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Assessment of the Bain Inspirational Leadership Model in a Finnish Media Agency

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MASTER'S THESIS	
Arcada University of Applied Sciences	
Degree Programme:	Master of Culture & Arts - Media Management
Identification number:	25423
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Title:	Assessment of the Bain Inspirational Leadership model in a Finnish Media Agency
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Abstract:

The ever-changing media industry is profoundly reliant on engaging and maintaining an inspired, enthusiastic and motivated team of creative individuals to create long-term captivating media goods. This research aims to outline and understand the importance of inspirational leadership within the media industry while studying different styles of leadership, the importance of leadership within the media as well as how important the adaption of inspirational leadership for upcoming generations is.

Furthermore, this research observes how the leadership of a multinational Finnish media agency translates to the Bain Inspirational Leadership model by conducting interviews with the companies leaders who lead a team of five or more people. It will be observed how the model renders into the leader's understanding of values of the media agency in question to get a perception of what inspirational leadership means to the subjects interviewed.

The core of this research is to understand if there is a consensus between the model and the choices in this media agency and how the choices of skills translate into the Bain model and overall leadership theories. Additionally, several methods to understand and manifest inspirational leadership are evaluated. This research intends to provide insightful findings of what leadership in a media agency signifies and lays the framework for further studies within the field of the media.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is an extensively studied field in economics and psychology. In the current working environment, it has become progressively essential to define what strong leadership requires and how it translates into actions to build and maintain a thriving and motivated team (Madanchian et al, 2017).

The most important resource for a leader to manage is people. In order to achieve success within the media industry, a leader must understand the importance of a well-functioning and satisfied team of creative individuals. The media industry is highly affected by the everchanging and fast-evolving technology and the fast coming and going trends and media outlets have the pressure to generate attractive and interesting media products in a short timeframe for the audience (Amabile and Khaire, 2008).

Therefore, the distinctive characteristics of a leader are the ability to inspire, motivate, and empower people while not leaving the long-term vision and goals unnoticed. Only a motivated and encouraged team will be able to create and produce captivating content daily (Choi et al, 2016).

Since media commodities are often unpredictable and shifting, it requires a swift adoption in leadership to convert ideas, concepts, and thoughts into solid and tangible possibilities (Fitzgerald and Schutte, 2010).

The fast-changing work surroundings within the media industry create a fast-paced, hectic, and unpredictable work atmosphere, which makes it difficult to maintain and retain creative talent (Madanchian et al, 2017).

Additionally, devices and facilities in work settings evolve at a rapid pace, which generates an increased requirement for leaders to keep up with and create an ambitious, creative, and inspiring work environment that drives both business and team relations to succeed (Cascio and Montealegre, 2016).

Since the media landscape is an abstract work environment that is difficult to estimate or predict, it is vital to understand the internal experiences, culture, and people that work within the media.

1.1 Aim of the thesis

This research aims to give specifications about leadership skills objectively and uses the Bain leadership model to try to find an understanding of the meaning of leadership skills. The Bain Inspirational Leadership model will be explained in the definitions sections as well as the literature review of this research.

As part of this study, the aim is to use part of the research as a tool to define, understand, and map out leadership qualities against the Bain model. The model will give an understanding of which leadership skills are being seen as important in the focus group of leaders which will map out the main leadership skills in a confined large-scale operation, company X.

This research tries to assess and understand the following research questions:

RQ 1: What kind of methods, approaches, and advancements are needed to achieve or manifest inspirational leadership?

RQ 2: What set of skills should an inspirational leader obtain according to client leads of company X?

RQ 3: How do the selected skills from the Bain Inspirational leadership model by client leads from company X correlate to research on inspirational leadership?

1.2 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is segmented into eight sections. Section one introduces the topic of the thesis, describes the aim of the research, and presents the research questions, which lead towards accomplishing the aim of the research. This section also incorporates definitions, describing the specific meaning of words and phrases in order to understand the terminology that is being used in this research.

The literature review, section 2, consists of firstly examining existing studies and current trends revolving around leadership in general with a focus on leadership in media agencies as well as introducing the Bain Leadership model in more depth. Additionally, the theoretical framework is being presented and explained, which will be examined and re-evaluated in the final section of this research.

In section 3, the research methodology is described. The research methodology contains the selected research method, data collection, and selected primary data as well as the approach to data analysis used to communicate the findings collected as well as the justifications for the validity and reliability of the thesis. Additionally, this section introduces and describes the structure of the interviews being conducted for this research.

Section 4 centers on the interviews conducted at media company X, and observations during the interviews, followed by an in-depth analysis as well as a thorough presentation of research findings. The findings are segmented into a structure that mirrors that of the literature review, the interview segment as well as the Bain Leadership model.

This fourth section is followed by section 5, the discussion part, in which the findings of the previous chapter will be addressed in detail regarding the themes of inspirational leadership, leadership development, as well as a general in-depth review about the Bain model, with an emphasis on the skill centeredness.

Finally, chapter 6 concludes the thesis by summarizing the research. The conclusion part of the thesis aims to clarify, understand and point out learnings and summarizes the research. The aforementioned section also consists of valuable recommendations based on the gained and progressed knowledge manifested by the previous sections. Moreover, in this final section, the restraints of this research are recognized and recommendations for further future research are presented.

1.3 Definitions of terms

This chapter focuses on the clarification of the theories or parts that will be presented and discussed throughout this study, as well as contextual information as to how the terms will be used.

The definition of key terms will help simplify the purpose and objective of the study being conveyed. In this section, the aim is to provide a list of terms that will be used throughout this study to ensure the understanding and familiarization of components.

1.3.1 Leadership

According to Khan et al (2015), "Leadership is a personal relationship in which one person directs, coordinates and supervises others in the performance of a common task."

Leadership is the social belief of the need for hierarchy and structure to execute tasks efficiently. The expertise and authorization of aligning people to achieve common goals and make them take action to reach them are what leadership is about. It also means having the ability to influence an individual or many individuals around a common goal (Kozlowski and Illgen, 2006).

1.3.2 Bain Inspirational Leadership model

The Bain Inspirational Leadership model is a model by Bain & Company in the U.S, which has created a broad model of leadership skills to help coaching leaders and managers to become inspiring and good leaders for employees as well as the company (Bain & Company, 2018).

For easier readability, the Bain Inspirational Leadership model in this research may be referred to as the Bain model or Bain leadership model. The model will be discussed in more depth in the Literature Review.

1.3.3 Skill

A skill is a term that is variously defined as a qualification or extensive expertise (Payne, 1999). According to the Further Education Unit (1982), "the skill concept was widening to include 'the ability to perform a specific manipulative occupational task' and which now embraces: Language (reading, writing, speaking and listening); number (calculation, measurement, graphs, and tables); manipulative dexterity and co-ordination; problem-solving; everyday coping, interpersonal relationships; computer literacy and learning".

Payne (1999) observed skills to include everything from reading, writing, communication, analytical and rational thinking, and motivation to the point of self-confidence, common sense, leadership, teamwork, customer-focused, self-management, and continuous learning.

1.3.4 Trait

According to McCrae and Costa (1995), a trait is defined as, "a quality that makes one person or thing different from another". Commonly, traits are inherited talents and are a part of who a person is. A trait is a natural talent that defines a character and that requires a high effort to modify, replace or change.

The most and foremost difference between skills and traits is that skills are developed capabilities, while traits are entirely characteristics of oneself (Jackson, 2017). The difference between skills and traits will be further discussed in the Literature Review chapter.

1.3.5 Interview

An interview is mainly defined as an evaluation of answers and questions of people. From a qualitative research perspective, interviews are commonly used to collect data from individuals (DeJonckheere and Vaughn, 2019).

1.3.6 Company X

The company described in this research is a large-scaled media agency, was founded in 2015, and has 40 offices in 24 countries worldwide. The international agency employs about 2200 professionals globally. The office of this company is based in Helsinki, Finland, and will be referred to as company X throughout this thesis paper. Company X employs around 140 people in Helsinki, Finland.

Company X's business model is to offer long-term consulting revolving around media communication, entertainment as well as content creation to international companies. The various offerings to several clients are being led by its client leads, who are trying to ensure a smooth process and exceptional consulting to the buyer. Therefore, a client lead has to build and maintain a productive and well-functioning team to preserve a long-lasting client relationship. Client leads have the responsibility to inspire and support the team to generate innovative ideas and eventually drive sales (Dal Zotto and Van Kranenburg, 2008).

In this research, the focus occurs on the clients leads leadership style. With the support of the Bain Inspirational Leadership model, leadership styles, and skills of the many client leads of company X will be observed.

1.3.7 Client Lead

According to Prichard (2012), a client lead is a person "that can demonstrate a passion for leading others at (and contributing to) achieving (a) fundamental mission." The function of a client lead within a media agency is centrally about inspirational leadership. The lead's foremost responsibility is to understand and translate the client's needs. The client lead can achieve that by creating meaningful aspirations, together with his or her team, and therefore build and retain a trustworthy and satisfactory client relationship. To complete a project in time and with the client's satisfaction, the client lead has to be able to lead, participate, and encourage his or her team (Study.com, 2020). For easier readability in this research paper, the client lead might also be referred to as "lead" or "leader".

1.3.8 Teamwork

The idiom "team" points to a small group of people working towards a shared goal while being interdependent (Hughes et al, 1999). Particularly within the media industry, working in a well-functioning team is crucial to achieving adequate results (Xyrichis and Ream, 2008).

Working in a team empowers people to connect ideation and creative processes and specialized knowledge from diverse perspectives and produce something significant collectively. The difficulty of managing a team may be the fact that multiple diverse and complex personalities work closely together who may not get along or disagree on many levels. Hence, a leader's responsibility is to assure an effective work environment within the team both professionally and personally to achieve a shared goal (Marshall, Chaffee and Tierney, 1990).

Furthermore, external factors such as relations among team members, people who do not fit into the team, team dynamics that may work well or not well, as well as the sense of belonging to a team or not define a team's success that a leader needs to take into account. A leader needs to achieve interdependent compatibility of different professionals with different kinds of skill sets, and ensure positive social interactions within the team (Reich and Hershcovis, 2011).

Additionally, a team needs to identify itself with the common goal a company or leader is establishing. Otherwise, it will be challenging to accomplish a common goal, if the team members do not identify or believe in the company, its goals, or its identity (Delfyett, 2002).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review section contains four segments. The segments include all collected literature regarding general leadership, leadership in media companies, the Bain Inspirational Leadership model as well as the interview process. The final segment of the literature review provides the theoretical framework, based on the aforementioned segments.

2.1 Existing studies

This chapter is the structure of available and existing literature concerning the research subject. This unit synthesizes the outcomes and findings of various sources to describe and outline the overall perception of the topic, establishing a framework for both research questions as well as fundamental examinations and research.

The aforementioned literature review centers on existing studies about general leadership, different theories about leadership styles and explains the significance and distinction separating traits and skills. Furthermore, it examines leadership within the media industry and studies the Bain Inspirational Leadership model. Additionally, it unfolds current and prospective trends of leadership within the media. Ultimately, the overall theoretical framework will be presented.

2.1.1 General leadership

Almost without exception, any kind of company or team is organized around a group of subordinates operating under the authority of the management of its leaders. This organization of the workforce creates a dynamic workflow and process. A leader's responsibility is to guarantee that a team is working together towards a common goal and ensure that the result is adequate and delivered on time (Tsourvakas, Zotos and Dekoulou, 2007).

Due to changing demographics, social trends and quickly evolving technological innovations, the importance of well-executed leadership in companies has grown remarkably (Graetz, 2000). According to Kotter (1995), leadership is identified as one of the most important factors for a successful transformation.

Within the past decades, the fast-paced business world has changed immensely. A particularly increased importance has been on leadership and its benefits of becoming a lead that is not only able to retain but also inspire a workforce to build a highly-skilled and diverse team (Ciulla, 2020).

Being a successful leader does not only mean to ensure that people complete their tasks, but it is also the ability to get extraordinary achievement from ordinary people (Eagly & Chin, 2010). This means that a leaders' responsibilities not only are to ensure that deadlines are met, but also to incorporate a vision to motivate and inspire the workforce long-term to empower them and develop their skills (Hollifield et al, 2016).

As defined by Yukl (1989), "The only definition of a leader is someone who has followers. To gain followers requires influence but doesn't exclude the lack of integrity in achieving this." This shows that leadership is broad, abstract, and, therefore, subjective.

In his leadership study from 1978, Burns advised it was about time to combine the theories of leadership and followership since leadership is not only about utilizing the power of subordinates to meet a leader's request. It is about "leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations—the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations—of both leaders and followers" (Burns, 1978).

This theory demonstrates the significance of the leader-follower relationship and the essential purpose that subordinates have in leadership.

Burns (1978) mentions that a leader is not only the person that acts as the coordinator of operative measurements and makes things happen ("transactional leadership"), but also functions as the advocate of the company's ethics and decides how these things should happen ("transformational leadership").

An ambitious leader should act as a driver, mentor, and activator and should support the team with opportunities for personal as well as career development by recognizing the diverse skill set of each team member. That can be achieved by support, empowerment, and a sense of shared ambition (Bass, 1985). Bass' theory explicates the importance of a combined set of traits and skills a leader should have to strongly lead a team, meaning leadership goes beyond solely directing tasks but to understand and serve the team's and individual's needs.

> *"The challenge of leadership is to be strong, but not rude; be kind, but not weak; be bold, but not bully; be thoughtful, but not lazy; be humble, but not timid; be proud, but not arrogant; have humor but without folly." —Jim Rohn*

Rohn's quote implies that one must combine, merge, and balance character and competence to promote a successful leadership concept (Wolfson, 2017).

Finding the balance between an authoritarian and liberal leadership style is the secret to impactful management. Leadership does not only mean that others take orders, obey, and deliver results, but also that people feel valued, respected, and understood (Rohn, 2007).

As stated in LinkedIn, the worldwide biggest professional network online, the Virgin Group was voted as the seventh-best company to work for in 2017 by its employees (Preston, 2017). What makes the Virgin Group so successful among its employees? Just as Richard Branson, founder of the Virgin Group, discussed in an interview about leadership, positive feedback, building happiness, a caring culture, and boosting employee experience are only a few of the traits that make a leader successful (Krapivin, 2018).

From Branson's point of view, an employee "who believes in what he or she is doing" and "who is appreciated, who is praised" and "is given a chance to do a great job" is a happy, loyal, and long-term employee (Krapivin, 2018).

Branson (2011) states: "If you are not always there, it forces other people to call the shots, which in turn improves their leadership skills, builds their confidence and strengthens your business." Being a liberal leader by giving your employees responsibility and trusting them to be able to make their decisions that support the company strategy creates loyalty and commitment.

Additionally, people feel empowered and want to exceed the leader's expectations because they have been given the freedom to accomplish a task on their own. This way of leading is more modern and is especially broadly used in specialist driven fields such as media, software, or the research itself.

"As we look ahead into the next century, leaders will be those who empower others." —Bill Gates

The quote from Bill Gates (quoted in Kruse, 2012) about his perspective of the future of leadership implies that taking a mindful approach to leadership will meet the requirements and expectations of both management and employees.

In reality, this means being focused on building an atmosphere that matches independence with support, discipline with stability, and provides awareness to peoples' basic human need to matter (Wallace, 2019).

Given the main points of general leadership, research is showing that leadership is an abstract, complex, and versatile task. There are many ways to lead to reaching a goal, but all of the different forms of leadership seem to follow the same fundamentals of empathy, inspiration, empowerment, and personal development. When looking at all of the features described, one could determine that successful leadership is humane coordination towards a common goal.

2.1.2 Leadership styles

According to leadership specialists, a leadership style relates to the way a leader cooperates, works, and delegates towards his or her team. While most leadership hypotheses argue that an "exemplary" leadership style does not exist, thriving leadership demands leaders to react to their team and their situation personally (Northouse, 2010).

Various researches focus on leadership styles. While some experts turned their focus on how organizational structures and working requirements create a leadership style, others surveyed the leadership style of individual leaders (Hughes, Ginnett and Curphy, 1999).

Leadership theories can be separated into trait theories and process theories. Trait theories were the earliest effort at a study of leadership. The first was the "great man", or "boss" theories and even though trait theories have developed over the last decades, their fundamental viewpoint of distinguishing traits that are essential for efficient and successful leadership is still existing in recent studies (Northouse 2010).

Even though there are numerous aspects to research about leadership styles, most experts claim that successful leadership entails the incorporation of leadership style and skills in particular situations and people in specific circumstances. According to leadership specialists, even highly experienced leaders can fail if they do not adapt their style to their team members' unique conditions. Modifying the emphasis on distinctive traits, understanding the surroundings and the people's obligations is the key to strong leadership (House and Dessler, 1974).

2.1.3 Theories of leadership styles

Leadership styles are divisions of how a person acts while leading a team. A leadership style relates to a leader's characteristic behaviors when advising, motivating, supervising, and managing groups of people. Successful leaders are able to motivate others to thrive for performance, generate ideas, and encourage innovation (Cherry, 2020).

Leadership styles are classifications of how a person acts while leading a team. Kurt Lewin's research on leadership styles from 1939 formed different theories and structures that enable us to properly recognize and understand these different leadership styles (Lewin, Lippitt and White, 1939).

According to Lewin's study, there are three distinct leadership styles: authoritarian (autocratic), participative (democratic), and delegative (laissez-faire) (Billig, 2014).

2.1.3.1 Authoritarian leadership style

The authoritarian leadership style, also attributed to autocratic leadership, points to a top-down management style that is heavily directed on both commands by the leader and authority of the followers. There is also a clear distinction between the leader and the team members. Authoritarian leaders make decisions autonomously, with little or no input from the rest of the group. Lewin's research shows that the authoritarian leadership style leads to less creativity due to a lack of autonomy (Lewin, Lippitt and White, 1939).

2.1.3.2 Participative leadership style

Participative leadership style also referred to as democratic or humanistic leadership, defines a leader who listens to input from team members, offers supervision to team members, but eventually has the final decision power. According to Lewin's study, this leadership style makes people think more creatively, while people are motivated and engaged in the process. Particularly in the media industry, a democratic leadership style is popularly used since it drives creative independence (Lewin, Lippitt & White, 1939).

2.1.3.2 Delegative leadership style

Delegative leadership style gives less or no direction to team members and leaves the decisions to the team. Although this style can be beneficial in circumstances involving highly qualified specialists, it often leads to defectively assigned roles and a decrease of ownership and motivation (Lewin, Lippitt and White, 1939).

2.1.4 Other aspects of leadership styles

According to Hughes et al (1999), not only leadership styles but also other viewpoints of organizational formations influence a leader's style and its effectiveness.

The way of how decision-making power is shared within the company, also known as centralization, has to be taken into account when examining successful leadership. Andrews, Boyne, Law and Walker (2009) claim that highly centralized organizations tend to drive a more authoritarian leadership style, whereas decentralized companies seem to be more participative.

Transparent and clear chains of commands have shown that reporting to only one leader points to better company achievement and happier personnel because it leads to less complexity and difficulty who to report to in certain scenarios (Rizzo, House and Lirtzman, 1970).

Although clear centralization seems to work most effectively in companies, media organizations tend to work independently. While there are no clear responsibilities and a team has to work as a whole to finalize a media concept or production instead of one person making all decisions (Andrews, et al, 2009).

Ouchi and Dowling (1974) state the span of control as another determinant that needs to be taken into account for a successful leadership style. A span of control implies the number of people and projects a leader is accountable for. Managing many people and projects prevents leaders to concentrate on one person or project at a time, which can lead to losing focus on confined supervision, and lack of developing a strong personal relationship with the team.

Even though there are different leadership practices and methods, genuine and impactful leadership behavior depends on a clearly defined vision and mission. Additionally, leaders must know how to resource and lead their employees by example (Benavides, 2012).

2.2 Traits & skills

According to numerous researches, experts claim that some leaders are born, while others are being made. Meaning, that some people are born with distinct confidence or charisma that is difficult to learn or mirror. Nonetheless, leaders can teach themselves the fundamentals of leadership. Additionally, they can become more efficient and powerful in leadership roles (Northouse, 2010).

Various studies have cataloged a long list of traits that are familiar to effective leaders. Traits are qualities that come naturally to some more than others but can be acquired or developed over time by individuals. Although there are several studies with records of multiple traits, there are certain common characteristics: ambition, charisma, commitment, creativity, the ability to envision the future, expertise, flexibility, integrity, (social and emotional) intelligence, self-confidence, as well as the ability to inspire and motivate others (Northouse, 2010; Stogdill, 1974; Zaccaro, Kemp and Bader, 2004).

As Horwitch and Whipple (2014), have mentioned in their research about skills, a leader is not just born, but can be made if the focus is on continuously improving his or her skillset of leadership.

According to scholars of leadership subjects, vision and therefore the ability to think out of the box, creatively, and in new ways about the future, is one of the most important traits to have as a leader. But, vision alone is not enough to steer through the media industry, where regular shifts of customer behavior, trends, and organizational changes are occurring frequently (Tucker and Russell, 2004).

Leadership experts have distinguished the subsequent critical leadership skills that are vital for successful leadership: assertiveness, coaching, communication, and listening skills, conflict management, decisiveness, delegation, empowerment, goal setting, negotiation, as well as problem-solving (Harris, 2002; Hughes, Ginnett, and Curphy, 1999; Northouse, 2010).

While several skills stand out as being a central part of a successful leader, communication and listening are fundamental. Being a visionary alone is not enough, since leaders must have the ability to communicate their vision and how they want to accomplish it. Contradictory or unclear communication towards the workforce might lead to misdirection, confusion, misinterpretations, liability issues, and eventually inefficiency.

2.3 The media industry

Nowadays, people consume a large amount of time with the media. There are various formats, genres, and forms of media channels that people consume in both their free time and in business. As people use more and more time on media outlets, the media industry has become a powerful player that serves as a dominant commercial and illustrative unit (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011).

Due to the ever-changing mediascape that encompasses trends, news, commercials, and much more, the media industry is heavily reliant on creative talent who are able to generate unique, innovative, original, and surprising ways of thinking that can attract and inspire people who consume media (Deuze, 2014).

Because the media industry needs to adapt to the ever-changing media environment and culture itself, it is massively reliant on creative people. It is important to know how to lead, motivate and inspire a creative workforce to maintain and engage creative talent and stimulate constant creativity (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011).

Fundamental incentives to work in media industries are creative independence as well as the experience of an engaged, demanding through collaborative, and supportive like-minded community. Through empowerment and reemphasized focus on the social, conversation, and collective viewpoints of working within the media industry, media professionals are able to thrive, grow and design inspiring media goods (Deuze, 2014).

Considering creativity is difficult to understand, measure, and predict its success and outcome, it is important for a leader to understand the creative minds and their needs to enhance creativity within the creative teams (Küng, 2004).

According to Kuhn (1996), the formula for creativity entails remarkable expertise combined with a portion of simplicity. By adding a portion of regular new ideas, sufficient sources, as well as an organizational formation and work culture that is able to empower people to seize opportunities, and go the extra mile in order to accomplish something extraordinary (Küng, 2004).

2.3.1 Leadership in media agencies

The meaning and importance of leadership has massively increased over the past decades for any kind of company in every kind of industry. Media companies are profoundly affected by the ever-changing world & the growing competition has forced companies to focus more heavily on talented and well-trained people who can lead through the constantly changing media marketplace (Küng, 2006).

Within the past century, numerous innovations, trends, and technological disruptions have transformed the media industry. That is why media executives have to reinvent their business by changing or adapting vital parts of their business. Business models, processes, distribution channels, data analysis practices, forecasting tools, market trends, and human resource management are some of the elements media agencies have to overthink frequently. Since specifically media agencies have been and still are constantly impacted by turbulent and unpredictable conditions, the most vital assets in a functioning and strong business are its people (Hollifield et al, 2016).

Traditional, stable, routine work lies in the past for media agencies. The outlook for the industry is shifting more and more towards innovation and adoption in both the industry itself as well as its workforce. Therefore, media managers will need to accommodate those changes by steering their focus on flexibility and prompt adaptation (Storsul & Krumsvik, 2013).

The constantly changing media industry is in demand for inspirational and supportive leaders who can guide, encourage, and maintain the agency creatives to keep his or her team members satisfied and engaged (Amabile & Khaire, 2008).

One of the main factors of a well-functioning media agency is often overseen in hectic times: its people. By directing the center of attention to the workforce are a significantly important part of leading a company through transformation, where unpredictable circumstances can cause stress, pressure, burn-out, and high fluctuation within the organization if its people are not being taken into consideration (Hollifield, Wicks, Sylvie & Lowrey, 2016).

Being a successful and profitable media company also means understanding how to lead its employees and get the most creativity and innovation out of them. A group of different people working within the company needs to stay driven throughout the whole year to produce great content for their clients. A leader's task is to motivate, inspire, develop innovative outputs, as well as retain the employee base for long term time. Therefore, continuous progression and growth of creativity and motivation are key to accomplish success (Küng, 2007).

But, being creative and innovative is not enough in a business where entertainment products are less durable and constant. Media creations are much dependent on current or future trends and thus change regularly. That is why media company leaders must understand those good ideas are not ample to ensure a successful and solid business. It is important to convert ideas into distinct opportunities and encourage as well as guide the workforce through these constant changes (Benavides, 2012).

Understanding leadership and holding leadership skills are essential for media experts in an international work context where projects and overall work is being done in a hectic environment. Additionally, many companies are changing their employment conditions to freelancers or fixed-term contracts to cut expenses. The adaption of leadership styles and methods according to the characteristics of people around the leader or a specific situation is the key to successful leadership as well as authenticity, effectiveness, and sincerity (Hollifield et al, 2016).

People generally prefer one way or the other in terms of method, habits, and character. Finding a balance between being empathetic and understanding to neutral or even critical is an important balance to lead efficiently and manage productively. Finding this balance is not easy; it demands attention, patience, and focus. Driving transformation, exploring innovation, leaving your comfort zone, and implementing various development projects are essential factors to accomplish a balanced leadership style (Raso, 2015).

Even though leadership within the media industry follows the same fundamentals as general leadership it specifically points into a more empathetic, co-creating, supportive & innovative subset of leadership skills. To stay relevant, keep up with technological changes, and keep employees and workforce motivated and skilled, one needs to particularly blend these skills with basic leadership knowledge. This creates a very diverse and difficult role that rarely stays constant, requiring continuous improvement from the leaders within the media (Küng, 2007).

2.4 Bain Inspirational Leadership model

As mentioned above, inspirational leadership is becoming crucial in the modern business world to establish a well-functioning team that delivers results and exceeds expectations. The Bain Inspirational Leadership model is a format by Bain & Company in the U.S, which has created a broad model of leadership skills in 2013 to help coaching leaders and managers to become inspiring and good leaders for employees as well as the company (Bain & Company, 2018).

To get a better understanding of what an inspirational leader means to individuals, 2000 people were interviewed by Bain & Company, who put the research program in motion. The most interesting and remarkable outcome of this research is that inspiration alone is not enough in order to motivate the workforce. It is rather important to use a particular mix of strengths to motivate individuals and teams (Horwitch, 2016).

The three main questions that were asked in the research objectives were the following:

1.   "What characteristics matter when it comes to inspiring others?

2.   How many inspiring behaviors does someone need to demonstrate reliably to inspire others, and what pattern of behaviors is most powerful?

3.   How can we calibrate the strength of those characteristics in an individual?"
(Horwitch, 2016)

The outcome of this questionnaire is 33 skills that give a leader the tools to inspire their surrounding employees or followers (Figure 1).

"The ability to inspire isn't innate. It can be developed. And in today's fierce marketplace, a company that helps people learn and strengthen their inspirational skills will gain an edge on the competition."
—Horwitch & Whipple

What Horwitch and Whipple (2014) imply is that a leader is not just born, but can be made if the focus is on continuously improving his or her skills. Even though some leaders might be born with specific traits such as charisma or confidence, a leader has the ability to learn and improve specific skills (Northouse, 2010).

A company's culture, strategy, business model, and values have to be reflected by its leaders to accomplish outstanding achievements. Hence, a leadership profile that matches and underlines the company's overall perception is vital for a successful performance. For this reason, each and every company "must emphasize the specific capabilities that make it better than the competition." (Garton, 2107).

Being an extraordinary leader in a company also means living by its values. Employees have to feel that the company and the leader's perception of leadership are aligned and in order with the company's values. Only then an empathic and supportive management team can be created.

The Bain model can be derived into different combinations, in different situations to create the best outcome for the leader. The four sections include distinct competencies that are key for that section of leadership skills:

1.   **Developing inner resources:** Emotional expression, emotional self-awareness, flexibility, independence, optimism, stress tolerance, self-regard, self-actualization.

2.   **Connecting with others:** Assertiveness, commonality, development, empathy, expressiveness, humility, listening, vitality.

3.   **Setting the tone:** Balance, follow-through, openness, recognition, responsibility, shared ambition, unselfishness, worldview.

4.   **Leading the team:** Co-creation, direction, empowerment, focus, harmony, servanthood, sponsorship, vision.

Centeredness has increasingly occurred as one of the top favorite skills a leader should have, according to the participants of Bain & Company's research (Garton, 2017). Centeredness means the engagement of all parts of the mind to become fully present and gives the distance in which we can decide how to respond, instead of immediately act to a situation (Figure 1).


Figure 1: Bain Inspirational Leadership model (Horwitch, M., 2016)

According to Zenger, Folkman and Edinger (2009), employees who work for inspiring leaders are more committed, productive, and satisfied (Figure 2). Besides, they are less likely to leave their jobs. This implies that an inspirational and motivational leader seems to have the ability to build and retain a motivated team.

An individual is more creative, dedicated, and happy if the team leader is convinced that his or her work is purposeful. Finding a cause in work tasks means that an employee is more likely to be dedicated and carry out a task with more enthusiasm. If an employee feels supported and inspired, they can not only carry out a task but even exceed the leader's expectations (Osborne and Hammoud, 2017).

As shown in Figure 2, inspired employees are probably to retain long-lasting employment within the same company. Companies that can keep their employees due to loyalty and trust towards the company and its leaders are more likely to succeed in the long-term.

Figure 2: The most inspirational leaders increase commitment, satisfaction and productivity
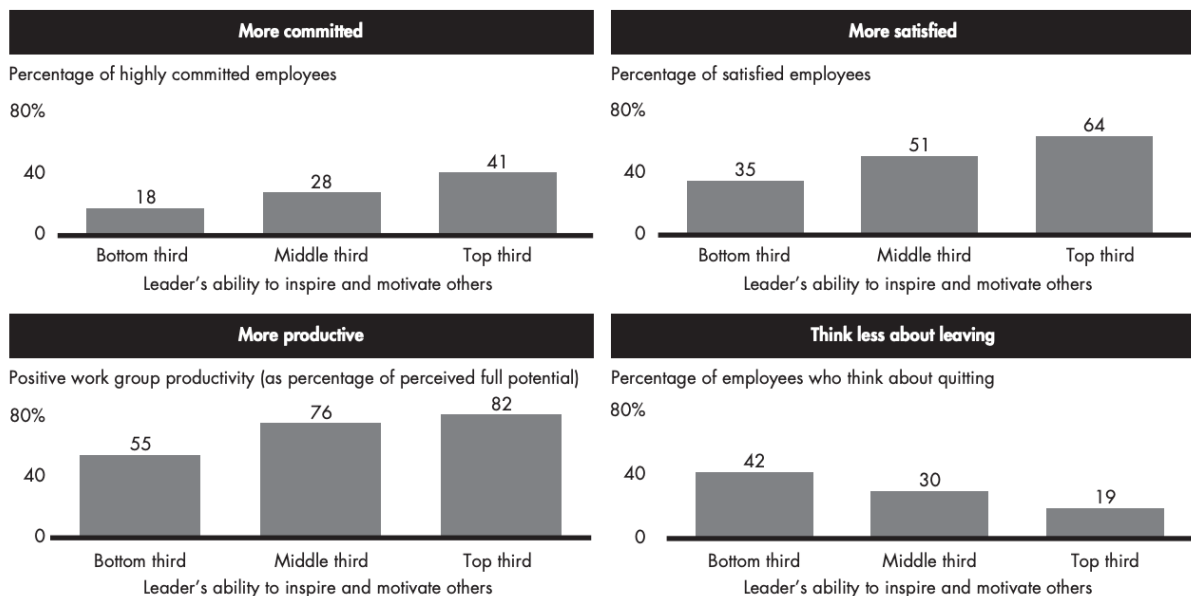
Figure 2: The most inspirational leaders increase commitment, satisfaction, and productivity (Zenger, Folkman & Edinger, 2009).

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2.5 Current trends

During former times, most leaders would mainly try to be result-driven and authoritarian but don't do more than what supports the company's financial status. Leaders would often go by the name "boss" by or her co-workers and many of them would solely focus on results instead of the capabilities and strengths of the individual workforce itself. Mental and physical health or development of skills were not highly prioritized (Tenney, 2014).

In the past centuries, leadership has experienced central transformations that have essentially changed the working environment and contributed to the development of a less hierarchical model of operation. This decisive change requires different points of view when it comes to leadership (Uhl-Bien, Marion and McKelvey, 2007). Over the years, it became a common standard to rather lead instead of giving commands and encouraging an individual to render their creativity at work (Gill, 2011).

In 2018, 60 participants were interviewed by Lead Well LLC about which characteristics a good boss should have. Characteristics and behavioral traits such as leads from a higher purpose, activates potential, grants autonomy, continual and pervasive feedback, and encourages risks to drive learning were discovered (Ferguson, 2018). These results indicate the value of social competencies beyond the merely organizational responsibility of a leader.

But, according to Palmer (2015), the level of trust in senior management was at an unexampled low in 2015 - only 18 percent of people said that they believe their boss to be honest. This indicates that there is still a long way ahead of building a trusting relationship between leaders and their teams in some companies. Businesses have to focus a lot more on culture, inspiration, and other soft-skills on top of financial figures and results to keep talented and encouraged personnel (Dean, 2017).

Furthermore, "today's employees are not impressed with your title or years of experience like they used to be, claims Palmer (2015). Work is no longer only about receiving a paycheck every month to pay rent, but more about being able to make an impact at work and feeling inspired (McKelvie, Wiklund and Bennett, 2008).

In order to attract and retain a young working individual, a manager or organization needs to understand what motivates and satisfies the younger generation (Guha, 2010).

Besides the need for a purpose in work-life, there is a discrepancy among different generations which can create complications being a high fluctuation in the labor force or disbelief in the companies' managers or values.

Especially younger generations such as millennials, also called Generation Y, individuals born between 1980 and 2000 (Smith and Nichols, 2015) and Generation Z, also called Gen Z, who were born between 1996 and 2013 (Bernstein, 2015), are not interested in hierarchy, but rather desire a (work) life of purposefulness and are more involved in economic development (Scott, 2016).

The younger generations' autonomous, down-to-earth, and digital native character will affect today's working culture in terms of autonomy and the understanding of leadership (Grow and Yang, 2018).

On another note, business schools seem to struggle with adding valuable leadership seminars to their curriculum to prepare leaders for the present business habitat (Rousseau, 2012). The main focus in their schedule is rather on technical, mathematical, or financial subjects than on subjects that support the authentic and empathetic development and behavior of managers (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002).

This indicates a long way ahead to implement valuable leadership subjects in business schools and to educate the next generation of leaders. The importance of leadership and the need for thoughtful, empathetic, and centered leaders is increasingly important, especially for the upcoming generations.

As stated by leadership students, the most essential characteristic of a leader is to have a long-term vision (Redmond & Trager, 2004). Visionary leaders ought to be thriving if they can inspire and motivate others with their vision and transform visions into reality (Hollifield et al, 2016).

According to Ahmed (2014), everyone owns basic leadership abilities but may not have particular skills that are needed to lead a specific group, business, or industry. Even though some people are born with specific leadership traits, leadership entails many skills and therefore is a quality that can be learned through practice and continuous improvement through self-awareness, authenticity and endurance (Horwitch and Whipple, 2014).

Experts in leadership acknowledge that some people might be born with natural leadership abilities more than others, for example, outstanding confidence or charisma, but everyone is theoretically able to learn the fundamentals of leadership or become more efficient in their current leadership roles (Hollifield et al, 2016).

By focussing on the four pillars of leadership (culture, character, charisma, and communication) in the individual group, business or industry, people can build a good foundation for an emerging leadership style (Ahmed, 2014).

These four pillars can evolve, change, or adjust according to a person, situation, or organizational change. Continuous interest in self-development and work experience in the leadership field itself will support the advancement and growth of one's leadership skills (Antonacopoulou and Bento, 2003).

Another significant part of recognizing the value of leadership is knowing the difference between performance-related and inspirational leadership skills. Many companies largely focus on performance-driven skills that are tangible and explicit, and therefore easier to understand if success and progress have been achieved by numbers and data (Horwitch and Whipple, 2014).

Nevertheless, the importance of inspirational skill sets such as the ability to sympathize or empower, are more challenging to scale, and therefore, often left out of sight by leaders. Since inspirational skills are more abstract and profoundly individual, it requires self-awareness, authenticity, and endurance to recognize and acknowledge the significance of these skills (Horwitch and Whipple, 2014).

The recent study of Ahern and Loh (2020), "Leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic: building and sustaining trust in times of uncertainty", shows that since the beginning of the global pandemic of 2020, which forced a high amount of people to work remotely or from home, a shift towards a more inspirational leadership has been noticed by many workers, which is more personal and and therefore difficult to evaluate.

Another recent study completed by McKinsey & Company in 2020 sought to gain insight and overview of "what companies are doing during the COVID pandemic to stabilize or even improve their organizational health." McKinsey & Company tried to understand what a company can do throughout times of unique transformations and a shift to remote working and presented the "influence model" (Basford and Schaninger, 2016).

The model is separated into four quadrants that include understanding and reliance, support, confidence and skill-building, and motivation. By utilizing these four pillars, organizations can create a work climate where people feel inspired (Dagan, Baz-Sanchez and Weddle, 2020).

More people seem to be more honest and transparent about their requirements to perform as well as their vulnerability. On the other hand, leaders seem to be more conscious, sensible, and understanding when trying to recognize their workforce's needs adequately. The greatness of directing the focus on inspirational leadership skills is what today's work environment needs to thrive as an inspired team. The way we work might change in the future due to more people working from home long-term. Therefore, the importance of being able to lead a team from different locations might be another important factor to consider and how to drive inspirational leadership from separate locations (Ahern and Loh, 2020).

These current trends are showing the increased need and demand for inspirational leadership in times of unprecedented change and a future workforce that is drawn towards soft-skilled leadership.

2.6 Theoretical framework

This chapter focuses on the theoretical framework of this research. Along the lines of having a clear understanding of the previous subchapter's contribution to the overall area of the subject, the previously presented theoretical concepts and models represent the main components that together unite as the framework of this study.

Foregoing subchapters have shown the importance of inspirational leadership within a media company to continually motivate and excite its employees. The lack of inspirational leadership is seemingly a topic that seeks better understanding within companies and leadership teams.

Lewin's study about leadership styles mentioned in the Literature review section shows the importance of determining the variances between authoritarian, participative, and delegative leadership styles. This basic concept serves as a basis for this research, but will not be the main focus since this research concentrates on inspirational leadership within company X.

The increased need for inspirational leadership, especially for future generations, shows the importance of continuous skill improvement within the leadership mindset. For the exact purpose of keeping stable and motivated personnel, leaders will have to re-examine their thinking of what the definition of being a leader means and adjust to the needs of the work personnel.

According to the previously mentioned studies, leadership within the media industry is more prone to a liberal and democratic style of management. As stated before in the literature review, teams work as units and achieve abstract tasks collectively without a centralized leader making all the decisions for them.

The media industry is especially reliant on effective and inventive teams to secure creative product outcomes and other media goods. To ensure a well-functioning and productive team, it is crucial to have a thriving leader, who can support the team on a daily basis but is also able to steer the team in the right direction and not lose focus on the company's long-term vision. For this to work, leaders in media companies have to hold or gain skills in order to bring inspiration, support, ownership, and self-improvement as part of the daily teamwork (Paulus, Dzindolet and Kohn, 2012).

When looking at the amount of projects and clients a large-scale media agency has, leaders must be able to delegate efficiently. Similarly, leaders have to have the ability to add more people to the decision-making process in order to avoid a small span of control number. This can prevent conscious quality decisions from suffering from a too centralized leader who decides everything and thus has not enough time to understand the high amount of different projects at the same time and is disconnected from the team members (Sweetser and Kelleher, 2011).

Due to the lack of communication and focus on the team, team members might feel detached and misunderstood. According to Bain, an inspirational and modern leader needs to be connected to the people to understand its needs in the first place.

Open dialogue and an in-depth understanding of media trends dictate the success and understanding between both internal and external sides of the business. In order to succeed in the ever-changing landscape of the media, a deep understanding of situational awareness and a quick adoption in leadership is needed (Dwivedi et al, 2020).

Because work-life within the media industry is agile, fast-paced, and abstract, it creates a complicated environment for highly skilled professional teams. Therefore, the need for additional research into inspirational leadership in media companies is important to understand better how to tackle the managerial challenges in this environment.

Since media and creative industries are abstract and therefore more difficult to measure than other industries, the importance of thoughtful, inspirational leadership is crucial to create a thriving and inspiring work environment where ideas rise and people feel motivated, supported, and inspired.

Even though the field of management studies within the media industry is achieving a significant volume of curious students and scholars, it is a comparably new domain that needs to discover more research in its field of expertise (Wirtz, Pistoia and Mory, 2013).

According to Küng (2007), the main difficulty in acquiring focused and straight-forward research within the media industry is that its literature is a shattered collection of studies, and therefore challenging to link and compile accordingly.

Additionally, leading a team within the media industry is uniquely challenging because assignments are intricate, abstract, and challenging to scale due to their hypothetical proposition of success (Ybema, Yanow and Sabelis, 2011).

Thus, this research is trying to identify advantageous traits and skills to lead teams within the media that are relevant momentarily as well as for future work generations.

The shifting focus towards a more balanced, self-reflective, humane, and inspirational leadership style shows the importance of extended research within the field of leadership, its evolution, and different and changing styles. The Bain Inspirational Leadership model is a crucial part of this research to overthink old-fashioned, strict leadership styles and focus more on soft skills that are mentioned in the research by Bain & Company and their research model.

Additionally, this research tries to understand and find results of the implication of Horwitch and Whipple (2014), that a leader is not just born, but can be made if the focus is on continuously improving his or her skillset of leadership.

The theoretical framework will be re-evaluated in the final section of this research. The re-evaluation is based on the results of the qualitative research, in this case, interviews and their gained insights. The findings while conducting the interviews the framework will be reassessed on the method of the Bain Inspirational Leadership model.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter details the research methods and approaches in particular highlighting the ones that have been practiced during the research. The methodology chapter of the research acts as a contextual framework and outlines the advantages and potential limitations of each method (Abbott, 2014).

3.1 Method

The purpose of interviews is to gather a diverse source of information from a small number of people about attitudes, behavior, feelings, knowledge, opinions, and preferences. By conducting an interview, it is simple to explain, understand, and examine the behavior, experiences, and opinions of the research subjects (Adams, 2015).

Interviewing people makes it easier to examine topics thoroughly, notice how individuals think and feel about a certain issue and why they have a particular point of view. Additionally, interviews add a personal aspect to abstract data (Jamshed, 2014).

As noted by Dörnyei (2018), qualitative data is 'most often' collected by researchers through interviews and questionnaires. However, interviews -compared to questionnaires- are more powerful in eliciting narrative data that allows researchers to investigate people's views in greater depth (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Not only does an interview give the possibility to gain subjective insights, but it also gives the interviewees the possibility to "speak in their own voice and express their own thoughts and feelings" (Berg and Lune, n.d.).

According to Mason (1994, see Jamshed, 2014), "no research interview lacks structure", therefore most of the qualitative research interviews are either semi-structured, lightly structured, or in-depth.

The objective of the interviews is to observe and analyze the knowledge, opinions, and thoughts of a small number of people, in this case, Client Leads of company X. Another goal is to gather insights about the preferences these individuals make by choosing four skills from the Bain model after their sensation of importance. Therefore, the option of collecting information from these individuals utilizing interviews is legitimate.

Sought information will be collected by interviews of seven individuals who are leading at least five people within media agency X and act on the behalf of the company with the title Client Lead. The interviews will be conducted separately - face-to-face or via online meetings. In the assessed interviews, the participants will be asked the same set of questions independently (semi-standardized interviews). The questions will be based on the Client Lead's subjective understanding of leadership.

Because client leads of company X have the responsibility of linking both the client-side and internal leadership within a team of creatives, they are a suitable target group for the interviews for this research. Knowing the big picture and aligning teams to be on the same page while driving inspiration is one of the lead's central competencies.

Later on, the Bain model will be introduced to the interviewee, and he or she has to choose the four most important skills a leader should have in his or her opinion. Most of the questions will be formally structured, but the wording of questions might be flexible, depending on if the interviewer has to make clarifications to a question. The interviews last about 45 minutes to one hour each, depending on the amount of information given by the interviewees.

The interview questions will try to identify and observe how leadership works in practice in media company X from the interviewed leader's point of view and what kind of skills are being chosen by the individual leaders from the Bain model. Further, it will be observed if there is a pattern or trend in the choices of skills that have been made by the seven independently questioned leaders and the means of inspirational leadership.

3.2 Sampling

By conducting the interviews, it is crucial to be able to make sure to be consistent, diverse, and transparent. Understanding the target group within a whole and testing the sample that has been chosen to be interviewed, it is crucial to test the sample for consistency before continuing the interviews.

Being confident about the data we collect is key to receive comparable samples. By means of being able to represent the Client Leads within company X, a sample must be as diverse as the observed people themselves. Due to a lack of time for information retrieval of all leaders within company X, it is important to point out that there might be a limitation of knowledge sharing and retrieval.

The sample owns more information that is relevant to the study the fewer participants are needed to conduct samples. Sufficient information power includes the aim of the study, sample accuracy, communication quality, and analysis precision.

For the reason that only a small number of people will be interviewed (seven individuals), purposive sampling is the most efficient method to collect data. Purposive sampling is especially useful if a target group has to be reached quickly.

Considering that the sample will be a specific group of people, a homogeneous purposive sample is favorable. That is because all individuals have a set of common characteristics, in this case, the common characteristics are being a leader working within the same media agency and with at least five co-workers reporting to him or her.

To ensure the credibility of scientific research, it is significant to have honest and dependable sources. The reliability and honesty of the interviewees are crucial since the process of interviewing a small group of people might endanger the objectivity of the research.

Due to lack of time, there is a limitation of interviews that can be conducted, so the risk of subjectivity has to be put up with. The research subjects have to give their consent if their gender or title can be mentioned in the research. Additionally, the interviewees have to be notified thoroughly about the possible usage, the methods, and the motivation of the research.

3.3 Interviews

As mentioned in the definitions and terms section of this research, an interview is mainly described as an evaluation of responses and questions of individuals. From a qualitative research aspect, interviews are usually used to gather data from people (DeJonckheere and Vaughn, 2019).

3.3.1 Introduction of interviews

The interviews were conducted with the sampling method, meaning a specific group of people was interviewed in separate sessions. Seven people from media agency X were interviewed that hold the title Client Lead (or similar) and have leadership responsibility for at least five people within their team who report to the interviewed person directly.

Following all interviewed individuals have a set of common characteristics, as mentioned in the sample section, purposive sampling is the most efficient method in this case to collect data.

Before the actual interview sessions, which have been held separately and personally to get individual and subjective answers, the interviewees were contacted initially by describing the outline, topic, and object of the research.

The design of the interview as well as all the fundamental implications were examined collectively with the participants at the beginning of each interview session to guarantee the interviewees' understanding of the overall study.

Once they agreed on participating in this research, an email invitation with the questionnaire and informational links to the website of the Bain Inspirational Leadership model have been sent separately to the interviewees. This was made to ensure that the interviewees have some time in advance to get more familiar with the questions and especially the Bain model. Each interview lasted about an hour. The chosen language for the interview was English.

As soon as the individual interview time was scheduled, an online video call was registered to conduct the interview. Due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic, these interviews have been held remotely and online with a video conference tool. In order to get back to the interviews at a later point in time, they were, with the understanding and consent of the interviewees, recorded. The interviewees have been questioned separately in private interview sessions that have been set for 60 minutes to give enough time to think, reflect, and respond respectively to the questions.

3.3.2 Structure of interviews

The interview questionnaire was structured into twelve questions, from which eight were open answer questions. Four questions were directly about the Bain Inspirational Leadership model, which were multiple-choice questions, as well as open-answer questions.

The reason for this set of questions was to find out more about what inspires the interviewees to be a leader, and if they are trying to develop their skills, and what inspirational leadership means to them personally.

Through this set of interviews, this research is trying to understand what inspirational leadership means according to the subjective understanding of the client leads in media company X, what the four most important skills that need improvement in order to be or become an inspiring leader as well as if there a correlation of skills to inspire in the Bain model among the chosen interviewees at media company X.

These general open answer questions asked about their previous leadership training, if applicable, where the interviewee finds inspiration, who or what inspires the observed person, how he/she is personally developing or improving his/her leadership skills. Additionally, the interviewee was asked what valuable leadership means subjectively to him/her if a situation could be pointed out where the client lead has inspired someone or someone has inspired him/her, and if there were challenges.

The questionnaire part of the interview about the Bain Leadership model was structured into four parts. The first part was the introduction of the Bain Leadership model with a summary of the research and its outcome as well as the visual of Figure 1 (Literature Review, Bain Inspirational Leadership model) of the Bain Inspirational Leadership model which was added to the interview appendix. By showing Figure 1 to the interviewee, he/she has the opportunity to get an overview of the different skills that the research found, as well as the key sections such as developing inner resources, connecting with others, setting the tone, and leading the team.

The next step in the interview was to choose four skills that the observed person thinks are the most important skills and that they want to improve in order to become an even more inspirational leader.

This part was crucial to the research of the Bain model since it was interesting to see which four choices the seven interviewees make individually, and if there are any correlations. And if there are correlations, is there a pattern to see in the choices of skills?

Since Horwitch (2016) mentioned in the outcome of the research that it is rather important to use a particular mix of strengths to motivate individuals and teams, the interview aims to try to understand if the interviewees choose one skill from each key section, or if there is a pattern of one or more specific skills that the interviewees choose individually and unknowingly from each other's answers.

4. ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

The following chapter presents and discusses the transferred interviews' analysis, followed by the findings of the interviews. The conducted semi-structured interviews intend to gain a thorough perception of inspirational leadership with the emphasis on the Bain Inspirational Leadership model within the media company X.

Findings are an empirical fact, based on data collected and can simply strengthen or decline a hypothesis supporting research. Nonetheless, the act of explaining and connecting the results serves to explain and recognize the problem from within, divide it into sections, and observe the research problem from multiple outlooks (McGregor, 2018).

All of the respondents were chosen due to their job specifications that indicate their involvement in the case organizations' practice of leading a team. The interviews observed the following topics: 1) Inspirational leadership, 2) Leadership development, 3) Bain Leadership model, 4) Centeredness.

4.1 Observations of the interviews

All interviewees mentioned that the topic is very interesting and relevant for their current job. None of the interviewees has heard about the Bain Inspirational leadership model before, although the majority of client leads have had some kind of leadership training during their career.

Even though the interviewees had time before the interview to prepare and research the Bain Inspirational Leadership model themselves, especially the part of the section "centeredness" and its meaning has been openly and very differently interpreted.

While some interviewees understood centeredness as general leadership and being able to focus on some specific theme, others understood centeredness as something more spiritual, and therefore, abstract and difficult to define.

4.1.1 Leadership

There has been proactive participation and flow of information about leadership during all interviews that have been conducted.

When being asked where the interview participants seek inspiration from and who or what inspires them, reading inspirational books was mentioned as the main source of finding inspiration. This answer is broad and subjective since any kind of book might be inspirational for different kinds of people.

When being questioned to be more specific, the participants mentioned autobiographies from leaders in the modern world, for example Barack and Michelle Obama (44th president of the United States of America and the first lady) were named as inspirational and empathetic examples of leaders, while others mentioned Bill Gates (Microsoft) as an inspirational and empathetic leader.

Furthermore, the client leads referred to further educational books and TED talks from authors and inspirational speakers such as Simon Sinek ("Leaders eat last"), or Brené Brown ("Dare to Lead") as sources they seek inspiration and learnings from.

Another factor that emerged when asking about who or what inspires the client leads from media company X, colleagues or people with similar job descriptions or titles in their environment who lead by example and seem to be valued and respected among their co-workers were named. Trying to replicate or learn skills from people that are being seen as a role model seems to be a relevant factor to seek learnings and insights from.

The majority of the interviewed client leads stated that they have had some sort of leadership training throughout their career. Leadership training in the aforementioned instances entails university classes about leadership, advanced training about management in previous jobs, as well as further education courses in their current job in media company X.

This finding shows that the vast majority of the current leaders of media company X have had leadership training to some degree, shows that in media environments it can be concluded that training before and during leadership responsibilities is common.

In question five of the interview, the client leads were asked what valuable and insightful leadership means to them personally and subjectively, and in their own words.

Interviewee 1 mentioned that it "starts from really understanding the situation from the start, problem statements and how we can help to solve it." On the other hand, "it is about understanding the team's needs".

According to interviewee 2, an insightful leader "always tries to improve things that the workers become independent" and is "empowering and motivating the workforce". A leader "should know what is expected from him/her, and the workers should have the independence and knowledge that they can eventually work independently". As a leader, "you can enable and make sure to retain value and create additional value. The best leaders are the ones who are not destroying any value".

When being asked what inspirational and valuable leadership means to interviewee 3, he explained: "Leadership means leading by example, communicating clearly, consistently, and whenever possible, honestly. Respect your team's time and cultivate their capabilities. Focus on what makes a difference and keep that aim even in tough times, and last, but not least, make the tough decisions that others can't or won't."

Interviewee 4 explained that "setting the goals and guiding my team to reach them in an empowering yet focused way so that we can all succeed together."

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As stated by interview participant 5, it is all about "leading by example and turning words into action. You have to keep focus even when things are rough, and the team might ask itself the reason why we are doing this task, we need to focus on the end goal. Respect your team's time and cultivation of their capabilities."

Another statement by interviewee 6 was that "a team works more effectively if it feels being trusted, treated fairly and valued. Make sure that people feel comfortable making mistakes - we can only learn from mistakes. Feeling the trust towards a lead creates a healthy work environment where mistakes are allowed, and there is room for discussion. By focussing on the future and what can be made in both present and future, while not dwelling on past mistakes that have been made".

"It is the baseline of leadership, the opposite should be prohibited. There is no leadership without giving value or insights to the team members" - Interviewee 7.

Overall, a feeling of connecting on a human and empathetic level, empowerment, teamwork, and focus are the main skills being mentioned by the leads when thinking about insightful and valuable leadership. It revolves much around the outward communication, and scarcely on the inward communication with yourself. Moreover, the answers show that optimism seems to be an important factor for an insightful and valuable leadership style.

Self-reflection was named as the main task for developing their leadership skills as well as asking and receiving honest and critical feedback from their team members as a great attempt to evolve and enhance their leadership abilities. Furthermore, three client leads stated that books and podcasts about insightful leadership help them in their growth.

Bain Inspirational Leadership model - answers per key section
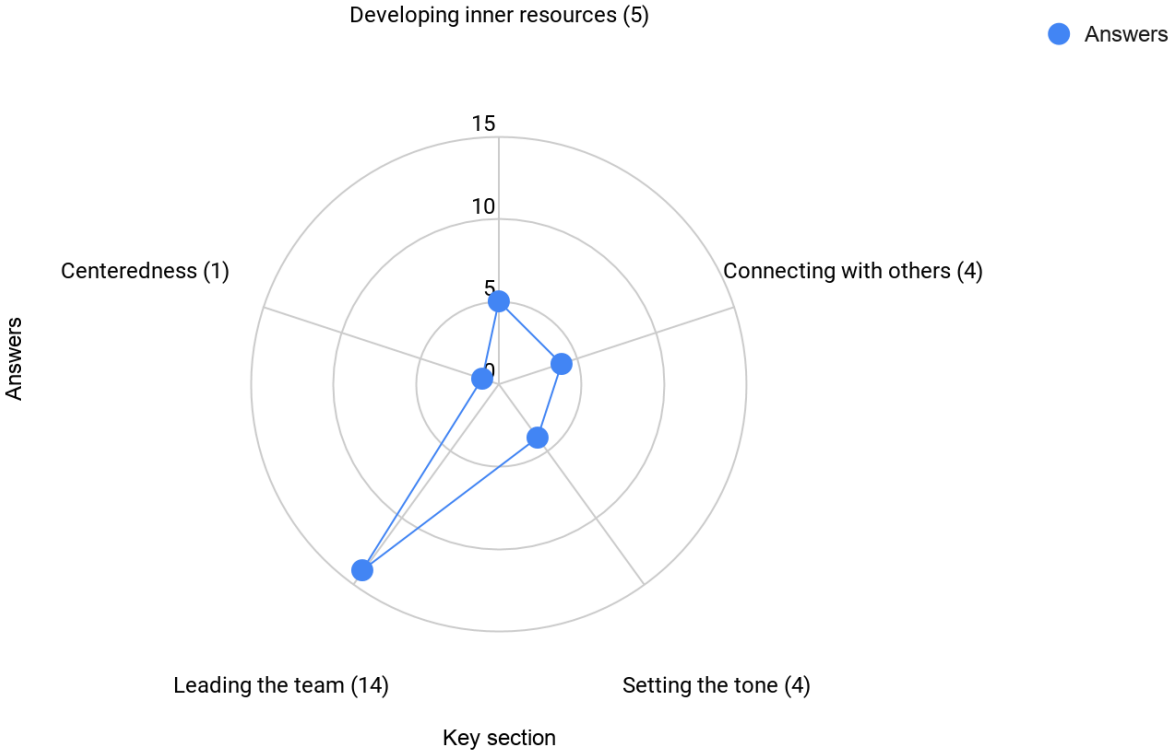
Figure 3: Bain model - Answers per key section

According to Healy (n.d), radar charts are direct and straightforward to compare items or groups on varied features or components. In this case, the number of answers by the seven interviewees per key section of the Bain Inspirational Leadership model is illustrated.

The radar chart shows the choices per key selection of the Bain Inspirational Leadership model, which is arranged into four key sections as well as centeredness, which is alone-standing and not part of any key section: Developing inner resources, connecting with others, setting the tone, and leading the team. The four key sections contain eight skills per key section.

Centeredness is the only skill that is standing alone, without being part of a key section. Since it entails the skill of engaging all parts of the mind to become fully present, it encompasses all four key sections.

Each of the seven client leads chose four skills from the Bain Leadership model, therefore there were twenty-eight skills chosen in total. The majority of selections of skills was made from the key section "leading the team", with fourteen picks of different skills within that category. This shows that half of the chosen skills were chosen from the key selection "leading the team".

Five out of twenty-eight overall choices were made for the key section "developing inner resources", while four skills each from the key sections "connecting with others" and "setting the tone" were picked. Centeredness was chosen by only one interviewee as one out of four skills.

Most selections of skills that the interviewed client leads would like to improve and think the most important skills are under the key sections "Connecting with others" and "Leading the team", with 4 skills per key section. This equals 30.8% of the choices of skills the participants made for these two sections. This implies that leaders in company X want to be perceived as empathetic and an assertive influence to others.

Three skills were chosen for the key section "Setting the tone" (shared ambition, responsibility, recognition), while two skills were chosen for "Developing inner resources" (Optimism, emotional expression).

The preferential key sections, "Connecting with others" and "Leading the team", are seen as the most important skills with four choices of skills each. Skills that have been selected from the key section "Connecting with others" are commonality, development, expressiveness, and listening.

Skills that have been chosen from the key section "Leading the team" are co-creation, focus, empowerment, and vision.

The specific skills and the main choices of the interview participants are being discussed and analyzed in Figure 4.

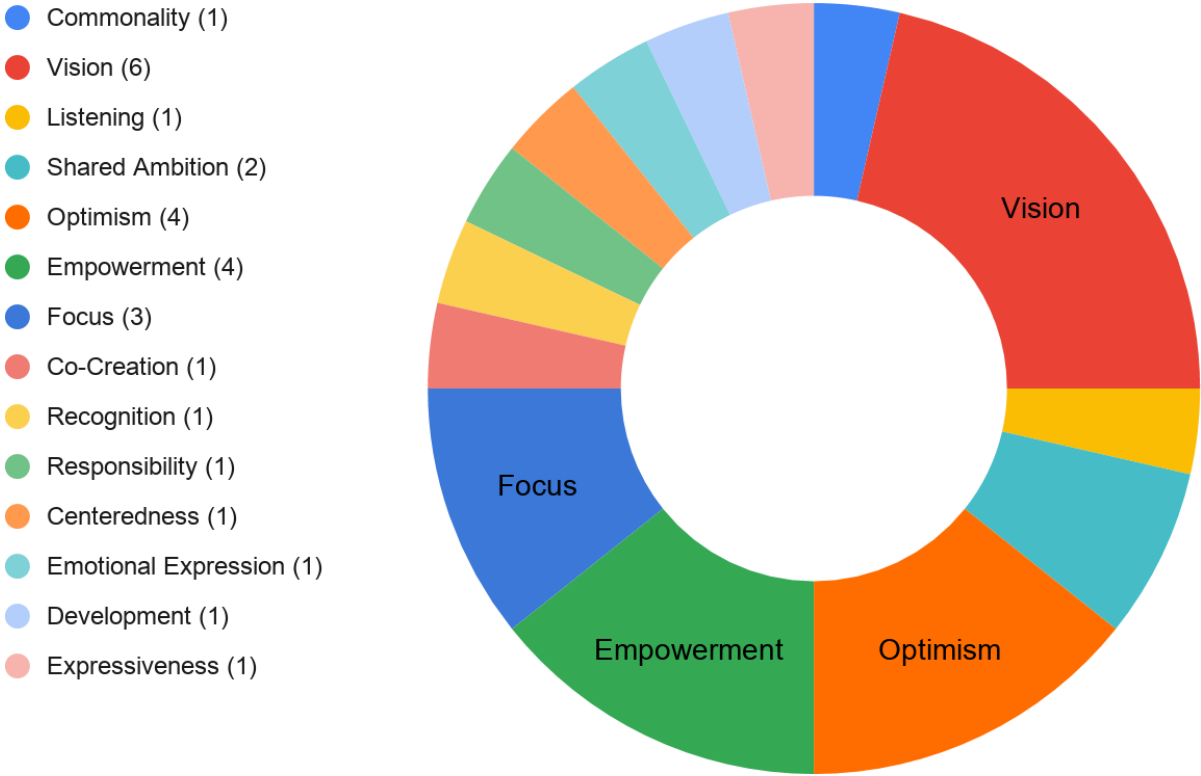Bain Inspirational Leadership model - choices of skills per answer

Figure 4: Bain Inspirational Leadership Model - Choices of Skills per Answer

Figure 4 presents the specific preferences per skills of all seven interview participants. The legend names the specific skills listed that have been chosen by how many votes the skills got.

Fourteen out of thirty-three skills of the Bain model have been picked by the client leads that they think are essential and they would like to center more on in the future. Especially four skills that stand out when looking at the pie chart are vision, optimism, empowerment, and focus.

Vision has been mentioned as one of the four choices of skills that the participants want to improve and work on. Having a vision is about "creating a compelling objective that builds confidence and encourages sign-up" (Bain Inspirational Leadership model, Figure 1).

According to the explanations of the interviewees why they chose vision as one of the skills is that a long-term vision is part of the key to leading a team strongly and the ability to be goal-oriented, set milestones, and make progress, which builds confidence within a team. Additionally, a strong vision allows team members to grow and to feel empowered.

When being asked why the leads would like to enhance this skill, the most common answer was the "lack of expressing the big picture and therefore losing sight of what the long-term vision is to others." This phenomenon could be a symptom of the media environment, which often is abstract, and goals and results are hard to define and measure.

Another interviewee stated that a vision "can and should change, but a long-term way of direction or destination is needed that the team can work towards. Ideally, it is an inspirational vision that engages the team to want to get to that destination or direction."

On a daily basis where people are busy with their daily tasks and work, losing track of a long-term vision is about to happen easily, therefore, it is important to constantly remind and lead by example to continuously keep the long-term vision ongoing.

Optimism, one of the skills of the key section "developing inner resources", was chosen as a significant skill the client leads want to converge on more in the future.

According to the Bain Leadership model (Figure 1), optimism is about "remaining resilient and positive despite challenges". According to one of the interviewees, "tenacity and capability to see a bright future are invaluable". Optimism should be "a curious mind that believes there is something truly worth venturing towards has a much better chance to get there than an analytical mind that evaluated likelihoods via scenario-thinking and deep analysis".

This statement indicates that in some situations it might be better to feel positive about something and share it with the team instead of solely focusing on analysis and scientific facts. Working on a project with a positive mindset could have a promising result and creates a feeling of collective achievement and encouragement within the team.

Moreover, another empowerment was chosen as one out of the four most important skills. Empowerment is "allowing and encouraging the freedom to stretch" (Bain model, Figure 1). One interviewee refines that "empowerment equals freedom to make decisions and therefore gives new ideas to think out of the box." The team and also the individual team member should have the chance to feel trusted and confident to bring up new ideas, make choices and judgments without the constant approval from their lead, and therefore build more self-esteem, independence, and out-of-the-box thinking.

Another of the chosen skills from the key section "leading the team" is the focus. The focus was chosen by three interview candidates and is about "orienting teams toward the most relevant set of outcomes" (Bain model, Figure 1).

Managing a busy lifestyle with many complex tasks is part of most leaders in a media agency. Setting priorities on both clients' and the teams' needs, ideas, and wishes while not leaving out the perspective and own responsibilities and tasks take a lot of focus.

Not leaving the focus out of sight in the usually busy and hectic daily schedules both short and long-term is not an easy job. By being able to center priorities and ensuring the awareness of the team towards the most relevant tasks, the team can succeed as an entity.

Curiously, 75% of the most chosen skills by the participants, vision, optimism, focus, and empowerment, got seventeen out of twenty-eight votes of possible choices of skills. Vision, empowerment, and focus are all in the key section of leading the team, while optimism falls within the key section of "developing inner resources". This implies that the actual leadership of a team is something that seems clearly important to the interviewees, as well as long-term optimism but difficult to accomplish on a daily basis.

The overall key term section of leading the team seems to be the most discarded but seen as the most important one among the client leads in media company X.

Since leads have busy schedules to delegate tasks to the correct people in their team, ensuring the satisfaction of the client as well as the quality of the project/task, while meeting the requirements of the team both as a whole and individually is not an easy assignment.

4.1.2 Centeredness

The participants of the interviews were asked what they reckoned under the term "centeredness". Overall, the definition of "centeredness" was recognized as "quite vaguely" from the interviewees' perspective. Additionally, half of the leads stated that centeredness sounds "naive" and that it does not align with reality in the actual work life and work situations.

To interviewee 1, centeredness intends to be "fully aware of what you are doing" while interviewee 3 stated the value of self-reflection and the greatness of taking enough time for it.

According to interviewee 5, centeredness says that "finding the balance between yourself, the team, the environment, and the task one works on mixed with one's self-awareness. Understanding all perspectives of leadership and the 33 skills [of the Bain model] and understanding how to work on e.g. empathy and improve and find balance."

Interviewee 2 mentioned the importance of meditation, which is vital to achieving centeredness and being aware and entirely present, while interviewee 7 mentioned the understanding of centeredness being "naive, since there is no "one-skill" to rule them all, and I believe centeredness is such an open term that people just allocate their meaning to it".

In the view of interviewee 4, centeredness anticipates "being mindful and aware of yourself and others and their thoughts and behavior. I think you can develop it by listening to yourself and others and giving others and the tasks at hand your full attention".

As illustrated by interviewee 6, centeredness is "something like mindful leadership. Since there are so many things happening and many different channels that require attention from the leader, it is easy to lose focus, and leads might go on auto-pilot trying to put out fires instead of trying to see the big picture."

5. DISCUSSION

The first and second themes were discussed to gain a thorough comprehension of the client lead's experience and framework of their expertise as a leader as well as their understanding and subjective view of inspirational leadership. Additionally, the first and second parts focus on obtaining an understanding of the client lead's objectives and motivations as a lead.

The third and fourth themes focus on the Bain Leadership model, its skills in-depth, and how the interviewed client leads perceive and prioritize the different skills of the model. Additionally, a specific focus is put on the skill "centeredness" and what meaning the interviewees indicate for this skill.

Each discussion chapter is parted into subchapters for easier understanding and readability and will be followed by a discussion subchapter, which translates the conclusions in the following chapter 6 according to the theoretical framework that has previously been presented in this research paper.

5.1 Interviews

The discussion part focuses on the interviews conducted in media company X as well as the answers of the client leads interviewed.

5.1.1 Inspirational Leadership

When thinking about people who inspire the interviewed client leads at company X, the main mentions were Barack and Michelle Obama, Bill Gates, as well as Brené Brown and Simon Sinek.

As an interesting observation, the 44th president of the United States, Barack Obama has been mentioned by several interviewees as an inspirational leader. In his book "The audacity of hope", Obama names having a clear vision, listening to people, conducting clear communication, teaching optimism and authenticity as the main competencies a leader must have to be respected by others (Obama, 2006).

The recurring remarks of Obama as an inspirational leader according to the client leads being interviewed indicate strong compassion towards Obama, who has been described as an empathetic, down-to-earth leader who manages by example and is therefore viewed as a role model within leadership teams at company X.

While Brown (2018), mentions reliability, communication, integrity and expressiveness as the main strengths of a leader, Sinek (2017) focuses on creating a human connection, communication as well as empathy. In addition, Microsoft founder Bill Gates (quoted in Kruse, 2012) mentioned that " leaders will be those who empower others."

Furthermore, Richard Branson from Virgin Airlines mentioned that an employee "who is appreciated, who is praised" and "is given a chance to do a great job" is a cheerful, faithful, and valuable part of the team (Krapivin, 2018).

By being open-minded, trusting, and empathetic leaders through giving responsibility and showing their confidence in others, inspirational leaders can create a considerate, honest, and dedicated work atmosphere within a team that is able to thrive.

All these inspirational leaders have in common that they want to focus not only on the leading part but want to create a working culture filled with emotional leadership. Leading does not only mean accomplishing work tasks, but also to create and cultivate a work culture where people feel empowered, inspired, and valued.

Additionally, all the mentioned role models for inspirational leadership possess a high level of experience leading large entities since a long period of time. This might indicate that leadership is an overall skill a leader can progress over time by developing, improving, and gaining the ability to adjust to certain situations, individuals, and teams.

When conducting online research about these leaders, a few skills show up as how these leaders are being perceived by the public. They are perceived as empathetic, clear communicators, active listeners, visionaries, and are fully present (Wilding, 2019).

Empathy is one of the most common skills that the mentioned role models of the interviewees have in common as well as being described as an optimistic visionary and one who has the ability to empower others.

Interestingly, these skills were chosen most as the options from the Bain model which seem to correlate with the skillsets of the chosen inspirational leaders the client leads of company X look up to.

Engaging all parts of the mind and becoming fully aware and present is a skill all the above mentioned aspiring leaders seem to have in common, meaning they all practice and perform centeredness. This skill is an invaluable part of being an aspiring and inspirational leader for others.

As Remond and Trager (2004) stated, vision, and therefore the ability to think creatively about the future and the opportunities of tomorrow, is one of the central characteristics a leader should have. The above-mentioned leaders also own the characteristics of a visionary in the eyes of society. Also, the interviewed client leads see the Obamas, Gates, Brown, and Sinek as visionaries, as someone who inspires them and adopts their vision and works toward its achievement.

5.1.2 Leadership development

Most client leads mentioned during their interviews that they are constantly or regularly trying to improve their leadership abilities and try to take time to reflect on their previous leadership behaviors in certain situations.

Some interviewees admitted to feeling like they have not performed ideally in particular situations where powerful leadership skills would have been needed and therefore feel the need to continually work on their skills to be or become a better leader for their team(s).

The leaders mentioned books, friends in similar positions or online videos of speeches, and TedTalks of inspirational speakers (such as Obama, Sinek, or Brown) as their main source of seeking further education and input for inspirational leadership.

Furthermore, the Obama's, Gates, Brown, and Sinek all are seen as people who put others first and focus on others to succeed. Moreover, the client leads stated that they are seeking to replicate or acquire skills from personalities that are being seen as a role model appears to be a relevant factor to seek education and insights from.

As mentioned by John Maxwell (quoted in Kruse, 2012), "people buy into the leader before they buy into the vision.", meaning people seek an emotionally intelligent leader that they trust, seek inspiration from, and value in the first place.

5.1.3 Bain Leadership model

The Bain leadership model is a universal model to cover and include all essential skills to be an inspirational leader.

The favored key section, "leading the team", is seen as the most substantial competency with four choices of skills each and a total of fourteen choices out of twenty-eight possible choices. This indicates that there seems to be a strong urge to lead a team to build long-term accomplishments.

Although optimism was chosen four times by the interviewed client leads as an important quality they would like to develop further on accords of the Bain model, none of the client leads mentioned optimism when being asked what valuable and insightful leadership means to them personally. This implies that the focus strongly is on empowerment, vision, and focus, therefore, leading the team.

During a 10-year long research study between 2010-2020, Google tried to identify the behaviors of their best managers. Google named the best fortes of a leader to be empowerment, empathy, and vision (Mautz, 2020). Both empowerment and vision correlate with the choices of the examined client leads of the Finnish media agency of this research.

Another research by Forbes magazine (2019), which interviewed 20.000 employees globally shows that assertiveness, expressiveness, and listening and the three central skills that employees would like to see improved in their leaders' behavior (Nordstrom and Sturd, 2019).

Those research findings imply that the assumption of leaders of media company X in this research directs essentially on leading the team. Rather than evolving emotional leadership to connect with the team on a human level, the client leads in company X intend to focus mainly on hard business skills, while employees, according to the study, seek more soft-skilled expertise from their leaders.

But, as mentioned in the literature review section, a leader is not only the person that functions as the coordinator of operative steps and makes things happen ("transactional leadership"), but also leads transformational leadership, meaning he or she acts as the advocate of the company's values and decides how these things should happen (Burns, 1978).

Therefore, there seems to be a discrepancy between the expectations of employees towards a lead and the lead's assumption of what employees would like to receive from their managers' leadership.

Centeredness means that all of the qualities balance because outwards and inwards development in a leader has to be balanced while setting the tone is the overall environment. Developing inner resources does not seem to be as important as leading outwards towards the people, although the people the client leads of company X see as an example see emotional intelligence and leadership as one of the most important competencies when leading a team, as mentioned in the findings of the above section of leadership.

Media agencies are overall modern workplaces. Trends come and go fast, and both leads and team members are often younger than other industry averages and change jobs regularly (Landrum, 2017).

In the Finnish media agency of this research, there is a relation and strong trend of leading the team and connecting with others. Communicating and leading in a stressful and ever-changing environment without clearly defined goals or work tasks is an utterly important skill that seems to be left out in a hectic daily environment. Due to the fast-paced environment, leaders want to ensure that their team feels connected and has a direction to go to, therefore connecting the team and leading the team to seem to be the most chosen key sections.

The media industry is a people business, therefore, empathy and active listening, and being human is the key to success as well as being understanding to the people you lead.

5.1.4 Centeredness

Centeredness, and therefore engaging all parts of the mind in order to become fully aware and present, has been seen as a trivial skill by the majority of the interviewed client leads. Although centeredness sounds like a skill the participants want to achieve, the focus is stronger on hard skills and leading the team in a bigger picture than on centeredness.

Even though the term, definition, and meaning of centeredness have been challenging to apprehend for most of the interviewees, they overall seem to admire and strive towards being able to practice centeredness without being aware of the term itself.

Interestingly, centeredness seems to be a common skill that is being practiced and performed by all admired leaders such as Obama, Sinek, and Brown. This skill is a valuable component of being a striving and inspirational leader for teams and individuals.

However, the people that inspire the client leads are people who focus on emotional intelligence, who are seen as empathetic, and who practice centeredness. Centeredness shall not be regarded as a secondary skill.

Even though centeredness seems to be a vague skill, and therefore is difficult to accomplish, the successful and admired leaders of the interviewees are the people who use centeredness as a powerful and relevant skill to be acknowledged as an inspirational leader.

6. CONCLUSION

The conclusion chapter incorporates and describes the conclusion of this research and tries to make a coherent, methodical and rational assessment that corresponds to the findings. Additionally, the results of the research are examined in terms of their theoretical and practical implications. Later, the limitations of the results are reviewed and further research directions are recommended.

6.1 Research summary

This research tried to observe the following research questions:

RQ 1: What kind of methods, approaches, and advancements are needed to achieve or manifest inspirational leadership?

RQ 2: What set of skills should an inspirational leader obtain according to client leads of company X?

RQ 3: How do the selected skills from the Bain Inspirational leadership model by client leads from company X correlate to research on inspirational leadership?

One important factor when thinking about leadership traits and skills is that skills can be learned, cultivated, and improved, while traits are essentially inherited, indicating that some people have a more fundamental ability to become a leader, while others require more focus on their developmental skill sets. Nonetheless, both types of leaders with or without certain traits should continuously strive on advancing and strengthening their leadership skills.

Due to the ever-changing media industry and landscape, an agile and swift adaptation of leadership skills is vital to achieve success and maintain a satisfied and thriving team.

The current pandemic (COVID-19) throughout 2020 made some businesses rethink their leadership approach and direct their focus more towards empathetic and soft-skilled leadership instead of solely directing measurable and results-driven leadership approaches.

By aligning the four pillars of leadership, culture, character, charisma, and communication, leaders can be capable of creating a good foundation of leadership within both a team as well as for individuals. Continuous leadership training, an open mind, as well as a perpetual leadership adjustment to particular individuals and situations, will support the aim to be or become a strong leader within the media.

When examining the interviewees' responses from media agency X, a connection between the four most chosen skills from the Bain Leadership model and general studies of inspirational leadership can be observed. The aforementioned findings can conclude that there is a probability that valued skills are aligned with general findings regarding leadership.

When reviewing the general leadership models presented in this research and the public people who were mentioned by the interviewees as their role models when thinking about leadership, there is a coherence between the skills mentioned in the general leadership models and the skills people such as Obama, Sinek or Brown hold, such as empowerment, vision, and empathy.

This shows that there seems to be a distinct alignment when thinking about leadership and what it necessitates according to the client leads of company X.

Additionally, there seems to be an association between general essential leadership skills according to several studies and the sought skills a strong leader should have, according to the interviewed client leads.

In the report of Hollifield et al(2016), some of the central leadership skills are communication and listening skills, empowerment, coaching and assertiveness, which also are mentioned in the Bain Leadership model.

Since there seems to be an increased need for inspirational leadership, especially for future generations, this research shows the importance of continuous skill improvement within the leadership mindset, with a particular focus on soft-skills. In order to keep stable and motivated personnel, leaders will have to reexamine their thinking of what the definition of being a leader means.

Emotional leadership is the focus that should shift towards retaining an optimistic, independent, and prosperous working culture.

6.2 Recommendations for further research

As observed in the research, there is a feasibility that valued leadership skills in media management align with the general leadership skills examined. To validate this finding more further, it would require more data on chosen answers to get a better statistical understanding and data of the chosen skills. One recommendation would be to choose a bigger subset of companies within the Nordics and conduct several interviews of Client Leads in other Nordic media agencies to see if valued leadership skills match or align with the ones in a larger quantity.

If there would be an overall alignment within the interviewed Client Leads within a larger set of media agencies, another compelling proposal for further research would be if the companies that value the skills that align have some differences or similarities in their characteristics as well as their financial data. One specific research example could be if the valuation of a set of leadership skills in media agencies leadership within Northern European media agencies decrease or increase their fluctuation of skilled workforce.

Another added research suggestion would be to take a larger set of media agencies and their client leads and examine if the same answers and conclusions would be found during the examined interviews.

Furthermore, it would be advised to understand if the leadership skills of media agency X have an impact on the overall work environment, work ethics of the workforce, employee satisfaction surveys, and eventually to analyze if there is a correlation between leadership skills and company financials.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic starting in 2020 and currently still ongoing, the requirement for people to work from home in many companies has changed how people work, communicate, and how teams and individuals are being managed. The adjustment of remote work, the isolation of teams, and the lack of face-to-face communication already have changed leadership approaches in companies and will affect their long-term strategy and leadership strategy.

According to the interviews conducted in company x, one could assume that leadership within the media industry is already more driven towards the approach of empathic and soft-skilled leadership in comparison to other industries. However, to find more proof about this theory, more research and empirical studies need to be conducted. Moreover, it would be beneficial to examine and compare other industries and the media to gain more insights into how leadership approaches differ within different industries.

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8. APPENDICES

8.1 Figures & tables

Figure 1: Horwitch, M., 2016. *How Leaders Inspire: Cracking The Code*. [online] Bain & Company. Available at: <https://www.bain.com/insights/how-leaders-inspire-cracking-the-code/> [Accessed 14 November 2019].

Figure 2: Zenger, J., Folkman, J. and Edinger, S., 2009. *The Inspiring Leader: Unlocking The Secrets Of How Extraordinary Leaders Motivate*. [online] Zengerfolkman.com. Available at: <https://zengerfolkman.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/White-Paper_-Unlocking-The-Secret-Behind-How-Extraordinary-Leaders-Motivate.pdf> [Accessed 13 November 2019].

Figure 3: Bain model answers per key section, 2020. Created by the author of the thesis, Franziska Slawinski [Created on 30 December 2020].

Figure 4: Bain Inspirational Leadership Model - Choices of Skills per Answer, 2020. Created by the author of the thesis, Franziska Slawinski [Created on 30 December 2020].

8.2 Interview questions

1. Did you have leadership training during your career?

2. Where do you find inspiration?

3. Who or what inspires you?

4. How are you personally developing or improving your leadership skills?

5. What does valuable and insightful leadership mean to you personally?

6. The *Bain Inspirational Leadership model* is a model by Bain & Company in the U.S, who has created a broad model of leadership skills in 2013 in order to help coaching leaders and managers to become inspiring and good leaders for both employees and the company.

More than 2000 people were interviewed in order to get a better understanding of what inspirational leadership means to individuals. The most interesting and remarkable outcome of this research was that inspiration alone is not enough in order to motivate the workforce. It is rather important to use a particular mix of strengths to motivate individuals and teams.

The outcome of this questionnaire is 33 traits which give a leader the tools to inspire their surrounding employees or followers (Figure 1). Please have a look at this model thoroughly.

Figure 1: Bain Inspirational Leadership model

7. Based on Figure 1, which **4** traits do you think are the ones that you want to improve to become or be an even more inspirational leader?

▢ Emotional expression	▢ Empathy	▢ Unselfishness
▢ Emotional self-awareness	▢ Expressiveness	▢ Worldview
▢ Flexibility	▢ Humility	▢ Co-creation
▢ Independence	▢ Listening	▢ Direction
▢ Optimism	▢ Vitality	▢ Empowerment
▢ Stress tolerance	▢ Balance	▢ Focus
▢ Self-regard	▢ Follow-through	▢ Harmony
▢ Self-actualization	▢ Openness	▢ Servanthood
▢ Assertiveness	▢ Recognition	▢ Sponsorship
▢ Commonality	▢ Responsibility	▢ Vision
▢ Development	▢ Shared ambition	▢ Centeredness

8. Why did you choose these **4** skills as the most important skills for an inspirational leader?

9. What does *centeredness* mean to you and how do you develop this skill?

10. Could you explain a situation where you think you have inspired someone or someone else has inspired you?

11. Is there a situation that you have in mind where you had challenges to inspire an employee or a team with the four skills you have chosen?

12. How would you handle this situation knowing what you know now and using the four most important skills that you were lacking at that point in your opinion?

I hereby agree that my answers will be used in Franziska Slawinski's thesis.

Signature: _____