

Leadership Characteristics in the Immigrant Community

Marketing Research

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Introduction

Leadership characteristics have been researched on a variety of different levels by multiple researchers and organizations. Previous research has identified that there are a multitude of different factors that can affect the leadership styles or characteristics of immigrants in the United States. Due to the increasing amount of diversity in the country and in business throughout the United States it has become increasingly desirable to understand the effect of leadership characteristics and the perception of leadership by immigrants (Xiaohua, 2011). The objective of this study is to understand the immigrant community's perception of leadership and its characteristics.

Previous literature supports the research objectives presented by 2Q marketing. A study conducted in Texas by Yun-Hsi Chang, Ming-Chia Chen and Yi-Fan Tsai MingDao (2011) from the University of Taiwan analyzes leadership characteristics in the workplace. This study conducted semi-structured interviews to gather quantitative results and evaluate leadership behavior. Their qualitative research study utilized a homogenous sampling technique to analyze the results of similarly valued participants. A survey was also used to gather quantitative data. After completing the analysis 38 elements were identified which were split into 10 different categories (Yun-His, 2011). Upon further analysis five main concepts were developed (Yun-His, 2011). The five major categories were defined as the cultural challenges, leadership challenges, cross-cultural challenges, adaptation, and consequences (Yun-His, 2011). The study concluded that Chinese immigrants face many difficulties when working in the United States and that they had to overcome the five previously mentioned challenges/categories. The process to do so is not easy and it also concluded that the immigrants had to work hard to become successful.

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Multicultural Context: A Structural Reproduction Analysis is another research study that was conducted to understand how immigrant leadership affects business operations (particularly in the direct selling industry) (Xiaohua, 2011). To collect primary data case studies, participant observation, documentary analysis, personal interviews, and focus group discussions were used. They were conducted within a major direct selling company headquartered in the U.S (Xiaohua, 2011). The study concluded that the ritualized practices involving organizational and leadership practices engaged in by immigrant Chinese entrepreneurs which are derived from their native culture have contributed to the growth and stability of the economic enterprise known as direct selling organizations (Xiaohua, 2011).

Another study conducted in Texas was aimed at understanding how Nigerian women found their way into the United States workforce. The study obtained primary data by conducting one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions. The interviews and focus groups were structured to elicit narrative information about the respondents experiences, how family influenced their experiences, they explore the challenges and opportunities in the workplace, and how the challenges and opportunities differ from Texas to Nigeria (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). The findings from this study conclude/identify that the Nigerian immigrants see America as the land of opportunity but there are a variety of factors that make it difficult to attain leadership positions (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). The study showed that education enhances leadership attainment, the women were successful leaders in the workplace, family responsibilities make it difficult to become/maintain success in leadership positions, the opportunities differ between America and Africa, and that they must assimilate into the American work culture (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). The women also identified that they have to work harder in America than they had to in Africa (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009).

Additionally an article written by Jaime Chahin and Rosana Rodriguez looked in depth at the impact that family and values had on leadership in the immigrant community (Chahin, 2005). Chahin and Rodriguez utilized their own personal experiences growing up in immigrant families and discussion with other Latino and Latina leaders to gather information that supported their findings; families and how different values are taught impacted the leadership styles and leadership abilities of individuals (Chahin, 2005). Chahin and Rodriguez also specified for the Latino and Latina community that it was the mother that was the largest contributor to teaching and impacting leadership characteristics (Chahin, 2005).

As found in the previously described academic research, immigrant leaders can increase the value of an organizations because of the different views and behavior that immigrants exhibit when working in the United States (Xiaohua, 2011). Business professionals can benefit from the findings of this study by encouraging the appropriate factors that allow immigrants to become leaders and add value to a company. Since immigrants have been entering the American workforce the need for managers who have the skills to manage and understand immigrant workers has been increasing (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). Also, previous research from Nwabah & Heitner has found that immigrant women from Nigeria have been successful and can be successful in the United States. Immigrants can also benefit from the findings of this study because it may allow them to understand the dynamics of the workforce in the United States. Women for Women and Welcoming New Hampshire can benefit from the findings of the study by identifying the opportunities to capitalize on leadership characteristics that immigrants have and work with them to apply those characteristics to become successful leaders in the United States.

The objective of this study is to understand the immigrant community's perception of leadership and its characteristics. What qualities would immigrants assign to leaders? The study will also investigate the community perception of the following leadership characteristics, which include but are not limited to: decision-making, associations, perception, and ease of leadership. Utilizing content analysis a model will be developed and presented based on the data collected from four interviews.

Body of the Paper

1. Explaining the Sample

In this study, there was a total sample size of four individuals and each interview was conducted with a different respondent. Three of the candidates that 2Q Marketing interviewed were interviewed at the Women for Women Coalition in Manchester, NH. Their mission is to

“bridge the socio-economic, and cultural gap hindering the smooth integration of African women and girls in the new community. Our ultimate goal is to empower and strengthen the role and participation of African women and girls in all spheres of development; promote self-reliance and self-sufficiency, and to provide a forum where they can be actively involved and where their voices can be heard.”

The mission was found on Women for Women's Facebook page, as they do not have a website. The reason 2Q Marketing conducted the interviews at that organization was because this was more convenient for the respondents. Also, there were rooms available at the organization in which the interviews could be conducted without interruptions. These characteristics allow for a better and more open interview process and ultimately make the interviewees want to give more information because they feel comfortable. The respondents at the first three interviews were all female and seniors in high school. All three live in Manchester area community and emigrated from countries in Africa. They are all actively involved in their community through volunteering and scholarly activities.

The fourth interview was conducted with a Latina immigrant, who works to close the gap between domestic citizens and immigrants. She is married with one child and is the coordinator of an organization called Welcoming New Hampshire. As stated on their website, Welcoming New Hampshire is “working in bringing the foreign born and the native born together to achieve a positive integration of immigrants and refugees into the social fabric of their recipient communities.” This organization focuses on educating the non-immigrant community about immigrant acceptance and to stop putting up barriers against immigrants. This woman came to Southern New Hampshire University’s Manchester Campus for the interview, and it was conducted in a conference room in the Academic Center. The respondent agreed to travel on campus because it was convenient for her and the interviewers.

2. The Interview Process

The first step when 2Q Marketing interviewed the respondents was to introduce ourselves. Then the interviewer would explain our study and why 2Q Marketing is conducting the study. They may have previously known what the study was for, but they needed a clearer explanation of the purpose, just to be clear. After they understood what exactly the research was for, 2Q Marketing had the respondents sign a consent form. Their names will not be disclosed in any of our reports.

After that, the next step was to start asking questions and collecting data. The purpose of introducing the researchers and our study was to make the respondents feel more comfortable. When respondents are comfortable, it removes barriers and they give more information. The interviewees in each scenario definitely did feel comfortable. When asking questions, most of the time it was not necessary to ask the respondents to elaborate because they

answered the question so completely. There were times when respondents would not answer the question directly and go off track. Their attention would be brought back to the question at hand.

Occasionally, 2Q Marketing had to reword the questions to make interviewees better understand what they were asking. Also, a few times, the order of the questions asked would be changed based on how the interview was going and if 2Q Marketing felt the interviewees were not ready to answer certain questions. For example one of our questions was, “Are you a leader and why?” If that had been the first question asked, respondents might not give useful information because it is personal. That is why the interview instead began with, “What are the characteristics of a leader?” and then would ask if they were a leader, and at this point in the interview, they felt more comfortable with the interviewer. Each interview took approximately thirty minutes and the respondents had a large amount of information to convey.

3. Data Analysis

To analyze our data, 2Q Marketing used the content analysis process. This process is important in qualitative studies as it allows researchers to understand the data that they collected and find the most important aspects of the data. It also allows researchers to make inferences based on the data they collected.

During the content analysis, 2Q Marketing looked at each interview that they conducted. 2Q Marketing began by extracting important keywords from each interview and grouping them into categories. Each question was then looked at for important words that the interviewees used in their answers and placed them in categories with other keywords that related. From this first step, 2Q Marketing established thirty-eight categories of keywords. These words were prevalent throughout the interviews that were conducted and were important aspects in each answer the interviewees gave.

Next, 2Q Marketing analyzed these categories in order to put them together into larger groups. They looked for relationships among the original thirty-eight categories in order to place them together with related words. At this step, they combined the groups into twelve categories and then labeled them based on the theme or word that described the category. The twelve labels were confident action, persistent, influential, planning, advocate, purpose, values, instinct, apply characteristics, conflict, added responsibilities, and opportunity. From these twelve labels, 2Q Marketing created a model for leadership qualities. In order to make this model manageable for a survey, they further narrowed it down. 2Q Marketing determined the most important aspects of leadership that would be tested in the survey and created the final model from those categories. The final model consisted of seven aspects organized in a two-step model, including values, confident action, influential, persistence, advocate, leadership qualities, and opportunity. These characteristics were selected because they were discussed most throughout the interviews and seemed to be the most important to the interviewees.

Conclusion

The goal of the analysis for the research project was to create a model that describes leadership in the immigrant community. It is important for organizations to understand leadership, especially organizations that work with the immigrant community. When 2Q Marketing was making the model for leadership, their research actually went further than simply describing characteristics of leadership. It does this because it shows how different characteristics define leadership and then the consequences when those characteristics are applied. The end result was actually two models, with one model being derived from the other.

The second model is very similar to the first model; however, the second model is much more easily tested. The second model eliminated some of the initial variables, but kept the

following variables: confident action, persistent, influential, advocate, and values. Then, those categories all connect to the dependent variable of leader skills or characteristics. Again, this model can definitely be tested based on the independent and dependent variables. After that, there is the dependent variable of opportunity. When the dependent variable opportunity is tested, it assumes that leadership skills are now the independent variable.

2Q Marketing realized from analysis of the interviews it was found that, simply having these characteristics does not make a person a leader. The respondents talked about how a leader is different from a non-leader because they are able to apply those characteristics together. One of the interviewees said that they consider themselves a leader, but not all of the time, depending on the situation. In essence, she has the characteristics of leadership, but does not always apply them. Since another interviewee said a leader has to apply the characteristics of leadership to situations in order to be a leader, the ability to apply these characteristics is very important in describing leadership.

The last reason 2Q Marketing decided to make this model is that the organizations and immigrants 2Q Marketing is doing this research for can benefit most from finding the correlation between leadership and opportunity. This model is called a two-step model and can be tested using quantitative methods in a reasonable amount of time.

Previous research has captured the same or similar results when determining the relationships between immigrant leadership and the factors that affect it. Starting with confident action, the existence of the relationship between the characteristic and immigrant leadership exists in this study to show/determine leadership. Immigrant women have found that in order for them to become successful in the United States they must apply confident actions to attain successful leadership opportunities (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). Applying this skill not only

helped them to obtain leadership positions but also proves evidence of their leadership success (because it helped them to obtain leadership positions) (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). This brings the discussion to the next characteristic, persistence. In multiple studies persistence has been found to be a determining factor in the role of immigrant leadership success. Immigrants have identified that they must work even harder to obtain the leadership opportunities in the United States (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). They also maintained that going back to school in America and working hard to earn a degree increased their chance for obtaining leadership positions (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). These two factors are relationships in 2Q Marketing's model of immigrant leadership.

Influential, the next characteristic in the immigrant leadership model is the ability for the leader to create relationships or actions among people in a mutually beneficial way. In a study conducted to understand immigrant leaders in the business environment it was evident that to be a successful leader one must be influential (Yun-His, 2011). Along with being influential it has also been found that being an advocate can improve success in leadership positions. Found to be true in a study conducted on Chinese workers in the direct selling business, the Chinese found success by actively seeking to find optimal solutions and supports the organization as it moves forward (Xiaohua, 2011). Finally, values have also been found in other studies to influence leadership quality. The values taught by parents and members of a household the immigrants lived in influences the quality of leadership (Chahin, 2005).

The existence of the relationships between the preceding variables and leadership is evident in previous literature. It is also evident that, by applying those characteristics, the appropriate opportunities will arise. With the findings of this study and the support of previous

literature the model presented in this study shows the major characteristics that should be applied to obtain leadership and leadership opportunities in the immigrant community.

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