lists the aspects from that category perceived as POS.



Table 4. Organizational policies as a source of POS.

Organizational policies	Support in mistakes
	Organizational rewards
	Favorable job conditions
	Open communication
	Equality
	Flexibility
	Favorable discretionary treatment
	Participation in decision making

The perceptions and experiences varied a great deal on **support in mistakes**. The interviewees working in the reception had perceived support when considering the aspect of mistakes. However, the interviewees working in the F&B department had not perceived that support in mistakes would affect POS. Moreover, they perceived a lack of positive or constructive support in comparison to the amount of negative feedback.

I2: No, en mä koe sitä, että se ois kauheen rakentava palaute vaan se on aina se on se, että periaatteessa etitään aina se syyllinen tavallaan, että sä jos rakentavasti niin en mä koe, et se ois rakentava palaute vaan se on täysin negatiivinen palaute.

[Well, I don't experience it that it would be very constructive feedback, instead it is, it always is that basically the guilty one is sought that like who has done it. If it would be constructive then no I don't think that it's would be a constructive, instead it's completely negative feedback.]

Interviewees in the FO department perceived feedback to be constructive rather than negative. Moreover, making mistakes were seen as a natural way to learn as it is a hands on job.

I3: Virheitähän tulee tietty välillä, mut sit ne on niinku opetettu kyllä noi kokeneemmatkin ja ihan niinku saman ikäset mut pitempään olleet, ketkä tiesi ne. Ne on niinku opettanu ne ja sanonu, et miten pitää tehdä.

[Of course mistakes happen once in a while, but then they have been taught by those who have more experience and just like by those who are the same age but who have been for longer and who knew. They have like taught and said how to do.]

**Organizational rewards** were perceived in various ways as well. Only one person from the F&B department considered that benefits were essential when considering POS.

I6: Henkilökuntaedut ja tämmöset, ne on mun mielestä aika iso juttu tossa noin.

[Staff benefits and things like that, they are in my opinion a pretty big thing like that.]

The other interviewee, also from the F&B department, mentioning organizational rewards felt that he/she was lacking the support needed of this aspect, both when considering influence over organizational policies and pay.

I2: Et eihän esimerkiksi mullakaan oo koskaan mitään toimistopäiviä merkattu vaan aina sit mulla laitettu, että vuorossa sit hoidat sen mitä kerkiät suurin piirtein. Et ajatellaan esimerkiksi, et toteuman laitto menee ihan tost noin vaan, et eihän siihen kulu aikaa.

[That for example I have never had marked office days but it has just been marked that pretty much you do it during the shift what you can. That they think for example that marking already done work shifts is done just like that so that it takes no time.]

I2: Palkka on myös yks asia joka vaikuttaa siihen. Et oon esimies nimikkeellä ja teen hirveesti suorittavaa työtä niin en mä koe, et siinä kohtaa motivoi. Sit on sama mennä ekstraks ja tarjoilijana saa vielä parempaa licksaa. On hirveesti suorittavaa työtä ja palkassa se ei sit näy. Työmäärä on aika paljon niin kyllä sitä toivois, et se huomioitais siinä palkassa.

[Pay is also one thing affecting it. That I'm under the title supervisor and I do a lot of operational work so I don't experience that it's very motivating. Then it's all the same to be an extra and a waiter to get better pay. There's a lot of operational work and it doesn't show in the salary. The work load is quite heavy so you would hope, it would be taken into account in the salary.]

The employees of the FO department did not mention the aspect of organizational rewards in either positive or negative sense.

**Favorable job conditions** were mentioned by two of the interviewees and especially job enrichment was mentioned as a positive contributor to POS. One interviewee from the FO department considered the fact that there had been encouragement to develop

oneself, learn more and take more responsibility, a very important aspect when considering POS.

A: Onks siellä muuten jotain tärkeitä sulle itelle sun työssä tai sun elämässä niinku että mitä sä koet että ois otettu huomioon?

[Is there something important to you in your work or in your life that you feel that it has been taken into consideration?]

I5: No ehkä se, että mä tai siis haluan ainaki oppii uutta ja siihen on aika hyvin. Siihen on ihan rohkastu siihen, että tota halua oppii uutta ja halua enemmän vastuualuetta.

[Well maybe it that I always want learn more and that has been quite good. It has been encouraged that you want to learn more and you want more responsibility.]

However, the interviewee also mentioned that when being a trainee he/she had been bounced from one department to the other and did not wish for that to happen again. Moreover, it was mentioned that if work would be done in other departments, it would be on his/her conditions. Still, he/she was ready to help other departments when necessary.

I5: Mut ehkä se ois nytte, ku on kuitenkin on kunnan työntekijä niin se on eri asia. Ei se nyt noin vaan, et tottakai menee auttamaan, mut ei se oo enää, että nyt meet tonne ja nyt meet tonne. Siis ihan mielellään autan muita osastoja... mut sillon harjottelijana kaikki oli uutta ja sillon oli ehkä enemmän innokkaampi. Et nythän mä en enää oo hirveen innostunu, et jos menee blokkaan.

[But maybe it would be now when you're a proper employee so that it's a different thing. It's not just like that that of course you will go and help but it's not anymore that now you go there and now go there. Like I like to help other departments... but as an intern everything was new and then you were probably more excited. That now I'm not very excited anymore if I go and collect dishes.]

The other interviewee from the F&B department focused more on the chance of being able to learn new things and tasks.

I6: Joo kyl ja siis, että saa kokeilla kaikkia erilaisia asioita. Tehä eri noita, opetella eri puolii siinä hotellissa ja muut tällasta.

[Yeah, that you get to try out different things. Do different those, learn different sides in the hotel and so on.]

On the other hand, one interviewee from the F&B department felt that there had been no support from favorable job conditions, i.e. that the content of the work had not been what had been promised. There had been no opportunities to challenge or develop oneself.

I2: Ettei aina niinku oo vaan sitä rakentamista ku en mä koe, et se on niinku ihan täysin mun juttu.

[That there is always just setting up and I don't feel that it is like totally my thing.]

I2: Esimieski sano, et vois olla sitä aikaa, et voi niinku ottaa niihin vanhoihin asiakkaisiin esimerkiksi yhteyttä ja kutsua vaikka sinne niin mitään tämmöstä ei ole tapahtunut, ... Siitä vaan puhuttiin ja sit se jotenki jäi.

[The supervisor also said that there could be time that you could for example contact old customers and invite them there so nothing like this has happened, ... It was just discussed and then it just was forgotten.]

Moreover, the interviewee had perceived there had been instances that he/she had been left with too much workload and responsibility to be able to handle the situation.

I2: No, periaatteessa se on ollu niin, että tota pahimmat päivät on ollu silleen, että Violassa on ollu kaks vakituista ja siihen yks ekstra lisänä ja sit on vielä M&E puolella ollu uus poika. Niin niitten yhteen sovittaminen ja sit varsinki, jos Violassa on hirvee kiire niin miten siitä tilanteesta selviää niin, että se menis kunniallisesti läpi. Niin se ei valitettavasti vaan toimi.

[Well, basically it has been so that the worst days have been so that there has been two regular employees and one extra in Viola and then in the meeting department there has been a new guy. So making those work and especially, if Viola is busy so how do you cope with the situation so that you could honorably make it through. So it just doesn't work.]

Individual categories also rose from the interviews. One interviewee emphasized the importance of **open communication** when considering POS.

I5: Mut siis se on ihan hyvä, et meillä on mun mielest kuitenkin, et aina voi puhua ja kysyä, ettei oo sellasta ongelmaa.

[But so it's pretty good that we have I think still that you can always talk and ask that there is not that kind of problem.]

Also another individual category was the importance of **equality** that was also highlighted by one interviewee when considering the treatment of employees.

I1: Niin ja kaikkii työntekijöitä pitäs kohdella samalla tavalla, ettei oo mitää semmosta suosimista. Mun mielestä meidän osastolla se toteutuu ihan hyvin.

[Yeah and all employees should be treated the same that there is no favoritism. In my opinion it is realized quite well in our department.]

One interviewee focused on the lack of **flexibility** to employees i.e. that in large organizations there are so many levels of executives etc. that the employee level is not considered of high importance.

I2: Et isoissa organisaatioissa se menee vähän niin, että siellä on tietenki johtotason porukkaa eri tasoissa niin se keskittyy enemmän ehkä niihin ja sitten se työntekijätaso jätetään tavallaan huomiotta. Ei niihin niinku silleen, et ne kyllä tekee ja ajatellaan, että haetaan sitä, että niiden aina täytyis joustaa, mutta se, että millon se jousto tulee sitten niinku ylemmältä tasolta takasinpäin.

[That in large organizations it goes a little bit like that there is of course managerial staff in different levels and so it focuses more on them and the employee level is kind of left without attention. They are not like that they will do and it's thought that it's sought after that they should always be flexible but the fact that when will the flexibility come back from the managerial level.]

**Favorable discretionary treatment** was considered to have positive contributions to POS by three of the interviewees. Positive aspects considered as favorable discretionary treatment included staff gatherings, such as department meetings, recreational gatherings, thesis guiding, as well as plain thanking at the end of your shift from your colleagues. It was also mentioned that the gatherings could be more frequent than they have been in the past.

I5: Ni se ollu ihan kiva ja sit sitä järjestetään niinku yrityksen puolesta, et on näitä virkistämispäiviä ja kaikkee tällasta. Et se on ihan kiva.

[It has been nice and when they are organized by the organization that there are these recreational gatherings and everything like that. It's quite nice.

I6: No, en oikeestaan [palautetta]. Ei ehkä tuu mieleen mitään sellasta niinku, et ois tullu ihan silleen, et hei tää juttu meni tosi hyvin. Mut mun mielest se, et illan päätteeks ollaan kiitos ja että kiitos avusta niin se on ainaki riittää mulle.

[Well, not really [feedback]. Doesn't maybe come into mind like that he/she would have come like that that hey this thing went really good. But I think that when at the end of the night you are thank you and that thank you for your help so that's enough for me.]

Still, a number of the interviewees perceived that there was a lack of favorable discretionary treatment, e.g. that not all contributions were valued equally, lack of support from any direction resulting in lack of motivation, lack of positive feedback and thank you, lack of acknowledging one's input at work.

I5: Se on vähän ehkä sit saa vaan siitä kiitosta, ku saa mahdollisimman paljon rahaa taloon, et on sitä muutenkin miten pystyy niinku tai, et joillakin on työpanos vähän erilainen.

[It's a little bit maybe that you only get thanked when you get as much money as possible for the house that there are other ways that you can like that some people have different kind of inputs at work.]

I2: Se miten ne aina anto palautteen. Niin ne aina kyllä huomautti jostain, mut periaatteessa se semmonen kiitos puuttuu kokonaan.

[It's the way they always gave feedback. So they always pointed out some [negative] things but basically thanking was missing completely.]

I4: Et ehkä mä oon kuitenkin sit sitä mieltä, et ehkä sitä omaa työpanosta ei oo ihan täysin huomattu, ku mä aika lailla pakerran niitä juttuja ittekseni.

Et ehkä silleen, et sitä ei oo ehkä huomattu ja en silleen hirveesti oo meteliä pitänykään, koska mä tykkään siitä mun vastuutehtävistä.

[That maybe I think that maybe my input has not been fully acknowledged, because I pretty much do these things on my own. That maybe so that it has not been noticed and I have not made a lot of noise about it, because I like my responsibilities.]

For being able to **participate in decision making**, there is a division between the FO department and the F&B department. As the two people perceiving that participation in decision making has positive contributions to POS are both employees of FO department. Both consider department meetings as a good time and place to be able participate in decision making. Still, both are unsure of the weight their opinions actually have.

I5: No, kylhän se on tärkeätä, jos on omia ehdotuksia niin niitä nyt ainaki kuunnellaan. Et en nyt tietenkään odota että kaikki muutetaan sen mukaan, mitä ite sanoo ja kylhän tuolla kuunnellaan. Meilläkin on kokouksia kuitenkin, niin kuunnellaan, jos on jotain kehitysehdotuksia.

[Well, it is important if you have your own suggestions that they are at least listened to. I don't of course expect that all will be changed according to what I say and yes, they listen there. We also still have meetings, so you are listened, if you have any suggestions for development.]

All of the interviewees from the F&B department however, felt that their opinions were possibly heard but nothing was done after that.

I1: Jos nyt on joku, mikä painaa mieltä niin kyllä sen saa sanottua. No, mä sanon sen niin, et se asia kyl kuullaan, mut sit, et mitä sen eteen tehdään niin ehkä se ei. En mä ehkä tiedä tarviiks kaikkiin asioihin niin hirveesti mitään toimenpiteitä tehdäksään, mut se miten se asia otetaan vastaan niin pitää olla sellanen kunnioittava, että hei mä välitän mitä sä sanot.

[If there is something that is bothering you, you can say it. Well, I will say it so that the matter is heard but then what is done for it so maybe it doesn't. I don't know if everything requires all that much actions but how the matter is received, you have be respectful that hey I care about what you are saying.]

### **7.1.3 Support in personal life**

The third main category collected together the aspects that were perceived to provide support in personal life and consequently contribute to POS.

Table 5. Support in personal life as a source of POS.

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Support in personal life	Support in sick leaves
	Growth opportunities
	Balancing work and private life

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**Support in sick leaves** was perceived as a source of POS by only one of the interviewees, who is an employee of the F&B department. None of the other interviewees mentioned this aspect.

The interviewee that mentioned support in sick leaves as a source of POS, mentioned the importance of being able to be sick without a guilty conscience. Furthermore, the interviewee emphasized that even though no personal experiences existed that other employees had had conflicting experiences.

I1: No, se on ainaki tärkeätä, et se, et sun annetaan ottaa se saikku ja siitä ei kysellä mitään ja silleen, et. Et suhun luotetaan, että jos sulla on joku, et sä voit olla pois, ettei kyseenalaisteta sitä mitenkään... Joo, mä oon omassa kokemuksessani kyllä kokenut niin, mutta sit tietenki ne keillän ollu enemmän ollu niitä niin sit tietenki kuulee vähän sellasta ristiriitaista kommenttia.

[Well, that is at least important that you are allowed to take the sick leave and you're not questioned about it and so. That you're trusted that if you have something that you can be away that it's not doubted in any way... Yes, I have in my own experience felt that it is so, but then of course those who have had more of them, there has been quite conflicting comments.]

**Growth opportunities** were the second highest aspect to be considered as a positive contributor to POS. Still, only three interviewees considered it a positive contributor while a number of negatively contributing factors were discussed as well. One of the positive aspects mentioned were opportunities to develop oneself through various trainings provided by the organization. Still, there was some critique that the work schedules hardly ever provided opportunity to participate on the trainings that were available.

I5: Siis meilläkin niinku tulee esimieheltä aika paljon niitä, että halua lisäkouluttaa. Et siinähan saa niinku lisätaitoo aika helposti, et on niitä koulutusmahdollisuuksii... niin



niistähän on hyötyä sitte myös niinku muuallaki elämässä periaatteessa, et ei vaan siellä työssä, mikä on mun mielestä kiva. Et se ois hyvä, jos ois enemmänki sellasia koulutuksia, joista ehkä hyötyy tulevaisuudessakin.

[So we get a lot of those from the supervisor that they want to offer extra training. There you get like extra skills quite easily when there are these trainings... so those will be useful also like elsewhere in life that not just at work, which I think is nice. That would be nice if there were more of trainings like that, from where you can take advantage in the future as well.]

In addition, help in future career paths were also considered of high importance for both the F&B and FO employees. Moreover, the organization was seen as a good company to develop oneself and launch a career either nationally or internationally.

I3: Esimiehen kanssa oli puhe ni se kysy, et mitä mä haluan tulevaisuudelta. Väläytin mahdollisuutta ulkomaille niin se sano heti, et he voi tarjota jotain apua siinä tietysti, jos paikan etsimisessä ja suositella ja tämmötteetä. Et tukee myös niinku uralla eteenpäin. [There was a discussion with the supervisor about what I want for the future. I flashed the possibility to go abroad and he/she said immediately that they can of course offer some kind of assistance in that, if looking for a place and recommending and things like that. So that there is also support in career advancement.]

However, both the F&B and FO employees also had contradicting perceptions and considered that there were not enough growth opportunities provided to them, including trainings and promotions, or any opportunity to develop oneself.

I1: Sitte varmaan toinen ois sellanen tavallaan eteneminen työssä, et sitä niinku kannustetaan... Niin onks sitä nyt sitte? Sitä ei ehkä ihan niin hyvin tai aina tulee jotain ideoita miten edetä, mut sit se ei kuitenkaan ehkä toteudu käytännössä niin hyvin. [Then probably another would be like sort of advancement at work that it's encouraged... Well is there any of it? Probably there isn't that as well or there are always ideas on how to advance but then in practice they don't happen as well.]

I2: Sanotaan näin, että kyllähän musta tuntuu, et tuo kehitys tää on tää kehitys nyt jäänyt nyt vähän siis vähän jysähtäny tuohon paikalleen. [Let's say it so that yes I feel that the progress or that progress has been stuck a little.]

All of the interviewees mentioned the category of growth opportunities in either positive or negative sense.

**Balancing work and private life** was a category that was discovered during the interviews. Two of the interviewees perceived that their wishes were taken into consideration when doing the work scheduling.

I3: No, ... on kysytty, että kuinka haluu vuoroja, et jos haluu vaihtaa sopimusta niin se onnistuu. Et siinä mielessä tuetaan, et halutaan pitää yrityksessä, mut niinku silleen niinku mää haluan olla siellä. Ni sitä on kyselty paljon ja otettu se huomioon...

[Well, ... it has been asked that how do you want to have shifts that if you want change contracts you can. So, in that sense you are supported that they want to keep you in the organization but like you want to be there. So that has been asked a lot and taken into account...]

However, there were also contradicting perceptions as employees from both departments also felt that the work scheduling was not supportive of one's private life and wellbeing at work.

I5: Ja ennen kaikkea sanotaan niinku sanotaan, et vapaa-aika on niin tärkeätä, et ei kaitken pidä olla pelkästään koulua tai töitä, mutta sit kuitenkin jostain syystä niitä hommia tulee niin paljon, et ehkä ne ei sit tajuu, et on niin paljon kaikkee.

[And above all it's said that free time is so important that not everything should be about school and work but still for some reason there is so much work that maybe they don't realise that there is so much of everything.]

I2: Et periaatteesa, ku suunnitellaan listaa niin annetaan seittemän päivää putkeen ja yks vapaa esimerkiksi ja sit jatketaan neljä päivää ja on aamuu ja iltaa sekasin. Niin en mä tiedä, et miten se niinku paljon liittyy työ, et työhyvinvointi olisi hirveen hyvä.

[That basically, when planning a schedule, one is given seven days in a row with one day off and then continued with four days and morning and night is mixed. So I don't know how much it's connected to work that work wellbeing would be very good.]

### 7.1.4 Summary of the perceptions of POS

Figure 1 below presents the discovered categories that were perceived as POS in a hierarchical form. First the three main categories are presented, followed by the subcategories.

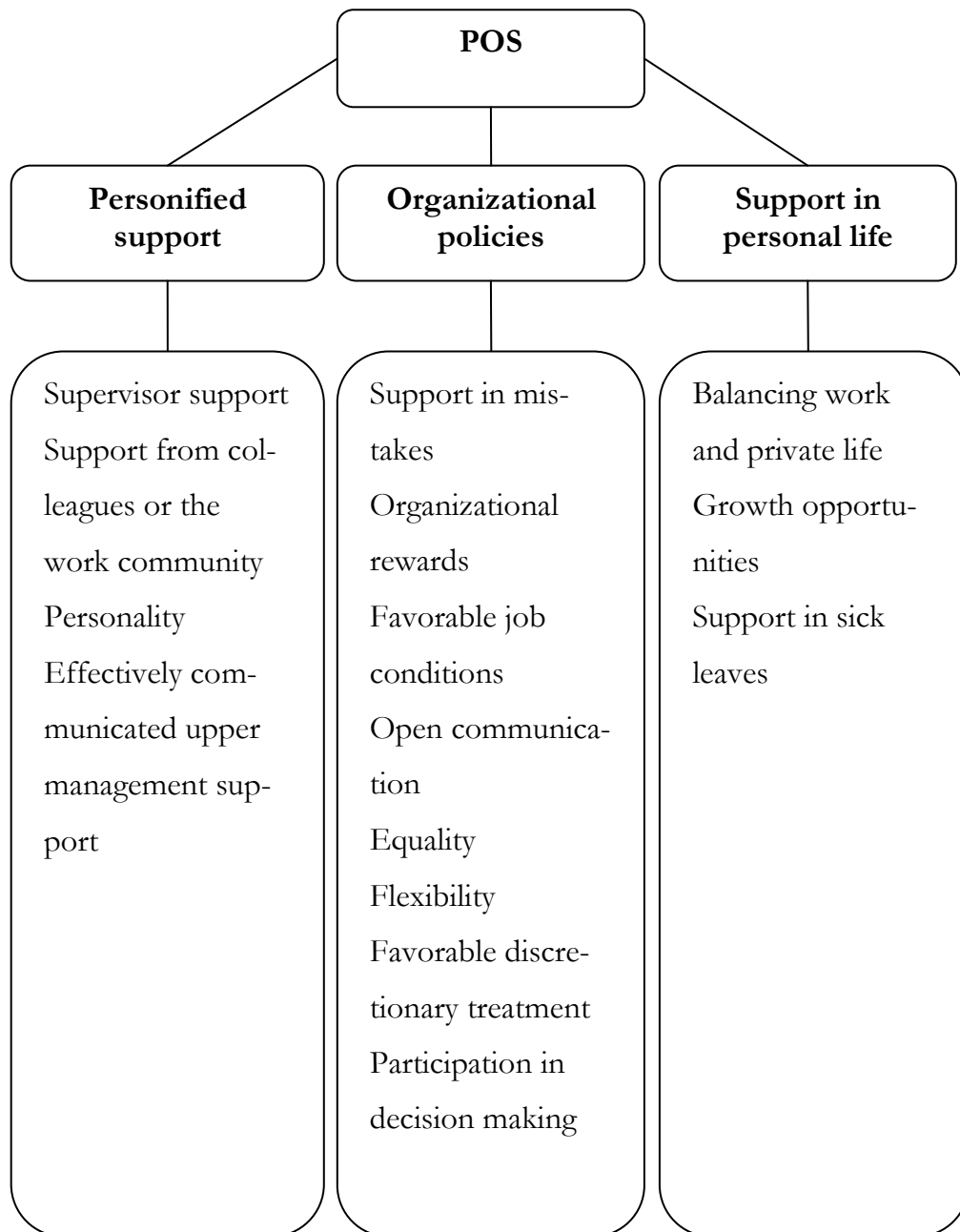


Figure 1. Perceptions of POS.

## 7.2 Aspects effecting AC in the short term

The interviewees experienced and perceived various levels of commitment from being committed to the work at hand to a future career in the organization, i.e. short term vs. long term commitment. However, some of the interviewees lacked commitment especially when considering long term commitment.

### 7.2.1 Reaching organizational goals

Many of the interviewees perceived that they were committed to the organization and its goals in the short run even though they might not see a future in the organization. This would suggest that even though, many of the employees felt a lack of support in a number of aspects, they were still willing to do their best as long as they were employed by the organization in question.

I5: Siis tottakai haluun tehdä parhaani mun työssä. Ja kyl mä sitä haluun, et niinku yritys menestyy... Eikä se mitenkään arkityössä mun työssä näy se, et mä en sit haluais jatkaa siellä niinku koko loppu uraani...

[So, of course I want to do my best at my job. And I do want for the company to be successful... And it doesn't show in my everyday work that I wouldn't want to continue there for the rest of my career...]

I1: No, semmosella arkitasolla oon tosi sitoutunu, et mä panostan siihen, että mä haluun, et kaikki toimii ja et siinä mielessä oon [sitoutunut], mut semmosella pidemmän ajan tähtäimellä niin en oo kovin sitoutunut.

[Well, I'm very committed on an everyday level that I invest in that I want for everything to work and in that sense I am [committed], but in the long run I'm not very committed.]

## 7.3 Aspects effecting AC in the long term

### 7.3.1 Personified support

The category of personified support was also discovered to effect affective organizational commitment.

Table 6. Personified support effecting AC.

Personified support	Supervisor support
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Lack of **supervisor support** was perceived as a negative aspect when considering its contribution to AC by two of the interviewees. Lack of supervisor support was seen as mentioned previously with POS as a lack of motivation skills and lack of interest or even indifference towards employee aspirations. The two employees connecting supervisor support to AC were from both departments.

I2: Esimieshän ei oikeesti osaa motivoida henkilökuntaa, et sillä puuttuu se semmonen, et se laittaa kyllä mielellään viestiä, et myykää, myykää, myykää tai, ette osannu taas tätäkään vaikka ollaan ihan hyvin pärjätty. Niin se on vähän ristiriitasta ja ku päällikön tehtävänä on myös motivoida henkilökuntaa ja siihen pitäis kiinnittää myös huomiota... Jos asian myöntää niin eiks sit voi tehdä asialle jotain. Ja meiltä vaaditaan se, et pitää sitä ja tätä mut ylempi esimies voi olla sitä samaa, vaikka tiedostaaki niin ei tarvi muuttaa asennettaan.

[The supervisor can't really motivate one's staff, that he/she is missing this that he/she will email that sell, sell, sell or that you didn't know how to do this again, even though we have done quite good. So that's quite contradicting and when the supervisor's task is to motivate staff it should a focus... If you admit it, so shouldn't you do something about it? And it's demanded from us that we have to do this and that but the supervisor can be the same, even though he/she acknowledges it and doesn't have to change one's attitude.]

### 7.3.2 Organizational policies

Organizational policies and its subcategories that were discovered to effect AC are presented below in Table 7.

Table 7. Organizational policies effecting AC.

Organizational policies	Favorable job conditions
	Flexibility
	Favorable discretionary treatment

**Favorable job conditions**, including job enrichment, were perceived as a negative contributor to AC, i.e. work conditions and tasks were not motivating or challenging enough for the level of experience and expertise of the employees in question.

I2: No, alkuvaiheesta on tietenkin tilanne muuttunu siihen sitoutumisen kannalta, että kyl mä mielestäni monta kuukautta tai periaatteessa vuosi meni, että mä ajattelin, että tässä on jotain mahdollisuutta. Niin että ura, urakehitystä, mutta en mä enää, että se ois niinku. Ei se ainakaan mee eteenpäin sillä, et siellä iltoja rakennetaan periaatteessa. Ei oo sitä pienintäkään enää motivaatioo siihen hommaan valitettavasti...

[Well, the situation has of course changed from the beginning when considering commitment that I think for many months or basically a year went by that I thought that there is a possibility. So that a career, career development, but I don't anymore that it would be like. It's not going to go ahead at least by building all nights there. There is not a slightest motivation for that kind of work unfortunately...]

**Flexibility** was also perceived as a negative contributor to AC by one of the interviewees, i.e. organizational policies were not considered to be fair and just towards the employee.

I2: No, siis olinhan niinku joustavasti olin työvuorossa niin, että tein sitä pitkää päivää ja halusin oppia niitä asioita... mutta sitte se niinku kuukausien jälkeen tuntu, että et tässä vaan oletetaan vaan aina, että ihminen joustaa loputtomiin...

[Well, so I was like flexibly at work that did long days and wanted to learn new things... but then like after months it felt that it is just always expected that one will be flexible forever...]

**Favorable discretionary treatment** was considered as a contributor to AC, when considering aspects such as social gatherings at work and off work with the entire work community. One person perceived that these enhanced the feeling of unity and they made one feel as a part of the company.

I1: Kyl mun mielestä kaikki noi, missä koko oma porukka on koossa, mitä meillä nyt on nää F&B palaverit. Aina kun on yhdessä ja keskustelee yhdessä niin se mun mielestä edistää sitä. Ja tietysti virkistyspäivätki, tämmöset luo sitä yhteishenkeä ja kans sitouttaa. [Well I think that all those where the entire group is together, like what we have these F&B staff meetings. Always when we are together and discuss together, I think it is en-

hanced. And of course recreational gatherings and so on create the team spirit and also make one commit.

Negative perceptions from this category on the other hand included, e.g. that as the company was not ready to invest in the employee and made them feel replaceable, there was no reason to continue working for the organization in the long run, even though positive aspects contributing to AC, e.g. staff benefits, were mentioned.

I5: En mä usko, et mä iteki koen sen silleen, et heidän mielestä mä en oo varmaan heidän tärkein työntekijä. Ehkä on vähän silleen, et olen korvattavissa... et mulla ois hirveesti inspiraatiota jatkaa siellä hirveen kauan ja luoda uraa siellä, ... Et tottakai tykkään, et S-ryhmään on hyvä, et siinä on hyvät henkilökuntaedut niin näin ollen se on tosi hyvä työpaikka.

[I don't think that I also experience it so that they think I'm not probably their most important employee. Maybe it's a little bit so that I'm replaceable... that I don't have very much inspiration to continue there for very long time and build a career there, ... That of course S-group is good that there are good staff benefits and in that sense it is a good place to work for.]

### 7.3.3 Support in personal life

Support in personal life was also discovered to have an effect on affective organizational commitment.

Table 8. Support in personal life effecting AC.

Support in personal life	Growth opportunities
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Some of the interviewees perceived **growth and development opportunities** as a positive contributor to AC especially in the short run but also in the long run.

I3: Joo, siis kyllä silleen, että on motivaatio ja silleen, ku oon vielä uus ja haluan vielä kehittyä ja nään sen kyllä silleen hyvänä paikkana, et kuuluu niinku isompaan ketjuun ja on paljon toimipaikkoja ja mahdollisuuksia... jos vertaa vaikka johonki yksityisiin pieniin paikkoihin, että siinä mielessä kyllä joo aika sitoutunut.

[Yes, like so that I have motivation and so when I'm still new and I want to develop and I see it as a good place that one's a part of a bigger chain and there are a lot of units and possibilities... if you compare it with some small privately owned places that in that sense, yeah quite committed.]

I6: Ku mä hain tonne harjotteluun ja töihin ja silleen, niin mä ajattelin tosi pitkälle, et ku S-ryhmän kautta pystyy kauheesti kouluttautuun ja sit siinä on niin paljon mahdollisuuksii kaikkialle...

[When I applied for an internship and work and so on, I thought really far ahead that with S-group one can educate oneself quite well and then there are so many possibilities everywhere...]

However, lack of growth opportunities, such as trainings for professional development and promotions or advancements, turned out to be a critical factor affecting negative long term commitment for some of the employees of both departments. All together four of the interviewees perceived a lack of growth opportunities, which then affected their commitment.

I5: Mä en tiedä, et mikä se sit ois, mikä sais mut jäämään sinne, et oisko se sitte oikeesti, et oltais ehkä se, et ois annettu enemmän palautetta tai sit se, et ois kerrottu ihan selkeesti, et sulla on mahdollisuudet edetä. Mä en tiedä... Ei oo hirveesti, ei oo niinku rohkastu siihen hirveesti, että kannattaa edetä tässä meidän hotellissa tai meidän konsernissa.

[I don't know what it could be that would make me stay there that could it be really that there maybe would have been more feedback or that it would have clearly communicated that you have a possibility to advance. I don't know... There hasn't been much encouragement that one should advance in our hotel or in the organization.]

I1: Joo, et mun mielestä just esimerkiksi sellaset koulutukset ja tällaset niin ne sitouttaa siihen yritykseen. Et sillan tulee sellanen olo, et kuuluu siihen työyhteisöön. Eikä välttämättä ees mitään suuria etenemisjuttuja vaan, et haluu kehittää sitä, mitä tekee sillä hetkellä. Et jos ei niinku täl hetkellä tuntuu, ettei tuu mitään muuta ku moittimisia niin sit miks tehä sit työtä tavallaan niille.

[Yes, I think that just for example those trainings and things like that, so they make one commit more to the organization. That one will feel that one is a part of the work community. And not necessarily even any major advancement but that one wants to develop what one is doing at the moment. That if like not at this moment it feels that there is nothing but criticizing so like sort of why work for them.]



I4: Et siinä mielessä on vähän niinku ollu mielessä nää tämmöset jutut, että palkkahan nousee aina parhaiten yritystä vaihtamalla ja niinku, vaikkei haluis lähtee yrityksestä pois niin nyt vähän niinku näyttää siltä, et ei oo niinku vaihtoehto. Mut nyt näissä tehtävissä mä oon ollu viis vuotta ja silleen. Alkaa olla vähän niinku motivaation puutetta.

[So in that sense there has been these kinds of things on my mind that the salary will always rise best when changing an organization. And like even though I would not want to leave the organization, now it looks like that there is no alternative. But I've been in this job for five years now and so. There's starting to be quite a lack of motivation.]

**Support from colleagues or the work community** was mentioned as well as a positive contributor to AC in the short run, i.e. that it affected the subjects' wellbeing at work. However, it was perceived that colleague support was not enough to commit to the organization in the long run as when discussing about commitment, it was not brought up in a positive sense by none of the interviewees. Moreover, one of the interviewees mentioned it just as a source of wellbeing. However, he/she mentioned that it was not enough for him/her to commit to the organization in the long run.

I5: Tottakai kollegat on kivoja ja tälleen, mut se ei oo pelkkä syy sit, se ei voi olla pelkästään syy, et sen takii jää.

[Of course colleagues are nice and so but that is not just a reason, it cannot be the only reason that one would stay.]

#### 7.3.4 Summary of the aspects of POS effecting AC in the long run

The discovered categories of POS effecting AC are presented in a hierarchical form in Figure 2. The categorization was done on the basis of the transcripts.

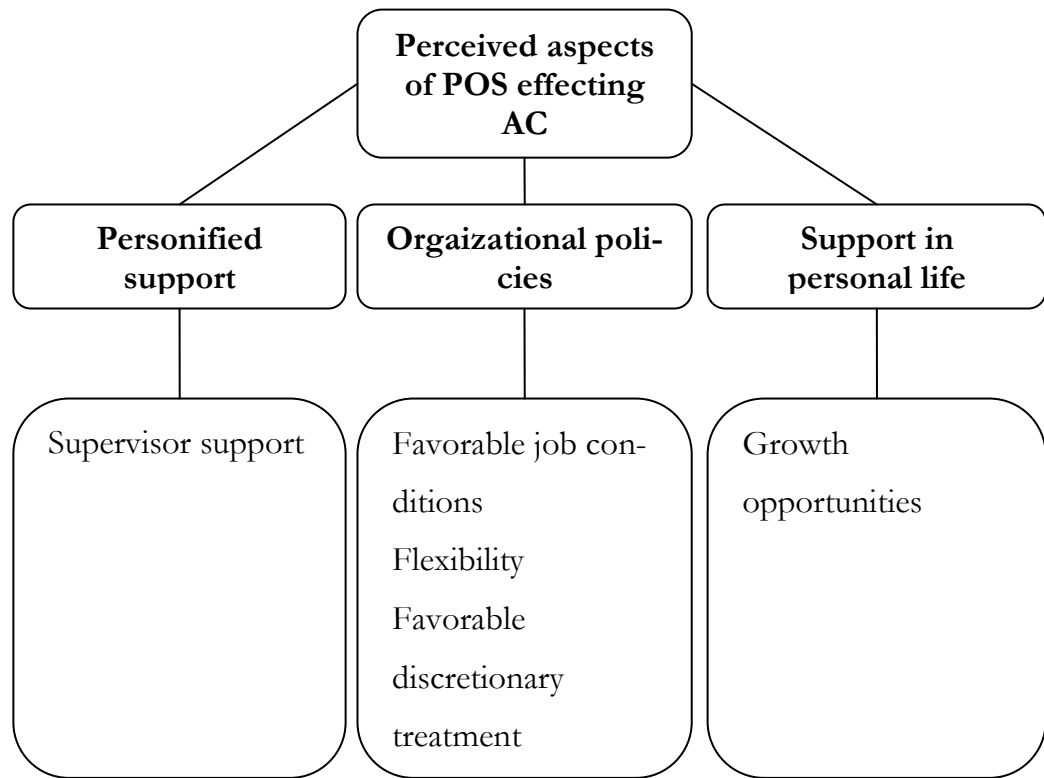


Figure 2. Perceived aspects of POS effecting AC.

## 8 Discussion

Understanding the dynamics of employee-employer relationship and how to recognize and influence employee perceptions through supportive HR practices, are essential tasks for a manager as it has been acknowledged that strategic HRM, including organizational commitment, are especially important in the fields where successful service delivery is dependent on the behavior of committed front-line employees, including the hospitality industry (Swales 2002, 165-166).

Consequently, the main idea of the research was to discover how front-line employees perceive that the organization supports them and how these perceptions affect the affective organizational commitment of those employees. Ultimately, understanding these factors could help the researcher to manage this critical asset to produce positive results for both the employer as well as the employees.

### 8.1 Reliability, validity and transferability

To ensure reliability in the phenomenographic approach, the research question was formulated with the aim of discovering the various perceptions of the interviewees of the aspect under study (Mann). In addition, the questions were formed with the aim to work from the data to the results, rather than to construct and test a hypothesis (Green 2005, in Mann).

The study was conducted through a phenomenographic research approach to discover individual perceptions rather than scientific truths. This was done through thematic interviews. Also, to ensure reliability the subjects were selected by the researcher by using purposive sampling approach to ensure variation in the experiences and backgrounds of the subjects. Diversity criteria were developed from the literature and included aspects such as age, tenure, gender, disciplinary background or the type of experience. (Mann.)

Only one pilot interview was conducted. However, the subject was not from the same line of work as the actual interviewees. Consequently, this might have an effect on the reliability of the study. Still, these aspects have been researched in a number of differ-

ent fields. Moreover, the questions did not entail anything specific to this particular industry.

The interview started with the same information and introductory questions and encouraged the interviewees to discuss freely on those subjects. The researcher's interview technique and especially follow up questions were not always consistent and easily understandable by the interviewees. Thus, some clarifications were needed at times. Moreover, especially with the interviewees with short tenure, the follow up questions might have been too leading to ensure that conversation would not stop after the initial answers. This could have had an effect on the objectivity and reliability of the study.

Still, when considering validity for the phenomenographic approach, one of the aspects where communicative validity is relevant, is that the interviewees should be informed prior to the interview that the researcher is interested in their experiences and perceptions of the aspect under study. They should also be informed that all answers are acceptable and that the answers will be handled objectively. (Sandberg 1994, in Mann; Mann.) In this case, the interviewees were encouraged to discuss freely on their perceptions and were informed that their anonymity would be protected. At this point, it should have also been essential to create a dialogue within the interview using an open ended initial question and follow up questions to create discussion. (Sandberg 1994, in Mann; Mann.) This was done during the interviews.

Moreover, the interview situation turned out to be a challenging one as it was difficult for the researcher to exclude oneself from the interview, i.e. not to guide the interviewees to matters of interest to the interviewer or to include one's own opinions on the matter. This could also affect the validity and reliability of the research. Furthermore, it was difficult to keep on point with the interview topic as all of the interviewees were known beforehand by the interviewer and thus, the conversation slipped into other topics outside the research area at times.

Other aspects affecting the reliability of the study were the number of interviews that took place. The recommendations discussed earlier indicated that a minimum of ten interviews should take place to ensure variation. In this study only six interviews took

place. There could have been more variation in the interviewees' answers and consequently in the results, if the minimum of ten interviews were conducted. However, the sample size was approximately 20 percent of the entire number of front-line staff of the two departments under study.

It should also be considered that no employees with immigrant backgrounds were interviewed for this study. As their influence and presence in the hospitality industry is growing, their input and perceptions could have produced different results. This could also affect the reliability of the study as it was now only focused on one rather than various cultural backgrounds. Thus, it could be questioned whether the results would be transferred if the sample would consist of subjects from more various cultural backgrounds.

Moreover, the length of the interviews should also be considered, as some of the interviews were fairly short, the shortest interview being 18 minutes. The short interviews could affect the reliability if the already small sample was not very productive. Still, the aim was to find variation in the sample and in the subjects' perceptions and a lack of perceptions on the research subject by one interviewee could also be considered variation.

When still considering validity and reliability during the analysis process, according to Mann, the focus should be on each transcript as a whole, rather than extracting parts that are out of context. This should be done by finding similarities and differences between whole transcripts. (Mann.) However, in this study to ensure categorization, parts of the interview were extracted as well. The analysis process in this case focused more on the paragraphs and individual meanings and categories discovered from the transliteration.

Finally, the categories were developed on the basis of the transcripts. Still, it could be questioned how much of the categorization was based solely on the transcripts, as the majority of the categories also existed in the theory base. Still, some categories were solely based on data discovered from interviews. Thus, the phenomenographic research method might not be conducted to the point and the reliability of the study

could be questioned. The categories and the theory base are discussed in this discussion part to ensure a possible comparison to the existing data. Consequently, the categories were combined again with the aim to describe qualitative similarities and differences across the transcripts. The final results and categories were presented in a hierarchical form. Mann also discusses the before mentioned aspects as a source of reliability in a phenomenographic study. (Mann.)

Still, when considering the validity of the phenomenographic approach, the aim should be to obtain feedback from other researchers and professionals. Ultimately, the results could be developed with other researchers in the field. (Mann.) There has been feedback from the thesis instructor, who can be considered as a professional in the field of study. Still, the results could be further developed in the future with other researchers in the field.

## **8.2 Evaluation and analysis of the results**

The phenomenographic research approach proved to be an appropriate research approach for the study as the aim was to discover perceptions of particular phenomena. Moreover, the focus was on the individual perceptions rather than discovering generalizations on the research subject. Using the thematic interview, a semi-structured interview, also enabled the interview process to develop into a dialogue between the researcher and the interviewees and enabled the use of follow up questions to ensure thorough answers.

The categorization of the perceptions included both the negative and positive contributors to POS and AC. The majority of the categories discovered were also found in the theory base. Still, some aspects from the theory base were not mentioned at all during the interviews, e.g. support in future superior performance. Moreover, some of the categories were mentioned only as the interviewees were lacking support from those areas, e.g. personality, effectively communicated upper management support and flexibility. Still, categories outside the theory base were discovered as well, which were perceived as contributors to POS, e.g. flexibility, equality, open communication, balancing work and private life, as well as support from colleagues or the work community.

Even though, support from colleagues or work community was considered by almost all of the interviewees as a contributor to POS, it was not considered a key contributor to AC as when discussing about the interviewees' commitment to the organization, the aspect of colleague or work community support came up only in one interview, which however suggested that it was not a reason for the interviewee to stay in the organization. Also, a number of aspects were not mentioned at all when considering AC that were perceived as contributors to POS. This included e.g. organizational rewards even though according to organizational support theory organizational rewards is one the three forms of perceived favorable treatment received from the organization that should increase POS (Eisenberger et al. 1986, in Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002, 699-701). Still, the research data would suggest that even though previous studies have discovered that it is a major contributor to POS, it is not the case in this study. Consequently, it also has little effect to AC. However, as the aim was to find new information, it could be suggested that the categories discovered solely on the basis of the transcripts are exactly that.

The first of the main hierarchical categories, personified support, was discovered, as employees often connect their favorable or unfavorable treatment by supervisors, the representatives of the organization, as an indication that the organization either favors or disfavors them. As supervisors act as organizational agents, their favorable treatment to employees, should thus contribute to POS. (Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002, 698.) Consequently, it has been suggested that employees personify the organization and its actions towards them (Levinson 1965, in Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002, 698). Also, Eisenberger (2003, in Junak 2007, 3) suggests that supervisor support is one of the key contributors to POS. Moreover, according to organizational support theory supervisor support is one the three forms of perceived favorable treatment received from the organization that should increase POS (Eisenberger et al. 1986, in Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002, 699-701).

The discovered subcategories for personified support from the empirical data included supervisor support, personality, support from colleagues or the work community and effectively communicated upper management support. As shown in the empirical re-

sults especially supervisor support was also mentioned when discussing commitment. However, this was brought up in negative sense, i.e. that it was perceived that supervisor support was missing. Consequently, the discovered data suggested that it was highly valued as a source of POS, if it would have existed. The theory base also indicates the essential role of the supervisors as they are perceived as the personified agents of the organization.

The second hierarchical category discovered was organizational policies, including support in mistakes, organizational rewards, favorable job conditions, open communication, equality, flexibility, favorable discretionary treatment and participation in decision making. When discussing also AC, the categories that were found to have an affect included, favorable job conditions, especially job enrichment, flexibility and favorable discretionary treatment. If the employees feel that e.g. organizational rewards and favorable job conditions are voluntary actions from the organization rather than regulated by external constraints, such as union negotiations (Eisenberger et al. 1986; Eisenberger et al. 1997; Shore & Shore 1995; in Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002, 698), POS is increased. Eisenberger (2003, in Junak 2007, 3) adds that one of the main factors contributing to POS is favorable discretionary treatment.

Both favorable job conditions and flexibility were perceived to be lacking and were thus indicated in a negative sense. However, there were both negative and positive perceptions of favorable discretionary treatment. Especially social gatherings at work and off work with the entire work community were mentioned as a contributor to both POS and AC. One person perceived that these enhanced the feeling of unity and made him/her feel a part of the company. Still, one interviewee felt that the lack of favorable discretionary treatment affected commitment negatively.

The third and final hierarchical category discovered was support in personal life and its subcategories were support in sick leaves, growth opportunities as well as balancing work and private life. Especially growth opportunities were perceived also as a contributor to AC in both positive and negative sense, i.e. the interviewees perceived it to be essential when considering their commitment to the organization. This is in line with previous researches by e.g. Huselid (1995) and Shaw et al. (1998, in Allen et al.



2003, 102) who have argued that supportive organizational practices that signal investment in employees and contribute in their development should be important in contributing to individual POS. Consequently, Allen et al. (2003, 100, 102) suggest that employee perceptions of supportive organizational practices that imply investment in employees, appreciation of their contributions, and are discretionary rather than obligated, should be positively related to the development of POS. In addition, the HR practices that contribute most to POS suggested by Allen et al. (2003, 100, 102) include growth opportunities.

Furthermore, for affective commitment the strongest antecedent has been according to Meyer and Allen (1987, in Allen and Meyer 1990, 4) those work experiences that fulfill employees' psychological needs to feel comfortable in their role and in the organization as well as competent in the job. As mentioned previously, Meyer and Allen (1997, in Rhoades et al. 2001, 825) suggested that work experiences including organizational rewards, procedural justice and supervisor support have strong associations as antecedents of AC. They also suggest that work experiences have a stronger relationship with AC rather than e.g. structural features of the organization or personal characteristics of employees. The results discovered in this study would also suggest this.

### **8.2.1 Diversity criteria**

The empirical results are also discussed by using the diversity criteria presented earlier to discover practical ways for managers and supervisors to affect the perceptions of employees from various backgrounds. The diversity criterion focuses on the aspect of tenure as it was discovered that there were differences in the perceptions of the interviewees when considering tenure. In this study, short tenure is considered to be under a year as there is a great deal of turnover in the hospitality industry. Consequently, long tenure is considered to be over a year. Sex of the interviewees was not discovered to have an effect on the variation of the perceptions. The division between FO and F&B departments was already discussed when presenting the results.

It was discovered from the empirical data that the employees with longer tenure had more in depth analysis on their perceptions and were better able to form and express

various aspects on their own compared to the employees with short tenure, who had a more narrow perception of the aspects considered as POS or AC, and needed more follow up questions. Moreover, some of the subjects' priorities were also varying according to their tenure, i.e. that e.g. pay and promotion was considered a higher priority as a source POS for the interviewees with longer tenure as they were for the interviewees with short tenure. This could suggest to the low increase and development of pay in the industry as a whole according to tenure.

Interviewees with short tenure focused more on the positive aspects perceived as POS and consequently, perceived hardly any lack of POS that would have affected their commitment. Interviewees with longer tenure on the other hand were more critical towards the organization's actions and policies. While they found positive aspects affecting POS, they also perceived a number of negative contributors to POS and AC.

### **8.3 Conclusions and suggestions for further research**

The empirical data could imply that organizations and managers should focus on enhancing the positive contribution of the aspects affecting AC and eliminate the possibility for the aspects to be perceived negatively. Moreover, the results could imply that it should be acknowledged that employees in different levels and times of their careers require different kind of support, i.e. that a newcomer might be satisfied with the idea that career opportunities are communicated and available in the future, but the employee with longer tenure is already in the future and thus, is waiting for the promises of a career to come true. Moreover, there is a possible connection that if the promises and expectations are not met accordingly, disappointments and conflicting situations will arise that will ultimately affect affective organizational commitment.

Moreover, the results could suggest that aspects that can influence AC mostly, such as favorable discretionary treatment, growth opportunities and supervisor support, all need to be taken into consideration if the aim of the organization is to develop POS and AC. Meyer and Allen (1987, in Allen and Meyer 1990, 4) suggest that for affective commitment the strongest antecedents have been those work experiences that fulfill employees' psychological needs to feel comfortable in their role and in the organization

as well as competent in the job. In addition, Meyer and Allen (1997, in Rhoades et al. 2001, 825) suggested that work experiences including organizational rewards, procedural justice and supervisor support have strong associations as antecedents of AC. The critical aspects discovered in this study could be connected to the before mentioned theory base.

Perryer et al. (2010, 912) suggest that creating a working environment that is positive and supporting, is one of the aspects that help to retain current employees. Consequently, the results could imply that the key question is whether the organization will consider their front-line employees as a critical asset by supporting them and ultimately having them affectively committed to the organization or are they going to continue on the same path as numerous other organizations in the industry and neglect the possibilities to succeed with the help of supportive HR practices and thorough execution of strategic HRM.

Still, a number of issues and questions rose from the interviews for both the researcher as well as for the interviewees. Many of the interviewees mentioned that they had not previously thought about the subject under study as thoroughly as they did during the interviews. Moreover, they were able to analyze their own thoughts, feelings and perceptions of the subject matter. Furthermore, the interviews gave the researcher a number of new perceptions on how to look at the aspects under research rather than to focus on one's own perception.

The process also brought to mind that the aspects under research are only weakly researched on the organizational level when wellbeing at work questionnaires are collected and during development discussions with one's supervisor. Consequently, aspects such as this with other supporting HR practices could be taken more into consideration, e.g. they could be studied more thoroughly in the organization. Consequently, further studies could look into how the different supporting HR practices are studied at present and how they could be studied more thoroughly in the future in this industry to ensure that managers and supervisors can react to situations concerning e.g. POS and AC accordingly and proactively. As now, the results suggest that the critical HR incidents have already occurred when there is a reaction from the manager. Conse-

quently, managers in the hospitality industry could be enabled to be proactive rather than reactive when considering strategic HRM.

The overall results could suggest that the employees of the FO department perceived more POS compared to the employees of the F&B department. Still, the level of commitment was approximately the same, i.e. that the employees with short tenure from both departments were more committed in the long run compared to the employees with long tenure as the results could suggest that they had been previously disappointed and thus, experienced less commitment. Still, the results could imply that all employees felt that they performed at a high level when doing their everyday tasks and all except one interviewee considered that they were motivated and committed to the organization in the short run. The aspect of felt obligation, i.e. “a prescriptive belief regarding whether one should care about the organization’s well-being and should help the organization reach its goals”, could be considered here (Eisenberger et al. 2001, 42). This would contrast to the results discovered in previous studies as they suggest that especially affectively committed employees are the source of enhanced performance and possible business success. The results of this study could imply that even though there was no emotional attachment to the organization, the employees were performing at a high level. However, this was the perception of the employees themselves and the organization could have a different perception of the level of performance of those employees. Moreover, it could be a subject of further research to study, what are the aspects that affect short term commitment and whether short term commitment is enough, i.e. is it in the organization’s interest to have employees who are committed in the long term and are most likely affectively committed, if those employees who are just committed in the short run, also perform at a high level to reach organizational goals.

The results could also suggest that when employees perceive that organization supports them on the key aspects mentioned earlier, there will be an increase on their affective organizational commitment. Swailes (2002, 162-163) suggests that an individual’s organizational commitment can change accordingly when a change occurs to a particular aspect of the job or the organization. Consequently, perceptions can work the other way around as well, i.e. that when employees expect that their contributions are

met with perceived organizational support and this does not happen, affective organizational commitment can be negatively affected in turn. Thus, it would be essential to be consistent when executing organizational policies, to ensure the consistency on both POS and AC. This could also be an interest of further study to research the outcomes of inconsistent organizational support. Moreover, the outcomes of the commitment process could also be an interest of study as e.g. some of the interviewees already mentioned the possibility or intention to leave the organization.

To conclude, the results suggest that there are similar issues in Radisson Blu Seaside as in the industry as a whole as discussed earlier when considering the execution of strategic HRM, especially perceived organizational support and affective organizational commitment. Ultimately, previous researches and the results of this study could suggest that in order to ensure successful service delivery, the key issues discovered in this study should be considered and executed more thoroughly than they are at present.

#### **8.4 Own learning**

My own learning throughout this process has developed especially in terms of understanding how to do research and the amount of work and persistency needed to finish the thesis. Especially, I discovered the joy and pain of qualitative research. Still, I feel that this type of research is definitely for me. Still, problems arose, especially in terms of time management and in setting realistic goals for myself. In terms of time management, I was not able to focus on doing the study while working, as for me; I needed adequate time to get into the subject. Thus, I mainly did the study during holidays, which meant that the process turned out to be a long one. Moreover, I felt at times inadequate and unsatisfied about the material that I was producing. My goal was to do as perfect a research as I can. I have now discovered that during the first try, this is hardly possible. Hopefully, I have still grown as a researcher.

Moreover, I have gained insight on the industry as a whole and how everything from sales and marketing to human resources management are connected to one another. Ultimately, in order to succeed in this industry, a service industry, all aspects should be considered and valued. I would suggest that if one aspect is lacking the others will fail

as well at some level. When considering this, it is surprising that the critical asset of front-line employees and HRM practices as a whole, are not valued more in the hospitality industry.

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## Attachments

### Attachment 1. Interview questions

1. Miten koet, että yritys tukee sinua?  
[How do you feel that the organization supports you?]
2. Mitkä yrityksen toimet koet tukena?  
[What aspects of the organizations actions make you feel supported?]
3. Mitkä yrityksen toimet koet tuen puutteena?  
[What aspects of the organizations actions make you feel unsupported?]
4. Miten olet sitoutunut yritykseen?  
[How are you committed to the organization?]
5. Miten sitoutunut olet yritykseen?  
[How committed are you to the organization?]