Findings: Senior Managers' Perspectives

8.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the findings of the senior manger interviews. The purpose of interviews with the senior managers was different from those with front-line staff and their managers. The focus was on exploring key points concerning culture and the practices of the company. Those points were decided by the researcher on the basis of an evaluation of operational manager and front-line staff interviews. Four senior managers were interviewed (as shown in Table 8.1). Three interviews took place at the company headquarters (the two human resource managers and the marketing manager). The fourth one took place with an area leader in a branch during a tour of in order to follow up the business operations.

Table 8.1 The main attributes of the senior managers

Position	Gender	Years of Employment
HR manager 1	Female	One and half years in UK and twelve years with Fun Travel
HR manager 2	Female	Six and half years in UK and Thirteen years with Fun Travel
Marketing Manager	Male	2 years as Marketing Manager and Seven years with Fun Travel
Scotland Area Leader	Female	Two and half years as Area Leader and Seven years with Fun Travel

8.2 Organisational Culture

8.2.1 Employees' orientation culture of the company

8.2.1.1 "Staff are the number one asset"

Senior managers emphasise the importance of the company's employees, especially the front end people, as they call them. Human resource managers consider them the core of the company's culture. The expectations of them are high but the rewards are considerable as well.

Any initiative that comes into play..It's always....is this going to improve the guys who work in the front line because they're our most important people almost (HR manager2).

Without the frontlines and their managers are doing the job they're doing and understanding why they're doing those jobs and the longer term picture ………..without them we absolutely wouldn't be growing like we've been growing or becoming out of the tough time that we had.(Marketing manager)

Front-line staff are considered to be important and unique. They are selected very carefully according to identified competencies needed for their role. The company depends on front-line staff to achieve success. Therefore, all top managers work for them and seek to ease the way for them. Time is devoted to their training to ensure that they understand the business and know how to best serve their customers.

The people that we try to attract and when we're talking kind about the sales roles are intelligent people who have travelled and a lot. Everything we do is to help them to make their job easier so they can make more money for themselves and for the company (HR manager2)

We have expertise staff that are well travelled and have good knowledge. I ensure that the consultants at the frontend understand the business and what we are marketing so they fully equipped to deal with customers' enquires and convert them into bookings. (Marketing manager)

The people are unbeatable because I think we have the best staff (laughing). We hire people you know who are ....have a wide range skills and entrepreneurial staff so we do have you know our staff are very good and we invest a lot of our time in our staff so. (An area leader)

All managers communicate with front line teams all the time. Equality is a strong cultural feature of the company so front-line employees can approach their senior managers at any point. On the other hand and according to senior managers, they never treat employees badly or take them for granted and they rate their opinions highly as well.

Everything I do is to help them and I would never be rude to them or take them for granted because ya my job is for them if it wasn't for them would never job effectively (HR manager2).

Well, obviously I am their manager but I see them as...I see them as equals. I value of their opinions as well. They can contact me at anytime. If anybody ever urgently needed to see me, I will make sure that I had time to see that person and I will always give them my time and like I said we have reviews all the time with people, if somebody is struggling, we call them and you know there is a lot of communications.(An area leader).

Front end staff work under stress all the time to meet customer demands and to hit their own targets and those of the company as well (due to the commission system). The company consider them to be an important means to grow the business by depending on them as part of the organisation's marketing in that they undertake marketing to their customers. Therefore, they need support and recognition all the time to be motivated and productive. Conferences and other events are held to motivate them, make them aware of the bigger picture of the company and how they are contributing to it as well as rewarding them among their peers.

The people you've been talking to are sales people and in sales you have to be motivated and inspired otherwise why we do bother and these guys are on incentives as well so they get commission from their sales so the reward and recognition and the conferences and all that kind of staff is really important. I think from a motivation perspective and also for letting them know the bigger picture because it lets them know that day to day they might be sitting in the New Malden shop with their team of four people but actually what they're doing contribute to the bigger picture. (HR manager2)

Depending on people in marketing the company is a lesson that the company have especially during the economy hard times and because we couldn't double the amount we are spending on the national advertising every year. So we make sure that we maintain our national advertising and marketing strategy but we will keep it at the level that we've done and we need to grow by getting the consultants engaged with and them having the tools to do that marketing to their clients(their own sort of portfolio of client).(Marketing manager)

They market the repeats and the referrals so ya 100% they are in ideal world, that all we have, we don't need any marketing you know we don't need any marketing....you know we don't need to market in news papers or anything like that so the front-line staff who have the repeat customers and the referrals.(An area leader)

8.2.1.2 Staff involvement in decision making

It is evident that decisions in the company are frequently bottom to top ones. For any major changes front-line opinions are gauged if only informally. Communications between team leaders and their teams are undertaken in order to explain changes and receive feedback. This can sometimes happen informally through meetings and discussion to capture their opinions. All decision takers have experienced front-line work in the past so they are usually aware of the special nature of the job at the front end as well as the implications which any decision could have. However, as in any workplace, sometimes certain decisions have to be made despite not being popular with employees.

There is some big decisions that we have to make as a senior management team that we have to make or you know that somebody might have to make then I have to implement but I will always communi.....if I have something like changes, something to communicate, I will always sit down with the team leaders and I will take their opinions and staff and we will have a discussion about it. (An area leader)

Most people in support I would say the majority of people in support all used to do that job………………so we understand that implementing this new system, you cannot just tell them to do it because we know that how busy they are and that they will need to be some kind of structure put around, we understand that practicality (HR manager2).

8.2.1.3 Gauging staff opinion (formally and informally)

Headquarters managers are committed to knowing how things are going in the branches. They use a variety of means to establish this. Formally, surveys are used to identify and measure staff opinion concerning managerial practices. This survey helps front-line staff to openly raise the issues they want as the surveys are

anonymous. These surveys help human resource managers to recognize the areas which need to be improved.

> *We do surveys of our staff to find out what we need to work on, so what's working well and what needs......and then we do work on that stuff to make it a better place to work and that's big part of my job is looking at what are people happy with but what do we need to work on and then thinking o.k. well-off. (HR manager2) .*

Informally, human resources managers use one on one meeting with team leaders to learn about front-line opinions and feelings towards the work environment. They review the targets of each employee, discuss reasons for not achieving them and indicate upcoming targets and the plans needed to achieve them. All surveys and meeting outcomes are taken into consideration in any future personal decisions.

> *I speak to the team leaders about ...I look through and see you know what areas we need to improve on, what their understanding is you know and see why...why they possibly think that their staff think like that. With some of the questions and look at whatever areas that we need to...that we have scored pretty low....they are the ones that we are looking at. (An area leader)*

8.2.1.4 Staff benefits and policies

The company has a major scheme relating to health and financial matters for employees. Financially, they support a meeting with a financial expert to help staff with issues such as mortgages, reducing debts and buying insurance. In other words, they address any financial issues that may concern employees. "Health wise" is another scheme which provides employees' access to private medical care to ensure their health and wellbeing. It is a free scheme to use. Other benefits include the pension scheme for employees, travel discounts and all the events that the company holds in order to reward and recognize the notable performance of any employee.

> *I guess the two that's you know come up a lot that again is fairly unique and perhaps a lot of companies wouldn't have is our money wise and health wise. So money wise is our in-house financial planning service so I can...I have at least one meeting per year that is company funded with our financial adviser*

to come in and help me with whether it's budgeting, or reducing my debts or if I want to buy a house, helping with setting up a mortgage, whatever it is my needs out of a financial perspective that's provided by the company, might be buying insurance whatever it is and health wise does the same thing from a health and wellness perspective so I have access to a health wise consultant at least once a year that's company funded that I can go and meet and they'll check my...my cloistral and my blood pressure but we'll also discuss you know just general well-being so whether I want to quit smoking or I want to run at the marathon or if I am feeling quite stressed or perhaps even though my desk causing my some issues that person is there to help me come with the plan is how to reduce those things or achieve your health and wellness cause. So those are the two things that are probably the things that we talk about the most. The other benefits...I mean we have a lot of benefits such as pensions and access to private medical and all those sort of things but i guess the other benefit that we talk a lot about is the reward and recognition side of things which we think it's a huge part of the company (HR manager1).

There are also other policies which are also indicative of how Fun Travel takes care of its people. Fun Travel ensures that all employees know their rights and highlights procedures that both the company and the employees should adopt in order to ensure fairness for all parties.

The researcher obtained access to company's policies, which are considered confidential and private, as document from the company. Reading carefully throughout the policies and as highlighted by HR Manager2, policies are developed in conjunction with legal requirements and SWOT requests. Most of the policies follow ACAS and statutory guidelines and are there to protect all employees. All policies are regularly monitored to ensure they are compliant with legal requirements, business needs and the needs of employees. The policies then sit on the Intranet in the "Employee Handbook" which is shown to all new staff during their Induction.

Any new policies or amendments are written by People works Support (HR managers), then the draft is approved by SWOT. They are rolled out via the Intranet and the Daily News to all staff individually and we also ensure we go to all Team Leader meetings so we can ensure they understand the policies clearly and they can ask any questions (HR manager 2).

Polices cover all the employment personal issues. For example, absence from work, all type of leave, financial issues such as loans, ticket payment;, annual holiday leave, parental and maternal rights; disciplinary issues relating to cases of misconduct and unsatisfactory performance procedures within the company; health issues, study; and communications within the company and with customers. Within the policies, the company culture is clearly reflected. For example, one of the policies is designed not only for employees but rather to them and to all the job applicants, clients, business partners and members of the public, where relevant. It emphasizes the equality philosophy

> *"Fun Travel is committed to treating every individual with respect and dignity. Consistent with that fundamental belief, Fun Travel is committed to equal opportunities for all". This policy does not just apply in the workplace. It also applies whenever you are involved in work matters at other places, such as at a supplier's site and at any work functions (including social functions, conferences and trips) related to or organized by Fun Travel".*
> .

Another example of policies is the communication policy which reflects the employee and customer orientation culture as well as keeping good work environment. For example concerning the communication with other employees, employee must:

• Always maintain professionalism, particularly when in view of customers or other employees;
• Use respectful and appropriate language at all times;
• Excuse yourself to customers if you are required to interrupt a colleague.
• If a fellow colleague is ringing to ask for your assistance, friendliness and professionalism is expected – you too may be in the same situation one day.

Concerning communication with customers, employees must:
• Show respect – the customer is paramount;
• Speak clearly and concisely;
• Not use jargon;
• Use positive body language;
• Display courtesy and professionalism at all times.
• In any dealings you have with customers and suppliers you are representing Fun Travel – it is extremely important that you demonstrate Fun Travel values and professionalism on every occasion.

8.2.2 Customers orientation

8.2.2.1 "Best" customer service

Customers are an important party to the vision and purpose of the company. In their vision Fun Travel states that the company purpose is to deliver an amazing experience to their people, customers and partners. In its stated purpose for customers, the company seeks to open up the world for those who want to see and this means, for their customers, opening up their world through the exciting medium of well-organized, targeted and great value travel experiences. Customers are second within the company philosophy after their staff. All senior managers who were interviewed emphasize how important customers are. They consider understanding exactly what customers need and delivering on this as the basic mission of all the company's departments. All senior managers confirmed that the only way to satisfy and retain customers is for front-line staff to understand the customers' needs and deliver on them in order to gain their trust. Through this customers can be retained as repeats and referrals. The commission that staff earn is an indicator of how they present good customer service as this shows that they have many customers. Customers' positive feedback is another indicator of the staff success.

> *Our customers are also our number one party you know we have to be able to deliver to their needs. We have to be able to figure out what they want and do it in an exceptional way because otherwise we don't exist. (HR manger1)*

> *We've basically our first philosophy is our people; our second philosophy is our customer. You know without our people and our customers then we will be inexistent so it's very important for our... for our marketing ciphers to understand our customers in terms of what they're looking for. So, from a sales person if you don't listen to the customers asking, what they're telling you, you know you don't know what to offer them so they wouldn't then book with you but equally if we don't understand our generic customer, we're not going to know what is the right product, what's the right message you know what is going to be unique that's going to mean they will then say wow that's great I am going to go to Fun Travel for this.(Marketing manager)*

8.2.3 Managerial Philosophy

8.2.3.1 The company's flat structure /equality culture

Fun Travel keeps managerial layers to a minimum. Five layers can be identified however they could be seen as only four if team leaders (the operational manager) are considered to be on the same level as their front-line employees. Communications channels are open so anyone can reach any senior manager, even the managing director, and discuss any issue with them. This structure and the idea of approachable managers help all staff to engage in the business and feel how important her/his role in the company is. Equality can be seen and felt throughout the company. Everyone is on first name terms. There is no routine administrative support in the company. Respondents describe it as a relaxed but professional environment. All senior managers stress the point that employees and managers in the company do have the same rights in terms of expressing their opinions and objecting to any sort of decisions. All of them play his/her role in the team. Everyone helps whenever this is needed without sticking to the specifics of their job description, whether the task is my job role or not.

> *We are very flat; we have a flat management structure so there is not a lot of levels as you would have seen (HR manager1)*

> *We are all kind of equals so there is no real hierarchy like a consultant can phone the MD at any point and any consultant can phone me at any point and I think in other companies I think there tends to be more of a hierarchy with the positions that you were in whereas I think in Fun Travel senior management are more approachable and you know the team leader is approachable we don't have...it's more of....more equal.(An Area leader)*

Egalitarianism is one of the company's major philosophies. An important aspect of this is requiring employees to clean their own shop in rotation. The idea behind that is a) to let them feel that the shop belongs to them and b) to save money.

8.2.3.2 Transparency

It can be seen that every issue concerning business strategy, business goals, and financial matters are transparent to all. As the respondent senior managers highlighted that nothing is hidden. Everyone has the opportunity to access this information and ask for any details. The company aims to involve all employees in the business and to seek buy- in for any strategy in the company that needs to be implemented.

> *We don't hide anything from anybody.....the executives would set the targets and everything and then and then it gets fed down to our area leaders so they know how they fit in to the big target and then they let their team leaders know, o.k. this is what our area needs to make in order to contribute to the company goals and then each team leader comes up with their own budget and business plan of how they're going to contribute to the area targets and then for the company once again. Everyone kind of knows how they can fit in to the grand scheme of things. Everyone is very aware of what we make and have access to understand it more if they want...some people want to know more than other so they can also call anyone they wanted anytime to get the information (HR manager1)*

Decisions in Fun Travel can be described as bottom to top ones. Front-line employees are involved (although not all of them) in the SWOT team where all senior managers discuss the business on a weekly basis and take key decisions. It is obvious that everything is decided based on discussion and everyone has the right to engage at any point. The company's management board has the ability to review any decision and has the ability to change it if implementation proves not to be practicable for staff.

> *Generally any major things that are happening at the front-end people are asked not all of them so even if it's something that has been like... maybe not such a popular decision or implementation, people in the front-end will have been consulted about it and about what they think and how it will impact them. It's not a head office decided "this do it", it would have been discussed with people in the front-end to see whether they....how they feel about it not just everybody (HR manager1&2).*

In any business context, decisions may be flawed. One of the main values that senior managers highlighted is that matters are reviewed on an on-going basis. They are reviewed according to results and the company is flexible in terms of changing any decision. However all managers in head office do consider how decision would affect front-line staff work before taking any. The fact that all of them were on the front-line in the past and did the same job before helps them to imagine and evaluate the potential consequence of their decisions.

> *We don't want people to be a number; we want to see how they fit into the big picture (HR managers).*

8.2.3.3 Ownership

Ownership is a major philosophy within Fun Travel. Everyone is responsible for his/her own work. It can be seen that each team leader and all front-line staff run their own business and this was clear throughout the interviews.

> *I think because we have again... have a better philosophy; it's a culture of responsibility and ownership (HR manager1).*

Team leaders delegate responsibility to their team in dealing with clients that result in different ways of doing things. Therefore, as the marketing manager highlighted management now are addressing this area to simplify the process of service delivery between employees and customers in what they call the one best way to ensure that all staff members adopt the same framework to hit their targets.

> *Fun Travel is a little different to other company to a......we do....we don't restrict our consultant from you know.....unless there is a financially or a....challenging situation with our supplier. So in terms of giving our employees flexibility, it has absolutely been there. It has also meant as I talked to you early about the promise one best way, we're probably.....we probably have been a bit too flexible with that so we need to probably bring it back down to say to be a successful sales person and therefore a successful team and a successful company this is the model with which you should follow, if you follow this, you'll be successful (Marketing manager).*

It could be that this framework includes general guidelines which organize work. However, all details within the framework are up to the implementing teams.

8.2.3.4 Investing in Staff

Fun Travel expects a high level of effort from the front –line. On the other hand, rewards and recognition are significant, both monetary and in terms of esteem. Payment is considered as a reward as it is a commission based job. Each front-line member receives a basic salary and then it is up to him/her to hit the monthly targets and earn as much as possible through commission. The commission that employees make from hitting their targets is considered the main reward for them as earnings are uncapped. However the company management recognizes the massive pressure that the commission based system puts on front-line employees.

Therefore all top managers seek ways to improve and ease the task at the front end through measures such as seeking attractive new contracts with suppliers, through training, and by installing new IT systems. The best approach is to skill front-line staff in order that they can understand clients' requirements and deliver on them. Such skills are gained through ongoing training on all products.

> *I do think of them as my client in that everything I do is for them and to help them and…It's always....is this going to improve the guys who work in the front line because they're our most important people almost. Everybody in support, everything we do is to help them to make their job easier so they can make more money for themselves and for the company so in that way ya they're my customers(HR manager2).*

The marketing department is also keen on strengthening front-line employees' knowledge of new products that have been added to their campaign.

> *Depending on people in marketing the company is a lesson that the company have especially during the economy hard times. without the frontlines and their managers are doing the job they're doing and understanding why they're doing those jobs and the longer term picture with things like new accusation inquiry, what do I need to do to get that to book and support them and train them and also motivate them and remunerate them very well.*

> *Without them we absolutely wouldn't be growing like we've been growing or becoming out of the tough time that we had (Marketing Manager).*

8.2.3.5 Work hard, play hard, progress fast

Rewards are relatively limitless in the company starting from pay to many financial and non- monetary benefits.

> *I think the main things are you know are people, we really do look after our people as we have rewards and recognition. We make sure that people do have a work-life balance (Area leader).*

One of the company's characteristics which really seems to encourage staff   is that there is no restriction on progression. It all depends on what staff aspire to and how hard they work to achieve that goal. For instance, staff do not need to spend a specific number of years before progressing to higher positions even to be a senior manager. That seems to be a reward in itself.

> *For me it's about opportunity. You....you don't have to be with the company for ten years to get anywhere, it's about if you can prove yourself in one role really you can pick what you want to do. you don't have to necessarily have the expertise if you can show the right behaviors and obviously you can prove yourself on one role, you don't have to wait for four years before you become a team leader or an area leader or whatever it's and for me it's a huge huge...that for me is one of the biggest benefits and thing that I probably love the most (HR manager 2).*

8.3 Internal marketing practices

The following section will focus on the company's managerial practices from the senior management perspectives. Head office senior managers interviewed described the way the business initiatives are driven across the company. Business needs are indicated by what is called the company SWOT team. This team consists of all department managers, the managing director, and invited staff from across the company as well as others from within the business who may have new ideas for the business. Then every department puts forward its own strategy in conjunction with

the needs of the business. So, the people strategy, for example emanates from human resource management according to the needs of the business.

Human resource managers undertake a high level of internal communication if any department needs to address issues concerning staff. However, if the issue is a business strategy, it will be the marketing department's responsibility. Anyone can communicate directly with the staff. The human resource management department's role, in this case, would be a supportive one if the strategy required. For example, this may involve design of the training for a new product. Equally, the marketing department may help human resources if they need to design a visual message to be delivered to staff. This can be seen as obvious and as expressed by one human resource manager, this reflects the level of partnership between departments. It is this form of coordination which leads to achieving the ultimate business goals.

8.3.1 Employer/Employees branding

For human resource managers, the company's slogan of ''unbeatable'' reflects what can called an unbeatable place to work. Their role is to ensure that all of the company are living day to day by the company's unique culture. One of the human resources managers referred to the leadership programme within which as the company's philosophy stresses that managers are operating the same way as everyone else in the company. Therefore, they are all the time ensuring that these philosophies are rolled out across the company and guided in a way that all leaders are "unbeatable" and all branches are operating in an "unbeatable" way.

> *We look at the philosophies and how they can roll them out to their teams and ensure that we live day to day in the manner that everyone is expected to so it's kind of like a guides the way we work to make sure that it's unbeatable place to work, that we're unbeatable leaders and that the shops operate in unbeatable way (HR manager1).*

Rewards and recognition that are offered to staff for their performance are another dimension of the unbeatable place to work for (more details of this will be found in reward system sector).

The marketing manager considers that the company has strong recruiters who are very successful in marketing the company's brand, as one of the best travel companies to work for. New applicants seek work not only because they love working in travel as an attractive sector, they also know that they can aspire to a bright career in the company. For the last seven years, the company has kept its rank in the Times Top 100 companies to work for. It is evident that this is a strong tool to attract young people who are searching for a promising job.

> *I think one of our strings is...in the UK for recruitment side of thing is being this Times top one hundred has been out now for.....I think probably eight or nine years and we've sort of been in the top one hundred for seven out of those years and I think that has been a very powerful tool with recent graduates and people looking to get into career (Marketing Manager).*

Human resource managers referred to an indicator of the company's reputation as a good employer brand. This is the fact that many people within the business recommend people to work for the company. This is an indicator of whether the company's staff think it is good place to work or not.

> *We get a lot of people referring you know from within the business sending out the people to work for us. Anyone works in some places better that others but that's often sort of a bit of....gives us a bit of a guidance to whether the people do think it's good place to work, it's directionally telling their friends and family and whoever it's you know come and work with us (HR manager1).*

They consider that this recommendation is a better way of marketing the workplace rather than routine advertisements. To keep the brand as "unbeatable", the marketing manager also confirmed that they have to make sure that the staff are prepared to deliver on customers' needs. Customers should not have any questions or requirement that staff cannot answer or fulfil. It could be said that the staff are qualified to understand and deliver on customer needs. This will help to retain customers and gain their trust of the level of service that they can expect from the company.

8.3.2 Recruitment procedures

The recruitment process is described by human resource managers as an evolutionary one. It has been developed over years of experience with the process. The stages of the process are designed according to the competencies required for the job. Within the process, candidates are given full information on the job a, the remuneration package and how it works. It is recognised that a sales job so may not suit everyone.

> *What we have today is probably eight years worth of an evolutionary process of the recruitment process (HR manager1).*

The area leaders are involved at certain stage of the process to choose candidates who match the vacancies they have. In some small regions such as Scotland, the area leaders are highly involved as well as the team leaders. For the company, the choice of new candidates is crucial. It is crucial to choose the right person instead of investing in developing the wrong one. The cost of recruitment is high and includes sending them to London for training. The new person, as one of the team leader stated, must be considered very suitable in order to be recruited. In the in-store day (see operational managers sector), reasons should be valid for rejection. It should not be ''we didn't like him/her''.

> *Here I get recruitment come up and I am heavily involved in that again because I have a smaller area and I also like the team leaders to have some input in the recruitment process because it costs so much money to recruit them, we send them down to London for training, it's a big decision (Area leader).*

The recruitment methodology for back-office positions is the same. This kind of recruitment is done on an ad-hoc basis. Both only differ in the competencies required so the questions and details may differ but the framework is constant.

8.3.3 Training systems

The training philosophy of the company is based on the idea of the unique selling point of front- line staff. Human Resources managers believe that the marketing campaign of the company is just a way of defining the company and attracting customers to call or visit branches. Once the front-line staff member has the customer in front of him/her is the moment when they start their own role in marketing themselves, their knowledge and the values of the company.

> *I think that you have to have a way of drawing people in and it's like any retail store they lead with the cheap stuff, get them in the door and then I think our training and our benefits and the way we motivate our staff they're the ones that sell themselves and the specialness of what they can do because you cannot go and get them in the doors and the marketing guys and our strategy with the unbeatable and cheap flights and stuff gets them in the shop and once they're in the shop those guys are the marketing team for themselves and their sales skills and that is explained to them in training(HR manager2).*

It can be seen that this policy succeeds to retain certain market segments of customers who seek good value for money rather than being driven only by price.

Although human resource managers confirmed the importance of ongoing training, initial training is also crucial. Most of the new candidates have not worked in the Travel industry before so they need this form of training. In addition, initial training is the opportunity to let them know exactly how the business works and how they can ensure the customers buy into the company.

> *The initial training, we recruit people in here haven't necessarily worked in the industry, in fact most of the people haven't so from that point of view, there has to be a basic requirement in the initial training just to get them to understand how to do this job so to use the systems, how to sell travel effectively but part of that is also again with business in mind, we need them to understand how the business works (HR manager1).*

Daily performance is monitored in order to identify any personal weakness early. Trainers are sent to branches to try to help those who may be struggling. Mainly, area leaders and their team leaders undertake the training themselves. When, team leaders

have more than one new person, head office sends a trainer to help. Ongoing training is also available in head office all the time. Any staff member can sign up for training sessions at any point.

> *We monitor daily how everybody actually is doing and you know trying to identify things quite early if they need some assistants (HR manager1).*

Training for leadership skills is also available. This training includes all the skills needed for leading a team. Performance monitoring also helps in selecting those who have leadership potential.

8.3.4 Reward System

The reward and recognition of staff play a major part is the company as clearly indicated by the Human Resources Managers. The company is keen to celebrate notable performance. Even the events which are mainly for communication purposes are also used to reward staff. Every year the company holds a Global poll in different unique destinations as a form of reward for participant as well (all is paid by the company). To add uniqueness to the event, keynote speakers (celebrity speakers) are also invited to give a talk.

> *There're also the celebration for you know success and how things are going at individual level, at the team level you know every level to sort of really reward people and recognize them that's huge benefit for us you know where in the travel industry this benefits of travel and discounts of travel which is huge thing for our people as well because they've done lots of travel themselves (HR manager1)*
>
> *There is also our global poll which is all the top sales people round the world get to go to some fantastic destination. We again now reward and recognize in front of their peers globally for you know top achievements. It really is about reward and recognition for....like we said we work hard, we play hard you know (HR manager1).*

Human Resource managers are in complete understanding of the commission pressures on staff. The only way to reduce the pressure is to introduce every possible way to ease the work for the staff through, for example, training or new systems. It is a sales driven environment so this is a core culture and staff work accordingly.

8.3.5 Empowerment

Although it may seem somewhat risky to give front-line staff wide powers to deal freely with their customers, this has been the unique culture of the company since the eighties. There are certain guidelines within which they all can choose how to handle the business.

> *It's a real fundamental believe and you know that again is part of the whole attraction is....that's why it's a unique place to work because you don't get that in a lot of places. Empowerment and giving them that empowerment is one thing but there is still a framework within which they have to work so we want to give people the responsibility, we want them to be empowered but you know they cannot go of willing the (lean) to completely what they want you know(HR manager1).*

Team leaders have full powers to deal with their teams concerning managerial issues. They encourage team leaders to manage their own business with the support of the existing framework.

> *We want them to do is empowered within that framework to make decisions on the daily bases about how they deal with their customers and that sort of thing (HR managers1).*

Concerning customers, if they have a complaint and contact head office directly, the first thing to be done by Human Resource Managers is to bring the case back o the branch level and to area leaders. The Human Resources Managers explained that they want issues to be solved at this level and not to escalate.

8.4 Employee satisfaction

Senior managers discuss the subject of satisfaction along three axes:

1. Employees' turnover rates.

2. Reasons for employee satisfaction ''why do they consider their people satisfied?''

3. How do they measure their staff satisfaction level?

The turnover rate in the travel industry is normally high. Senior managers identify the company turnover rate as average. According to senior managers, compared with other travel companies, Fun Travel is considered to have a low turnover rate. However, the turnover rate is not as low as they wish; this is due to the segment of employees that they attract. These employees are frequently young, want to get experience and get money and then transfer that to another kind of job or even go for travel and fun. On the other hand, many other staff remain long-term with the company.

> *High rate; Compare to other industries absolutely, compare to the travel industry then no (Marketing manager).*

> *I think its average...I think it's...it's worth probably average in the industry (HR manager 1).*

> *We have a lot of people have remain a long-time because we grow so rapidly as well so I mean we're opening new teams every other month so it's a continual flow, we recruit you know probably 30 people a month. That's not just turn over, that's also because we're continuing to grow and opening new teams and new stores all the time (HR manager1).*

To measure employees' levels of satisfaction, human resource managers state that formally there are two main surveys. The first one is an in-house survey which is run once or twice a year. It is an international survey so comparisons between countries are useful for assessing performance. This survey is mainly for measuring attitudes and the engagement level of employees. Marketing manager describes this survey as an opportunity to air the positives and negatives respectively. It is an anonymous survey. One of the human resource managers referred to the result of the last survey,

which showed 70% engagement rate compared to 30% in other companies. Eighty percent of the employees feel attached to the company. It could be said that the managerial philosophy within the branches as well as the work environment gives all employees the opportunity to air any problems on the spot. Within the employees' and operational managers' interviews, it appeared that these surveys did not gain their attention and they receive it as part from the company's branding and marketing scheme. All staff have the opportunity all the time within different channels to express their opinions and feelings.

> *We run what we call our people for success survey so that's in-house survey that we run at least once a year sometimes twice which is you know the same sort of survey done across the Globe so we've got good comparisons as well and there is also the same one we have run for I don't know five or six years here and it's very much about their attitudes towards the company, their leaders, their peers you know the strategies, the benefits all those sort of things so you know it's about measuring their level of engagement, do they want to be here in the next twelve month you know two years, five years and an understanding what some of the core issues are so that's done annually. We just did it in August I think and then that's probably the main one that we use in terms of an actual formal study as such that we put in out there and get some feedback and then come up with strategies that feedback to all the leaders in the business. It's completely confidential and they will take some action based on the outcomes of that survey. (HR manager1)*

The second survey one is "the best to work for". This survey is done in cooperation with the Times newspaper as part of ranking the company within the top 100 organizations to work for. As shown in the employees section, front-line staff and their managers perceive this survey as part of the marketing and branding of the company. Senior managers considered the same survey as a means to gain an insight of key matters inside the company.

> *Internal employees' satisfaction survey... It's anonymous so they can rise whatever issue they have. we look through them, go back through to our leadership team and talk about them with our department, how can we you know these several concerns that have been noticed and how we address this and make sure we communicate back to say look we have listen to this, this is what we're doing about it and it's very powerful to just give employees a*

chance to you know air the positives and negatives that they might have so we can try and address those.(Marketing manager)

Relationships within the company are evident as having a vital role in relation to a number of issues. One of these roles focuses on satisfaction levels. An area leader believes that through her strong and positive relations with branch managers, she can identify any problem and solve it. It can be seen that there is a wide range of trust. It is obvious that this view of trust and openness are two way as both managers and area leaders assert it. Finally, senior managers highlighted a number of reasons for the high employee causes of satisfaction. First of all, the most important factor for all senior managers is the career opportunities that the company gives to all its employees to grow as long as they have the desire and work for it. Secondly, there is the high level of reward and recognition is another reason. Thirdly, the success of the company as one of the best in the field makes employees happy to belong to a successful company. Fourthly, the   good people and the positive, decent work atmosphere seem to create high satisfaction levels. Finally, senior managers referred to the monetary and health schemes that the company offers to its people.

8.5 Customer satisfaction

It could be seen that Fun Travel pursues a balanced array of policies towards both its customers and employees. The company makes efforts to know about customers' needs and satisfaction levels. As well as the indicator of repeats and referral percentages that are mentioned by operational managers, senior managers indicate some procedures for measuring their customers' level of satisfaction.

1. Customers' calls are recorded to identify how front-line staff relate to customers which leads to identification of any training required for further improvement

2. Customer surveys; this is done mainly online with small focus groups from customers to see what works well in terms of marketing efforts

3. Area leaders do random customer phone surveys, to identify why they book with the company or not.

4. Area leaders conduct tours within branches to speak with customers to check their opinions.

> *In terms of getting understanding what our customers want and need and that sort of thing do we survey them yes, it's done in various ways sometimes it's a more formal survey but sometimes it's also our area leaders will phone up and say you know i know ,because we've got the details of the customers, look you spoke to this person you didn't book anything can you tell us why, so they'll actually make an effort to phone up and say look what are we not doing for you, why didn't you book with us and vice versa why did you book with us and so for so(HR manager2).*

> *We have call recording in the businesses now which it's just been rolled out which means that anyone can listen to a call, is to how you're engaging with your customer and that's done with improvement on that (HR manager1).*

> *Absolutely we will speak to the customers when we are in the store you know to get an idea of what's going on (Area leader).*

Throughout the three chapters organisation members' views are captured and presented as themes and sub-themes. Major findings within the three managerial layers will be summed up in the next chapter to evaluate the level of consistency throughout the data. Then links will be made between themes to discuss the findings in relation to the literature.