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## Unravelling the essence of extraordinary, vibrant, exemplary and noteworthy experiences at EVEN Zhongshan City Center Hotel, IHG

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### Abstract

This paper explores the exemplary leadership practices at EVEN Zhongshan City Center Hotel under the guidance of General Manager Ivan Tang. The leadership framework at the hotel embodies a people-first approach, integrating transformational and servant leadership principles to create a work environment characterized by empathy, open communication, and emotional intelligence. Ivan Tang's leadership focuses on fostering a culture of mutual respect, unity, and support among employees, which translates into exceptional service and guest satisfaction. The paper examines how Tang's hands-on leadership style, prioritization of employee well-being, and innovative approach to navigating industry challenges have contributed to the hotel's success. Through his emphasis on empowering staff and maintaining high standards of hospitality, Tang has cultivated strong guest loyalty and positioned the hotel as a leader in both service and dining experiences. This paper highlights the critical role of leadership in creating a thriving organizational culture that enhances both employee engagement and guest experiences, demonstrating the profound impact of authentic leadership on overall hotel performance.

**Keywords:** Leadership, Hotel Management, Service Experiences.

### INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a critical factor in the hospitality industry, profoundly influencing the success and long-term sustainability of hotel operations. Strong leadership not only enhances a hotel's operational efficiency but also shapes the overall guest experience. This study examines the leadership style at EVEN Zhongshan City Center Hotel, which embodies the true spirit of hospitality. By cultivating a culture of commitment, sincerity, and care, the leadership has significantly improved the hotel's performance, fostering an atmosphere that consistently surpasses guest expectations and encourages loyalty.

The leadership is characterized by a deep commitment to excellence and a visionary approach to managing the team. Its influence is evident in every aspect of the hotel's operations, where the ability to inspire and motivate staff has led to the consistent delivery of outstanding guest experiences. Through a hands-on leadership style, a work environment has been cultivated that

emphasizes mutual respect, open communication, and a sense of belonging among the staff. This culture of warmth and support is reflected in the genuine care extended to guests, making the hotel a preferred choice for visitors.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction to Leadership in Hospitality**

Leadership plays a crucial role in the hospitality industry, shaping both the internal environment for employees and the external experience for guests. The hospitality industry is inherently service-oriented, where guest satisfaction is a direct reflection of a hotel's leadership practices. Effective leadership fosters organizational commitment, employee engagement, operational efficiency, and ultimately guest loyalty, which are essential for maintaining the competitive edge of hotels in a rapidly evolving market (Testa & Sipe, 2012). In recent years, attention has shifted from traditional autocratic leadership styles to more transformational and servant leadership models that emphasize emotional intelligence, empathy, and a collaborative working culture.

### **Leadership Theories in Hospitality**

Various leadership theories have been applied in the hospitality sector, each contributing to different aspects of organizational performance. Transformational leadership, characterized by a leader's ability to inspire and motivate employees, is particularly significant in hospitality. Leaders in this model act as role models, promote creativity, and encourage innovation (Bass, 1990). Studies have demonstrated that transformational leadership improves employee morale and job satisfaction, which translates to enhanced guest service and overall hotel performance (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Similarly, servant leadership, which prioritizes the well-being of employees and fosters a sense of community, has gained traction in hospitality. Leaders adopting this style focus on empowering staff, showing genuine care, and creating a supportive environment. Research shows that servant leadership leads to higher employee retention rates, greater organizational commitment, and improved service quality (Liden et al., 2008). Both of these leadership styles reflect the need for a people-centered approach in the hospitality industry, where employee satisfaction directly influences guest experiences.

### **Leadership's Impact on Hotel Performance and Guest Experience**

Leadership is directly linked to a hotel's performance, influencing everything from staff productivity to guest satisfaction. A study by Kim & Brymer (2011) emphasized that leadership behavior strongly correlates with employee engagement, which is essential in maintaining high service standards in hotels. Engaged employees, in turn, exhibit greater commitment to meeting guest expectations, which boosts guest satisfaction and encourages repeat business.

Research conducted by Dvir et al. (2002) highlights that leadership styles such as transformational and servant leadership positively impact customer satisfaction by enhancing service delivery and fostering a customer-centric culture. Leadership that promotes open communication, teamwork, and a clear vision also enhances operational efficiency, which is crucial for both back-end processes and front-line services (Li & Liu, 2016).

### **The Importance of Organizational Culture and Leadership in Hotels**

An organization's culture is closely tied to its leadership. In the hospitality industry, where team coordination and consistent service standards are crucial, a strong and positive organizational culture is vital for success. Leaders shape this culture through their actions, communication, and the values they promote (Schein, 2010). A supportive and empowering leadership style helps

create an inclusive and collaborative workplace, which, in turn, ensures that employees are motivated to deliver exceptional guest experiences.

Leaders who prioritize transparency, trust, and mutual respect help cultivate a culture where employees feel valued and are willing to go above and beyond in their roles. This type of leadership fosters an environment where guests consistently receive high-quality service, promoting guest loyalty and positive word-of-mouth referrals (Tracey & Hinkin, 1996).

### **Guest Loyalty and Leadership**

A significant outcome of effective leadership in hospitality is guest loyalty. Studies show that leadership that aligns with the core values of hospitality, such as care, sincerity, and commitment, results in an emotional connection with guests, which is key to fostering long-term loyalty (Kotler et al., 2016). Guest loyalty is essential for business sustainability, as repeat guests are more likely to contribute to positive reviews, word-of-mouth marketing, and stable revenue streams.

Leadership practices are designed to consistently exceed guest expectations. The management emphasizes authentic hospitality, where every guest is treated with care and attention. This personalized approach builds lasting relationships with guests, making them feel valued and appreciated, which directly contributes to the hotel's high guest retention rates.

In conclusion, leadership plays a fundamental role in the success and sustainability of hotel operations. Theories such as transformational and servant leadership highlight the importance of people-centered approaches that foster employee engagement and enhance guest experiences. Leadership practices that emphasize emotional intelligence, teamwork, and adaptability are increasingly important in the hospitality industry, especially in a post-pandemic world where guest expectations and operational challenges continue to evolve.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts a case study approach, a qualitative research method that involves an in-depth examination of a specific instance. Data for the case study will be gathered from multiple sources, including direct observations of dining experiences and the analysis of related documents, such as menus and customer reviews. The data will be subjected to content analysis to uncover patterns and themes that contribute to the effectiveness of diverse dining experiences. This approach is well-suited to the research as it offers a comprehensive view of how diverse dining experiences are designed and executed in a particular setting. The qualitative nature of the study enables an exploration of guests' perceptions and experiences, offering valuable insights into the factors driving the success of these diverse dining experiences.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Leadership at EVEN Zhongshan City Center Hotel**

The leadership at EVEN Zhongshan City Center Hotel exemplifies key best practices, focusing on creating a culture of commitment, sincerity, and care. Under the guidance of General Manager Ivan Tang, the hotel has embraced a leadership model that prioritizes a people-first approach, closely aligned with transformational and servant leadership principles. Tang's leadership fosters open communication, emotional intelligence, and a focus on building strong relationships with both staff and guests.

By nurturing an environment where employees feel empowered and supported, the leadership team at EVEN Zhongshan City Center Hotel has enhanced employee engagement, resulting in

elevated service standards and guest satisfaction. The hotel's management places high value on the well-being of its employees, cultivating a supportive workplace atmosphere characterized by collaboration and mutual respect. This leadership style directly impacts the guest experience, as motivated and appreciated staff provide sincere, attentive service, which contributes to the hotel's success.

The leadership approach at the hotel also emphasizes innovation and adaptability, qualities that are critical in the fast-evolving hospitality industry. In the post-pandemic era, flexibility and resilience have become essential for hotel growth. The leaders at EVEN Zhongshan City Center Hotel have navigated these challenges by maintaining a focus on empathy, guest care, and operational excellence, which in turn has strengthened guest loyalty and the hotel's reputation for service excellence.

### **Leadership Style and Influence**

General Manager Ivan Tang's exceptional leadership and expertise are evident in all aspects of his role. His dedicated attitude and ability to inspire the team have consistently led to operational excellence and outstanding guest experiences. Tang's leadership has fostered a culture of dedication, driving genuine hospitality and high standards among staff. Under his guidance, the hotel consistently surpasses guest expectations, building strong loyalty and a lasting reputation for excellence.

Tang's influence goes beyond his professional achievements; it reflects a deep appreciation for his heartwarming leadership style. His unwavering commitment to excellence and visionary approach inspire his team to strive for success and happiness. His focus on delivering hospitality from the heart permeates the entire organization, motivating staff to adopt the same heartfelt approach in their daily tasks. This culture of sincerity and care is evident in every guest interaction, ensuring a seamless, high-quality experience.

Ivan Tang's leadership is marked by an inclusive, hands-on approach. He works alongside his team at all levels, fostering a culture of unity and respect without a rigid hierarchy. This approach creates a warm and supportive work environment where every individual, regardless of department or position, feels valued and empowered. Tang's sincerity and personal touch elevate the hotel's services to exceptional levels, consistently exceeding guest expectations.

The positive working atmosphere cultivated by Tang was particularly evident during a recent town hall meeting, where staff camaraderie and mutual respect were palpable. Open communication flowed freely, and employees felt comfortable expressing their thoughts, knowing they were heard and valued. This environment, built on transparency and trust, is a direct result of Tang's sincere connection with his team and his heartfelt commitment to every individual.

### **Leadership Impact and Organizational Culture**

The leadership framework at EVEN Zhongshan City Center Hotel extends far beyond traditional management practices, embedding core values of empathy, unity, and support into the daily operations of the hotel. Ivan Tang, as the General Manager, plays a critical role in shaping and reinforcing these values, ensuring that each team member is aligned with the overarching vision of providing heartfelt hospitality. His leadership is transformative, not only driving operational efficiency but also building a culture where employees are fully invested in their work, motivated by a shared sense of purpose.

This people-centered leadership model fosters a highly cohesive team environment. Tang's ability to eliminate barriers between management and staff allows for greater inclusivity and a shared sense of ownership in the hotel's success. The absence of strict hierarchical boundaries encourages open dialogue, allowing staff at all levels to contribute ideas, raise concerns, and celebrate successes collectively. This level of inclusiveness ensures that each employee feels they have a stake in the hotel's success, which leads to enhanced job satisfaction and loyalty.

Moreover, Tang's emotional intelligence is a key asset in his leadership approach. His deep understanding of the emotional and psychological needs of his team creates an environment where employees feel cared for both professionally and personally. This emotional support translates into higher engagement and a stronger commitment to delivering outstanding service. Employees who feel heard, respected, and appreciated are more likely to go above and beyond in their roles, which is reflected in the hotel's consistently high standards of guest satisfaction.

### **Impact on Hotel Success**

Ivan Tang's leadership has had a profound impact on the success of EVEN Zhongshan City Center Hotel. By fostering a culture where employees feel genuinely valued and supported, Tang has created an environment that enhances job satisfaction and drives high performance. This supportive atmosphere translates into exceptional guest service, further strengthening the hotel's position as a leader in hospitality.

Tang's ability to personally connect with his team, nurture an environment of trust and respect, and maintain a focus on guest satisfaction has contributed significantly to the hotel's operations and reputation. His leadership, rooted in a genuine care for both staff and guests, ensures that the hotel's culture of excellence continues to thrive.

Tang's hands-on leadership style, combined with his focus on training and development, has equipped his team with the skills and knowledge necessary to consistently deliver outstanding service. His engagement with guests, understanding their preferences, and seeking feedback further elevates the guest experience, fostering loyalty and an exceptional reputation for service excellence.

Ivan Tang's visionary leadership has played a pivotal role in the success of EVEN Zhongshan City Center Hotel. His unwavering dedication to excellence, combined with his ability to inspire and motivate his team, has elevated the hotel's guest experiences to new heights. Tang's leadership serves as a model for aspiring hospitality leaders, demonstrating how true leadership can transform not only a workplace but also the guest experience.

The town hall meeting highlighted the profound impact of Tang's leadership. The genuine happiness, open communication, and positive energy among the staff were a testament to the supportive culture he has nurtured. The mutual respect and familial atmosphere present within the team are reflections of the heart-to-heart connection Tang has established with every individual, making EVEN Zhongshan City Center Hotel a place where people are more than just employees—they are part of a close-knit, supportive family.

### **The Role of Leadership in Guest Loyalty**

Ivan Tang's leadership directly contributes to the hotel's ability to cultivate strong guest loyalty. The consistent delivery of exceptional service under his guidance has fostered deep connections with guests, many of whom return to the hotel for the warmth and sincerity they experience during their stay. Tang's leadership philosophy centers on the belief that true hospitality is about

building relationships, not just delivering services, and this mindset is instilled in every team member.

The personal touch that characterizes Tang's leadership style is evident in the hotel's guest feedback. Guests frequently remark on the genuine care and attentiveness they receive, noting that the staff's commitment to service goes beyond fulfilling basic expectations. This level of dedication is a direct result of the positive work environment Tang has created, where employees are motivated not by obligation, but by a genuine desire to make every guest feel valued and cared for.

The hotel's emphasis on delivering heartfelt service has led to a growing reputation for excellence, particularly in its dining experiences. Tang's leadership has not only shaped the guest experience but has also positioned the hotel as a leader in culinary innovation within the hospitality industry. This success is a reflection of the culture of passion, creativity, and attention to detail that Tang has cultivated among his staff, particularly in the dining and culinary teams.

### **Empowering Employees Through Leadership**

Ivan Tang's leadership is grounded in the empowerment of his team, ensuring that each employee feels confident in their abilities and supported in their professional development. His approach to leadership goes beyond managing day-to-day operations; he invests in the continuous growth and training of his staff, providing them with opportunities to expand their skill sets and advance their careers. This investment in employee development has created a highly skilled and motivated workforce, one that is capable of delivering consistently high levels of service.

By offering regular training sessions, performance reviews, and opportunities for professional growth, Tang ensures that each team member is equipped with the knowledge and tools necessary to excel in their roles. His leadership also encourages creative problem-solving and innovation among staff, empowering them to take initiative and contribute to the hotel's success in meaningful ways. This culture of empowerment boosts morale and fosters a sense of pride among employees, further enhancing the quality of service provided to guests.

### **Building a Legacy of Leadership Excellence**

Ivan Tang's leadership at EVEN Zhongshan City Center Hotel is not only transformative for the current team but also lays the foundation for long-term success. His ability to inspire, motivate, and lead by example has created a legacy of excellence that will continue to influence the hotel's operations for years to come. The culture of care, respect, and sincerity he has established ensures that future leaders within the hotel will carry forward these values, perpetuating a cycle of positive leadership and outstanding service.

As the hospitality industry evolves, the leadership practices at EVEN Zhongshan City Center Hotel stand as a model for how to navigate change while maintaining a strong commitment to core values. Tang's leadership exemplifies the transformative power of leadership that is not only strategic but also deeply human, fostering a work environment where every employee can thrive, and every guest can experience the true essence of hospitality.

Ivan Tang's leadership at EVEN Zhongshan City Center Hotel represents the pinnacle of what effective leadership can achieve in the hospitality industry. His ability to inspire his team, foster a culture of mutual respect, and deliver heartfelt hospitality has set a new standard for guest

experiences. The hotel's success, built on the foundation of his visionary leadership, serves as a testament to the power of leading with empathy, dedication, and a commitment to excellence.

By fostering an environment where every team member is valued, Tang has not only created a supportive workplace but also established a guest experience that is warm, welcoming, and memorable. His leadership continues to shape the hotel's future, ensuring that EVEN Zhongshan City Center Hotel remains a leader in hospitality and a place where both staff and guests feel genuinely cared for.

### CONCLUSION

Mr. Ivan Tang's leadership at EVEN Zhongshan City Center Hotel sets a high standard for the hospitality industry. His ability to inspire his team to deliver genuine, heartfelt service has not only enhanced the hotel's operational performance but has also created a lasting impact on guest satisfaction. By fostering a culture of care and sincerity, Mr. Tang has established a work environment where everyone feels valued and motivated to contribute their best. This study affirms that true hospitality begins with leadership that resonates with the hearts of the staff and reaches the guests, making them feel genuinely welcomed and cared for.

The study emphasizes the hotel's steadfast commitment to providing exceptional dining experiences that exceed guest expectations. It highlights the significant attention to detail and personalized service central to EVEN Zhongshan City Centre Hotel's hospitality approach. Under the leadership of Mr. Ivan Tang and his outstanding team, the hotel continually aims to create memorable moments for every guest. The team's dedication and passion are evident throughout the dining experience, from meticulously curated menus to delightful culinary surprises and captivating ambiance. EVEN Zhongshan City Centre Hotel is recognized as a prime example of the esteemed "IHG" standard of excellence. Its meticulous focus on detail, personalized service, and exceptional leadership distinguishes it within the industry. By consistently exceeding expectations, the hotel has set a benchmark for excellence in dining experiences. This case study attests to the hotel's remarkable leadership, dedicated team, and unwavering commitment to outstanding service, showcasing its ability to create unforgettable dining memories. Whether through unexpected gestures, culinary delights, or enchanting surroundings, EVEN Zhongshan City Centre Hotel consistently fulfills its promise of extraordinary dining experiences that leave a lasting impression. It stands as a model of culinary excellence and mastery, where every detail is thoughtfully crafted to enhance the dining experience.

**Limitations and Future Research** While this study offers valuable insights into the exceptional dining experiences at EVEN Zhongshan City Centre Hotel, certain limitations should be noted. These limitations present opportunities for future research to deepen our understanding of the topic.

**Generalizability:** The findings are specific to EVEN Zhongshan City Centre Hotel and may not be applicable to other hotels or restaurants with different contexts and resources. Future research could involve similar case studies across a wider range of establishments to compare approaches to exceptional dining experiences.

**Subjectivity of Data:** The qualitative nature of the research, based on observations and document analysis, may introduce subjectivity in data interpretation. Future studies could

incorporate quantitative measures, such as customer satisfaction surveys or financial performance indicators, to provide a more comprehensive and objective assessment of the impact of exceptional dining experiences. Future research can address these limitations by conducting comparative studies, integrating quantitative measures, examining long-term effects, considering employee perspectives, and exploring emerging trends and technologies. These research avenues would enhance our knowledge and contribute to the ongoing improvement of exceptional dining experiences in the hospitality industry.

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