UNIVERSIDAD DEL ROSARIO

HOW CAN THE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE BE ENFORCED IN AN

INTERNATIONAL FRANCHISE LIKE DEPILARTE

GRADUATION PROJECT

MELISSA ROCHA ORTIZ

BOGOTA D.C, COLOMBIA

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MENCIÓN: MERCADEO DIGITAL

BOGOTA D.C, COLOMBIA

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Confidentiality declaration

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Comments:

Oath of personal work

I undersigned Melissa Rocha Ortiz declare that the following graduating project is my own work. No part of this research has been submitted in the past for publication or for degree purposes.

I am fully responsible for the truthfulness of this declaration.

Date: August 2020

Abstract

This project has the objective of understanding how to enforce organizational culture in an international organization, especially in a franchise. It was based on Depilarte, a laser hair removal company that started in 2010 and that now has more than 100 stores between Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Panama, Peru and Venezuela. The research was based in Bogota, Colombia and the data obtained was available thanks to an internship agreement between the organization and the author of the investigation. The main objectives were to understand where the company was regarding organizational culture, initially the founders considered it was rather different amongst all of its members. Secondly, to identify the ideas the members of the organization have regarding organizational culture and its benefits to the company. The research started with a literature review in order to understand all the different concepts in the investigation as: Culture, international business, franchising, organizational culture, and the beauty industry. That allowed the qualitative analysis to have a guide on how to proceed with the questioning and analysis. Two questionnaires were created, one for the founders by an interviewer completed questionnaire and one for the survey to the owners and employees, this allowed a better comparison and analysis of the data collected. 175 members of the organization took part in the investigation. The findings were both beneficial and surprising, as mentioned the analysis started with the mindset that there was no clear organizational culture, but the members in the company do have a shared meaning between them, no matter the country they work for the organization. They had a shared meaning but, without knowing it represented the organizational culture. Some relevant information came to light thanks to the research: The training of the members must be evaluated in order to ensure the preparation for the work, the founders must work on their cultural skills to create better relationships with its members in the six countries. Finally, to create an organizational culture that

is known by its members and it is consciously enforced by them, it is necessary to create a "desired

culture" document so that all the members are aware of the meaning of the organization.

Resumen

Este proyecto tiene como objetivo comprender cómo hacer valer la cultura organizacional en una organización internacional, especialmente en una franquicia. Se basó en Depilarte, una empresa de depilación láser que comenzó en 2010 y que ahora cuenta con más de 100 tiendas entre Colombia, República Dominicana, Ecuador, Panamá, Perú y Venezuela. La investigación se basó en Bogotá, Colombia y los datos obtenidos estuvieron disponibles gracias a un convenio de pasantía entre la organización y el autor de la investigación. Los principales objetivos eran entender dónde se encontraba la empresa con respecto a la cultura organizacional, inicialmente los fundadores consideraron que era bastante diferente entre todos sus miembros. En segundo lugar, identificar las ideas que tienen los miembros de la organización sobre la cultura organizacional y sus beneficios para la empresa. La investigación comenzó con una revisión de la literatura para comprender los diferentes conceptos de la investigación como: cultura, negocios internacionales, franquicias, cultura organizacional e industria de la belleza. Eso permitió que el análisis cualitativo tuviera una guía sobre cómo proceder con el cuestionamiento y análisis. Se crearon dos cuestionarios, uno para los fundadores por un cuestionario completado por un entrevistador y otro para la encuesta a los propietarios y empleados, esto permitió una mejor comparación y análisis de los datos recolectados. 175 miembros de la organización participaron en la investigación. Los hallazgos fueron beneficiosos y sorprendentes, como se mencionó, el análisis comenzó con la mentalidad de que no había una cultura organizacional clara, pero los miembros de la empresa tienen un significado compartido entre ellos, sin importar el país en el que trabajan para la organización. Tenían un significado compartido pero, sin saberlo, representaba la cultura organizacional. Información relevante salió a la luz gracias a la investigación: La formación de los miembros debe ser evaluada para asegurar la preparación para el trabajo, los fundadores deben

trabajar en sus habilidades culturales para crear mejores relaciones con sus miembros en los seis países. Finalmente, para crear una cultura organizacional que sea conocida por sus integrantes y conscientemente reforzada por ellos, es necesario crear un documento de "cultura deseada" para que todos los integrantes sean conscientes del significado de la organización.

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1. Chapter I: Introduction

Depilarte is an International franchise that was founded in Venezuela in 2010, the main purpose of the business is to provide permanent laser hair removal with the latest technologies, that offers painless and effective results to its customers (Depilarte, 2010a). This is what defines the success of the business, in addition, it offers treatments like facials, aging resurfacing, acne management and many more involving the skin and its imperfections (Depilarte, 2010b). All the treatments are cosmetic, the technology is based on stimulating skin cells for their regeneration for acne and aging resurfacing and cell elimination for the hair removal (Depilarte, 2012). Therefore, the focus of Depilarte is on the beauty industry specifically laser hair removal, trying to help men and women take care of their skin removing the unwanted hair, darkness and irritation created because of shaving all of these with no pain and effective results (Depilarte, 2010a). The beauty and aesthetic industry has been growing, especially because of growing aesthetic consciousness in the population, a very important aspect is an increase in 43% of males that are now aware and in use of these type of services, for 2015 laser hair removal was the most used laser method (Grand View Research, 2016). Making this a service that is gender neutral inviting anyone to use it (CBInsights, 2019). According to the National Laser institute (2018) reported that in 2017 more than 1 million laser hair removal treatments were performed, this is a 51% rise from 2010 (National Laser Institute, 2018). Depilarte stated in their blog that in 2018 they performed more than 150 thousand treatments throughout all of its stores with more than 15 thousand new customers, this growth represents how attractive the industry is (Depilarte, 2019).

The main idea of the company was always to be a franchise but considering that it was the first time the founders entered this industry and the first time selling franchises, they wanted to standardize and organize the processes of the treatments and a year later they started to sell the franchise (Depilarte, 2011a). Two of the founders come from similar backgrounds and the third has a completely different one and according to Beckman (2006) the previous company relations both similar and different from founders create advantages that allow growth and encourage innovation in the organization (Beckman, 2006). Making this a beneficial factor for the company. Nevertheless, they did not think about how to maintain and reinforce the organizational culture once the expansion started and this happened faster than they expected. In 2017 the company was featured in an important Colombian magazine named Dinero, in an articled focused on the "Prices and conditions of the 10 most popular franchises in Colombia" (Dinero, 2017). This was mainly because of the growth the company was experiencing largely because of the franchising expansion method. Franchises in Colombia are regulated by "Colfranquicias" a non-profit organization that brings together all the franchisors and others involved in the industry of the country. It focuses on promoting collaboration and contribution among its members and promoting the franchises of the country, it holds a yearly fair where all the active franchises in the country can participate in order to find new franchisees (Colfranquicias, 2020). Colfranquicias also releases a yearly magazine called "Fanyf" of all the franchises in the country. For 2020 there were 565 franchises in the magazine, and one of Depilarte's Franchisees was featured in the front page of the 2020 magazine as the theme for the year is "Three entrepreneurs tell us their experience as franchisees" (Fanyf, 2020). This is a huge honor for the company to be featured by them with their biggest franchisee based in Medellin. In addition, since the beginning Depilarte has been working with an international consulting company called Front Consulting Group, that focuses on helping

franchisors and franchisees in developing their business ideas into something successful (Front consulting group, 2016). They are in 5 of the 6 countries Depilarte is present and helped the company develop their manuals of structure and supervision that are in use to this day.

The company has expanded to 6 countries those being Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Panama, Peru and Venezuela now with 107 stores, where only 5 are actually owned and managed by the founders (Depilarte, 2011a). This means that 102 stores are managed and ran by other people from different backgrounds, cultures and nationalities (Depilarte, 2011a). For this reason, even though there are set manuals and standardized procedures on how the treatment is supposed to be done and how the store must me managed, currently there is no real or clear way to guide the employees in a way that the organizational culture is shared by all the members no matter where they are. The outcome is that in each store the culture is set by the owner or manager, resulting in having one brand with almost 100 different cultures due to the different management styles (Depilarte, 2011a). Here is the main problem of Depilarte, the founders also known as the franchisors cannot choose the franchisees that will have the different stores around the world, and how can they enforce their core values and vision in each employee that works for the brand without having proper contact with them. According to the Hofstede Insights (2015) There are five key factors in managing global virtual teams, starting with time and distance taking into account that not all members belong in the same time zone and this has to be taken into account when planning meetings and even when sending emails (Hofstede Insights, 2020). Secondly, creating a level of trust with someone that you have not met in person, you must speak the truth and be appropriate with your intentions and expectations and also keep your words and commitments and being consistent with what you say and what you do (Hofstede Insights, 2020). Third, preventing technical difficulties in order to assure the participation of all the members. Fourth, leadership to

a diverse team can be challenging and it links with the final one that is taking into account all of the different cultures involved in the team in order to be ready when facing any situations (Hofstede Insights, 2020).This topic has been found relevant due to the upcoming importance of organizational culture, this does not mean that it is a new topic for companies, but it has been growing in importance as the workplace has evolved (Alton, 2017). The author Alton (2017) stated that there are some clear benefits to having a strong unified culture, it helps identify the values of the company, it contributes to retention of better talent and finally, it adds to the identity of the brand (Alton, 2017).

Having this situation in mind, this project is focusing on analyzing a few things. First, what the current situation really is. The founders consider there could be differences in what their vision and set goals for the company are compared to what they can perceive from the franchisees and their stores and these situations are highlighted when there is communication with the franchisees or when the founders do special visits to the stores. At that moment they realize that many of them differ between each other and of course in what the set culture is supposed to be. After, analyzing how to establish and preserve the organizational culture in all of the current stores in the most equal way possible knowing that there is no permanent presence of the founders and finally, find the right way to pass the culture down to the employees and to keep it alive and going in every store and how to ensure that upcoming stores will not have the same problem and they will be a reflection of what is expected from the founders in all the stores.

This project will be developed in 4 stages: An initial literature review that focuses in understanding the most relevant concepts related to the investigation culture, franchising,

corporate culture and the beauty industry. The following stage is the how of the investigation, this study is a qualitative research based on surveys and interviews. The population taken into account are the current members involved with the company, these being founders, franchise owners and employees of the stores. The main objective of the analysis is to understand the ideologies and the views the founders have about the company and how they envision the stores to be no matter the country. In addition, examining the background the company and the initial goals set by the founders. Also, analyzing how the franchisees see the business and its culture. Finally, identifying how all the employees describe the organization and its culture taking into account the majority of them do not share time with each other, by doing this, it is possible to understand how the company is viewed by most of its members and answer how the organizational culture can be enforced and preserved in this international context. It is important to highlight that even though all the countries are Spanish speaking countries, and even some are neighbor countries, the cultures these have differ a lot from each other. All of this is being done in order to understand the gap between the wanted culture by the founders and the culture that the stores actually have, in order to improve the relationships between the parties and strengthen the brand name, with a much more unified front. Third, analyzing the collected data from the interview and the survey trying to understand patterns and the views of the members about the company. Finally coming to a conclusion from the data collected, analyzed and proper recommendations.

2. Chapter II: Literature review

In order to begin to understand the importance of a strong or dominant organizational culture in an international environment like the one Depilarte has to manage. It is imperative to analyze: What is culture, where does it come from, and how does it affect humans and the fact that all humans belong to one or many cultures. After this, it is necessary to see how organizations influence the way that humans live and the dynamic in a franchisor - franchisee relationship. Finally, looking in depth at all the benefits of having a defined and generalized organizational culture that represents the core values of the company through all its members taking into account the international environment Depilarte has and the industry it belongs to.

Culture is not an easy term to define according to the article "Developing intercultural competence through education", all around the world there are an incredible amount of different cultures that create cultural identities in people (Barrett, Byram, Lázár, Mompoint-Gaillard, & Stavroula, 2014). Culture is a composite of three aspects: Material culture, social culture and subjective culture, meaning that culture is a combination of these resources distributed across the group (Barrett et al. 2014). Material culture focuses on artifacts that are usually used by groups (Barrett et al. 2014). Social culture is based on the organization of the group like societal rules, language and religious beliefs (Barrett et al. 2014). Subjective culture entails all the moral norms, ethical beliefs, attitudes and values they share (Barrett et al. 2014). Adding to this Mele & Vujnovic (2016) stated that it can be seen as a strict formation based on assets that can be put to use by its members, these aspects are judgement, routines, styles, abilities and knowledge that holds together the social boundaries (Mele & Vujnovic, 2016). On the other hand, the authors Sapir & Darnell

(1999) have proposed that culture is not something hereditary, and it is something that is altered by its surroundings and not by any individual, it is a learned process for all the members just like language, and the differences in personalities do not affect it or its influence (Sapir & Darnell, 1999). In addition, they stated that culture is also characterized by a complex network of traditionally conserved habits, usages and attitudes (Sapir & Darnell, 1999). Barret et al (2014) also affirm that each individual uses only a small part of all of the characteristics available to them, it is important to highlight that all people can belong simultaneously and identify with many different cultures (Barrett et al., 2014). In all culture is a shared meaning system that is found in those that speak a particular language, during a particular period of time in a specified location (Gannon, 2008). Finally, a national culture can include many subcultures making it a multi-layer (Dan, 2020).

The author Mukti Khaire states that inside of every culture we have organizations or producers, that have a particular economic interest in the goods that are exchanged in the market, these are involved in the procurement, production, distribution and sales, the price at which an exchange occurs represents the value placed on the good by the customer that actually buys it (Khaire, 2017). The author Khaire (2017) also emphasizes the fact that the actual value assigned to the goods by the consumers is never truly objective, this is because the determination of value is subjective to other situations that are part of the dominant context they are living in (Khaire, 2017). Two people can be in different parts of the world and assign a different value to the same product or service, this context being the culture or country where the company is offering the goods (Khaire, 2017). A lot of factors influence the determination of value for one person, some are the individual preferences, also the collective interpretations of certain norms, customs and practices (Khaire,

2017). Value can also be seen, as the net benefits the customer gets which are any costs a costumers incurs in order to obtain the desired benefits except for the purchase price (Anderson & Narus, 1998). Value is very relative depending on where the company is selling the goods, turning the commerce into a very dynamic situation that needs to be managed carefully, an example is the value of cattle in a country like India compared to Colombia, in Colombia the value is greater because it is one of the most common sources of protein the population consumes, in contrast, in India there would not be valued because of how sacred cows are and the society does not accept the consumption of the meat (Paramo, 2012).

There are many ways of performing business internationally (Daniels et al. 2018). First, what really started it all, was importing and exporting that is based on trade transactions between actors that are physically in different places, when the exchange is between two different countries is called international trade (Daniels et al. 2018). Then we have multinational enterprises also known as MNEs that are international firms that have operations and activities directly in controlled overseas locations (Collinson, 2016). Afterwards, there is the foreign direct investment FDI based on equity funds invested in other nations (Collinson, 2016). The authors Eden, Dai and Li (2010) state that internationalization can be seen in three ways: International business, international management and international strategy (Eden, Dai, & Li, 2010). International management is defined as the process of organizing planning and controlling of the company by the managers to achieve the objectives when an organization is dealing with processes outside the nation it is from (Eden et al., 2010). On the other hand, international business is defined as a busines that crosses national borders and has interactions with the international environment (Eden et al., 2010). In contrast, international strategy is the comprehensive whole of actions, decisions by organizations

to gain competitive advantage in an international setting (Eden et al., 2010). Finally the focus is in franchising, that is a specialized form of licensing in which one party, the franchisor creator of the brand and its processes, gives permission to an independent party, the franchisee, to use its trade mark that is an essential for the franchisee's business (Daniels et al. 2018). It also gives assistance in how to operate and manage the business (Daniels et al. 2018). According to Sherman (2011) Franchising is one of the most powerful ways to grow a business specially in a slow economy. Another definition of franchising is that, it is an arrangement in which the owner of a product, process or service the franchisor, licenses someone else, the franchisee, to use it and its methods in exchange for some sort of royalty. (Watson, Stanworth, Healeas, Purdy, & Stanworth, 2005). The authors Watson & Johnson (2010) state that the franchisor - franchisee relationship must be taken very seriously by both parties, because the success of the enterprise will depend on how well the two parties collaborate and specially on how they follow the stated agreements signed in the contract. At the beginning of the relationship franchisees are eager to learn and require a sort of hand holding, when time starts to pass they become like teenagers resentful of parental interference, this is what could threaten the relationship (Watson & Johnson, 2010). Success is what both the parties involved are looking for once they sign the contractual agreement (Jang & Park, 2019). In order to gain long term sustainability, balancing the benefits between franchisor and franchisee is vital, the parties are mutually dependent, part of the profit of the franchisor comes from the aggregated success of the franchisee (Jang & Park, 2019). Some relate the beginning of the relationship to a "honeymoon stage" that is characterized by a fascination and excitement from the franchisee because of all the new things its learning, this starts to decrease, leading to disillusion when they are confronted with the daily business work, after this they develop an understanding of how the system has to be managed and they start to adapt to it (Blut et al., 2011).

How the relationship works, the franchisor, in return for the fees they receive from franchisees normally called royalties, is required to provide a number of services, including initial and ongoing training, research and development, advertising and marketing support, market research, management assistance and so on, in order to allow the franchisee to work properly (Watson & Johnson, 2010). The actual key to having a win-win situation is the quality of the relationship (Jang & Park, 2019). In the service sector, the businesses by nature have few tangible assets, much of the success relates to the ability to effectively manage and maximize the value of their intangible assets (Watson et al., 2005). An important aspect of this is the intellectual capital (IC) referring to the intangible assets, the knowledge, resources information, skills, structures, culture and relationships of a company which collectively can create wealth (Wexler, 2002). In addition, Intellectual asset management (IAM) is focused on organizing, prioritizing and extracting the value from specific intellectual property aspects, the technical know-how is one of the most valuable assets the company can have and it can provide the competitive advantage (Sherman, 2011). This can also be seen as the value added to the service, is another way in which businesses can get a competitive advantage, after they become commodities (Reinartz & Ulaga, 2008).

Finally, going through what is the organizational culture and looking at all the benefits it can bring to an enterprise in any situation. The authors Robbins and Judge (2013) state that the organizational culture in a company refers to a system of shared meaning held by its members that differences the organization from others, it is characterized by having employees that are innovative and risk takers, attentive to detail, and are oriented by the outcomes, the techniques and processes used to get there, the company is people and team oriented, with just the right amount of aggressiveness and competitiveness, and finally always having stability in the practices in order

to grow (Robbins & Judge, 2013). It can also be known as the collective understanding of how things work in each organization, this is one of the most difficult attributes to change in an organization because it becomes part of everything (Woodside, 2010). This can later affect when leaders are trying to make the organization more effective, when facing certain pressures, they can find that the members are not willing to change their ways of working because they are too comfortable, which then threatens the outcomes of the intended change in the organization (Schein, 2004). At this moment organizational culture turns into a liability for the business because the current shared values are not in pair to the ones that will actually drive the organization to a successful outcome, making it hard for the organization to respond effectively to change (Robbins & Judge, 2013).

The corporate culture must be described by all of its members in the most equal way, no matter their level or position within the organization, all the employees must perceive similar characteristics of the enterprise, this would define the culture as strong (Robbins & Judge, 2013). How to get this positive organizational culture the authors Sergeant & Laws-Chapman (2012) proposed using emotional resilience training on the employees, this are the individual abilities employees need to adapt to different conditions while maintaining a purpose, balance, positive mental health and physical well-being, it is focused on helping employees manage stress (Sergeant & Laws-Chapman, 2012). Having employees that know how to manage the work load and the possible stress that comes with it, is necessary for a positive outcome, and a strong link of feeling towards the company (Sergeant & Laws-Chapman, 2012). What really makes the difference in an organization and in how its organizational culture evolves is its founders, they are the ones that have the core ideologies of the organizations existence because of their initial vision of what the

business should be, they try to hire people who they can share the same values with them and that can be influenced to see what they see and most importantly identify with them, they search for a sort of fit, with this the personality of the founders becomes embedded in the culture (Robbins & Judge, 2013). Corporate culture is one of the least researched value drivers that work in favor of the performance of the organization (Graham et al. 2017) .

The author Roger McCoy (2017) explains how it is possible to have a positive franchise culture in every way, he states that obtaining this culture is possible by having leadership responsibility from the franchisor, because a positive culture creates alignment of the behavior of everyone involved and by this it aligns the employees goals with the ones of the organization, when it comes to the franchise, the franchisee and their employees must feel persuaded to behave in the prescribed manner set by the model because they want to and they see it is the best path for them and for their independent business, it is a lot about the influence the franchisor can have like how the franchisee can look up to them and want to be like them, because they know this is how they will all succeed (Roger, 2017).

For international companies the corporate culture can evolve from the way the organization works, the strict structure it has, the decisions are made from both sides, this way of working will eventually become part of their culture (Bauer & Knill, 2007). This type of bureaucracy can help the organization successfully create shared values and reach the corporations main goals (Erdem, 2018). This international scene implies that the founders have to be global leaders with "cultural skills" that will allow them to be more responsive and flexible in order to manage teams and stakeholders from different cultures, a global leader maintains all the members of its organization

motivated for the same goals (Steers & Bhagat, 2009). Franchising on the other hand, is based on

individual owners thus franchisors must have rigid standards, set processes that franchisees must

follow in order to present the same image to the customers, these have to be monitored, corrected

and enforced in all of the stores to ensure quality (Combs & Ketchen, 1999). As Bauer and Knill

(2007) stated the strict structure will eventually become the culture. It is important to understand

that the corporate strategies applied in the franchise at the beginning will adhere to it, the methods

and processes are hard to change once enforced, when facing new situations it is important to

consider all the possibilities of how to act to not harm the culture and to use common tools that in

the long term will not affect the organization (Mitsuhashi, Shane, & Sine, 2008).

The specific industry of Depilarte is beauty, there is a section in their blog dedicated to beauty

and giving their audience beauty tips and tricks (Depilarte, 2018). This is a growing industry,

according to the authors Romano et al (2017) the growth of the industry is based on two factors:

First, the rise in women workforce and secondly the utilization of new and high technologies which

is essential for innovation in the industry (Romano, Teixeria, Alves, & Helleno, 2017). The beauty

industry focuses on a short life cycle for the products, in order to have innovation and bring people

the idea that something new is coming, this idea creates higher revenue because it creates a certain

rush in society demanding to have the newest things, it is about the momentum, creating this need

in society is part of the culture of the industry (McCracken, 2014). Spas, hair salons and laser hair

removal are expanding in the industry, especially for people with a higher income rate, resulting

in the growth of the industry (McCracken, 2014). Finally, this project aims to improve the

relationship between franchisor and franchisee at Depilarte by having a greater connection caused

by the unification and synchronization linking the parties also resulting in higher profits for both

of them because success in a franchisor franchisee relationship is very related and dependent between the two parties.

From the first day the organizational culture of a company is set and enforced by the founders ideology and vision of the firm (Robbins & Judge, 2013). They will hire people that can see what they do and that will work to move the company forward to the same goal, using the same or very similar practices, because the presence of the founders makes their desired personality to become embedded in the culture (Robbins & Judge, 2013). In addition, there is quantified evidence of the benefits it brings to the organization, 91% of company executives affirm that corporate culture is important to the firm, and 79% include the organizational culture in the top 3 to 5 value drivers of the organization, also, emphasizing that the culture of the organization has influences regarding the ethical decision making inside the firm, this is based in the research "Corporate culture: Evidence from the field" (Graham et al., 2017). This is very important and taking into account that the founders can only spend a maximum of 5 days in every new store, and sometimes no time at all (Depilarte, 2011a). Having all of this information from these authors and knowing the way Depilarte works, how can they make this happen, how can the organizational culture be enforced in the desired way if there is no direct influence from founders in some of the stores.

3. Chapter III: Methodology

This research was a qualitative study chosen because of the benefits it brings regarding the welfare of the population studied in their work life (Adams, Khan, & Raeside, 2014). This aimed to understand how all of the different members that are involved in the organization Depilarte view its culture, and how they differ from each other in this definition. For this reason, the data collection is divided in two ways: The interviewer-completed questionnaire with the founders was conducted to understand their vision of how the organizational culture of the company is and how they want their employees to represent them and the brand on a daily basis. A survey was conducted to the independent owners known as franchisees to understand how the organizational culture inside their stores differed from the founder's. Finally, the second survey was used to seek for the employees' idea of what the corporate culture is like, because they are the ones that represent the organization on a daily basis to the customers. This process was selected in order to understand how the organizational culture perceived by owners and employees is and how it differs from the founders idea, allowing to find a way to enforce the founders vision in each store. It was classified as an evaluative research because it allows an assessment of the answers received by founders regarding the organizational culture, comparing its efficacy in the company looking at what the owners and employees identify or feel about it. A cross-sectional study was used where data was collected at a specific point in time (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2015). The data collection process was divided in the following categories:

1) Interviewer-completed questionnaires to the founders

2) Self-completed questionnaire to the owners and employees

It is done in this specific way because of the structure of the franchise. The founder gives and teaches the owners of the franchises and its employees the know-how needed to manage the store and provides the elements that are required to run the business, this includes a training directly with founders of no more than 5 days, some stores do not get this opportunity depending in each situation and the country where the store is opening (Depilarte, 2011a). Not having the opportunity to meet with the founders and the individual goals of each owner can start to create differences in the culture of each store, for this reason this study aims to understand the main differences between the stores and the ideologies of the founders. This was chosen because it is interesting to understand how the same business model and company can have a non-identical corporate culture in its different stores based on who is responsible for running the specific store. Also, how it can show to its customers different fronts depending on the store the customer visits, even when the main influence of every store comes from the same place that is the master franchise ran by the founders.

The data collection was done in a specific time frame from June to July leaving time for analysis. Interviews were done online with video calls to the founders, the surveys on the other hand were sent out to the whole population of owners requesting the completion and the socialization of the survey with their employees, it was sent from an internal company account to all the franchisees in order to get a greater response. The population selected to take part in the investigation was:

- Founders: They are university graduates, entrepreneurs and hard workers, they came up with the idea, started developing the business and opened it in 2010 (Depilarte, 2011b). They are a very important part of the investigation because it is necessary to take into

account their ideas of how the company must be regarding its culture and concerning the business model because the organizational culture comes from the founders, what they envision their company to be like (Robbins & Judge, 2013). For this reason, they are an imperative part of the research to understand how to manage the differences encountered. They are the general influence and common ground between all the franchisees.

- Owners: Individual people that are looking for business opportunities to have their own business and independence, they can have a variety of backgrounds and are willing to invest time and money to develop and grow their store. They are entrepreneurs that have to be willing to operate their business in order to make it grow (Depilarte, 2011b). They relate to this investigation because they are the ones responsible for the individual stores and their employees. They are the most recurrent influence they have and guide their specific stores to success.

- Employees: Esthetic professionals that are all women, that look for a regular job with a steady income, they are independent and good at their profession. They are relevant to the investigation because they represent the biggest part of the organization, they are the ones that can share the same meaning of the organization. Moreover, they are the ones in direct contact with clients, because of this they are a big representation of the company.

In order to develop the questionnaires in a meaningful way, where all the information needed was gathered, a data requirements table (table 1) was designed. It allowed the creation of the right and unbiased questions (Adams et al., 2014). Assuring the recollection of the right information and the relation to the theory. This permitted the creation of two questionnaires, one for the founders and one for owners and employees. Because both questionnaires come from the same

data requirements table the information collected allows a more accurate analysis, there are some

differences in a few questions based on who the question was directed to.

Table 1: Data requirements

Research question: How can the organizational culture be preserved in an international franchise like Depilarte?					
Type of research: Evaluative research, wishes to understand the differences in the organizational culture in the different stores Depilarte has.					
Investigative questions	Variables	Detail of measurement	Relation to theory	Check	
				F	O & E
Do you agree that the traditions in the cultures from the different countries where Depilarte is present vary widely from each other?	Opinion on the variations of the culture where Depilarte is present	Strongly agree 10, agrees in some part, disagrees in some part, strongly disagrees 1	Culture is also characterized by a complex network of traditionally conserved habits, usages and attitudes (Sapir & Darnell, 1999).	Y	Y
Do you identify with more than one culture different to	Identified	Yes or no	All people can belong simultaneously and identify	Y	Y

the one you are in at the moment? Yes/no			with many different cultures (Barrett et al., 2014).		
Do you think people give a different value to the service based on the country they are in?	Opinion on the variation	Yes or No	The actual value assigned to the goods by the consumers is never truly objective, this is because the determination of value is subjective to other situations that are part of the dominant context they are living in (Khaire, 2017).	Y	Y
Agreement to the statement: The relationship with the franchisor must be taken seriously, and both must collaborate with each other and respect the agreements for the relationship to be	Opinion on the statement	Agree 10, tend to agree, tend to disagree, disagree 1	The authors Watson & Johnson (2010) state that the franchisor - franchisee relationship must be taken very seriously by both of the parties because the success of the enterprise will depend on how well the two parties collaborate and specially on how they follow the stated agreements signed in the contract.	Y	Y owners

successful for both parties.					
Do you consider that at the beginning of the relationship with the franchisees there is a "honeymoon stage" where the franchisee is fascinated by the work, and this then decreases until they understand how the work is done?	Opinion on the relationship	Agree 10, tend to agree, tend to disagree, disagree 1	The beginning of the relationship can be seen as a "honeymoon stage" characterized by fascination and excitement from the franchisee because of all the new things its learning, this starts to decrease, after this they develop an understanding of the work and they start to adapt to it (Blut et al., 2011).	Y	Y
How much do you think the quality of the relationship between franchisor and franchisee	Opinion on the relationship	A lot 10, a little, not so much, nothing at all 1	The actual key to having a win-win situation is the quality of the relationship (Jang & Park, 2019).	Y	Y owner

matters in order to succeed?					
How successful do you think the training and transferring of the knowledge, skills, structures was from the franchisor/ to the franchisee?	Opinion on the preparation	Very successful 10, somewhat successful, not successful 1.	The intellectual capital (IC) referring to the intangible assets, the knowledge, resources information, skills, structures, culture and relationships of a company which collectively can create wealth (Wexler, 2002).	Y	Y
Can you (in 3 words) describe Depilarte as a whole?	Description	Adjectives	The authors Robbins and Judge (2013) state that the organizational culture in a company refers to a system of shared meaning held by its members that differentiates the organization from others.	Open ended Y	3 words Y
Select the statements you consider are true and reflect to the work in Depilarte.	Description of stress	True statements of description	It can be known as the collective understanding of how things work in an organization (Woodside, 2010).	Y	Y

Do you consider your tasks at Depilarte to be stressful?	Opinion on stress	Yes/ no	Having employees that know how to manage the work load and the possible stress that comes with it, is necessary for a positive outcome, and a strong link of feeling towards the company (Sergeant & Laws-Chapman, 2012)	Y	Y
If yes, do you know how to manage this stress?	Description	How its managed			
How strong do you feel is the influence the (you have on franchisees) founders of Depilarte have had in your store and work experience?	Opinion on founder influence	Very high influence 10, medium influence, low influence, no influence 1	Founders find people that can be influenced to see what they see and most importantly identify with them, they search for a sort of fit, with this the personality of the founders becomes embedded in the culture (Robbins & Judge, 2013).	Y	Y

As a franchisee / a franchisee employee do you consider having similar goals to the ones Depilarte as a whole has? As if you had a role model you follow because this is the best way to run the business?	Opinion on goals	Same goals, near goals, different goals	The author Roger McCoy (2017) explains how it is possible to have a positive franchise culture in every way, having leadership responsibility from the franchisor this creates alignment with the employees goals with the ones of the organization, feel persuaded to behave in the prescribed manner set by the model because they want to and they	Y	Y
As a franchisor how strong do you think your influence towards employees and franchisees is, regarding the goals and the way of running the business?	Opinion on influence	Very high influence 10, medium influence, low influence, no influence 1	see it is the best path for them and for their independent business, how the franchisee can look up to them and want to be like that, because they know this is how they will all succeed.	Y	Y

As a franchisor do you take into account if the possible franchisees can really understand the ideologies of the company so that they will focus in having similar practices in their own store?	Opinion on ideologies of franchises	Yes/ No	Founders will hire people that can see what they do and that will work to move the company forward to the same goal, using the same or very similar practices (Robbins & Judge, 2013).	Y	Y
From this list, could you select the following value drivers by number from 1 (most important) to 10 (less important) value drivers for Depilarte	Value drivers	Selection	Executives affirm that corporate culture is important to the firm, and 79% include the organizational culture in the top 3 to 5 value drivers of the organization (Graham et al., 2017).	Y	Y

Before the question above, have you ever considered corporate culture as a value driver for Depilarte?			Corporate culture is one of the least researched value drivers that work in favor of the performance of the organization (Graham et al. 2017) .	Y	Y
Did you know that corporate culture is important to the firm affirmed by 91% of executives and 79% include the organizational culture in the top 3 to 5 value drivers of the organization?	Knowledge on importance	Yes/ No	There is quantified evidence of the benefits is brings to the organization, 91% of company executives affirm that corporate culture is important to the firm, and 79% include the organizational culture in the top 3 to 5 value drivers of the organization, also, emphasizing that the culture of the organization has influences regarding the ethical decision making inside the firm, this is based in the research "Corporate culture: Evidence	Y	Y

			from the field" (Graham et al., 2017).		
Do you consider the culture of Depilarte has evolved based on the way the organization works, as its structure and decision making strategies?	Opinion on the evolution of the corporate culture	Yes/ No	For international companies the corporate culture can evolve from the way the organization works, the strict structure it has, the decisions are made from both sides, this way of working will eventually become part of their culture (Bauer & Knill, 2007).	Only Y	
Do you consider that throughout the years you have gained the necessary "cultural skills" to manage such a wide range of people that are part of the company?	Skills	Yes No	This international scene implies that the founders have to be global leaders with "cultural skills" that will allow them to be more responsive and flexible in order to manage teams and stakeholders from different cultures, a global leader maintains all the members of its organization motivated for the	Y	Y

			same goals (Steers & Bhagat, 2009).		
Do you consider the standards and processes Depilarte has are rigid enough to be controlled, corrected and enforced in every store to ensure quality ?	Opinion on standards and processes	Very rigid, somehow rigid, not rigid	Franchising is based on individual owners thus franchisors must have rigid standards, set processes that franchisees must follow in order to present the same image to the customers, these have to be monitored, corrected and enforced in all of the stores to ensure quality (Combs & Ketchen, 1999).	Y	Y
From 1 (very important) to 10 (not important) How important do you find the fact that women are the leaders for the specific market?	Opinion on the importance of the growth factors	Very important to, not important	The authors Romano et al (2017) specify that the growth of the industry is based on two factors: First, the rise in women workforce and secondly the utilization of new and high technologies which is essential for innovation in the industry (Romano et al., 2017).	Y	Y

How important do you think it is the fact that Depilarte uses the newest and highest technologies?					

Source: Melissa Rocha 2020

There were two types of questionnaires created from table 1: 1) The founders. They had a list of themes found in annex A and the questionnaire found in annex B. 2) The independent owners and employees that only had two questions that differentiate the questionnaires because they were specifically for owners. Found in annex C. The questionnaire could be answered in less than 10 minutes. The total population including founders, owners and employees is about 300 which was divided according to Table 2: Distribution of the sample, that contains the information of the population and the sample that actually took part in the investigation. The information was available thanks to a signed internship agreement between the researcher and the company.

Table 2: Distribution of the sample

	Population	Sample
Founders	3	3
Owners	103	60
Employees	206	112

Source: Melissa Rocha 2020

The questionnaires were sent to the whole population making the sample ethical by not selecting the participants (Adams et al., 2014). As the table above shows 175 members of the organization took part in the investigation, there was no concrete reason of why the others did not answer, mainly the time frame of data collection that was only of 13 days. Once the email with the survey was sent, most of the answers were collected, after a few days a reminder was made in order to get more responses, even with these efforts some owners and employees failed to take part in the investigation. The email was sent explaining the purpose of the investigation and it emphasized the importance of response, the instructions given were clear and simple, to answer the survey and to pass it down to their employees, once the survey was opened there was a greeting for the respondents, available in the appendices.

The quality of this research is based on two aspects. First, reliability concerning the replication of the investigation. It will not be harmed no matter who is preforming it because the surveys are structured with set questions from a data requirements table (table 1) as a guide of where the questions came from. Also, notes explaining how the information obtained from the surveys and interviews was analyzed were provided, hence ensuring consistency throughout the investigation. At the moment of this research there is only one researcher collecting and analyzing the information which also contributes to ensuring consistency, if the same questions from the formats in the appendices are used, there should not be any external reliability. Since the researcher was taking part in an internship at the moment of the investigation at the Bogota, Colombia offices of the organization, it means the position taken in the investigation is as an internal researcher allowing to have a certain advantage concerning the knowledge regarding the structure of the

organization and how it works. The members of the organization were very open and helpful to all the questions and needs regarding the investigation.

On the other hand, there could be some threats to the reliability, for instance there is a possibility of the participants being biased because the employees answering the survey may be predisposed to answering truthfully thinking that their employer may see the answers and have repercussions on their employment. For this reason, there was a disclaimer at the beginning of the questionnaire letting them know that the answers provided were not going to be seen by their employers, the questionnaires were also answered anonymously. Secondly, the validity of the information. This investigation is taking into account a great part of the population involved in the organization from all 6 countries, table 2 explains it, which is appropriate for the purpose of the investigation. In addition, the investigation was not informed to the participants beforehand, the survey was sent to all members at a specific moment with an explanation of why the survey was being done with a time frame of possible responses. As the research was cross-sectional and done with a standard questionnaire assuring the validity of the instruments, for this reason maturation does not affect the investigation. There is a threat of mortality specially with the employees that can resign from the company at any moment because they have less compromise to it, in comparison to owners that have signed 5 year contracts with the company that are always renewed and since the first franchise was sold not one has been closed.

Limitations that are faced are the geographical factor. The study, specially the observation and interviews with founders were planned to be conducted from Colombia and special visit to the Dominican Republic. However, because of the current pandemic of COVID19 the special visits to

the Dominican Republic that were planned for the beginning of May and July were cancelled and no longer viable for the research, having to make the interviews and surveys on-line. There was another situation generated by the COVID19 pandemic, where the stores in Panama and Venezuela had been closed for four months with no idea of when they were going to re-open, forcing the owners to suspend the contracts with their employees in order to survive, this created a conflict of interest because they were not able to ask anything of them restricting the answers in these two countries. Nevertheless, the sample was considered representative because, it takes into account a great part of the population.

The investigation was developed ethically, the data collection was done openly, respectfully and with no harm to any of the participant. As mentioned before the survey was sent out to the totality of the population, the ones that took part did it voluntarily and had the right to refuse to participate as some members of the organization did. In addition, the surveys did not request any personal data as names, numbers or emails of the participants in order to ensure anonymity, this also contributed to cancelling the possible biased answers from employees by ensuring them that their employers were not going to see the answers and that they were strictly for research purposes (Saunders et al., 2015).

Notes on the analysis

As the information was collected using google forms, as soon as an answer came in, the response was checked and separated into three excel sheets, one for owners, one for employees and one sharing the basic information of both, this was done specially because the owners had two

extra questions and the information that was regarding only owners was not mixed with the general information that the two groups answered. Moreover, the excel sheet with the general information of both groups was used to create the majority of the graphs and tables by filtering the information. The answers from the founders were added to each category as it was being analyzed.

The questions that were answered using a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being disagreement and 10 being agreement, in order to code the information collected if the answers where 5 and below (1-2-3-4-5) it was considered disagreement and 6 and above (6-7-8-9-10) was considered agreement on the question to facilitate the analysis.

The decision on using doughnut charts or bar charts was based on the number of variables per category, more than 4 variables used bar charts to allow a more efficient way of looking at the information.

4. Chapter IV: Data analysis

The analysis focuses on a thematic narrative in order to point out themes found in the data, based on the literature initially reviewed the data was categorized, allowing the creation of five categories: 1) General information, 2) Culture, 3) Franchisor - franchisee relationship, 4) The company and work life, 5) Value drivers. These categories are clearly differentiated in the questionnaires and gave the respondents a logical order to answer the questionnaire. These categories also allowed the analysis to be straight to the point and consistent.

The data was collected by sending the survey to the owners and employees on July 1st and the recollection lasted until July 11th receiving a total of 172 responses from 112 employees and 60 owners from all 6 countries. Table 3 demonstrates the distribution of the responses based on the percentage of total response for the study where it shows how many stores participated form each country in relationship with how many stores participated in the study. The most successful response rate from each country individually was from the Dominican Republic that all of the stores participated and Colombia with a 91% response rate.

Table 3: Distribution of the response

Country	Owners	Employees	% of total response	Stores participation rate
Colombia	31	47	45%	91%
Venezuela	7	12	11%	27%

Peru	9	20	17%	55%
Ecuador	3	18	12%	69%
Dominican Republic	5	9	8%	100%
Panama	5	6	7%	43%

Source: Melissa Rocha 2020

The first category from the questionnaire called general information, with socio-demographic questions that were age and level of studies, this showed that the predominant age group inside the organization was the second one (29 to 38 years old) with 39% of the members including founders, owners and employees, Figure 1 exhibits the complete representation of how the age groups are distributed in the sample.
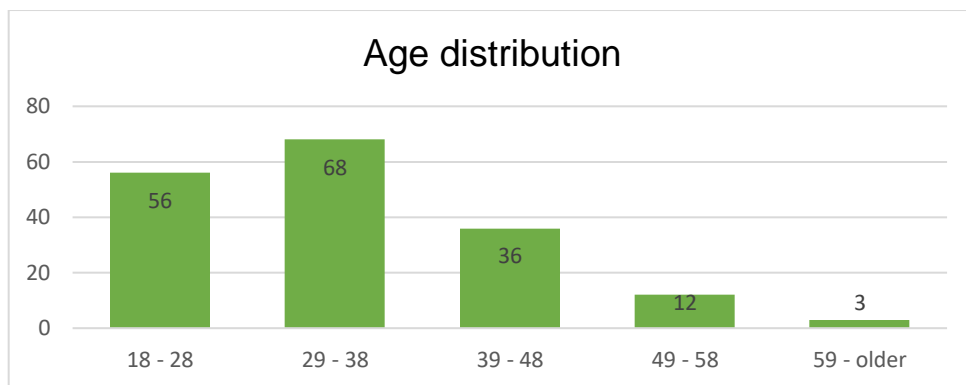
Source: Melissa Rocha 2020

Figure 4.1: Age

Figure 2 shows there is a direct connection between higher education and a higher position in the company. The three founders have a master's degree and 77% of the employees only carry an

associate degree and 38% of them are between the ages of 18-28. Having an associate's degree at the 18-28 age range is common in the industry because in these countries this is the only requirement to be a beautician. For the owners 55% hold bachelor's degrees and 45% are between the ages of 39-48 years old.

Source: Melissa Rocha 2020
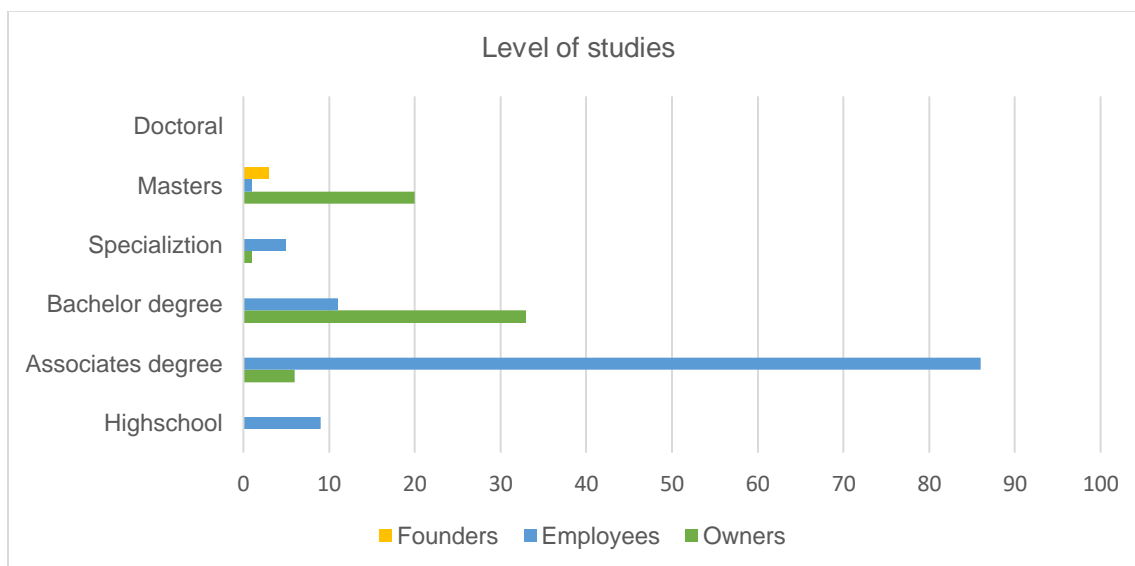
Figure 4.2: Level of studies

As the questionnaire evolved following the literature review, the next category analyzed was culture, specifically differences in the cultures from the six countries the company is present and the possible identification with more than one culture, different from the one they live in. These two questions specifically were the only ones in the survey that the respondents were not obligated to answer, taking into account that all of them may not have knowledge from other cultures different from their own. Regarding the similarity between the cultures, 85% of respondents agree on the fact that they share similar cultures with each other highlighting that only 10% of the respondents did not answer. In addition, 57% identify themselves with more than one culture, the

founders included in both of these findings. It is relevant to point out that two of the founders have lived and worked in three of the countries where Depilarte is present. Consequently, it was relevant to understand if the population considered that the service offered by the organization (laser hair removal) was valued differently depending on the country where the customer acquired the service. Figure 3 exhibits the response to this question, 69% of the population agreed that the customers give a different value to the service based on where they acquire it. Regarding the founders two of them did not consider that the customers value the service differently based on the country they access it.

Source: Melissa Rocha 2020

Customer value depending on the country

Same value
31%

Different value
69%
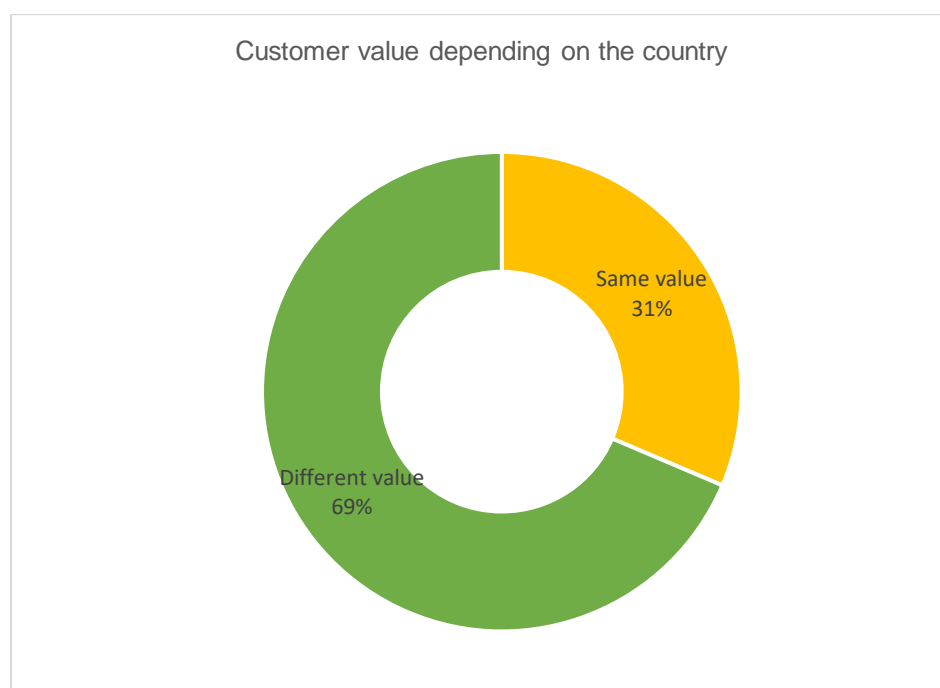
Figure 4.3: Customer value depending on the country

The following question was made in order to transition from the culture category to the franchisor- franchisee relationship category, it focuses on understanding the view owners and

employees had regarding the founders "cultural skills" in order to manage and train successfully such a wide range of people from 6 different countries. The response from 100% of participants was that 82% of them agreed on the fact that the founders have the skills to interact propitiously with every member of the organization no matter in which country they are at. On the other hand, the other 18% of the population that does not think the founders have these cultural skills are owners from Peru and Colombia, this point of view from them can affect the maintenance of the organizational culture in these specific stores. All three of the founders agreed that they have gained the necessary skills to work with people in the organization regardless of where they are. These skills were acquired throughout experience, travels and working with members in all six countries.

The third category addresses the franchisor – franchisee relationship. It focuses on four main ideas: Importance of the quality of the relationship between the two, how enthusiastic the owners and employees can be at the beginning of the relationship, the success regarding training of new owners and employees and the rigidness of the internal processes. Initially, there are two questions only directed to the owners and founders. In order to understand how they see the relationship. One hundred percent of the owners and founders agree on the fact that both parties must always be taken seriously, respecting all agreements and collaborating with each other, which will help both of them in order to be successful. On the other hand, looking how important the quality of the relationship was to them in order to succeed, Figure 4 shows how 98% of the owners consider it important, as well as the totality of the founders consider it is significant to carry a good relationship with the franchisees in order for the two to gain benefits from an adequate association.
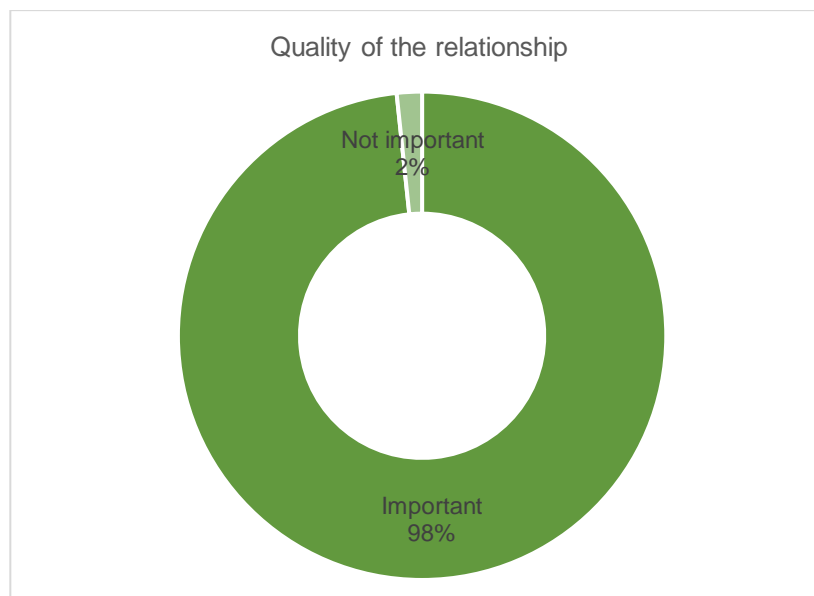
Figure 4.4: Quality of the relationship

Furthermore, looking into the "honeymoon stage" that the new owners and employees face at the beginning of the relationship, that eventually can become a feeling of discontent until they understand the reality of the daily work life and become confident with what they do. The owners and employees mostly agree with this statement with a 72% of acceptance to it. The founders on the other hand tend to agree with it. As a franchise Depilarte must be very effective in the training and preparing of owners and employees for the work and service offered by the organization, there must be set structures all the stores follow. The answers to how successful the training and transferring of knowledge from owners and employees are shown in Figure 5, specifically 87% of the population considered the training successful. This matter can also affect the corporate culture if there are employees and owners that do not feel comfortable with the knowledge, they have in order to manage the stores successfully and with confidence.

Figure 4.5: Success in training

A franchise must ensure the standardization and quality in all the stores that represent it, for this the founders set specific processes that all franchises have to follow, the majority of the founders consider that all the standards are somewhat rigid in order to be monitored and enforced in all the stores by the founders. Figure 6 represents the view of owners and employees regarding the processes and how rigid they are, 57% of them view the standards as very rigid, 39% view them and the founders consider them somewhat rigid and finally 4% consider the processes not rigid. As mentioned before standardization is key in franchising and if the population does not consider the processes to be rigid enough. This can create differences in the different stores, that also affects the maintenance of the organizational culture in all the stores.
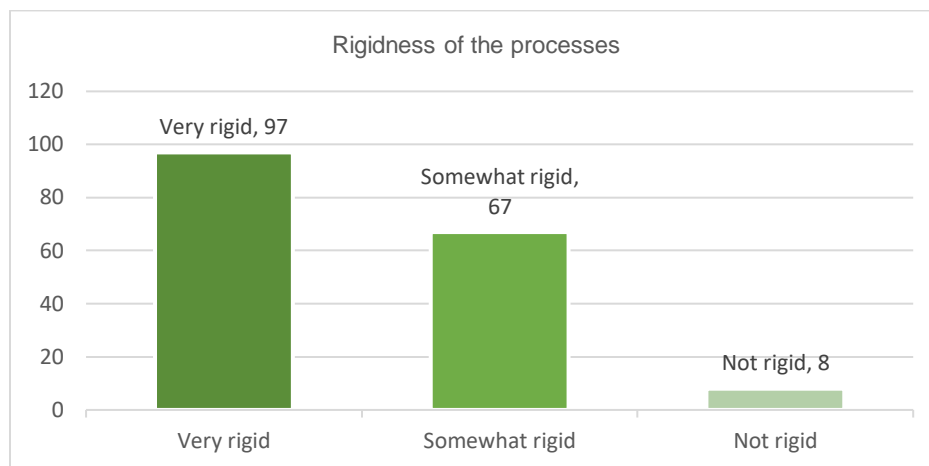
Figure 4.6: Rigidness of the processes

The fourth category focuses on Depilarte and the work of its members, starting with the way all the members view and describe the company, continuing with the stress in the work environment. In addition, looking at how much the founders have influenced the owners goals and work methods in their stores, and if they consider important understanding the main ideologies of the company the ones that drove the creation of the organization.

The way the members in the organization describe it, is very important when understanding the organizational culture of a corporation. For this reason, the analysis asked the founders to give a description of what Depilarte was to them, their responses are in Annex D. On the other hand, owners and employees gave a 3 word description of Depilarte in order to match them with the founders responses and find what they share between each other and with the founders. The description from the founders allowed the creation of nine groups shown in Table 4 that were used

in order to classify the answers of the owners and employees and shows the ranking based on the most common answers, this classification is also in Annex D.

Table 4: Groups and description

| *Group*	Description	Ranking
1	Entrepreneurship, innovation, franchise	7
2	Steady income	3
3	Healthy and warm environment, teamwork	5
4	Professionalism	2
5	Stress free	9
6	Great quality service	1
7	Successful	6
8	Solid	4
9	Legacy	8

Source: Melissa Rocha 2020

After classifying the information in the nine groups, the patterns in Figure 7 were discovered, from the least to most common descriptions of the organization only 5 % agreed with group number 5, describing it as a stress free and 10% describe it according to group 9 as their "second home, family, love" and as founder number 3 stated "Legacy" these responses show a positive association to the organization and to what it means for them. The following group with the most affiliations is number one, 24% of the population describes the organization as a life project, filled with innovation, opportunity for growth and independence brought from having their own

company. Group 7 focuses on looking at the company as successful and 25 % of the population considers that the organization is successful.

The next group with the most statements was number 3 healthy warm environment and teamwork with 26% of the population. As founder number 2 mentioned, "the company is a solid organization in 6 countries" creating group 8 and 29% of owners and employees also described the company as solid. The next group with the most responses was steady income, it is relevant to highlight that Depilarte is their form of income for more than 300 people and 32% described it as their security and income method and as founder number 1 stated "it gives them the opportunity to regain their investment quickly". Finally, the last two groups, number 4 professionalism and 6 great quality service have responses of 46% and 47% of the population respectively making them the most common ideas concerning the organization by its members.

Source: Melissa Rocha 2020
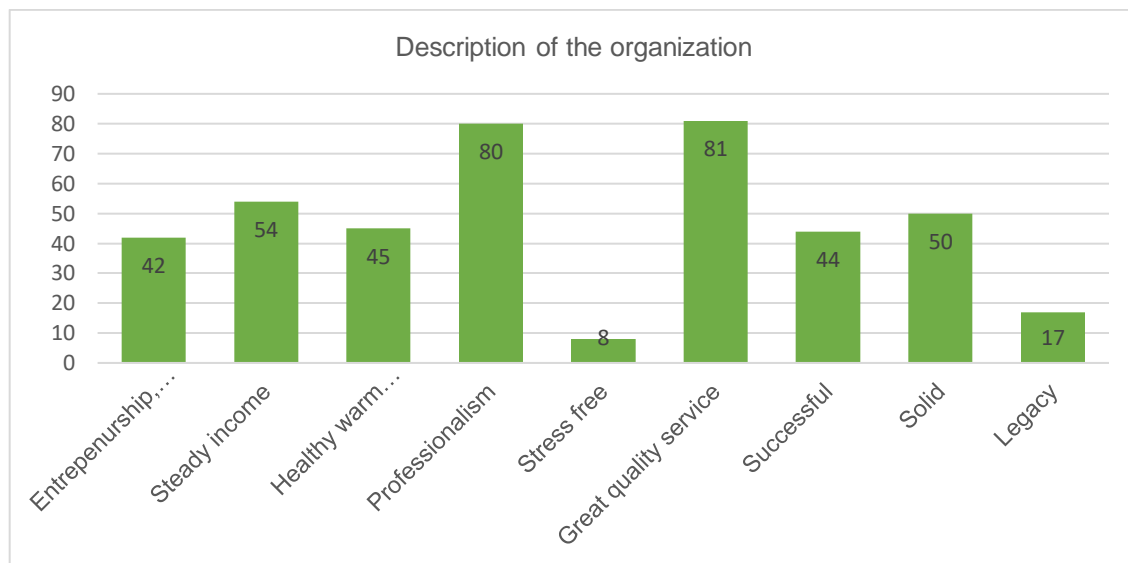
Figure 4.7: Description of the organization

Consequently, taking into account the most common responses from founders, owners and employees to this research, they consider the organization to have a great quality service, that it is a very professional company, creating a steady income for everyone involved in it, solid and successful in six countries with a healthy warm environment as an innovative franchise. Even though only 56% of the whole population participated in this investigation, in these classifications the largest accordance from all the participants involved was of 47% which support the idea that the majority of the population has similar views regarding the organization. On the other hand, this can also influence the problem of maintaining the organizational culture, because if the majority of the population has different views regarding the organization it means that its personality and influence in every member is different. Secondly, understanding how the population feels about their workload at Depilarte, they were given four options to choose from to see which one described better their workload, the options are described in Table 5 and the results obtained are shown in Figure 8.

Table 5: Workload description

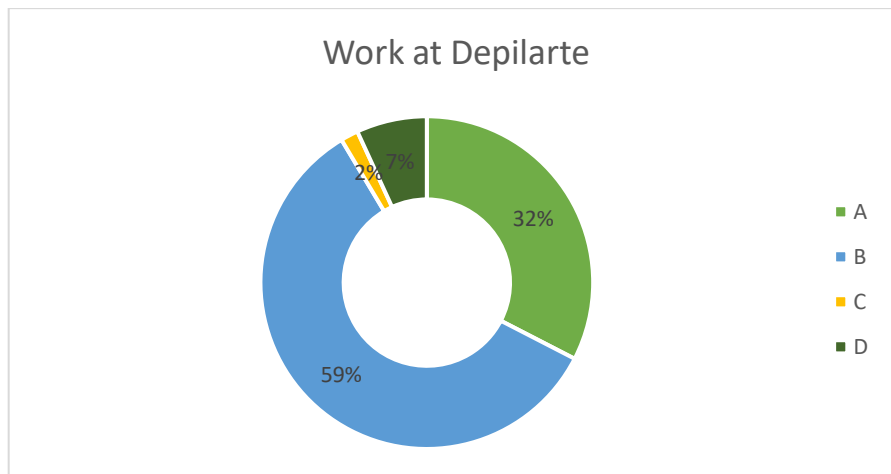| *Option*	**Description**
A	Straight forward, calm with specific tasks
B	Mostly calm with some setbacks from time to time but it is possible to enjoy the work
C	Mostly heavy workload, few calm moments
D	A lot of hard work, not calm at all

Source: Melissa Rocha 2020

Figure 4.8: Work at Depilarte

The figure above demonstrates how 59% of the population view their workload at Depilarte as calm with few setbacks and the other 32% consider their workload as straight forward with specific duties, making this the majority of the population to be satisfied and content with their jobs, the founders included. Consequently, it is relevant to analyze the possible stress caused by their work, only 18% consider their job to be stressful, and they all have coping mechanisms to manage their stress as working out, meditating, disconnecting, praying, active breaks, reading and listening to music. If members have a negative correlation to their work and daily tasks this can affect their view regarding the organization, and when they come to describe it, their negative associations will be part of it, and it will affect the organizational culture.

Furthermore, the analysis continues looking at the influence the founders can have in the stores, their goals, methods of work and a very important aspect of how relevant the understanding of the main ideologies of the organization before entering into it. Initially, focusing on the direct

influence the founders have on the owners and employees, 72% consider that they do have had a high influence from the founders in general. This also goes in hand with the influence the founders can have on the way they manage and run the stores and 81% of the owners and employees agreed on this. On the other hand, the founders consider they have had a high to medium influence on all the stores both in general and in the way on running the store mainly because of the initial training they all get. Consequently, the investigation evolves with the understanding if the individual owners have the same, similar or different goals in their stores than the goals of the organization. Figure 9 represents the answers received. As seen in the figure below 54% of the population considers that they share similar goals and 34% affirm that they have the same goals as Depilarte International, this data is including the founders point of view. Gathering the majority of the population they agree on having the same and similar goals among all the members and stores. When all the members of the organization are moving forward to the same direction it can relate to an organizational culture that impulses all of their members to the same objectives.
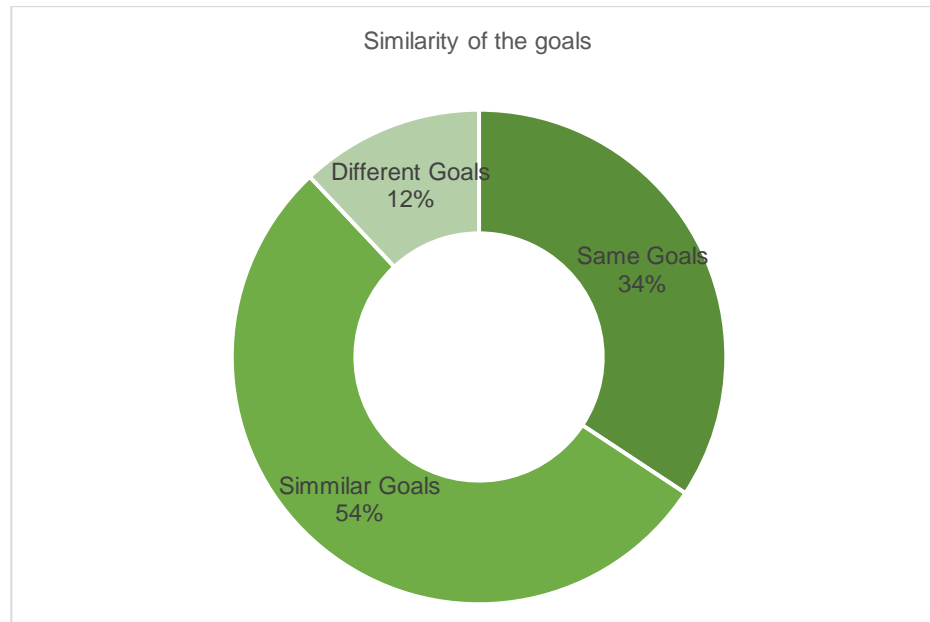
Figure 4.9: Similarity of the goals

To finalize the fourth category, it was necessary to ask about the understanding by the owners and employees of the initial ideologies that inspired the founders to establish the company. To the founders, it was asked if they take into account that the possible franchise owners actually understand the ideologies of the company when deciding to sell a new store, the data collected showed that 100% of the founders take this into account when selling a new franchise. Despite this, 7% of owners and employees do not think that taking into account the importance of understanding the ideologies of the company is relevant for the development of their store. This relates to the problem being analyzed because if owners do not understand and relate with the initial ideologies of the founders, they can drive their own stores to principles that can even contradict the ones that Depilarte International has.

The fifth and final category focuses on the relevant value drivers for Depilarte and its industry and the knowledge regarding organizational culture by its members. The value drivers considered most important by its members were: marketing strategy, service offered, and customer base. Figure 10 represents all the value drivers and their marks.
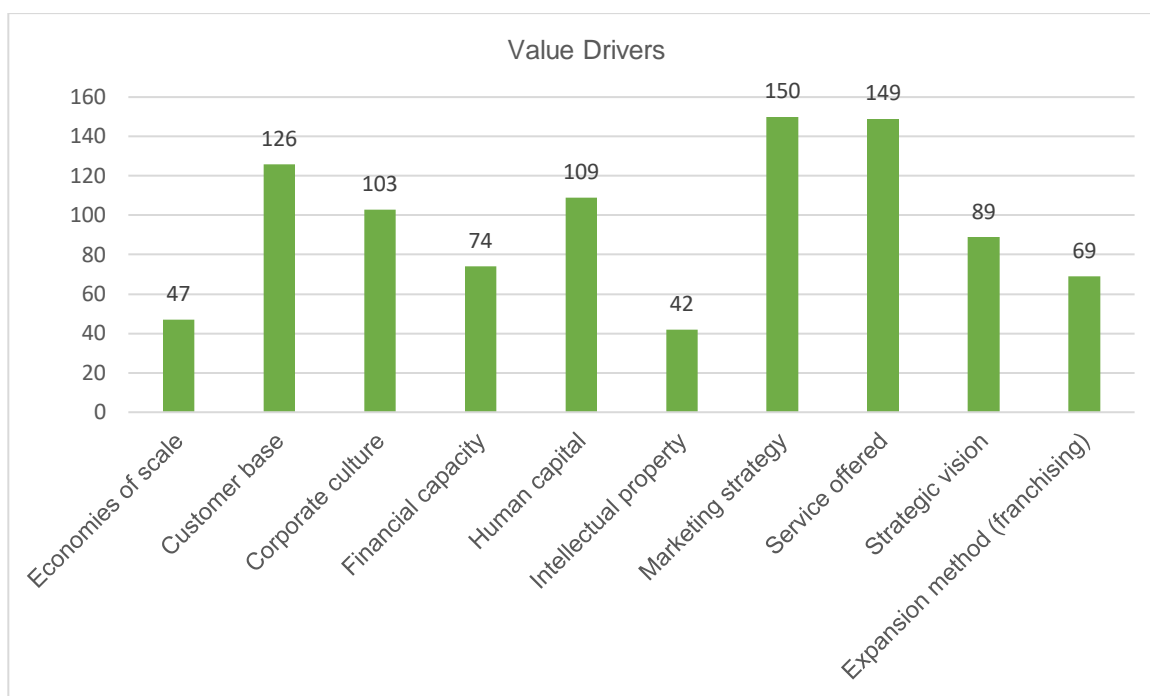
Figure 4.10: Value Drivers

For the majority of the population the most important value driver for Depilarte was their marketing strategy as seen in Annex E. The company is very rigorous about their posts in social media that are controlled by Depilarte International in order to show a unified image in every country with the exception of special promotions from each country. The following value driver chosen by the population was the service offered, this is the strategic advantage of the company painless laser hair removal, it is what attracts the customers and 85% of the respondents value it.

In addition, human capital was chosen by 62% of the population as a relevant driver, for Depilarte women represent the totality of the employees because of the nature of the business and when asking the population about the importance of women being the leaders for this specific market 86% agreed on it, including the founders. In relation to the problem, having the 100% of women as employees no matter the country can have a specific influence in the organization.

Nevertheless, regarding the financial capacity only 42% of the respondents considered it as important and it goes in hand with the importance of utilizing the latest technology that in contrast 85% of the population considered as very important for the company including the founders. As seen in Figure 10 only 59% of the population chose organizational culture as a relevant value driver for the company, 63% of these were employees, 33% owners and the founders. However, when asking the population about the consideration of organizational culture as a value driver before the question they had just answered 68% of the respondents answered as if they had considered it before but only 59% chose it as a relevant value driver for the organization, Figure 11 shows this. Only 51% had knowledge regarding the proven importance of corporate culture in organizations. Even though the purpose of the investigation is to enforce the organizational culture in the organization, it is more relevant to have members that share the same meaning of the organization than for them to have knowledge from the benefits it brings to it.
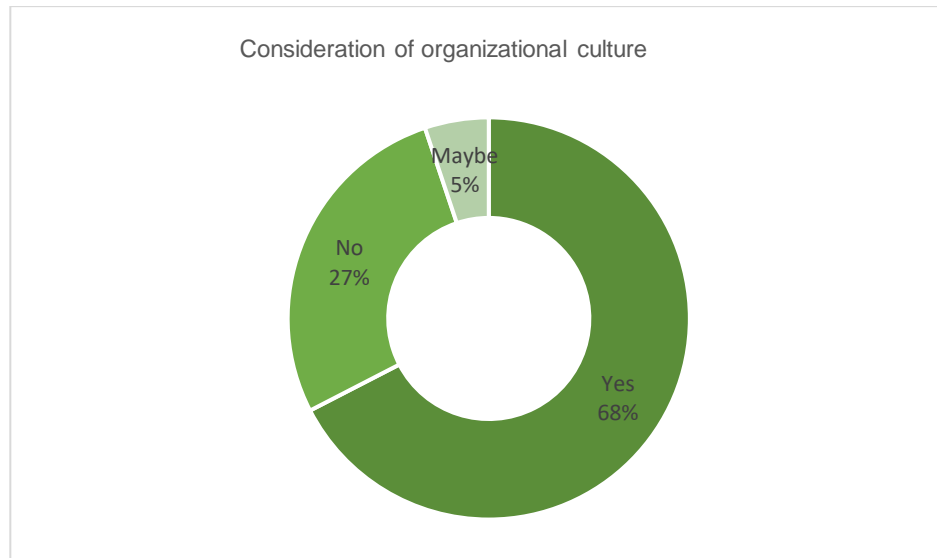
Figure 4.11: Consideration of corporate culture

The five categories allowed a better analysis and understanding of the information collected, giving it order and coherence. These have shown clear patterns in the data, as 76% have an associate's degree, 57% of the population identify themselves with some other cultures and 69% considers that their customers do value the service differently depending on the country they are in. In addition, 72% have agreed that there was a honeymoon stage at the beginning of the relationship with the company and also, 77% have agreed that the founders have had a significant influence in their way of working in their individual stores. Consequently, by following the literature review the analysis and collection of information as done in a meaningful and more effective way.

5. Chapter V: Conclusions

This research started with a literature review that allowed the creation of questionnaires for data collection, and later on the data analysis, this chapter focuses on evaluating the findings in order to be able to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the data and what these mean for the organization. In addition, answering the research question of this investigation that is based on the organizational culture in an international corporation interest raised when attending the Organizational Behavior course form the MSc in International management.

The initial thoughts when starting the investigation was that the organizational culture of Depilarte was not strong, mainly because it was a franchise with very fast international growth and there were so many external parts involved like the owners, as they manage their own stores and have the biggest influence on the employees, creating multiple influences in all the employees. Once the literature was reviewed, there was a clear view of how all the elements relevant to the investigation linked between each other and with the data collected the link between them was even more relevant.

Starting with the cultures, as Depilarte was based in six countries Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Panama, Peru and Venezuela. Five of these are neighbors and all of them are Spanish speaking countries with similarities among them. When asking the population 85% agreed that between the countries they have similarities in the cultures. Even though they consider this, they also stated that the customers value the service differently based on the country they acquire it. As Khaire (2017) stated two people can be in different parts of the world and assign a different

value to the same product or service, this context being the culture or country where the company is offering the goods. Considering the similarities between the countries is interesting to see how 69% of the population considers the services was valued differently.

In addition, the cultural skills founders need in order to manage all the members in the organization no matter where they are. The founders consider they have acquired the necessary skills throughout the years that have allowed them to have beneficial relationships with everyone in the organization. This international scene implies that the founders have to be global leaders with "cultural skills" that will allow them to be more responsive and flexible in order to manage teams and stakeholders from different cultures, a global leader maintains all the members of its organization motivated for the same goals (Steers & Bhagat, 2009). Nevertheless, 18% of owners and employees consider that the founders do not have the cultural skills needed in order to manage the members in the six countries. From this 18% of the owners 6% consider that they did not experience a "honeymoon stage" that was supposed to be characterized by a fascination and excitement from the franchisee because of all the new things its learning (Blut et al., 2011). In addition, 10% from these owners also stated that they do not considered important understanding the ideologies of the company, two ideologies that the founders agree on are important, specially the understanding of the main ideologies of the organization.

As much as the researcher agrees with the statement form the authors Steers & Bhagar (2009) regarding the "cultural skills" from the leaders and motivating all the members towards the same goals, Depilarte is a franchise that even though it has somewhat rigid processes and most of the population considers having similar goals, there is still a sense of individuality in every owner to

push their store to what they consider successful, the leaders at Depilarte meaning the founders, have to keep the members motivated and inside the acceptable boundaries of the franchise but still giving them the opportunity to grow as their own leaders, meaning this statement form the authors is not 100% true for Depilarte because of the way that it functions.

Depilarte is a franchise that offers a specific service, for this reason the intellectual property or capital the owners hold is key for the success. Wexler (2002) stated that the intellectual capital (IC) referring to the intangible assets, the knowledge, resources information, skills, structures, culture and relationships of a company which collectively can create wealth. Which is why it was asked to the population how successful the transferring of knowledge and training was for them, 13% responded that the training was not successful even though the founders all agreed that it was, this means that the lack of preparation among the members of the organization threatens all the customers, the individual store and Depilarte as a whole, because the intellectual property they are supposed to have and give them an advantage is not present in these stores. In addition, the population does not consider intellectual property as a relevant value driver for the organization as only 24% of the participants took it into account, and as stated before it does bring great advantages to the corporation and it is important for Depilarte to start paying more attention to it and to giving a successful training to all the members old and new.

Furthermore, to this matter is also relevant to analyze how the franchise can control the processes to ensure standardization and quality in all the stores. Franchising is based on individual owners thus franchisors must have rigid standards, set processes that franchisees must follow in order to present the same image to the customers, these have to be monitored, corrected and

enforced in all of the stores to ensure quality (Combs & Ketchen, 1999). In this investigation, the majority of the population considered that the processes are from very rigid to somewhat rigid, which is a good sign for Depilarte regarding the control they can have over the stores, not forgetting that there is a part of the population that does not consider the processes to be rigid but, this goes in hand with the training, if it is not successful it will harm the possible control in the stores and the standardization of the service offered. These two findings are a strength for the analysis.

One of the most important aspects analyzed in this investigation was the description of Depilarte. The authors Robbins and Judge (2013) state that the organizational culture in a company refers to a system of shared meaning held by its members that differences the organization from others. This shared meaning mentioned by the authors is represented by how the members describe or see the organization and if many share the same idea then Depilarte has a strong organizational culture as only 56% of the population took part in the investigation. The one aspect that most of the population shared regarding the organization was the "great quality service" offered in all a large description that can be drawn from how the population described the organization was "a great quality service, very professional that creates a steady income for everyone involved in it, solid and successful in six countries with a healthy warm environment as an innovative franchise". In addition, something relevant to highlight was that a part of the population considers the organization as their second home/ their family creating stronger bonds towards the company. What was found shows that the members in all have a good image of the company, none of the responses were negative, see Annex D. It can be concluded that the organizational culture of the organization is somewhat strong as the responses all fitted inside the nine group created based on the founders description. Regardless the number of members that responded there was a consensus

in these nine groups, this is a positive outcome from what was expected at the beginning of the investigation. It was expected to have a wider differentiation between the answers of the members and that the organizational culture was going to be weaker.

Stress is a relevant factor when thinking about employees in an organization. Having employees that know how to manage the workload and the possible stress that comes with it, is necessary for a positive outcome, and a strong link of feeling towards the company (Sergeant & Laws-Chapman, 2012). Initially it was thought that the work at Depilarte was not stressful for the employees but more so to the owners and founders, surprisingly, only 18% of the population presents stress and knows how to manage it, and as the authors stated this creates a stronger attachment to Depilarte and as the description of the company showed the members to have a positive relation to their work and to the organization.

Regarding the influence the founders have on the owners, employees, the way they work and manage their stores and they goals they have. The author Roger McCoy (2017) explains how it is possible to have a positive franchise culture in every way, having leadership responsibility from the franchisor this creates alignment with the employees goals with the ones of the organization, making them feel persuaded to behave in the prescribed manner set by the model because they want to and they see it is the best path for them, how the franchisee can look up to them and want to be like that, because they know this is how they will all succeed. The majority of the population considered that they have received a high influence from the founders, meaning that the organization has been a leader to all the members in it. Concerning the goals, it was surprising to find that most of the owners and employees consider that they do have same or similar goals as

the whole organization which also means they have the same goals amongst each other, because they all share the same influence form the founders. This confirms the statement form the author that the founders indeed have had a leadership responsibility to all the franchisees and their employees. This finding is beneficial to the study affirming that there has been a positive influence from the founders to all the members adding to the strength of the organizational culture of Depilarte.

The company has many value drivers, the ones the members value the most are marketing strategy, service offered, customer base, human capital and the corporate culture. These findings can also be seen as a shared meaning between the members of the organization, meaning that the organization with their main business practices has created the same meaning of all of its members. This question regarding the value drivers purposely had the organizational culture as one, in order to see how many members took it into account amongst all the other ones. It showed that 59% chose it as one and when asking if they had thought of it as a value driver before the question above 68% answered that they had, creating a discrepancy between the both and also 51% affirmed on having knowledge of the benefits it brought to the organization. This is viewed as a weakness in the investigation, because the data does not have consistency regarding the subject of organizational culture when members actually put a name to having this shared meaning and description on the organization which the data has shown that they do. The members can have a shared meaning of the organization without knowing that this is considered as organizational culture.

In response to the research question that initiated the investigation "How can the organizational culture be enforced in an international franchise like Depilarte?" the data collected has demonstrated that by having a strong relationship between founders, owners and employees, that creates a positive influence in the members allowing them to create their own goals that at the same time are aligned in the most part with the goals of the whole organization. In addition, when having standard processes that can be evaluated and enforced by the founders, this can create a much more simple and straight forward way of work, relieving the stress members can have and creating a much more positive relation to the work and the company. What was found in the literature review is confirmed in most of the cases with some differences based on the way the company works and has evolved by learning. It was also found that because all the members believe in the benefits of the service offered, this creates a shared meaning between them. This can answer the research question because if all the members believe in what the organization does and know this is their competitive advantage, then the organizational culture will be enforced because they all share the same meaning.

5.1 Chapter V: Recommendations

Recommendations in order to enforce the organizational culture in Depilarte are: Initially, to focus more on the training of old and new members owners and employees, to make sure they all are getting the right information and knowledge delivered concerning all the possibilities in the job. Moreover, this will allow to create more rigid standards in all the processes that also allows a better control and standardization in all the stores. Secondly, to be aware of how the customers in the different countries value the service differently to create a more personalized marketing strategy for each one at specific moments in order to attract new clients. Third, even though the founders consider on having the necessary cultural skills to manage the organization members, they can be more aware of specific situations that can come from each country, like this the owners and employees will not feel like they do not have the ability to handle all of them. Finally, to create a greater acknowledgement in all the members of the organization of the benefits a strong corporate culture will bring to the whole organization. In order to do this and to unify all the members in the organization no matter in which country they are at. It is recommended to the founders to create and share with all the members the desired culture of the organization; it would be a creative document that states and explains the characteristics that represent the organization and its members. This will allow all of the members of the organization to have a shared view and meaning of what the organization represents, it would be easier to enforce by having the personality of it in writing. This desired culture document will give the current members a stronger shared meaning between them. For the new members, it will create an easier transition as they enter the organization with the knowledge of the desired culture and how things are in the organization, and

like that they can grow inside the organization representing it as the founders would. It can also be

modified if necessary but maintaining the same core.

In conclusion it is recommended to the organization to apply the following:

- Enforce the training methods and to evaluate their success before allowing the members to

  start working.

- Understand the differences of the clients based on the country they are in.

- The founders must work in their cultural skills, in order to have better relationships with

  all the members of the organization.

- To create a "Desired culture" document for all the members to have and apply.

5.2 Chapter V: Limitations

Limitations concerning the generalization of the investigation. This was a research focused 100% on Depilarte and how the company has managed to create a shared meaning amongst its members. For this reason, it is considered limited to this organization. Regarding the timing and the depth of the analysis, there are some topics that are relevant for further analysis, when it's possible to have a higher participation rate from the members of the organization and also, taking into account the point of view from the customers these limitations are listed below:

Regarding the success behind the training from the founders to the owners and employees, for further research it would be interesting to understand the reason why 13% of the population did not find the training successful taking into account that the totality of the founders consider that the training to all the franchises was successful, meaning that something went wrong with these 13%.

When asking about the rigidness of the processes in the company in order to control and enforce them this can also be a matter to look at in more detail into why the 4% population considers that the current processes of the organization are not rigid enough, also having the input of those members from the organization that did not participate in this investigation. As standardization is vital for an organization like Depilarte.

Concerning the description of the organization from its members, so having a larger participation of members that give their opinion and their description because in order to get a more clear and generalizable description of what the members view or think about the organization it is necessary to have the opinion of more members.

The fact that the majority of the population considers that they have a calm job, also the majority considers the processes in the organization to be somewhat rigid and that only 18% consider their jobs stressful. This gives space for further investigation contemplating the fact that if the processes set and enforced by the founders can actually relieve stress from its members because of the structure they follow making their jobs easier and calmer.

As all the stores seek success in their day to day work this could be a matter for further investigation looking to connect that because they all have the same work, offering the laser hair removal service to customers, then they share more of their individual goals with each other.

For further investigation it can be interesting to understand the customers point of view if men were the ones applying the treatment, at the moment 100% of the employees are women and when asking the participants about how important they found this 86% affirmed it, meaning 14% does not consider it very relevant. This could mean that they would also be comfortable with men applying the treatment.

When asking the participants about the value drivers and the previous consideration of organizational culture in the organization some differences were raised, the differences presented in this part of the analysis can be useful for further investigation, why the respondents did not select organizational culture in the first place but have considered it as important for the organization before.

Regarding the initial ideologies from the founders 7% of owners and employees do not think that taking into account the importance of understanding the ideologies of the company is relevant for the development of their store, how can this answer change if more members take part in the investigation, and why do they think that this matter is not important.

A weakness of the investigation regarding the interaction with founders, it would have been helpful to have asked more questions regarding the experience and/ or interaction with the founders from both owners and employees. This could have allowed the members to create a greater connection to the organization.

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