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# COMMUNICATION GAPS AT SEASONAL RESTAURANTS

Case study: Symposium Restaurant, Crete Island, Greece

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## FOREWORDS

This thesis work was done to Symposium Restaurant, the workplace where I increased love and passion for my career. All good memories and valueless lessons will not be forgotten.

I would like to express my thankfulness to my thesis supervisor, Ms. Helena Alamäki, for giving me detailed instructions and constructive feedback during my writing. She is also the teacher who has walked me every first steps into the hospitality industry. I would like to send biggest thanks to all lecturers and staff of VAMK who have taught and helped me a lot during my study.

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I'm thankful for everything that you have done for me. Thank you for making this thesis a reality.

Vaasa, 2012

Dang Thai Ha

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Tehokas viestintä vaikuttaa merkittävästi yrityksen menestykseen. Kuitenkin tehokkaan viestinnän kehittäminen on vaikeaa sesonkiravintoloissa, joissa henkilökunnan vaihtuvuus on suurta.

Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena on tutkia kausiluontoisuutta ja sen vaikutuksia Symposium-ravintolan henkilökuntaan. Toinen päämäärä on määritellä sisäisen viestinnän rakenne ja tekijät, jotka aiheuttavat ongelmia viestinnässä. Sitten tulokset yhdistetään, jotta pystytään luomaan kokonaiskuva Symposium-ravintolan sisäisen viestinnän ongelmista.

Tutkimuksen teoreettinen viitekehys sisältää kuvausta viestinnästä ja sen kehityksestä sekä palautteesta ja viestinnän solmukohdista. Myös viestinnän kehitys yritysviestinnän kontekstissa määritellään. Lisäksi kausiluontoisuutta ja sen vaikutuksia ravintolayritysten työllisyystilanteeseen ja työoloihin tutkitaan. Tähän tutkimukseen on valittu laadullinen menetelmä puolistrukturoituine haastatteluineen. Haastattelut molempien sekä ravintolan johdon että työntekijöiden kanssa toteutettiin puhelimitse 18.2. ja 5.3.2012 välisenä aikana Vaasassa. Haastateltuja oli kahdeksan, kuusi työntekijää ja kaksi työnantajaa.

Tutkimuksen tulos osoittaa, että ravintolalla on heikko sisäinen viestintä, mikä johtuu siitä, että työnantajat eivät kiinnitä asiaan tarpeeksi huomiota. Kausiluonteisuus on syynä työntekijöiden taustojen erilaisuuteen sekä myös henkilökunnan epävakaisuuteen yrityksessä, mikä myös osittain tuottaa sisäisen viestinnän ongelmia. Yksilölliset luonteenpiirteet ja asenteet kuitenkin voivat nostaa esiin viestinnän ongelmia. Lisähuomio on myös, että mitä pitempään työntekijät ovat töitä tehneet sitä enemmän he ilmaisevat empatiaa viestinnän ongelmia kohtaan.

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## ABSTRACT

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Effective communication in the workplace plays a significant role in the success of a business. However, it is difficult to build up effective communication especially at seasonal restaurants where changing staff happens at high frequency.

The aim of this research is to study the seasonality and its impacts on the staff organisation of Symposium Restaurant. Another aim is to define the structure of internal communication and the factors that cause communication barriers. The findings then are linked together to perceive the problems existing in the internal communication of Symposium's organisation.

The theoretical framework includes descriptions of the communication and its process, feedback and communication barriers. The process of communication as in an organisational context is also defined. Seasonality and its impacts on the employment status and working conditions in the restaurant business are also studied. The qualitative method with semi-structured interviews is chosen for this research. The interviews were conducted with both the managerial team and employees via telephones between 18 February and 5 March 2012 in Vaasa. There were 8 interviewees, 6 employees and 2 managers.

The outcomes show that the restaurant has a weak internal communication due to the lack of the manager's attention to the matter. The seasonality leads to diversity in the employee backgrounds as well as the staff instability in the organisation which partly affects the internal communication. Individual characteristics and attitudes however can bring out problems in communication. Another notice is that the longer an employee works, the more empathy they express towards any communication problems.

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Keywords	Internal communication, communication barriers, Seasonality
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Working in a restaurant is considered as working in a fast-paced environment and it requires people to think and react to any coming-up activities quickly and also to be able to make rapid decisions. The restaurant activities necessitate the interactive relations by means of communication between the staff and customers as well as amongst the staff themselves. Flow of the communication is hence densely built up within the restaurant's activities including customers booking tables, hostess receiving reservations, welcoming guests, diners placing orders, orders transmitted to the kitchen, food served to customers, feedback sent and received, and so on. Each mistakes happening at any stage of the flow may leave the customers dissatisfied and with a bad impression, which is equivalent to bringing down the restaurant's reputation. Therefore, the whole communication system of the restaurant requires the uttermost efficiency.

That is to say, effective communication in the workplace places a significant impact on the success of a business organisation. It strengthens the rapports between individuals in the organisation, gains the loyalty from employees, and improves their engagement and productivity. However, most enterprises only focus their effort on nurturing the external communication (with an attempt to establish strong relationships with their customers and suppliers) and underestimate the importance of the organisation's internal communication (Roehler 2007, 1).

## 1.1 Research objectives and questions

Having worked in different restaurants for last four years, the author has experienced several situations in which the internal communication in the workplace clashed. It happened between the staff and their colleagues, as well as between the staff and their bosses, all of them resulted in mutual misunderstandings and an awkward atmosphere which affected negatively the overall performance of the working team. After examining different researches and articles related to this matter, the author was stimulated to initiate this research on a specific case, Symposium Restaurant, where she used to work for



two seasons. The research is conducted following the case study method which is an intensive analysis in which the researcher uses several sources of evidence for investigating a specific phenomenon within its real-life contexts (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 588). The research is going to study the structure of the internal communication in an organisation as well as the characteristics of seasonality and its influence on the restaurant business. With that knowledge, the investigation of linkage between the seasonality and Symposium Restaurant's internal communication will be implemented to reason existing communication problems at the restaurant.

Like other local businesses on Crete Island, Symposium Restaurant is presumably affected by the seasonality of the local tourism which leads to its closure in winter time. In connection with finding explanations for the communication problems happening within Symposium's organisation, the research's objective is to study the seasonality and its impacts on the employment status at the restaurant. The outcomes hopefully help the author and audience obtain comprehensive understanding of the internal communication at seasonal restaurants. Another objective of this research is to reacquaint the audience with the process of internal communication as itself and its appearance in the organisational structure. From there, the causes of internal communication problems at seasonal restaurants will be defined. Lastly, the thesis is expected to bring a reflection of the internal communication framework for the managerial team of Symposium Restaurant and to assist them in ameliorating the management system of the restaurant partly.

In order to follow and enlighten all objectives of the research which are mentioned above, research questions are structured as following:

1. What are the employees' backgrounds like in the case restaurant?
2. How is the upward communication between the staff and managerial team at Symposium Restaurant?
3. How is the downward communication between the staff and managerial team at Symposium Restaurant?

4. How is the communication between the staff at Symposium Restaurant?
5. How does the seasonality influence the internal communication at Symposium Restaurant?

## **1.2 Background study**

It happens commonly during a conversation that people do not share the same courtesy to each other, which is reflected by that a person does not pay attention to what the other says or a speaker does not care if his message is delivered well to the listener. Whether they happen intentionally or accidentally, these acts cause barriers in the conversations. The barriers get multiplied when addressing human multiple backgrounds which differ from one person to another. It exemplifies by distinctive styles of communication between men and women due to their different views of the world (Baher 1994, 3). However, in the globalised world nowadays, people find themselves working in multicultural settings. The working environment at restaurants is not an exception. As one part of the food service industry, restaurant business also attracts diverse workforce whose backgrounds including the nationalities, cultures, religions, educations, prejudices and other values varies from people to people (Murad 2007; Wilborn & Weaver 2002, 80).

Besides, restaurants are claimed to be temporary options for people who are awaiting their dream jobs or when they cannot find other workplaces. They tend to do so because of the flexibility of working hours, together with most of restaurateurs do not require from applicants high related experience or education. Tremendous workload which mainly causes pressure and stress to the working environment appears as a serious issue that employees working in the restaurant business are facing with. As time goes, the pressure and stress lead to the employees' tiredness, lack of interest in the job, and even aggression. Thus, the work team at many restaurants is prone to change often by the coming and leaving employees (Food Services Workbook 2001, 14)

With all these facts, it is challenging for the restaurants to generate a healthy and effective workplace, especially with those restaurants that suffer from seasonality. Along with other strategies to cope with the challenges, it emerges an urge to

enhance the internal communication in the workplace efficiently to strengthen the employees' commitment and improve the culture in the workplace with an attempt to achieve success of the organisation.

### **1.3 Research methodology and structure of the study**

Research methodology is considered as a framework for any type of research (White 2003, 20). It is a certain way followed by particular disciplines to conduct a research and how necessary data for the research are collected. In this thesis, the author has chosen a restaurant case to study the internal communication process under conditions of the seasonality effects. The purpose of the research is to investigate the current profile picture of the staff organisation in the case study along with their thorough perspectives and views towards the concerned matters. Therefore, the qualitative method is chosen as the research approach. Both primary and secondary sources of data are in use to approach the research objectives. Secondary data are compiled from literature including books, journals, previous study papers as well as electronic sources and so on, whereas primary data are analysed through information collected through the semi-structured interview. The interview is conducted with both the managerial team and employees in the case study – Symposium Restaurant in order to perceive the internal communication status from multiple perspectives.

The thesis is structured into two main sections: theoretical and empirical studies. In the theoretical study, the research objectives are approached by analysing two disciplines, which are the communication process and seasonality. But before the theoretical framework, the whole chapter 2 is dedicated to introduce the case study- Symposium Restaurant: the location, the business concept, and the staff organisation. Chapter 3 and 4 follow with theoretical data supporting the thesis. In chapter 3, the process of communication is analysed from the intimate view before being observed from the structure of an organisation. Seasonality and its impacts on the organisational scheme of seasonal restaurants are studied in the next chapter. After all, outcomes of the two chapters are combined to suggest possibilities of the communication barriers.

With the support of theoretical framework, the empirical research is conducted in chapter 5. In the chapter, the research approach is clarified and the data collection method is introduced. This part will give the audience the answers for the research questions from a practical perspective. It then combines primary and secondary data collected for the substantial important analysis in the conclusion part.

#### **1.4 Limitations**

First and foremost, secondary sources of information specifically related to the thesis' topic are insufficient. The internal communication is studied as in an organisation structure while the seasonality and its influences are investigated regarding to the tourism aspect. Although the gatherings are collectively put into the restaurant context in this research, further studies related to restaurant business are necessary in order to enhance the reliability and validity of this research. The empirical research has also neglected examining communication barriers caused by the multi-levels of the organisation's hierarchy due to the informal appearance of the case restaurant's staff organisation.

## **2 THE CASE STUDY**

In this chapter, the case restaurant will be introduced. The presentation includes an introduction of the restaurant and its business concept. Besides, the restaurant's location and structure of staff organisation will be mentioned.

### **2.1 SYMPOSIUM RESTAURANT**

Symposium is a modern-style restaurant located in Platanias Area, Chania, on the Island of Crete, Greece. Established in 1999, the restaurant has never stopped developing the outlook and facilities as well as improving the qualities of the products and services. Each operational season, the restaurant brings a new atmosphere through a new appearance with temporary design, a new tableware (including silverware, dishes, and glassware), a fresh menu, while still keeping the image and concept of "Symposium"- exclusive feast to the clientele. These are the reasons why the same customers keep coming many times at the restaurant during their stay in one season and the seasons after. And it also explains the fact that Symposium is considered as one of the best restaurant in Platanias, Chania area.

Due to the fact that the majority of Symposium's customers are Scandinavian tourists, the menus of food and drinks appear as a blend of several tastes preferred by Scandinavians' palates. The Symposium's menu is categorised into traditional Greek food, pizza menu, pasta menu, salad menu, and kid menu besides the exquisite menu with starters, main courses, and desserts. The restaurant mainly promotes fine Greek wines besides a few foreign wines. Various kinds of cocktails, strong beverages and non-alcohol drinks are included in the drink menu. The restaurant never stops developing its product and service qualities by bringing new food courses into its special daily menu, offering special performances of serving food and drinks at the table, and providing its employees with the education of food, drinks and other restaurant-related issues. The main products of the restaurant are delicate courses savoured with fine Greek wines. They are often served in special ways as well.

During the high tourism season (which falls in June, July, and August), restaurant is fulfilled with reserve-customers and passers-by. The operation time lies from

mid-April till mid-October depending if the weather is nice and warm which makes the tourists continue coming the place. Symposium opens in the evening, seven days a week. The kitchen opens from 17.00 till 23.00, but the customers may stay until 1 or 2 am.

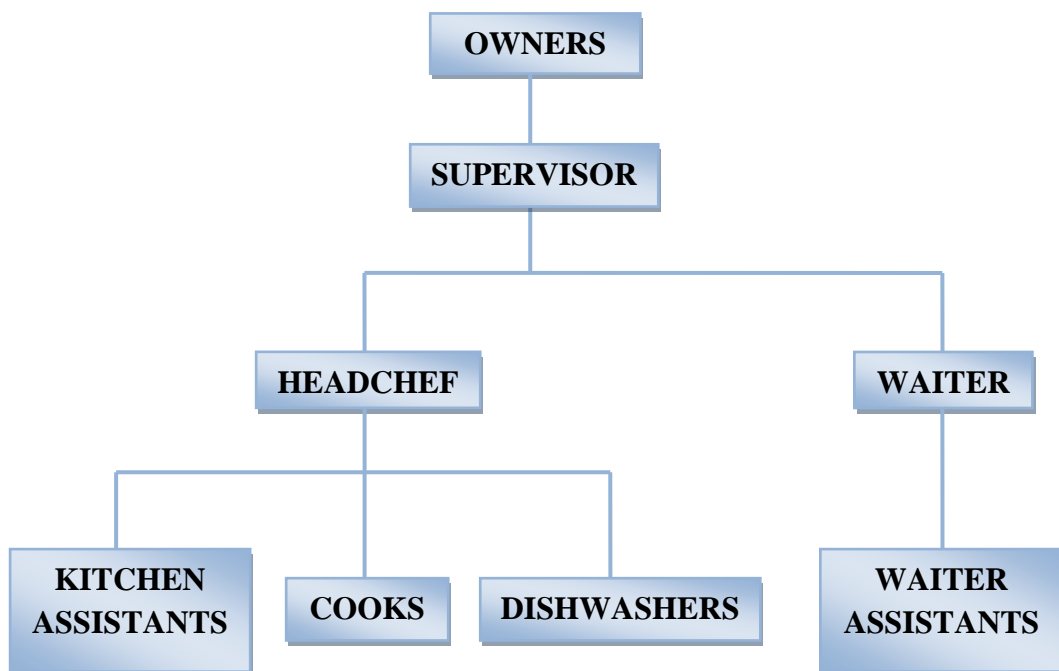
## **2.2 LOCATION**

Crete Island located in the eastern Mediterranean is the biggest island of Greece. It is considered as the most frequently visited destination by foreign tourists (about two million visitors a year). The tourism of Crete is claimed to have experienced a significant growth over the last 30 years. As a result, the tourism industry at the moment represents the major economic factor for the island. Nevertheless, most of the arrivals (92.1%) fall in the period between April and December (Andritotis 2005; Matkzarakis & Nastos 2011, 142). However, previous researches have shown that Crete Island is under significant impact of seasonality illustrated by the tourism facilities being consumed to capacity during peak period and being under-used or non-used during low season and winter time. Andriotis 2000, 127).

According to the report of EU Hotel and Restaurant Sector (Hesselink, Houtman, Bossche & Heuvel 2004, 8-10) about work and employment conditions, there are 62,178 companies belong to this sector in Greece, yet 98.1 per cent of which have 0-9 employees. It is therefore implied that most hotels and restaurants in the country fall into small- and medium-sized businesses. Another statistics included in the report also indicates that Greece (together with France, Italy, and Spain) has a smaller share of female labour than the male labour (46 per cent women in the sector) while in the rest countries, there are more women than men working in the hotel and restaurant sector.

## **2.3 THE ORGANISATION**

Symposium Restaurant consists of 20 employees (including the owners) for different working positions and shifts. Like in other small-sized businesses, the staff organisation appears casual with a flat hierarchy. The organisation of Symposium Restaurant is formed as following:



**Figure 1.** The organisational chart of Symposium Restaurant.

Even though the restaurant's organisational chart shows a clear position hierarchy, the organisation remains less autocratic and formal. The restaurant is co-founded by two people. They are responsible for all restaurant activities related to operation, management and supervision. They also work along with other employees during the opening season. One works as the cashier whilst the other works as the waiter. Their roles are regarded as the managers of the restaurant. They have one assistant whose position is the supervisor or duty manager. The supervisor is the one who mostly keep communication connection with all employees at the restaurant. Before and during its opening season, the restaurant also has to deal with job replacements due to the employees' resignation and dismissal.

At Symposium Restaurant, an individual employee takes on a position which is responsible for particular tasks but quite often, the employees offer help to each other so as to be able to complete the teamwork effectively especially in rush hours. In the morning, one person cleans the whole dining areas which are patio and in-door areas. The kitchen includes one head-chef, one cook and one assistant at hot station, one cook at cold stations, one assistant responsible for desserts and

coffees, and two staff working as dishwashers. At dining area, one waiter mainly works at the bar managing all drink orders. There are two waiters and four assistants working at patio area while one waiter with his assistant work at in-door area. Besides, two male waiters are responsible for carrying food trays, they freely move around dining areas to help their colleagues.

One head chef and three waiters lead the activities at the kitchen and dining areas with the help from other colleagues. Before opening hours, waiting staff are also responsible for cleaning and preparing works at the restaurant. At dining area, only waiters are capable of receiving orders from customers. They are equipped with electronic order pads which send the orders directly to the kitchen. The waiter assistants are responsible for preparing tables for new customers, serving food and drinks, and other tasks. Working areas are not divided, instead, the waiters try to help each other and take control the whole restaurant area. In the kitchen, the head-chef controls the coming orders and distributes them to the ones who are responsible for salads, grilled courses, desserts, and so on.

Working shifts are not clearly divided. Instead, the managerial team manages to let one group starts and leaves the work earlier than the other. During the quiet days, one employee may have a day-off, yet most of them are assistants. The main cooks or waiters rarely have day-offs during a season.



### 3 COMMUNICATION

Communication has emerged its inevitable role in various facets of human life. Since the pre-20<sup>th</sup> century, communication has been studied by different scholars from various angles of mathematics, accounting, psychology, linguistic, system analysis, etymology, etc. As a result, the concept of communication appears as an interdisciplinary field of study (Rayudu 2010, 2). In one of his articles, Bob Nelson (01/2010) implied the importance of communication in the workplace with the results of one survey conducted among approximately 1400 CFOs from American companies (the companies consists of 20 or more employees). The two top answers for “what was the most negative impact on employee morale?” are “Lack of honest communication” followed by “Failure to recognise employee achievement”. The survey also stated that 48 per cent of the CFOs agreed that good communication will improve the low morale in employees.

Through the communication, one person can exchange facts, ideas, opinions, feelings and attitudes to one another in order to share the meanings and mutual understandings. And because mutual understanding is considered as the steady foundation from which the human relations are built up, effective communication is a must especially at workplaces (Kristina & Yesenia: 2005, 78). Before going into communication issues in the workplace and reason the causes of communication problems, the definition of communication and its process will be introduced.

#### 3.1 WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

Acknowledged as a multi-faceted concept, communication has evolved in various related academic studies (Fisker 1990, 1). The word “communicate” derives from the Latin “*communicare*” which means “to share” or “to make common”. There are several definitions of communication, one of which describes clearly:

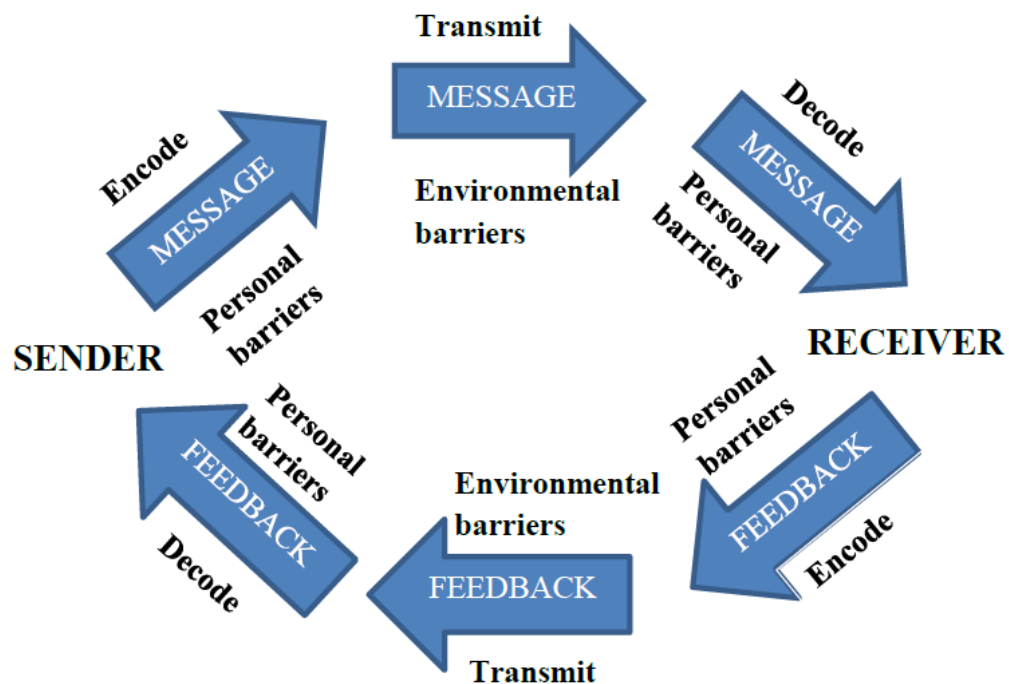
*“Any act by which one person gives to or receives from another person information about that person's needs, desires, perceptions, knowledge or affective states. Communication may be intentional or unintentional, may involve conventional or unconventional signals, may take linguistic or non-linguistic*

*forms, and may occur through spoken or other modes.” (The National Joint Committee for the Communicative Needs of Persons with Severe Disabilities, 1992: 2)*

Communication is not simply a series of acts to transmit the information, but it continuously takes place as a systematic process of which messages are being exchanged so that two or more people can reach the same knowledge and understanding (Louis A. as cited in Rayudu 2010: 2). The organisation or social system regardless of its structure, scope or magnitude becomes consolidated through a process of communication. When the process of information reciprocation runs smoothly, all departments of the organisation can function as a solidary unit even if the organisation is multinational (Chester Barnard, as cited in Rayudu 2010: 3; Rai 2008: 1)

### 3.2 COMMUNICATION PROCESS

As the communication studies have been developed in many directions, the communication is defined and developed upon different models of the communication process. The following model is suggested in this research due to its simple appearance and the purpose of this study.



**Figure 2.** The communication process (McShane & Von Glinow 2003, 324)

The model demonstrates the key elements placed in the process of communication and how they act together to create the process. All activities within process are involved by two parties: the sender and the receiver. Sender (also known as a communicator) is the one who initiates the communication by encoding the information he wants to send, inform or share into the message. The message is created either with words or symbols. In another hand, receiver is the person (a group, organisation, etc.) who receives and translates the message into meaning with his understanding. The process of communication will not be completed without an existence of the receiver (Ford, Knight& Littleton 2001: 80-82; Urmila 2008: 4-5)

Encoding is a process of converting abstract or intangible matters that exist in the mind of the communicator into symbols (verbal or non-verbal techniques). It is crucial that the communicator has a well-organised flow of his opinions, feelings, information, feelings, etc., and use the right medium to translate the flow into a message from which the intended receiver will get the meanings correctly. When the message comes to the receiver, it goes through a converting process so-called “Decoding”; the information is transformed into understandable language for the receiver so that he can receive what is meant to be sent by the sender (Urmila 2008, 4-5).

The communication succeeds when the receiver understands the message and reacts as the way the sender wants. The verbal or nonverbal responses or reactions from the message receiver are called as feedbacks. Feedback is a tool to check whether successful communication takes place (Bisen& Priya 2009, 6; Rayudu 2010: 11)

### **3.2.1 The feedback**

Quite often the managers or the owners of any different business establishment including the restaurant field neglect this part of the communication process. They tend to give information, task, or demand without knowing if their employees understand the message or agree with them on the mentioned subjects. It is hence necessary to check immediately whether the information or instruction is clear

and understandable (according to the receivers' knowledge) at the first place (Rai & Rai 2009, 4-5)

As the last step to close the process (Figure 2), feedback helps to measure the mutual understanding and agreement within a communication situation, to see if the message is received and understood in the expected way. Through this stage, both sender and receiver are allowed to adjust the content of the message in order to bring out the mutual agreement or understanding. Moreover, getting feedback is a way to learn the message receiver's emotional response and reaction, especially in a face-to-face communication process. In face-to-face communication, the speaker relies on the immediate non-verbal response from the listener to adjust the conversation in order to adapt the listener's needs and expectation (Rai et al. 2009: 5; "How to Use Feedback..." 1992).

At work, employees crave to know how they perform. But it does not mean they are willing to receive judgemental words. Randye London, who has been working as a waiter for 15 years, claimed that she was treated with lack of respect from both customers and restaurant managers and she wished to know if she made mistakes at work but "don't talk down to me" (Stern 1993, 68). The feedback needs providing with a positive intention. The employee will feel more appreciated if he gets the feedback in an objective manner rather than a judgemental manner. The feedback should consist of precise and reliable information and it is recommended to be sent at the right time ("How to Use Feedback..." 1992). Luthans (2011, 255) and Mariko have proposed the characteristics of effective and ineffective feedback for employee performance:

**Table 1.** Characteristics of feedbacks for Effective and Ineffective Interpersonal Communication in Human Resource Management (Luthans 2011, 255)

<b>EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK</b>	<b>INEFFECTIVE FEEDBACK</b>
Intended to help the employee	Intended to belittle the employee
Specific	General
Descriptive	Evaluative
Useful	Inappropriate

Timely	Untimely
Employee readiness for feedback	Makes employee defensive
Clear	Not understandable
Valid	Inaccurate

### 3.2.2 Communication barriers

Communication is not easily obtained due to the existence of barriers. Appearing during the communication process, barriers prevent the message from being transmitted, or distort meanings of the message, causing the misunderstandings. The barriers are results of local effects (the environment where communication happens) or from personal effects of the sender and receiver. More specifically, the barriers can be divided into three main groups which are Physical and External barriers; Semantic and Language barriers, and Socio-Psychological barriers (Urmila 2008, 34; Guo & Sanchez 2005, 86-87)

During the communication process, physical problems (with communication media), noises and disturbances (happening at the environment) may become obstacles that hinder the message from reaching the receiver. These obstacles are named as Physical and External barriers (Urmila 2008, 34-35; Krishnamacharyulu 2009, 10). In some restaurants, wireless order-taking pads are provided to waiters to reduce the waiter's time of running back and forth to the kitchen. This high-tech product brings convenience to both dining and kitchen areas, and also increase the productivity of the business. However, sometimes the software or the wireless connection does not function properly which make the orders never come to the kitchen. The deficiency or breakage in the media including telephone, postal services, email service, and others may send out incomplete or distorted messages to the recipient (Urmila 2008, 34-35).

Working under very hot or cold conditions, the staff may feel tired and distracted, which results in barriers in their communications at work. Besides, lack of time is another barrier. The sender is unable to arrange the message thoroughly according to his intention with time deficiency. In addition, the receiver's ability of decoding the message is limited (Guo & Sanchez 2005, 87).

The second group of communication barriers is called Semantic and Language barriers. This group is associated with an individual person's understanding of words and their meanings. Both verbal and non-verbal forms of language are considered as the most powerful and common tool used in communication. How does the language bring the barriers into the communication process? In verbal language, one word contains different meanings while some different words are pronounced similarly. It becomes more complicated when sentences are made during any conversation. Even in the same language, there are slight changes in the way things are explained, words that are used, phrases that are spoken from place to place, from people to people. That is to say, people with diverse emotional, cultural, educational backgrounds and mother-tongues possess dissimilar linguistic understanding. Nowadays when the globalised business has developed, diverse nationalities and cultures can be found at many workplaces. Communicating in another language rather than first language also limits the ability of conveying as well as understanding messages (Rai 2008, 35-36).

The last type of barriers is Socio-Psychological barriers. They emerge during the communication due to the distinction in the sensation and perception of human beings. An individual's consciousness is established upon his own intelligence, education, personal experiences with the substantial influence of the family background and social environment. Each person has distinguished understanding and response towards messages that he may receive (Rai 2008, 35-36). The act of receiving a message is divided into three stages which are Noticing, Understanding, and Acceptance:

**Table 2.** The stages of an individual's receiving the message (Rai 2008, 37)

<b>NOTICING</b> (The physical stage)	The awareness of a message addressed to the receiver by his senses.
<b>UNDERSTANDING</b> (The intelligent stage)	The ability of understanding the languages or symbols in the message. The ideas and concepts in the message must be within the reader's knowledge.
<b>ACCEPTANCE</b>	The emotional response of a receiver towards his

(The emotional stage)	message. Emotional distortions may cause misunderstanding or fail to understand the message
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Social-physiological barriers often happen during the Acceptance stage. People tend to evaluate and judge towards any statements that come up to them. The acts of judging and evaluating relying on a person's frame of preference get involved during the communication process. People are more or less prone to receive the information according to their interests and desires. They filter out things unfavourable to them and only pay attention to what they want to know. The message is hence interpreted in the way as the receiver expects, which make the information of message distorted or mislead. (Rogers& Roethlisberger 1999, 105-111; Krishnamacharyulu 2009, 10-11)

Each person also possesses a visionary image which illustrates his own physical appearance as well as characteristics. The image is drawn based on the truth and the magnification about his own good characteristics. That is to say, people get hurt when receiving any negative feedbacks about themselves. Negative or threatening contents in a message leads to the receiver feeling defensive and reacting in a way that blocks the genuine information or mislead the understanding .At works, employees tend to ignore or defence when they only receive negative messages from their executives. It is easier when negative comments go along with compliments on their job performance. Recognising what good job they have done, the employees will try harder to maintain good side and improve the lack. (Rai 2008, 38; Gunderson 1996, 44)

It is difficult that the contents of a message can be completely shared between people with unrelated values of the prejudice, knowledge, experience, and belief. Some people even refuse to consider new ideas or principles that go against their preconception. At work, young employees often find it difficult to convince their senior colleagues about new ideas and innovative plans. Seniors' closed-mind and resistance to change bring the gap into their mutual communication (Guo & Sanchez 2005, 88; Rai 2008, 38)

### **3.3 COMMUNICATION IN THE ORGANISATIONAL CONCEPT**

Organisational communication is a broad concept, which comprises all activities of communication that take place within an organisation. Communication in the organisation operates as the systems transmitting the data and information (in the past and present) in particular patterns within the organisation. For the business organisations, there are three main categories of communication existing at workplace including internal communication, external communication and informal communication (Rayudu 2010, 4). In this study, the internal communication and informal communication will be studied to observe the communication process from the organisational perspective.

When an organisation holds effective internal communication, its employees become motivated and empowered. That means the employees need to know their roles in the business success, they need to receive feedback of what they do in order to see if the work goes well or not. And as a part of the organisation, they would like to be asked for their ideas or opinions to improve the business (Nelson, 2010). As Bovée and Thrill (2000, 7), internal communication is regarded as a process of exchanging information and ideas within an organisation". The effective internal communication helps to establish the respect atmosphere among the individuals within the organisation, to keep employees engaged in the business. Effective work performance of the organisation hence remains while high values are provided consistently to customers and partners (Argentie 1998, 128; "2009/2010 Communication..." 2009, 3). Internal communication of an organisation is formed by three parts known as upward communication, downward communication, and horizontal communication.

#### **3.3.1 Downward communication**

In downward communication, the flow of information goes from the top management of an organisation through the immediate subordinates before reaching the employees. Downward communication is objected to providing task instructions, workplace rules and regulations, organisational procedures as well as the organisation's missions and goals. Feedbacks on working performance of



lower functionaries are also provided to either encourage the employees' morale or correct their work inadequacies (Ramasamy 2010, 157).

As theory, the information is transmitted from top managers to middle managers or heads of departments before it is given to employees. Due to the multi-levels in the hierarchy of an organisation, the message is interpreted again and again before reaching the final receivers. Besides, the information flow is also delayed or withheld for various reasons. These lead to situations where the given information is found lacking or false (Rayudu 2010, 260; Proctor & Doukakis 2003, 271). Even though hiding information from employees is believed to drag the organisational knowledge down, providing more information does not mean the employees are well-informed. Choosing right information and right channels to communicate with employees should be carefully taken into consideration to prevent the overload of information in the message (Harris 2002, 235). In 1982, Roger D'Aprix (cited by Gorman 2003, 14) proposed the manager's communication model. The model suggests the information employees want from the communication with their managers with an attempt to improve the communication between them:

**Table 3.** D'Aprix's model of employee's communication needs (Gorman 2003, 14).



Corresponding to each category, D'Aprix illustrated with a question asked by the employees in order to clarify their communication needs. About the job

responsibilities, employees want to know clearly what their tasks are. Company regulations, work procedures and employee rights should be included so that they together support the employees with their jobs. The next communication topic which the employees need to know is feedbacks about their working performance. The topic is raised with the question of “How am I doing?”. Employees want to know if they make any mistakes and they also want to hear appraisals when they do well at work. Besides, the employees want to communicate about their individual needs and concerns. Regardless of positions in the organisation, people seek for attention from their managers as well as colleagues. The superiors are expected to listen and discuss about the employee’s conflicts, problems, and others whether they are relevant or irrelevant to the work. The employees want the assistance and support from their managerial team; in return, they are also willing to engage themselves into improving and developing their organisation. Communication hence turns into a powerful tool to complete those issues. Additionally, the business situation of the organisation is one of the issues attentively discussed by the employees. They feel secured when they are informed how the business of their organisation is performed, how the goals or plans are implemented or if there are any problems happening in the business. From that, visions, missions and goals of the organisation ought to remain clear within the conversation between the organisation and employees. Together with that, the managers should discuss about what and how the employees can do their tasks in order to help the organisation to complete these missions and goals. Such conversations are believed to guide and motivate the employees at work (Gorman 2003, 14; Field 2007, 2-3)

### **3.3.2 Upward communication**

In contrast to the downward, upward communication indicates the flow of the message sent from the employees to the managerial positions. It is the way for the employees to exchange messages with their managers including suggesting the ideas, sharing their opinions, expressing the enthusiasm, provide the reactions (Rayudu 2010, 274). Among other functions, the upward flow is seen as the feedback flow of the downward communication process as shown in Figure1. It

helps to evaluate the downward flow by sending signals of acceptance or rejection upon the information received from the managers.

Same as in downward communication, various levels of organisational hierarchy result in the communication barrier in which the information is either distorted or dropped out. Besides, status block is another factor to the barrier. Status block happens when the superiors find it difficult to perceive new ideas or suggestion from their employees. In their opinions, the employees are considered to be lack of experience. Likewise, the employees hesitate to send true messages to their managers for that may cause the negative impression on the bosses (Rayudu 2010, 267; Harris 2002, 236)

### **3.3.3 Horizontal communication**

Horizontal communication is defined when the exchange of information occurs between people with similar status or equality of relationship in the same department or different departments of an organisation (Rayudu 2010, 271). When the job requires the cooperation between colleagues of a department or of many departments, horizontal communication is performed in order to share information, to reach mutual knowledge and understanding, to solve conflicts or problem if they exist, and to establish the rapports (Harris 2002, 241)

Employees who share similar positions in the hierarchy of an organisation often are emulous to become the one who is better at job. Important information is hidden or withheld by colleagues who perceive each other as rivals. It hence blocks flows of the horizontal communication (Urmilla 2008, 40).

### **3.3.4 Informal communication**

Regarded as the most common workplace activities, informal communication is established upon personal relationships between one to another person. This type of communication is described spontaneous, frequent and uncomplicated (Rayudu 2010, 319; Whittaker, Frohlich, & Daly-Jones 1994, 131).

In informal communication, messages are normally transmitted seemingly quickly and effectively even though the content information is not assured whether precise

or rumour. Also, the flow of information is not determined by the hierarchy of an organisation. It can happen between any individuals or groups belonging to the organisation (Rayudu 2010, 320).

## **4 SEASONALITY**

Tourism is considered as a cross-cutting industry. Activities within tourism are associated with variety of economic sectors including hotel and other accommodation, or gastronomy (restaurants, cafés, and others) (Eurostat... 2010, 184). In this chapter, seasonality in tourism will be examined before focusing on its effects towards the restaurant business. For the purposes of the study, the concept of restaurants mentioned here is focused on local restaurants at tourism destinations which are significantly influenced by seasonality in tourism.

### **4.1 SEASONALITY IN TOURISM**

Seasonality presents the foreseeable and irrepressible variations in demand over time. The cycle of seasonal changes can be predicted based on a recurrent chain of events and activities happening within particular periods (Shugan & Radas 2000, 148). In the tourism process, seasonality is portrayed by the temporal imbalance in many facets including the fluctuation of tourist arrivals, the significant volume of tourist expenditures on products and services, the high rate of transportation uses and labour demands at a particular destination (Butler 2001, 5).

Fretchling (1996, 55), in his study, has defined four causes of seasonality in tourism demand. Firstly, changes in climate or weather are claimed to cause the seasonality in tourism. Climate and weather of an area are defined according to the course of natural seasons: spring, summer, autumn, and winter (Shugan et al. 2000, 150) causing the differences in temperatures, humidity, rainfall or amounts of sunlight. For instance, in winter time, skiing resorts are attracted by people who love skiing whereas tropical places with warm weather and nice beaches are perfect choices for tourists who want to escape from the coldness. The second cause in Fretchling's study is due to social customs or holidays which consist of Christmas' and New Year's holidays, school breaks, work vacations and so on. Besides, business customs comprising trade shows, international conferences and other similar events are also argued to be the third cause. During the events, large numbers of business tourists from different places gather at the destination not only attending business events but also consuming accommodation, food and

beverage, transportation and other tourism products. The last cause Fretchling (1996, 55) mention is the calendar effect resulted from the existence of important days such as Independence Day, Easter. Christmas, etc.

## **4.2 SEASONALITY AND RESTAURANT BUSINESS**

Considered as one of the tourism sectors, restaurant business also shares with tourism the seasonality's characteristics and its impacts. In his article, Mintzer (2007) brought up two solutions that owners of seasonal businesses use deal with the seasonality temperament, which are either to choose to close the business during slow months or to remain it open if the owner who find the way to maintain cash flow throughout the rest of the year. Therefore, at some tourist destinations by which the seasonality highly affects, restaurants, hotels, or bars are open when tourists visit the destinations. When the tourist season is over, the operation of those businesses are also stopped.

Seasonal restaurant is a challenging field for anyone who gets involved no matter what position they undertake from owners to managers, supervisors, chefs, or waiter positions. Charles Milite, a Principal with the Gotham City Restaurant Group once in an interview has claimed the worst part of running a seasonal restaurant is that "*You don't have time to make mistakes*" (Prewitt 1995, 7). There is only a certain period of a year that seasonal restaurants can accomplish profits. And the question of how to gain the highest profits as possible lays on the hands of the work team.

### **4.2.1 Features of employees**

According to Smidth's report on employment in hotels and restaurants (2003, 1), the hotel and restaurant staff in European Union possesses the average age which is young compared with the average age of the whole economy's workforce. The employees of this sector mostly fall into groups of either 15-24 year-old or 25-34 year-old. The report also shows the female employment dominates hotel and restaurant sector. For instance, women generally holds around 72 per cent of the jobs belong to Finland's hotels and restaurants. The other members of European

Union share the same experience except Greece, France, Spain and Italy where hotels and restaurants prefer more male than female workforce (Smidth 2003, 4).

Working on seasonal basis becomes fundamental to numerous enterprises belonging to hotel and restaurant sector. The sector hence has to deal with seasonal peak and off-peak seasons. It leads to the consequence of providing insecure work. In high seasons, large numbers of employees are needed until the off-peak periods many of them have to leave the job. For that fact, women and students are prone to apply for the jobs more often than men. The main reason lies on that women tend to combine care obligations with temporary earnings and students may work and study at the same time or by turns around the year (EU Hotel and Restaurant...2004, 10-13).

Together with high unemployment rate between seasons, low income and poor working conditions are also features of seasonal job at hotel and restaurant section. This makes local people as well as skilled employees leave the sector, and leads to foreign workers' attention. Keeping the thought of the jobs being temporary and seasonal, people easily receive and quit their jobs after a short time. It appears that the number of employees working as bartenders, waiters, kitchen personnel, porters and catering assistants possesses the high frequency of quitting their jobs. Whereas, hotel and restaurant sector attracts a lot of employees with a low educational level or no academic knowledge related to the jobs because of the employment requirement of no education or a low level of training and experience. Only few jobs required academic knowledge and professional experience such as cooks, sommeliers or hotel managers. On the other hand, the owners save the labour cost from paying low wages to their unskilled employees (EU Hotel and Restaurant...2004, 17-18).

#### **4.2.2 Working conditions**

In general, working in the hotel and restaurant sector is described as physical and strenuous work. The employees often deal with standing or walking for a long time, carrying stuffs for instance waiters carry trays of drinks or food, kitchen staff carry heavy ingredient packages, and so on. At particular bars, female servers are required to wear high-heels while working. At restaurants whose business is

highly affected by the seasonality, the workload is even heavier during the peak period of tourist arrivals. The working time is extended while the movements are highly repetitive in the limited space. This apparently causes the continuous physical pain for the employees (EU Hotel and Restaurant...2004, 25).

The other problem is the workload and stress. At restaurant, employees face with the time pressure (various tasks needs doing within the limited time) required the high individual concentration and well-operated team work. The lack of replacement for sick employees is also noticed at the working condition within the sector, and so, the staff have to work even more on behalf of their absent colleagues. It all leads to the situation where employees find themselves suffering the stress, boredom, and lack of interest for their jobs (EU Hotel and Restaurant...2004, 27).

It is challenging for the employees who suffer the stress and have duty to serve the customers the best service with friendly and warming attitude. The personal emotion and feeling are required to be hidden, which is also resulted in the stress tolerance. Moreover, at the seasonal restaurants where it is easily to find different nationalities, educational backgrounds, and genders, discrimination also co-exists. Overtime is also one of the matters existing together with the seasonal business due to the high fluctuation of tourists in a particular period of time. On the other hand, employees rarely receive the payment for their over-time (EU Hotel and Restaurant...2004, 28-31).



## **5 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH**

After having reviewed the theoretical background of the topic through a collection of literature sources, this chapter introduces how the research has been approached, by what method the primary data have been collected in order to answer the questions which were mentioned in the beginning. The findings of the research will also be presented in this chapter.

### **5.1 RESEARCH METHOD**

Case study – Symposium Restaurant was chosen as the case from where to collect the primary data for the research. The researcher wanted to intensively capture views and perspectives from the employees as well as the managerial team of Symposium on the research matter. Hence, the chosen method for this research was the qualitative method.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with the employees and the managerial team of Symposium Restaurant. The interviews were expected to gather their opinions on different matters related to the internal communication of the restaurant. Then, the current picture of the internal communication would be clearly defined. In semi-structured interviews, the questions shown in Appendix 1 and 2 were designed and organised in separate themes. However, the flow of conversation might change the order of questions and additional questions might be asked if necessary in order to explore the research questions and objectives (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009: 320)

The interviewees selected for the interviews were employees who worked at Symposium Restaurant last season, 2011. Because the interviewees and interviewer lived in different places, the one-by-one interviews were conducted via internet telephone. The interviews were all done either as video or voice calls between 18 February and 5 March 2012. The conversations lasted 45 minutes to more than one hour. Employees of Symposium Restaurant came from different countries, so it was most convenient to use English as the language for the interview. Since English was not the first language for all interviewees, the requests and questions for the interview were sent to employees and managerial

team in advance so they were able to draw an outline of the discussed matters in advance. There were two separate question categories, one of which was for the employees while the other one was for the managerial team. The time of interview was decided by the participants who agreed to do the interview. The interviews were conducted one-to-one and all information gathered was dedicated for supporting this thesis work. Two male and four female employees agreed to do the interview. In the managerial team, one of the owners and the duty manager agreed to do the interview with the author. The names of the interviewees would not be revealed.

## **5.2 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

Validity and reliability are two determinant characteristics of any kinds of good research. The validity issue is about “correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account” (Maxwell 1996: 87) while the reliability is referred to the result consistency (Saunders, et al. 2009: 156).

To build up the reliability during the interview progress, some matters were ensured by the researcher. The first matter was ensuring the interviewees that all collected data within the interviews were only used for the study purposes and their name information would be kept in secret. The employees would feel more comfortable and secure to speak out freely about the working place. Besides, the interviewees were able to decide the convenient time for them to have conversation so they would not be in a rush or feel distracted by other matters during the interviews. Hence, the given information during the interviews would be detailed and intensive. The interviewer was also acquainted with all interviewees so no awkward feeling would exist during the conversation. All information during the interviews was noted down and confirmed with the interviewees during the conversations. Lastly, the interviewer stodd unbiased during the conversation by neither leaving comments on any topics during the discussion nor answering any questions for the author’s agreement on their opinions.

The researcher also collected the opinions of employees and the manager team on the same subjects to reach more ultimate perception with an attempt to increase the validity of the research.

### **5.3 ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH**

The interview was segmented into different parts surrounding the main purpose of investigating the internal communication of the case study. The investigation goes with collecting opinions from both sides of the employees and managerial team on the same issues before coming to a conclusion.

#### **5.3.1 Employee backgrounds**

Questions in the first segment concerned personal and professional information of the employee backgrounds. By then, a realistic image of Symposium's staff organisation will be presented. None of the employees who had interviews were Greek. Six employees whose ages range from 22 to 32 years old came from Albania, Bulgaria, China, Hungary and Vietnam. Only one was a representative for the kitchen while five of the employees worked in the dining area. Apparently, they possessed either relevant education or rich working experience except the one who worked in the kitchen. Graduating from cooking school, he had been working for 9 years as a cook before he started working for Symposium since 2009. Two of the other interviewees who were studying at restaurant school started working at Symposium as trainees. Thus, they had no previous working experience related to the restaurant business. They worked for Symposium in one and two seasons respectively. The remaining respondents who had been working for Symposium for at least 3 or more seasons had no job-related education. None of the interviewees had Greek or English as their native languages. Only one of them who worked as a waiter was able to speak these two languages fluently. The others were only fluent in the English language.

On the managerial team's side, they gave 70-80 per cent of the restaurant's employees were foreigners when being asked. The statistics of new employees recruited every season were also mentioned. One in the managerial team said new employees accounted for 15 to 20 per cent of total staff number while the other

gave the number of 20 to 30 per cent. During the interviews, there was an issue that caught the author's attention. It was about the frequent staff changing at the restaurant, which will be discussed deeply in the last part of the interview. Discussing about minimum requirements for recruiting the staff, the author has learned that the restaurant was flexible in finding employees for the restaurant. There were no specific standards for qualified employees; yet, the restaurant tried to seek for applicants with some education, especially the ones who work in the dining area. The education including high school graduates, vocational graduates, or undergraduates was not necessarily relevant to the restaurant business. Employees with some education were believed to learn the tasks faster and adapt to new environments easier. The managers considered waiters and hostess as Symposium's face and therefore, they would know better how to treat customers when they have some basic education.

### **5.3.2 The downward communication**

In connection with analysing the downward communication between the managers and employees, the information flows running from the managers downwards was brought up to the discussion with the employees. We discussed the restaurant's regulation, general information, and official meetings with the employees. All interviewees had similar responses of that the information they received consists of introduction of Symposium restaurant, its working system and the job instructions. The instructions of how to do tasks as well as how to work as a team member assigned to each new employee. The instructions were only given in spoken language by the experienced staff. New-comers who had rich restaurant-related job experience were prone to apprehend the working system quickly and easily. Thus, they actively asked for more information if necessary whilst the novices claimed that they needed more time and more instructions to understand their tasks as well as the working system.

Two of the interviewees argued there were no workplace regulations at the restaurant while the others said that there were actually workplace regulations at the restaurant but they were announced face-to-face and changed frequently during the season. "The given information was not consistent. It was changed

without any explanation. We were sometimes confused...” – One interviewee said. The regulations were somehow considered unimportant and confusing to follow. The researcher also brought up a similar question of what information the managers provided to employees in the workplace. Both of them responded similarly that the general information was normally provided during the first working days, and it was then added or changed as time goes by. The duty manager stated that the restaurant offered necessary information in both written and spoken forms. Yet the owner of the restaurant admitted there was lacking in providing official and consolidated workplace regulations. Therefore, they failed to make the staff committed to the regulations of the restaurant.

Staff meetings were also discussed. A staff meeting was defined to the interviewees as a formal meeting at which the staff and managerial team sat together and discussed the restaurant’s recent operation. When asked how many times they had staff meetings a month, the given number of meetings varied between 1 and 2 times a month. In a clearer look, both sides of managers and employees agreed that the meetings were conducted whenever there were any significant problems at workplace. The topics of meetings were therefore about current problems and their finding solutions. Four of the employee interviewees claimed they never received any compliments on their working performances or efforts while the other two said the managers gave them compliments sometimes.

In addition, one female respondent who worked as a trainee reflected on her conversations with the managerial team with a negative expression. She expressed the feeling of stress during the working time and when always receiving negative feedback from the managers. “He criticized people for doing something wrong, and pushed them to change...” She said, “We had meetings every night after work during eating dinner”... and “the bosses just blamed their staff for making mistakes. They never reward anyone.” However, other female employees who worked for 2 seasons feeling acquainted with the situation declared that if they did not have meetings or private conversations with the managerial team, it meant their working performances were fine or there was no problems happening. One explained: “At the beginning, I was a trainee and I felt like my job would never

satisfy the managers...” and “They have some weakness in communicating with the staff, but I also feel their difficulties when many of the employees just come to work for vacation or money, and they are also from different countries...” and “I got compliments from the boss, yet it was very rare.”

On the other hand, male employees reacted calmly when we approached the same issues. One said that he sometimes received compliments on his work, and that he felt no problems in mutual conversation with the managers. The other one claimed he never got compliments and he did not know if his performance was good or bad. In conclusion, all interviewees expected that the managerial team would improve the way of communicating with their employees at the restaurant. They agreed that it would be nice if they received compliments or rewards on their good performances besides negative feedbacks at the workplace. Additionally, the management of Symposium’s organisation was also a big concern.

On behalf of the managerial team, the interviewees declared having given compliments to their employees when they did good jobs even though the frequency remained low. The managers lay the reason for that on employees’ attitudes. Specifically, the owner stated that compliments were for not only people who did their job well but also for the ones who made efforts to complete their tasks despite lack of skills and experience. Both respondents emphasized there were not many employees who possessed the right attitudes at work. Many of them combined enjoying summer vacation with earning money while working at Symposium Restaurant. Besides, both managers noticed the negative changes in work attitude and behaviour in some employees after they had received good feedback. As the managers’ explanation, some employees overrated their self-importance after the compliments and became arrogant towards their colleagues. One said: “Some started thinking that they were the only ones who made the restaurant successful and they started putting down other people...” However, the managers agreed that compliments and rewards should be taken into careful consideration.

### **5.3.3 The upward communication**

The managerial team showed their eagerness and respect towards new ideas and opinions about work-related issues from the employees. However, there were only few employees who came and discussed their job with them about their job or operational activities of the restaurant in general. The managers explained that was because the employees were afraid of telling the truth which might offend the bosses, or they did not have clues of what was going on at the restaurant, or even worse they were not concerned about the restaurant and their jobs.

In the interviews with the employees, most of them showed their willingness to share opinions with the managers in order to improve working efficiency and tenderise the jobs. They also affirmed that despite specific standards existing at the restaurant the managerial team were open to receiving feedback or ideas from their employees and take them into careful consideration. However, lack of meetings was claimed to be the reason that the managers did not receive enough information from the employees. Other than that, one interviewee stated that she was not comfortable to talk with the managers so she never discussed any work problems or ideas with them.

### **5.3.4 The horizontal communication**

In this section, the author studies the communication performance between the employees and briefly investigates the informal communication at Symposium Restaurant. A few related issues were questioned during the interviews. In their opinion, the working tempo at the restaurant was at a rapid pace especially during peak months, which resulted in a stressful atmosphere. Problems happening at work were temporarily solved with a single decision or quick discussion. Before and after working hours were often used to reflect on mistakes and problems and find solutions. Most of the interviewees also agreed that bad attitudes, high voices and wrong body gestures when communicating with co-workers even increased the stress at work. Through the interviews, it showed that female employees seemed vulnerable by inappropriate words, speaking tones or body gestures received from their colleagues at work. Feeling offended and stressed hence lead

to their loss of working motivation. One said: “Some people don’t know how to act politely with others. They started yelling if some problem happened and affected their job”. Male employees, in the other hand, expressed their understandings towards the situations at which their co-workers raised their voices or showed bad attitudes.

The interviewees found similarities in their body languages and how they understood in different situations. When asking the roles of body language in communication at work, the author noticed that communicating with body language only happened among certain employees. Even though the restaurant business required a team work, not many employees noticed body gestures, eye contact and other non-verbal signals from their colleagues. The interviewees expected the employees to show respect and empathy towards their work-mates and to notice more non-verbal contact during working time. They also believed that casual conversation outside work between employees helped to gain a mutual understanding and strengthen their work relationships. From that, the horizontal communication at work will be improved. As the duty manager said, employees were human beings with a mixture of emotions. When they brought with them personal, family and other problems to work, the manager and their colleagues tried to comfort them to be in ready mood before work.

### **5.3.5 Seasonality influence on internal communication**

For its temporary feature of the business, Symposium Restaurant possesses a dynamic and international working environment where people meet different cultures, languages, and other attributes. The research wants to look for any communication clashes which might be caused by those differences. The issues were discussed with both employees and managers of the restaurant.

Language was considered as one of matters limiting the communication at the workplace, especially in the kitchen area. The kitchen area where all of the native people worked required communication in Greek. The interviewee who worked in the kitchen admitted his biggest communication problem was language limitation for he did not know Greek when starting the job at Symposium while the kitchen



staff knew so little English. Thus, he had to learn little by little the Greek language during working time in order to communicate with colleagues. The other responses that the author received were that language was not the big barrier in their communication although limited etiquettes in speaking and listening was claimed to lead to misunderstanding or offended feeling in communication. High tone in speaking, avoidance of listening, or using sarcastic or imperative sentences were exemplified.

Besides, the interviewees mentioned that people tend to exaggerate their own prides (including personal and patriotic prides) and hence, they sometimes took less consideration and respect into their colleagues or managers' opinions. Conversely, their prides might be hurt by the others, which unintentionally blocked the information flow. It was acknowledged that each person had specific characteristics as well as prejudices about things and it always took time for their opinions to be in line with the options of others. The differences in cultures or educational background rather than the differences in individual traits and characteristics remain unclear in causing the communication barriers.

There were opposite ideas about body language used at work. They found common understanding in body language but three employees including the kitchen staff thought they did not use it often while the others claimed that body language was used selectively at work. It required the employees' good attention and sensibility especially during rush hours. However, not many employees could catch the non-linguistic signals from their colleagues. Therefore, body language was limitedly used between specific employees.

Changing staff was recognised a common fact at Symposium Restaurant. It happened not only season after season but also during each season. It was claimed that the employment situation in the kitchen area was more stable rather than in the waiting area. Every one or two months, there was an employee changing. Employees leaving or getting fired was replaced by a new one chosen in a short time. However, the interviewees believed the communication system within a season was not affected by the employment changes. The length of time working together and its effect on the communication was brought up to the discussion.

Besides the ones who claimed that they had not worked long enough in order to make comments on the matter, the others agreed that the longer time they worked together, the better they understood each other.

On the managerial team's side, deficiency of language skills was also a fact that was said to hinder the communication. Moreover, they claimed that lack of right attitudes at work indirectly lead to communication conflicts. Many people applied for the jobs because of the restaurant's location. As an attractive tourism destination, Crete Island as well as all tourism-related businesses became ideal options for people who wanted to combine working and vacation time. Many employees were in holiday mood while working. Therefore, their lack of commitment blocked their minds from perceiving the true meanings. They were found listening without actually understanding and accepting the contents. Likewise, they were not interested in speaking their minds about the job or any problems which they might be faced with.

#### **5.4 SUMMARY FOR THE INTERVIEW**

Seasonality has significantly influenced the human resource management of Symposium Restaurant. Due to the seasonality of local tourism, unstable working demands at the destination discourage many skilled employees to apply for and commit to the jobs. Frequently, the restaurant has to cope with recruiting and keeping qualified employees. Another highlight is that high occupancy of foreign employees creates a diverse working environment at Symposium Restaurant. In the interviews, half of the employees admitted that they would not come back to the restaurant in the next seasons. The fact resulted from complex reasons which were not examined within this research. One certain thing emerging from this is that the status of Symposium's staff organisation is unstable. Especially, during the season when staff changing occurred, the managerial team faced with the limited time for recruitment as well as limited options.

With a diverse organisation in constant change, it became a challenge for the managers and employees to establish and maintain a good system of internal communication. The limitation of language skills was acknowledged as one of the

concerning issues for the communication at Symposium although this issue was perceived by one employee and the managerial team. Together, the ways of using tones words, phrases, and sentences significantly affected the communication process. Female employees were prone to be responsive more than male employees during the discussion about speaking etiquettes. They were seemingly sensitive towards high speaking tone, imperative words or neglects of listening. The slight difference was also noticed between the old employees' and the new ones' reactions. The employees who had been working for Symposium for 2 or 3 seasons got adapted to any limitations or mistakes occurring within the internal communication system. They expressed their sympathy towards the situations and somehow tended to ignore the bad communication while the new employees might fall into offended feeling and lose their working motivation.

A stressful working environment was also one of the main factors causing internal communication barriers at Symposium Restaurant. It resulted from a large amount of tasks and long working hours during the peak period together with the fact that the restaurant failed to offer an effective system in arranging and managing varied activities of human resource management especially the staff scheduling. Under these circumstances, the employees as well as managers were struggling against the stress and pressure and had difficulties controlling their emotions and attitudes towards their colleagues or even customers. The internal communication system therefore was affected in different directions. Despite its important role in strengthening the organisation, the internal communication system at Symposium has not been taken into careful consideration by the managers.

Lastly, bad working attitudes and lack of respect for the local culture were claimed to bring negative impacts to the communication at Symposium. Being self-centred or feeling too proud of oneself were picked up from some people at the organisation. These states might prevent human minds from receiving and accepting other people's opinions. Disrespectful or offensive words can be generated during the conversations with other members of the organisation. Additionally, the holiday mood existing among many employees affected their

working attitudes. This was believed to indirectly affect the internal communication at workplace.

In the end, the managers affirmed that they were planning big changes in the management system of Symposium Restaurant. They were hopefully expected to bring out significant improvements in all activities within the restaurant including the internal communication part. The changes aiming in various directions were exemplified by improving the system of calculating salaries in order to increase the employees' commitment, implementing official regulations at workplace for the employees, creating more staff meetings in the next season.

## 6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the findings which have been collected through the theoretical and empirical parts of the research will be compared and analysed in order to bring forth the outcomes of the whole study. Besides, the suggestions for improvement and further study will be mentioned.

The thesis aims at understanding how the seasonality impacts on the internal communication of seasonal restaurants. Symposium Restaurant, located on Crete Island, which is significantly influenced by the seasonality, is chosen as the case study. As a matter of fact, the literature sources have identified various possibilities that cause communication problems at seasonal enterprises. Through the case study, some of the possibilities were found to match its existing issues. The findings from the interviews with the managerial team and employees are diverse. Both sides' perspectives are not in contrast. Instead, they help to capture the extensive picture of the entire communication situation at Symposium restaurant through the research.

Overall, the restaurant cannot avoid the effects of the seasonality on the staff features as well as the working conditions. Symposium has staff with diverse backgrounds which are theoretically considered as potential barriers of the internal communication. However, as in this case, only limitation in language and individual attitudes are found to be problematic issues. Both are probably the most challenging to solve because they require the individual person's self-awareness of his/her weaknesses, and willingness to fix them. It is recommended to have further study on the interaction between the internal communication and people's attitudes to see whether the managers need to improve ways of communication so that it will improve people' attitudes or they need to recruit people with good attitudes in order to establish a good internal communication.

A stressful working environment has also been proved to affect the healthy internal communication at Symposium negatively. The managerial team needs to work on scheduling and arranging tasks for the employees. Creating flows of formal communication within the organisation should be taken more seriously by

the managerial team. As the employees' suggestions, formal meetings should be arranged more frequently, yet, it would be interesting to learn in what effective way formal meetings are supposed to be conducted for the fact that opinions and feedback are freely spoken in public. Furthermore, informal communication apparently dominates the entire communication system at Symposium Restaurant. It might help to satisfy the social and psychological needs of individual members and strengthen their work relationships; yet, informal communication reduces the role of formal communication. Gossip as a part of the informal communication would be problematic if they are out of control. This aspect should be considered in further study as well during the improvement process of the internal communication.

Hopefully through this research, the managerial team of Symposium will achieve better understanding about their internal communication situation. The research is used as a reference source for the managers to perceive the internal communication and its importance for the restaurant. The research also creates a chance for them to understand the employee's opinions and expectations towards their jobs and the restaurant in general so that they can ameliorate the effective communication system for the restaurant which brings out the best performance of the team while still harmonising communication needs of the managers and employees.

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### **Interviews for the case of Symposium Restaurant**

Mr. D., Managerial Team.05.03.2012.

Mr. M., Managerial Team.05.03.2012.

Ms. Q., Waiting Staff. 28.02.2012.

Ms. R., Waiting Staff. 02.03.2012.

Mr. S., Waiting Staff. 24.02.2012.

Mr. T., Kitchen Staff. 22.02.2012.

Ms. A. Waiting Staff. 05.03.2012.

Ms. T. Waiting Staff. 18.02.2012.

## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE INTERVIEW WITH EMPLOYEES

### 1. Research question: What is basic information of employee backgrounds at Symposium Restaurant?

Interview questions:

- Can you tell basic information about yourself (Gender, age, nationality, language)
- What position do you work at Symposium Restaurant?
- How long have you worked for Symposium?
- Do you have education on the related job?
  - If yes, what kind of education did you get?
- How much experience do you have on the related job?

### 2. Research question: How is the communication between staff and managerial team at the case study?

Interview questions:

- What information did you receive from the Symposium Restaurant's managers/supervisor when starting the job?
  - Job instruction, workplace regulation, and work manual?
  - Is there any too much information given to you?
  - In your opinion, is there any other information that needs given by the managers?
- How often do you have staff meeting with the managerial team?
- Do you receive feedbacks from the managers/ supervisors on your working performance? (Negative or positive feedbacks? Any rewards or compliments?)
- Are the managers/ supervisors willing to receive your feedback about the restaurant work? Do they work on the matters?
- Other opinions related to this question.

### 3. Research question: How is the communication between the employees at Case Study?

Interview questions:

- If there are any problems at work with your colleagues, do you communicate with them to solve the problems?
- Do you have any problems related to your communication with the colleagues?
  - If yes, in your opinion, what is the reason?
- Do you ever feel offended by your co-workers' sayings?
  - If yes, what do you expect to change?

- Do you understand each other through body language? (Face-expression, body gestures, and so on).
- Do you have conversation with the colleagues outside the work?
  - Do you think if it helps to improve the communication at work?

**4. Research question: How does the seasonality influence on the internal communication at Symposium Restaurant?**

Interview questions:

- Do you work with many foreign colleagues at Symposium?
  - What language do you use at work? Do you find it difficult to communicate with your co-workers?
  - How do the differences in cultures, languages, educational backgrounds affect to the communication at work?
  - Do you find the similarity in body language between you and co-workers?
- How often does the restaurant recruit new employees?
  - How does the staff changing affect to the communication at Symposium Restaurant?
- Speaking about the effectiveness in communication, what do you think about working together with a colleague in several years and working with a person only in 3,4 months?
- Do you have any other opinion about workplace communication at Symposium?
- Do you plan to stay to work for Symposium next season?

**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE INTERVIEW WITH MANAGERIAL TEAM****1. Research question: What is basic information of employee backgrounds at the case study – Symposium Restaurant?**

Interview questions

- What is percentage of the new staff in the working team in each season?
- What are minimum requirements of educational backgrounds and working experiences for the staff?

**2. The research question: How is the communication between the managerial team and the staff at the case study?**

Interview questions

- In what form is the information (about workplace regulations, task assignments, working instructions) given to the employees?
- How often do you arrange the staff meeting a month?
  - What do you discuss in staff meetings?
- Do you give the staff compliments or rewards when they do good jobs?
- Do the employees express their feelings, attitudes, and expectations through the body language and verbal language to you?
  - Do you have reactions towards them?
- About what do your employees normally communicate with you?

**3. Research question: How does the seasonality influence on the internal communication at Symposium Restaurant?**

Interview questions:

- What do you think about communicating with foreign employees?
  - Does the difference in languages and cultures affect the communication between you and them?
- In your opinion, what makes the communication at work difficult when the staff is changed frequently?
- Do you have plans to change current ways of communication with the employees?