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**TITLE:** The Considerable Factors in Hiring Practices of the Upscale Restaurant Industry:  
An Explorative Study of Michelin Restaurants in Oslo, Norway.

**AUTHOR**

**ADVISOR**

Student number:

248090

Name:

Lucelia Kallhovd

Tone Therese Linge

### **Abstract**

This master thesis focused in understanding what managers take into consideration during a resumé screening process and how they address a candidate appropriateness for a high-status and a low-status job in a Michelin restaurant in Oslo. The study was of qualitative nature, exploratory and gathered data through in-depth interviews with restaurant managers.

The findings of the interviews of 10 participants showed what the managers take into consideration when they want to keep a candidate in the hiring process, being that: experience, good communication skills and appearance. These three characteristics seemed to be relevant to determine the status of the position that candidates would occupy in the workplace.

However, the results from this study did not show many similarities with other studies conducted on the matter presented on the literature review that showed discrimination and stereotyping beyond reasonable doubt.

The empirical findings of this study could be of beneficial use to the wider scope of stakeholders in this contextual setting. For the research community, it could be an added empirical knowledge as to the applicable theoretical perspective of hiring practices given the European setting. For the practitioners and hospitality management, it could be a benchmark to address the inconsistencies brought by stereotyping, discrimination and rational laziness of the hiring processes. Thus, it will be a useful guide for both the restaurant management and aspiring hospitality practitioners to positively respond on the challenges of human resources undertaking.

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## Foreword

This master thesis is highest academic achievement of my life and I am proud of being part of the Norwegian School of Hotel Management of the University of Stavanger and I will be forever grateful to all that, somehow, helped me get to where I am today.

To my family, my husband, my advisor, Tone Therese Linge, who is a very kind and knowledgeable professor and has been a great source of inspiration during this process, too bad we just had you on the last semester!

To all my friends from UiS that I made along the way, thank you for making this process more joyful, thanks for the long hours of study, for the drinks, for the food and for the fun.

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My eternal gratitude for all of you.

## Introduction

The goal of this Master Thesis is to investigate which resumes' features are taken into account by the managers when hiring a person to a fine dining restaurant in Oslo.

Considering that a hiring process usually consists of three steps: 1) screening of resumés to sort out the ones who will be called to an interview; 2) interview; and, 3) decision making.

This research was focused on the first step of a hiring process: the resumé screening.

This study was inspired by previous research that pointed out that employment discrimination transpire beyond reasonable doubt in the United States of America and Europe, based on ethnicity or race expressed through names in their job applications (Birkelund, Johannessen, Rasmussen, & Rogstad, 2020; King, Mendoza, Madera, Hebl, & Knight, 2006). These experiments proved that the discrimination and stereotyping happen.

Under those circumstances, this study aims to investigate what features of a resume are considered by managers in their choice of candidate, together with the issue of stereotyping and discrimination in the fine dining industry together with the concept of rational laziness in the hiring processes (Birkelund, 2016).

Norway has a total of 12 Michelin Stars and one restaurant with 3 stars, the highest achievement. The country occupies the 14<sup>th</sup> position in the world rank of Michelin Stars, together with the neighbors Sweden and Denmark (Agung Gita, 2013; Guide, 2020; Johnson, Surlemont, Nicod, & Revaz, 2005; Kuhn, 2009). With that being said, the fine dining niche was chosen due to its increasing relevance for the hospitality industry, as matter of fact, previous studies have focused mainly on hotels and full-service restaurants.

Midtbøen & Rogstad, 2012, as cited in Linge 2015, raised concern about the recruitment and hiring processes in Norway. The researchers found out that individuals with non-Norwegian name had 25 percent less chance than individuals with Norwegian names of

being called for a job interview and also that discrimination was higher in the private sector than in the public. Another study from the United States, showed that recruiters kept placing certain profiles in specific roles, based in nothing else but the applicants name that carried an implied ethnicity (King et al., 2006).

Although this may be true, a review of the Birkelund (2016) study will demonstrate that among other factors, mental laziness can be responsible for this bias during hiring processes. In a world where the supply is of candidates is abundant and the time to make a decision is limited, we often rely in automatic non-cognitive features to make decisions which can lead to an implicit discriminatory outcome (Birkelund, 2016).

The numbers from Statistics Norway (Sentralbyrå, 2019) that are demonstrated in the next chapter show a difference between qualification and job placement, exposing that some immigrants are overqualified for certain positions, which can be detrimental to society in some years to come. Since it places qualified people in positions that they do not have the chance to develop or use their knowledge and skills.

The aim of this study is to explore the hiring practices of the upscale restaurant industry in Oslo and investigate if there are any barriers from the managers' side that hold candidates back from being hired, uncovering a possible unfair recruitment process.

Previous studies encouraged farther investigation into stereotyping and discrimination, as matter of fact, the existence of them have been cited in several researches, however, there is no general agreement in regards to the depth on which the candidates are judged to certain occupations, neither the reason why they exist (Birkelund et al., 2020; He, Kang, Tse, & Toh, 2019; King et al., 2006).

The Statistics Norway (Sentralbyrå, 2019) showed that in 2018 the Net Move-In total in Norway was positive, which means that more people came to Norway than left the country



and the Service and Hospitality industry has been seen for many immigrants as a first entry door to the work environment in Norway (Linge, 2012).

An investigation of the fine dining industry hiring practices in Oslo can bring awareness to the field by calling attention to stereotyping and discrimination. This way future leaders can be encouraged to change their attitudes in order to mitigate the stereotyping and discrimination in the workplace and promote a more diverse and fair market for all.

This study applies an exploratory design and makes an effort to answer the following questions: What factors do managers take into consideration during the resumé screening process when deciding which candidate to choose for a job? How do managers assess a candidate's appropriateness for a high-status and low-status job?

The next chapter shows an overview of immigration as a trend all over the world and in Norway, with reason for migration and a picture of the number of immigrants in Norway. After that, the literature review displays the main researches used as base for this study.

## **Immigration in Norway**

### **Motives and Trends**

Migratory movements have been seen since the start of the humankind could be documented. It was a search for food and climate that lead the way at first, then with the development of cognitive skills and writing it was possible to travel less and build things that could sustain people for a while.

Nowadays, the driving force for a better life are: safety, since some places in the world still deal with war; better wages and better education (Jonathan Coppel, 2001; Mor-Barak, 2014).

According to the Trends in Immigration and Economics Consequences review, from 2001, the tendency consisted in people moving from undeveloped countries to countries that have a more established and secure economy, countries that are more developed in an overall sense.

The migrating movements overall have been in all sides of this phenomenon, countries that have people leaving and the countries that receive people. In the countries that are having immigrants coming in, an impact in government revenue expenditure can be observed and, nowadays, there is a tendency to make it easier for skilled immigrants to come in opposition to have low educated and no skilled people coming. Which raised concerns on the sending countries since they started to lose their “brains” (Jonathan Coppel, 2001).

There are many other reasons that can make an individual move away from his homeland that go away from this thesis scope. By having a look and reflecting about the main trends and reasons in immigration, a deeper look into the Norwegian society and immigration facts will set up the scene for a better understanding of hiring processes in the hospitality field, specifically in the upscale dining industry in Oslo.

### **A background and Context**

According to Statistics Norway, with updated numbers from April 28<sup>th</sup> 2020, the Net Immigration to Norway was 39,9% bigger in 2019 than in 2018 and the majority of immigrants come from European countries followed by Asian countries (including Turkey) (Sentralbyrå, 2019). The Statistics Norway also show that the main reason for immigration is, first of all, labor, followed by family reunion, refuge/asylum and education (data last updated in May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019).

A study conducted by Birkelund (2019) stated that immigrants have a lower level of employment if compared to the population, the Eastern Europeans are shown to have higher

employment rate than immigrants from Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Pakistani immigrants show a high rate of self-employment, the biggest rate of all ethnic groups in Norway (Olsen 2011 as cited in (Birkelund, Chan, Ugreninov, Midtbøen, & Rogstad, 2019)

Norwegian history has extensively shown that Norway had not been a place that use stratification or 'social status' (Chan, Birkelund, Aas, & Wiborg, 2011, p. 451) in order to define its population, everyone would seem familiar to each other and treat and be treated as equals in comparison to another nations. However, the researchers pointed out that being Norwegian, with Norwegian name and educational background can influence in a person's chance of social mobility in the Norwegian society.

According to Larsen, Rogne, & Birkelund (2018, p. 87), the Norwegian welfare state protects employment for its citizens which causes an impact on job mobility in certain positions. Making harder for new immigrants to penetrate in the job market. In order to do so, these immigrants end up accepting low skill jobs which they are overqualified for. This can become destructive for the society on the long run (Larsen, Rogne, & Birkelund, 2018, p. 87).

Extensive researches have demonstrated that first and second generation of immigrants have experienced ethnic discrimination (Birkelund, 1992, 2016; Birkelund et al., 2019; Birkelund, Heggebø, & Rogstad, 2017; Chan et al., 2011; Larsen et al., 2018; Wright, Baxter, & Birkelund, 1995). Thus, when hired, minority job seekers need better qualifications to be even contemplated on a similar standard as the other candidates. Also, expecting that discrimination will happen to them, candidates might end up looking for jobs with inferior requirements than they hold to being able to enter market.

Rogstad, 2004, as referred to in Linge, 2015, presented in his work evidences for direct and indirect discrimination against people with minority background in the Norwegian hospitality job market. Rogstad observed that employers handled the minorities in a different

way due their low competence in Norwegian language or due to the candidates not having the education that seemed familiar to the employer. The recruiters would rather to hire someone that would bring less uncertainties to the environment (Linge, 2015, pp. 21-27). However, those were all assumptions based on a minority group rather than a particular person.

Studies encouraged the investigation of the pace in which new immigrants take in rules and patterns of their new home. Supposedly, these adaptations will happen in a low speed and it may take many generations for them to assimilate and behave within the expected norms (Triandis & Triandis, 1962, p. 19).

Birkelund et al. (2019) argued that immigrants might decide to go into self-employment as well as going to fields where they might face more equality, such as the public sector, seeking to avoid be confronted with discrimination and prejudice. Such decision-making can change the essence of the job seekers pool affecting the employers' conduct and, as previous mentioned, be detrimental to society on the long run (Birkelund et al., 2019, p. 255).

After presenting the Norwegian context for immigration, the following chapter contains the literature review, where core concepts for this analysis make frequent appearance in the researches within hospitality and will be explored. Following that, I explain the data collection process, demonstrate the results, make some ethical considerations and further it will all lead to a conclusion of the thesis.

### **Literature Review**

The goal of this chapter is to summarize the literature in order to lead to a better understanding of the scenario in the hospitality industry and in Norway by covering several elements that are essential for this research.

First, perceptions that may arise about a candidate's resumé will be discussed; followed by literature about discrimination and stereotype in the workplace and society. The last element of this chapter is a complete review of the Rational Laziness study from Birkelund (2016). All of these elements together provide a well-rounded basis for this master thesis, when linking the concepts together and using it for the further discussion.

It is important to know that it is not just in Norway that implied discrimination and stereotypes come into light during hiring processes. Case studies from the U.S and Europe have shown similar results to the Norwegian studies, as the Literature Review will show.

### **Resume first impression: what's in the name?**

Many characteristics such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, among others are not legally allowed to be considered in a hiring process, in some countries even the fact of asking for a picture attached to the resume is considered illegal (Bendick & Nunes, 2012).

Under those circumstances, the jobs applicants' name is the first thing that an employer evaluates according to Birkelund (2016). The author also pointed out in another study that immigrants usually have an inferior rate of employment if compared to the greater population. A study conducted in Oslo, within different sectors of the economy, demonstrates an overall discrimination against non-Norwegian ethnic names, regardless them being first or second generation of immigrants (Birkelund, 2016).

The biggest non-European migrant groups are from Iraq and Somalia and the most entrenched group in Norway is the Pakistani (Birkelund et al., 2019). The randomized field experiment by Birkelund et. al (2019) showed that applicants with a typical Pakistani name were less likely to be called to a job interview compared to those with common Norwegian name.

An Irish case-study about employees that have different names than locals who immigrate to Northern Ireland showed that they had the perception of being sub-judged as low-skill workers by their employers in the hospitality industry. Although welcoming and valuing the presence of migrant workers, their skills were, most of the times, under-used in the market (Devine, Baum, Hearn, & Devine, 2007, p. 347).

In Norway, although not very well comprehended, job seekers with a Norwegian name were more likely to be called back for a job interview than the applicants with a Pakistani name (Birkelund et al., 2019, p. 241).

Although no discrimination was clearly demonstrated by the main informants of a U.S study, when asked about it, an audit investigated at the same informants and it was shown that their attitudes differed from their words. Meaning that their hiring decisions did not favored candidates from a different race or ethnicity (Birkelund, 2016; King et al., 2006; Shih, 2002).

King et. al (2006) study showed substantial effects of occupational stereotypes across race groups. The authors demonstrated how individuals with common Black and Hispanic names might have a subjective disadvantage in a hiring process as well as how people with Asian names can be treated differently from the others, confirming past theories in the matter. However, the authors call attention that the results showing a negative racial stereotyping are, in all likelihood, unintended (King et al., 2006, pp. 1155-1156).

It is important to realize that hiring a new worker is to take a risk, since it is impossible to know how this individual will behave with others and perform a task at work. This way, most of the managers rely on resumés and cover letters to evaluate an applicant at first. However, even with all give information, managers end up counting on their own knowledge or perception of a person or group (Birkelund et al., 2020, p. 2).

## **Discrimination and Prejudice**

As stated by Mor-Barak (2014), “discrimination can lead to negative impact on access to jobs, promotions or compensation” (Mor-Barak, 2014, p. 56) and prejudiced is defined as a “a preconceived judgment or opinion held by members of a group. Most commonly, a prejudice is perceived as an irrational attitude of hostility directed against an individual, a group, a race, or their supposed characteristics” (Mor-Barak, 2014, p. 139).

However, prejudice can also be perceived as social distance, such as in people that do not tolerate subjective discrepancy among others. Likewise, it is seen as occurrent among individuals that are insecure. Insecure people are more likely to want to keep the things as they are and are less likely to prefer change, embracing a less democratic and more conservative view (Triandis & Triandis, 1962).

Placing these concepts in the Norwegian job market, Midtbøen & Rogstad, 2012, as cited in Linge 2015, raised concern about the recruitment and hiring processes in the country. The authors found out that individuals with non-Norwegian name had 25 percent less chance than individuals with Norwegian names of being called for a job interview. The research also found out that the discrimination was higher in the private sector than in the public.

These practices were interpreted as blending of previous negative experiences with different background than Norwegian employees and a lack of knowledge about diverse ethnic backgrounds from the employer side (Linge, 2015).

One of the earliest studies in prejudice, social distance and discrimination (Triandis & Triandis, 1962) developed a few hypothesis regarding these subjects: (i) cultures differ in norms about social distance; (ii) in societies with strong egalitarian values, where democracy and or Christianity are present, responses to negative stereotype happen in order to reduce the differences and; (iii) the more insecure and anxious an individual is, greater will be the level of social distance that he/she will perceive towards people who are different from him/her.

Furthermore, literature has shown that majorities and minorities perceive discrimination and stereotypes in different ways. Majority groups are more likely to have a positive attitude towards themselves since an early age. Which differs from ethnic minorities, since they understand from an early age that certain traits are associated with them and can lead to what is called an out-group negativity, or discrimination. However, if a stereotype is recurrent among a group and a person of that group has to perform a job that is related to the stereotype, the attitude of this individual tends to be compatible with the perceived trait (Gillen-O'Neel, 2014).

A broad and comprehensive study from the United States showed that employers kept trusting in certain stereotypes and placing applicants with non-American names in specific occupations that were defined accordingly to some perceived mental definition that they previously had (King et al., 2006).

These hiring practices segregate people from different backgrounds in the workplace. The minorities keep being hired for low-skill, low-paying and low-status jobs, causing a “ghettoization” of the work environment rather than being included and set-up for success. First and second generation immigrants are discriminated and not granted opportunities in the same extent as to people with a Norwegian name (Birkelund, 1992; Birkelund et al., 2019; Birkelund et al., 2017; King et al., 2006; Linge, 2012, 2015).

Rogstad, 2001 as cited in Linge, 2015, showed how direct and indirect discrimination processes hold up individuals with minority background the chances of entering the job market. Looking into the Norwegian context, the preference for locals and not for ethnic minorities, that were explicit through their names, was reasoned by the hiring staff due to the lack of competence in the Norwegian language, work life and culture or even for having the not ideal education background. The hiring team preferred to hire individuals that they were familiar with their background, assuming that a person's Norwegian name was similar



enough to them, personally and overall would decrease the degree of uncertainty in fitting a task to an employee (Linge, 2015).

Non-Norwegian candidates tend to need stronger qualifications in order to be even considered equals to the majority of local candidates, which eventually leads the job seekers to an overqualification status. Meaning that ethnic minorities are more likely to apply for jobs with lower formal requirements than what they have (King et al., 2006; Larsen et al., 2018).

It has been stated that policies from government as well as from private companies have been trying to soften the clash between locals, immigrants and minorities within the labor market, aiming to have a better management of the diverse environment (Mor-Barak, 2014, p. 136).

However, when analyzing minorities gap in the workplace, researchers talked about a “glass ceiling”, which means that even with actions to facilitate the entrance of a minority to the labor market in order to overcome discrimination and prejudice, an invisible barrier still exists, blocking or slowing down their vertical movement up to the hierarchy, specially to the jobs that are considered to be the best positions up in a chain (He et al., 2019; King et al., 2006; Larsen et al., 2018; Wright et al., 1995).

Some possible motives that might cause the discriminations in hiring processes will be investigated in the following topics, starting with stereotyping of a candidate.

### **Stereotype and Occupational Stereotype**

Mor Barak (2014, p.139) explained stereotype as a “standardized, oversimplified mental picture that is held in common by members of a group”. In another words, it tells just part of a story, not the whole picture of it.

Since an early age, mental pictures of certain occupations might follow a child through years and sometimes, can lead to the harmful kind of stereotypes, weighted as

prejudice against race, gender or age, among other characteristics. Although stereotyping can have a negative connotation overall, it can also be seen as positive, when preparing an individual for a meeting with someone that is from a different background in order to avoid a clash of values or habits (Caparoso & Collins, 2015; Gillen-O'Neel, 2014; He et al., 2019; Mor-Barak, 2014; Roe, 1974; Schuster & Martiny, 2017; Wen, Shan, & Bin, 2012).

Lipton et al. 1991, as referred to in King et al. 2006, defined the concept of occupational stereotype being a “preconceived attitude about a particular occupation, about people who are employed in that occupation, or about one’s suitability for that occupation” (King et al., 2006, p. 1145).

For instance, Anteby, Chan, & DiBenigno (2016, p. 187) as referred to in He et al. 2019, characterized occupational stereotype as:

“Associating certain traits and attributes with different occupations and define the occupational stereotype as socially constructed entities that include (i) a category of work; (ii) the actors understood; (iii) the actions enacting the role of occupational members; and (iv) the structural and cultural systems upholding the occupation.” (He et al., 2019, p. 2).

The recognition of stereotypes in certain occupations might be critical to understand vocational behavior, whereas a specific image comes to mind whenever we think about an occupation. This might come from early childhood when we are exposed to certain stereotypes either in books or television and children hold to it through life and become infused in social categorization and associated with expectations, as known as, stereotypes.

In reality, regardless the negative connotation that stereotyping has, creating a categorization or schema are important to humans since it aids us to arrange objects and feelings, consciously or unconsciously and it is seen as an important feature of being a human (Caparoso & Collins, 2015; He et al., 2019).

According to Stele (1997), stereotype can be alarming when it places the person in a negative spectrum of life and can bring to light a person's social anxieties or lead the individual to accommodate with what has been implied about him or her (as cited in Caparaso et al., 2015).

King et al. (2006) highlighted that the consequences of stereotyping are not fully investigated, however, cites Shih (2002) work with 145 in-depth interviews and found evidence of stereotyping in four different fields: hotels, retail stores, furniture manufactures and printing (Shih, 2002, p. 104).

Employers were more negative towards Black and Hispanic people. As matter of fact, the stereotypes appeared to be triggered just by reading the applicant's name. The authors point out that the finds are substantial, although should be looked at with caution, due its probable unintentional roots (King et al., 2006, pp. 1146-1147).

He et al. (2019) speculated that stereotype is perpetuated for both sides, job seekers and employers. The first by averting to pick jobs that are, for whatever reason, associated with a group that has a different identity than them. As for example, women would avoid looking for jobs that are perceived as masculine. At the same time, the employers are less inclined to hire people from groups that the stereotypical traits do not fit the requirements of the occupation. Thus, the authors do not speculate which one happens first, the study implies that if a mismatch occurs, the stereotyped group is less likely to be hired (He et al., 2019).

Birkelund (2020) showed an interesting view on hiring decision and stereotyping. When screening through a resumé the employer might ask 'Will Khan be a good worker?', which is difficult to know since they would not know before they hire this person. Therefore, they swap the question with an easier one, starting by treating the subject, Khan, as a member of a bigger group X and asking instead: 'Are members of group X good workers?'. This way, the employers can make decisions about Khan based on the stereotypes about group X. In

addition, the author emphasized that when the employers have no experiences with workers from certain groups, they usually tend to lean on general assumptions about that group characteristics from media and other resources (Birkelund et al., 2020, pp. 5-6).

In the Norwegian job market, a case study demonstrated that applicants from a visible minority background are looked upon in a different way than the Norwegian applicants. The minorities were associated with a lack of Norwegian language competence, low knowledge of Norwegian work life and also having the not correct education. When having a Norwegian applicant, the employers had the feeling of less uncertainty, since they were familiar with their education, background and experiences, these applicants were preferred (Linge, 2015).

The reasons that underlie this preference are explored in the next topic of this chapter: rational laziness.

### **Rational Laziness**

The concept of Rational Laziness emerged to help explaining people's decision making. If the number candidates to choose from is high and the time is limited, human beings tend to make an automated decision about the situation, instantaneously characterizing the individuals as in-group or out-group members (Birkelund, 2016).

Birkelund (2016) study aimed to show how people behave in a hiring scenario and specifies mechanisms from the managers decision making. Considering time being limited and supply of labor being abundant, this structured scenario is crucial to understand the choices made.

The author brought attention to the fact that employers were interviewed about job opportunities to second generation immigrants, the ones who are born in Norway but have a non-Norwegian ethnic name. However, the conversation was often shifted from that to talking about general immigrants, which made the author look further into this matter.

When discussing discrimination based on stereotyping and prejudice, the author highlighted that everyone has to classify people and things in order to function. It's a human behavior and condition that helps us not feel overwhelmed by reality by reducing things to simple contexts. Therefore, people pre-judge others, place them in groups and accept or reject them. The human brain works in a way that it seeks to strive and survive, consequently they must belong to a group, it's almost an animal instinct the necessity to belong to a group and praise and detract another.

The biggest issue then, was to understand how people classify who belongs, in-group, and who does not belong, the out-group. However, the decisions seemed to be made automatically. Almost similar to a line of repetitive work, when you process a lot of information and separate them in general baskets, human beings tend to use short-cuts to process information.

Birkelund, citing Fiske (2000), pointed out that biases are not straight transferred into a person's behavior and there is not a lot known about that either. It is correct to presume that an automatic categorization, with probable stereotyping bias involved, happens in hiring processes.

When discussing the concept of bounded rationality, the author started presenting Herbert Simon (1955) work, where a concept about decision making emerge: satisficing, meaning that a person stops collecting information about other options when one has achieved a satisfactory point.

It was taken into consideration that most of the people search gradually, or in sequence, stopping when the utility of the search is satisfactory. Since the views cited above are part of a more abstract context, the model fails to address the non-cognitive aspects of the process of decision making, leading Birkelund to go further by integrating the bounded rationality on stereotyping literature to the study.

Moreover, Birkelund put the ideas into a context and three arguments arise for better understanding the screening in the hiring processes: i) taste-based discrimination, when the employer examines the applications based on his/her tastes; ii) statistical discrimination model, when the employer scans the applications based on his/her anticipated lack of information and cost-benefit calculations; iii) rational laziness, the employer might choose the applications based on his/her natural or unconscious grouping classifications.

Arai, Skogman Thoursie (2009), as cited in Birkelund (2016), displayed the results of a Swedish study about immigrants who have changed their names from Asian, African or Slavic origin to a neutral or Swedish name, had an increased in their earnings. Equally important, the Dutch study from Blommaert et al. (2014), as cited in Birkelund (2016), results showed strong evidences of discriminations against resumes with Arabic-named individuals, they were often less requested.

Both studies considered that the decision making was based in prejudices and stereotype. Although this may be true, Birkelund (2016) brings to light the rational laziness argument.

As mentioned before in this thesis, the hiring process is a set of decision-making steps in a scenario of limited time and a big pool of candidates to choose from. Starting with inspecting candidates that are not qualified at all to the job. Secondly, the employer presumably will be rationally lazy and not choose candidates that somehow express foreign ethnicity, most of the time due to their different than local names. Lastly, the employer might gravitate towards candidates that he feels more familiar with (Birkelund, 2016; Birkelund et al., 2019; Birkelund et al., 2017; Birkelund et al., 2020).

Given these points, Birkelund (2016) expressed the importance of considering the number of candidates, timing and pressure that the managers go through during a hiring process, these factors might make a difference in their final decision. In addition, the author

highlighted that humans are cognitively lazy, meaning that when a manager believes that he/she has a good enough sample pool of candidates they might not consider looking further, choosing an escape from the task of mining a good candidate.

The rational laziness emerged as an effort to comprehend the reason why employers did not characterize first generation immigrants from second generation immigrants. Discrimination came up as a first argument, taste-based and statistical, hence, the author suggested a more distinct approach to understand the decision-making process when screening candidates for a job.

### **Method**

This chapter contains the research methodology for this qualitative study that focused in understand which characteristics play a role in the managers' decision when hiring someone for a fine dining restaurant in Oslo.

First, the study design will be justified, afterwards the explanation of the data gathering will be given, clarifying the interview procedures. Given these points, the chapter finishes up with the analysis of the data collected during the interviews and how it will be discussed in the following chapter.

### **Design**

In order to better comprehend the purpose of the research, it is crucial to use the method that will best fit the goal of the study combined with the researcher possibilities (W. Lawrence Neuman, 2013, p. 477).

This research design was exploratory (William Lawrence Neuman, 2014), whereas the researcher pursues to understand the perceptions of hiring managers to job applicants with names different than Norwegian names and that imply a different ethnicity.

The study was of qualitative nature, in-depth interview was conducted to managers or recruiters from restaurants considered in the Michelin Guide (Agung Gita, 2013; Johnson et al., 2005; Kuhn, 2009) 2019 in Oslo. They were asked open-ended questions that were recorded and transcribed for better analysis and reflection of the researcher and during the interview process.

During this thesis development and data collection, the world was caught by surprise by a respiratory disease pandemic spread by a virus popular named Corona or COVID-19. Business were shut down temporarily and agglomerations were not allowed, social distancing was enforced and with all these factors combined the process of data collection became a challenge and some adaptations to the study had to be made, such as phone or Skype interviews instead of in person interviews.

As Neuman (2013) states, purposive sampling is convenient to select specific cases that need to be investigated in-depth (W. Lawrence Neuman, 2013, p. 274). For this thesis, the goal was to find informants who had experience in hiring processes and could contribute with meaningful insights. The restaurants from the Michelin Guide 2019 were pre-decided by the author. The Michelin restaurants were chosen since other researches focused in big chains brands, this way, the results can be compared in the future. The sampling started with the Michelin-star restaurants found in the organization website and the researcher gathered contact information of leaders within the restaurant by email and/or phone call. All respondents were kept anonymous.

A qualitative research method attempts to look within life over and above what it looks like to the eye. It seeks to manifest and understand the meaning of life, leading the



researcher to be immerse in the field and establishing relationships that will help to research the problem at its core (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006).

With that being said, the qualitative research method was the best match for this study, since the aim was to investigate and explore in depth what the informants take into account when looking to a candidate's resume. Trying to understand their meanings and what underlies their decision (McGrath, Palmgren, & Liljedahl, 2019).

The use of open-ended questions divided by topics as an interview guide, gave the researcher room to investigate deeper meanings to statements, since the qualitative method give back the participants feelings and thoughts about the subjects and not just direct answers. This way, there were not logical statements that would corresponds to an abstract construct which would lead to hypothesis testing (Ivey, 2012).

### **Data Collection: Sample and Context**

The four-point approach described by Robinson (2014) was used in this research: i) define a sample universe; ii) decide on a sample size; iii) devise a sample strategy; iv) source the sample (Robinson, 2014).

Once the field and topic were defined during the initial process of this master thesis, it was crucial to establish the sample universe. The aim was to investigate restaurants from Oslo that were cited in the Michelin Guide in the year of 2019.

Crouch & McKezie (2016) argue that in-depth interviews for qualitative researches require an intensive and immersive work from the researcher, justifying smaller samples in exploratory studies. This way, being able to generate knowledge and endorse ethical standards at the same time (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006; Damianakis & Woodford, 2012).

Since this research is not focused in statistical data or hypothesis formulation, the purposive sample aimed for a common element among the participants (Guest, Bunce, &

Johnson, 2006, p. 61) that was predetermined as being a manager active in hiring processes in upscale restaurants from Oslo.

Provided that, at first, the sample size was defined by considering what was ideal, practical and possible within the time available and being a small-scale study (Robinson, 2014), the total sample was N= 10 participants, the respondents were the restaurant managers or recruiters. If needed, more interviews would be conducted. There were no boundaries regarding age, gender or ethnicity regarding the participants.

The sample strategy chosen was a non-random and purposive sampling strategy (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012; Ivey, 2012; McGrath et al., 2019; William Lawrence Neuman, 2014; Robinson, 2014). The convenient cases were located from the Michelin Guide (Agung Gita, 2013; Johnson et al., 2005; Kuhn, 2009) 2019 database of restaurants. Recruitment of the participants, the managers or recruiters, was initially done by phone and email as an invitation to be part of a research, no incentives were offered.

The first contact with the restaurants was done by email. A message was sent to the general email available either in the Michelin Guide website or in the restaurants' web page. The interviews were conducted between March 6<sup>th</sup> and June 21<sup>st</sup>. The period of interview was extended due to the Oslo lockdown that happened from 12 of March to the 25 of May of 2020 in response of the COVID-19 containing measures. More on this matter will be found under the Ethical Considerations topic that is presented further in this study.

### **Data Collection: Gathering and Interview**

The interviews were conducted in person, one-on-one, as this study is of qualitative nature, a semi-structure interview was used to guide the researcher during the meeting and also to give freedom to investigate certain subjects further if necessary, as if they were in a conversation.

The interview consisted of some semi-structured questions, as presented on the Appendix of this thesis.

At the beginning of the interview in order to build rapport with the participants, some general questions about life and background were asked, questions such as their demographics, gender identification, nationality, age, experience in hospitality and educational level.

The conversation and the questions guide were used to give the researcher a basis to where to lead the interview to. However, the questions were not stuck to that script entirely. This way, giving room to the managers to express their opinions and not rushing the conversation.

The first group of questions were personal about the individuals, followed by questions about their career in the hospitality business. performance at work and their preferences at work regarding staff.

The last group of questions were focused in their hiring practices, trying to investigate how they chose and hire people and leading to how they deal with diversity in their workplace, past experiences and aspirations for the future.

It is important to highlight that two pilot interviews were conducted in Stavanger in early March of 2020, before the interviews for this thesis started in Oslo, the informants were two former students from the University of Stavanger who are currently restaurant managers. The reason for that was that the researcher wanted to evaluate if the interview was built in a correct manner and if the participants could comprehend the questions. After that, some minimal adjusts were made in order to have a good fit for the future participants and researcher.

The use of open-ended questions gave the respondents the chance to be honest with their answers, explain reasons for particular issues and also this personal approach allows the

researcher to read in-between the lines of the conversation, not just be attached to what the person says, yet allowing to read the non-verbal signs of the encounter (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Damianakis & Woodford, 2012; William Lawrence Neuman, 2014; Robinson, 2014).

A literature review was made previously to the data gathering process and, it was crucial to have an open mind during the meetings.

The goal of the empirical data gathered was to help to understand the relationship between theory and the world (McGrath et al., 2019).

Moreover, the interviews followed the Interview Protocol Refinement Framework four-steps suggested by Castillo-Montoya (2016). The process involves: i) making sure the interview questions are aligned with the research questions; ii) building up an inquiry-based conversation; iii) receiving feedback on the protocols used in the interview and; iv) piloting the interview protocol.

The interviews had the duration between 45 and 90 minutes and started with a brief informal introduction from both sides in order to make things more comfortable and put the respondents in a more friendly side to answer the questions, followed by the verbal agreement of the respondent in participating on the research. After that, the interview started with the in-depth and open-ended questions of the topics to be researched and finished at the moment when it was assumed there was no new information to be provided (McGrath et al., 2019; W. Lawrence Neuman, 2013).

As the data was collected, sooner the interview was transcribed and coded to make it possible to have the data analyzed in order to have its contents' weighed and if any of the concepts were not saturated, more interviews would be conducted (Guest et al., 2006, pp. 60-61).

The researcher was mindful of not expressing any emotions or reactions to the answers during the interviews in order to avoid or to decrease possible issues with social

desirability bias. It is also important to mention that the data was listened, transcribed and then read several times, after all it was critical to certify that the final themes derived from the data analysis were properly leveled with the themes mentioned by the participants. Some stories might be considered not 'politically adequate'.

Confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were assured and secured through a consent form (see Appendix). After the verbal consent, the interview started, and it was recorded by an independent recording device and the interviews were pseudonymized and encrypted and no code key was created in order to guarantee anonymity. In order to make the process efficient, the interviews were transcribed through an online software called HappyScribe.

### **Closing the Interview**

The managers were very open and outspoken about all the issues that were touched on during the conversation. A good rapport, since the first contact through email was the base for building a trusting relationship with the informants.

There was no holding back in answering the questions, only some pauses for self-reflective moments. The overall reaction when asked if there was anything else that they would like to add was positive "I think I said it all. It was a great conversation and I am happy I could help you!" (Manager 1, 10/03/2020); "I always like to talk to students, you were not the first and I am sure you will not be the last" (Manager 5 12/06/2020); "Thank you for insisting and come to talk to me now that we are open again, the past months were crazy and uncertain, but now things are back to normal. It was good to talk to you!" (Manager 9, 24/06/2020).

No participants asked to have any statements withdrawn.

## **Data analysis**

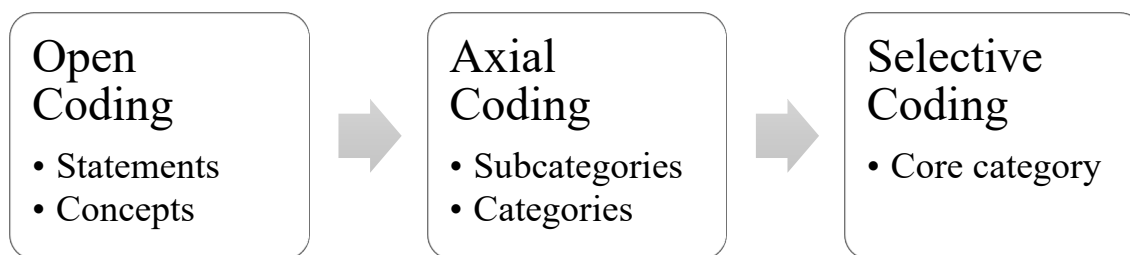
This study extracted a selected number of themes from the literature review, while remained open for new themes that could have emerged from the data. Moreover, new themes emerged from the data and were categorized.

After transcribed the data was coded, or conceptualized, meaning that labels were put into some statements in order to categorize the information gathered, facilitating the search for patterns on the interviews. Three concepts of coding qualitative research were used: open coding, axial coding and selective coding (W. Lawrence Neuman, 2013, pp. 477-488).

The open coding was the first step in summarizing the raw data gathered, followed by the axial coding, when the researcher linked the codes and identified the analytic categories that led to the last coding step, the selective coding, where the data was screened to support the previous concepts developed on the previous stages (W. Lawrence Neuman, 2013, pp. 480-484). This method was chosen since it gives the researcher the chance to analyze the data gathered with the chance to find out new themes that might emerge, bringing something abstract to a concrete label.

Thus, the software NVivo was used to help with the data analysis management, making possible to visualize often mentioned concepts as well as new words that would show up during the interviews, making it easier to categorize themes for further analysis of their relationship.

Figure 1. Inductive Flow of Coding for Qualitative Research



*Figure 1.* Code methodology for research used in this qualitative study. Based on “Social Research Methods” by Neuman, 2014, p. 481-482. The specific categories developed for this thesis are displayed on the Findings chapter that follows.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The data collection in this master thesis was reported to and approved by NSD (Norwegian Center for Research Data).

The study followed the ethical standards by Neuman (2013). At first, an email was sent where I explained the main topic of the study, provided my affiliation to UiS as well as some of my personal information, such as full name, age, occupation and telephone number for further contact. Following that, both parts agreed to have an in-person meeting and move forward with the research.

All the participants received oral and written information about the purpose of the study and also were informed that there was no right or wrong answer to the questions. The participants were informed that participation is happening on voluntary basis and that it is possible to be withdrawn from it at any time, as well as guaranteed confidentiality. There were no withdrawals or further inquiries.

The managers were aware that the matter discussed during the interviews were likely to be unpleasant to talk about and often are considered a taboo. They were informed about

their right of anonymity and that it was possible to withdraw from the interview at any point in time without a proper reason.

### **Verification of Empirical Data**

Equally important as the method description, it was important to certify the validity and reliability of this study. By making sure that the methodology was suitable for fulfilling the research questions, together with the validity of the design for the methodology, not to mention the sampling and data analysis being appropriate for the research.

**Validity.** Understood as trustworthiness, it means how proper and accurate are the methods used to gather the results. It is important to understand that multiple scenarios exist when doing a qualitative research method. Or for qualitative studies is about how authentic it is, not a crusade to find the truth itself (W. Lawrence Neuman, 2013, p. 216; Noble & Smith, 2015).

To ensure validity of this study, two pilot interviews were conducted before the main interviews, to verify that the questions were clear and to limit the possibilities for misunderstandings by the informants.

The validity in qualitative studies is concerned with having an impartial, honest, balanced, clean, candid and fair report of social life from the point of view of those who live it. It is not focused on duplicate an abstract construct to empirical data, but rather portraying reality according to the informants' views. Seeking to put together ideas and statements about the world expressed by the informants (W. Lawrence Neuman, 2013, p. 216).

In other words, rigor, credibility and transparency about the methods used in qualitative research, are crucial to guaranteed the validity of the study (Golafshani, 2003; Noble & Smith, 2015; Seale, 2001).



This study sought to investigate manager's preferences during hiring processes and what was desirable in a candidate to be hired. There was no yes or no answer, neither right nor wrong. The interview guide was built to meet the needs of this research and the questions could, somewhat, become of sensitive topic for some informants. However, anonymity was enforced and guaranteed and the building of a rapport prior the core questions was considered extremely important to get honest comments throughout the interview.

**Reliability.** Also understood as dependability or consistency. In qualitative research, it means that the findings are consistent, and do not vary within the process or the method itself (p. 212).

It is upon the researcher to stay in line with the decisions taken and making sure that the findings are candid. Reliability is about consistency and confirmability, considering personal biases and also method biases, taking them into account, thus also differentiating them to the informants' perspectives. Given these points, applicability is taken into consideration, meaning that the findings might be applied in similar contexts in order to confirm, to a certain point, the reliability (Golafshani, 2003; Noble & Smith, 2015; Seale, 2001).

As much as a researcher does not want to be unreliable, in qualitative studies, reliability presents itself as a challenge, considering that the majority of the studies of this nature are not stable over time, the subjects change and develop over time. Therefore, the idea of accurate replication is, such as in quantitative studies, put aside and many data sources and measurement methods can be applied in qualitative research keeping in mind that different measures can find different results (W. Lawrence Neuman, 2013, p. 218) .

This study sought to contribute to existing researches instead of replicating previous ones and, it achieved this goal by exploring a different niche in a specific location, the fine dining industry in Oslo, though in-depth interviews that had not been conducted this way

before. Making clear to the reader, step-by-step, how this thesis was organized and how this study reached certain conclusions.

### **Findings**

This chapter illustrates and confirms the results of the data analyses. Prior to the analysis, the data was gathered, transcribed, coded and conceptualized through open coding, axial coding and selective coding (W. Lawrence Neuman, 2013, p. 477). The intention was to link the results from the analyzes to the main elements from the literature review. On the other hand, new themes could have emerged from the analyzes.

At first, this section presents a brief description of the sample chosen. In order to keep the anonymity of the informants, very little personal information can be displayed. Thus, the author decided to expose only relevant information, such as gender and if the individuals are from Norway or not.

On the following sections of the chapter, the data will be displayed according to the core themes that emerged from the coding. Included in the chapter, there is a table presenting examples of direct quotes and how they were coded. Furthermore, the results are presented divided by topics using more direct quotes from the interviews.

### **Sample Presentation**

Following the NSD rules regarding the anonymity of this research, no personal information that could help to trace back the managers interviews, such as age, school degree and nationality, will be provided.

See table 1 for information on the interviewed managers.

Table 1

Managers Chronological Order of Gathered Data

Manager	Gender	Norway-born
1	Male	No
2	Female	No
3	Female	No
4	Female	No
5	Male	No
6	Male	Yes
7	Female	Yes
8	Female	No
9	Female	No
10	Male	Yes

*Note.* Numbers were given to the managers in order to link certain statements to them. As the research is very focused and touch in some sensitive subjects, not a lot of personal information can be displayed, thus anonymity is preserved.

### Interpretations of Findings

Three broad themes showed up during the analysis of the data. The broad themes that will be presented are; i) Work experience, ii) Appearance, and iv) Communication skills.

The table below presents some examples of statements made by the informants and how they were coded to the final core theme using the methods presented in the previous chapter.

Table 2

## Inductive Developed Categories

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Subcategory</b>	<b>Core Category</b>
<i>"I like people with previous experience. Because this industry requires a certain type of people to work"</i>	Manager prefers someone who already worked in restaurant	Hiring practices; work experience; preferences	Work experience
<i>"Usually, experience is a must. We had bad experiences with people new to this industry, I try to avoid that now"</i>	Manager prefers someone who already worked in restaurant	Hiring practices; work experience; preferences	Work experience
<i>"I can't have someone ugly dealing with customers. It's hard to define ugly, but they should at least make an effort to look good"</i>	Manager prefers someone who presents himself/herself well	Hiring practices; preferences; appearance	Appearance
<i>"If the person can't talk or understand English, it is a big problem. How is he supposed to get things done?"</i>	Manager prefers someone who can communicate with the entire staff	Hiring practices; communication; communication skills	Communication skills
<i>"Some rules are unspoken. Like, do not ask for every Friday off! You should know better"</i>	Manager prefers someone who understands the unspoken rules	Communication; non-verbal communication; work experience	Work experience
<i>"If a person has an outstanding resume, but when I call her to a in person interview, she does not come dressed properly or do not present basic restaurant hygiene standards, it is a no-no right away. I cut things short"</i>	Manager prefers someone who understands what it takes to be in the fine dining business	Hiring practices; preferences; appearance	Appearance
<i>"I can't hire someone with bad teeth or that smells like cigarettes to serve my customers"</i>	Manager prefers someone who presents himself/herself well	Hiring practices; preferences; appearance	Appearance

*Note.* Exhibiting relevant statements made by managers in order to understand how the coding process from statement to core category was summarized.

During the interviews, the managers pointed out that experience is the main attribute that they look for in a resume, considering that these restaurants are from the upscale side of hospitality and focus on perfection instead of ‘‘getting things done quickly’’ (Manager 2). ‘‘We do not have room or time for mistakes. The guest here is spending thousands of kroners and expected to have a first-class treatment’’ (Manager 3).

Most of the informants alleged that for working in the front of the business, such as serving or hosting, experience is the first attribute that they look into. An interesting finding was that one of the managers said that the restaurant used to be open for people with very little experience in the field. However, they had bad experiences several times and decided to only hire people with proved experience, regardless inside or outside Norway.

Another topic that emerged during the interviews was appearance. ‘‘If a resume does not have a picture of the person, it goes to the bottom of the pile of resumes and I just look at it if I didn’t find other people’’ (Manager 1). It was mentioned several times that it was expected from the workers to look ‘‘clean and groomed’’. ‘‘Some girls come to the interviews with very long fake, colored nails and big eyelashes. How do they expected to be hired? The nails are not hygienic and if one of the lashes fall into a dish, we are int trouble’’ (Manager 6).

An interesting finding was that the majority of the staff in the restaurants from the study were not born in Norway, neither had any Norwegian heritage and English was mentioned as the language proficiency required for the jobs. ‘‘We need the staff to communicate well between themselves, we have one Norwegian only, so we all speak English mainly’’ (Manager 2).

It was interesting to hear from the informants that they expected their teams to feel like a family, as they have particular work hours and are usually working when people are having fun. Under those circumstances, the staff have days off usually on Mondays and Tuesdays and often program activities together once every month, in order to avoid the feeling of loneliness from society and create and maintain a team spirit.

## Work Experience

The experience is shown to be fundamental since this niche of the hospitality industry requires the work to be flawless when meeting the expectations of guests. ‘‘This is not a club; this is not a party place. This is a Michelin star restaurant. We are never rushing things. We want to be precise and keeping up to our standards.’’ (Manager 4).

As mentioned above, the participants pointed out the work experience from a candidate as being the first thing that they look for when looking at a resume, especially if they are hiring front-line workers, the ones who deal with the customers. It is important to check how many years the person has been working on hospitality as well as the candidate rotation between jobs.

In contrast, one of the managers said that if the person shows to be an eager candidate through their presentation letter or further phone call, the candidate can still be considered to the job ‘‘Some people have no experience at all but really want to get into the business, if I have a good feeling, I will give them a chance’’ (Manager 2).

Usually, when new employees have worked in restaurants and hospitality before, they do not ask for days off, since they have the understanding that evenings and weekends are the restaurants’ most important working times. Avoiding, this way, any issues with the team and manager. ‘‘We had one rookie cook that would often ask for Fridays off. Friday is one of our busiest times. Have some decency, we should not have weekends off all the time! Needless to say, I had to let him go after one month. And he was Norwegian!’’ (Manager 2).

The managers expressed their desire for people with experience, though for some it is an utopic scenario to find the perfect candidate ‘‘On our ads, we ask for Norwegian, we ask for experience, but most of the time what we get is very unexperienced people with English only’’, and adds ‘‘if I have someone with no experience and someone with some, of course I will go for the person with some experience first’’ (Manager 8).

All things considered; the informants implied that experience is the first thing they would look at in an applicant's resume to be considered for a Michelin star restaurant position in Oslo. At the same time, if not much experience is shown but, in the application, and screening process the candidate shows an ambitious personality for the position, they would still consider the person to move on with the process.

### **Appearance**

“Would you like to have someone who looks dirty serving you?” (Manager 1). The participants judged appearance to be one of the reasons that someone could be hired or not and they often ask for pictures of the candidates to be attached to their resume application.

At first, the questions asked did not differentiate between hiring staff to deal with the public and hiring staff that stays on the backstage of the restaurant. However, as the conversations followed, some participants made the clear distinction between hiring for specific roles.

“You can call me whatever you want, but if you look ugly, you will not be hired! I mean, if you don't even try to look better, it is a problem for me. You are the image of my restaurant; I would never put someone with bad skin or bad breath to serve or host anyone.” (Manager 1)

Race or color seemed not to be an issue for any of the informants, in other words, the way a candidate carries himself or herself was the main focus during a hiring process. Physical characteristics shown in a picture implied more weight in their choice, as for example, candidate's “skin appearance” or “hair care” were often cited by the managers. If interviewed in person, their “teeth cleanliness”, “the length of the nails” and “smell” would be considered during a hiring decision.

‘‘In this restaurant we don’t care if you smoke or not, as long as you don’t smell like cigarettes and have your teeth clean, you should be ok’’ (Manager 5).

Equally important, some of the informants highlighted the importance that appearance has for hosting and serving customers, comparatively to the staff that stays away from the public, ‘‘If I am hiring a dishwasher, I honestly don’t worry about the looks. If I am hiring a waitress, I have to follow some standard’’ (Manager 9).

The managers interviewed seem to require a good appearance in candidates regardless their background, in particular for positions that deal with customers. On the other hand, for a kitchen position appearance did not seem to be an issue. The critical matter suggested was substantially to look good and not be reckless with your personal appearance.

### **Communication Skills**

The capacity to comprehend the tasks given emerged as another key factor for hiring a candidate, ‘‘I’ve had cooks making simple mistakes just because they would not understand the commands in English neither Norwegian’’ (Manager 1).

If a team staff is not able to clearly understand commands that are quick given, neither can ‘‘read the room’’, it is a problem for the managers. It may slow down the team’s flow, which can directly impact on the restaurants performance to the guests that are present.

Once I had asked an employee to polish the cutlery. She did not understand what cutlery was and did not asked anyone what it was. When I realized, she was wiping the chairs and tables that were empty and we eventually ran low in cutlery. It took me a while to understand the whole situation, as why was she wiping chairs, but eventually we figured things out (Manager 4).

One manager pointed out that it might look ‘‘weird’’ to have a Nordic food specialty restaurant and no one but the chef being fluent in Norwegian ‘‘but I never had any problem



with guests about it. If you speak Norwegian, good! But English is the main language that we expect” (Manager 5). Moreover, the informant did not seem concerned with the guest experience in that matter. She seemed more concerned in being able to provide a good experience for the guests. “A good communication between staff goes a long way” (Manager 2).

Hiring someone who is not fluent in the main language spoken in the restaurant might be a risk for the venue image, reputation and surely for the safety, especially when working in the kitchen. “It’s not because the guests can’t see the kitchen staff that I can hire anyone. I need someone who can understand things and speak up. It is a matter of safety for the kitchen staff.” (Manager 1).

A good verbal communication was the other main theme mentioned by the informants. Since it could impact in the way they cook food “exact steps” and “how to” from their recipes coupled with the need of constant attending to the guests demand in a hectic work environment. “Have a bad communication between the team is like a business suicide” (Manager 6).

It was interesting to notice that the majority of the sample demonstrated an understanding that in Oslo, the majority of people who want to work in a restaurant are foreigners “I can’t speak about other cities, but I have been working in major cities in Europe and Oslo for 6 years and this is typical of this business, majority of the staff and candidates are not locals” (Manager 10).

The managers interviewed implied that being able to communicate with the staff is important when looking for new people to add to their team, regardless their background, yet in particular for positions that deal with customers. It is necessary to understand and to be understood in order to keep the restaurant work standards.

## **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to explore the hiring processes in the upscale restaurant industry in Oslo to find out if there was any kind of stereotyping, discrimination or rational laziness involved during the resumé screening process.

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings as well as the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research to stimulate seeking answers for the research questions: What factors do managers take into consideration during the resumé screening process when deciding which candidate to choose for a job? How do managers assess a candidate's appropriateness for a high-status and low-status job?

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

The following sections of this chapter will focus on the three main themes that came up from the data gathering and were later, coded and producing the core categories in this research. Each element will be discussed separate, followed by the limitations from this study and suggestions for future research. After that, a conclusion will be presented.

### **Work Experience**

All the informants mentioned work experience as being a very important component in their first screening of resúmes and with that being stated, it seems to be important for the hiring part that candidates have some familiarity with the task and the work environment.

When having a big pool of candidates to choose from and limited time, the employers tend to rationalize their decision, the more they make it automatic, the less work they have to do, considering that human beings are lazy by nature. "Human beings are cognitively lazy. If

we think our opportunities are good enough, we do not consider all possible alternatives, we limit our search to a smaller sample” (Birkelund, 2016, p.221). Thus, looking for candidates with previous experience give the managers a sense of security regarding that candidate. By screening a resume and seeing what tasks a person performed before facilitates the creation of a mental movie of what that candidate can do.

An example would be if someone works in the dishwasher and aims to be chef. It does not seem clear if when hiring the managers have that in mind, that some people want more of a job besides just the financial reward. This way, perpetuating the stereotyping in certain positions of the hospitality business. However, as He et al. (2019) states, it is not clear from which side the stereotyping comes first, the employer or the job seeker, since sometimes people tailor their resumés for certain positions.

Equally important to highlight, it is that immigrants might end up taking jobs that they are less qualified for just to have a chance to go into the labor market which is harmful for society on the long run. The “glass ceiling” is real and slows down the vertical movement of immigrants in the workplace (Birkelund, 2016; Birkelund et al., 2019; Birkelund et al., 2017; Birkelund et al., 2020; Chan et al., 2011; King et al., 2006; Larsen et al., 2018; Wright et al., 1995). Although managers seem sympathetic to help their team to be better once they are in the business, it is not quite clear if they have that in mind when first evaluating a candidate for a job.

Moreover, such practices, as in “I like people with previous experience” (Manager 4, personal communication, 10/06/2020) might hinder the work penetration of minorities who do not have experience at all, and still want to be in this industry. Leading the candidates in a loophole of needing experience to have a job and at the same time being unfit to the desired position.

## Appearance

In Norway, some employers require in their ads a picture to be attached with the resumé, especially in the hospitality businesses. Meanwhile, in the U.S a heavier importance is placed in names since having a picture attached to the resumé can be considerate an illegal practice, (Bendick & Nunes, 2012; King et al., 2006) and with that being said, this might place a heavier onus in name stereotyping since hiring managers can't see a candidate's face.

The results from this thesis exhibit a considerably importance in the candidates' appearance for working with customers in a restaurant. Generally speaking, such practice can lead to a "ghettoization" of the work environment, placing people that do not fit in with certain standards in hidden positions or positions that are considered low-status without mention that their pay is lower compared to others and under those circumstances there is no rising in the career path for these individuals.

Given these points, the concept of occupational stereotyping (He et al., 2019; King et al., 2006) emerges when managers worry with the looks of a candidate for certain positions when they correlate people's images to certain occupations and traits, not to mention the consequences that occupational stereotyping can cause to an individual's behavior and sense of self.

Steele (1997) and Kang (2005), as cited in Caparoso & Collings (2015), state that in the long run, these actions can trigger an employee in a negative way, arising personal social anxiety or contributing to the person's acceptance of what is connoted about him and blocking his will to pursue more in life.

It looks like that the appearance goes beyond the question of "is this worker a good worker?", it reaches the matter of the manager's perception of an applicant being acceptable to the restaurant's image. Good appearance leading to high-status job within the workplace.

It is important to realize that it is not quite stated what is a “good look” to a server, the managers seemed to not be direct in saying exact physical traits and, instead, but an emphasis on how an individual carries his image and influence other positively. Some traits are explicitly expected, such as being groomed and have short nails; however, none of the informants stated exactly what they expected from a candidate’s physical attributes regarding skin color, hair color or weight and such.

### **Communication Skills**

If someone is not able to take an order from a customer or has difficulty in expressing themselves, it can be a problem for management as it can makes the service goes slower or harm its quality.

For these reasons, managers avoid hiring people that are not capable of understand the language or being understood properly. Notably, this is a barrier encountered by immigrants, especially the ones who do not master the local language or English beforehand.

As the literature review presents, some employers do not differentiate between first and second generation of immigrants, not to mention that they assume people with not Norwegian names would have a harder time in communicating with the staff (Birkelund, 2016; Jansson, Birkelund, Lillehagen, & Breiger, 2020; Larsen et al., 2018).

In this study, the workplaces investigated had English as the main spoken language and the majority of the informants were not Norwegians. Thus, for this study’s case, not mastering the Norwegian language was not a barrier in finding a job with them, not speaking English would be a greater barrier.

The most compelling evidence shows two main aspects of communication: 1) between the team and 2) with the guests. Neither of them required to speak Norwegian full-time for any high or low status position. The main issue for backstage, low-status position,

would be communication between the staff, thus whatever language is spoken, English or Norwegian, is the one that they look for in a candidate for hiring. In regard to servers, sommeliers and hostesses, that are considered high-status or front-line positions, English is the first main requirement and Norwegian is a plus.

Given these points, the empirical findings of the upscale restaurants of Oslo do not go quite in the same direction as the previous studies presented on the review, that stated that candidates are highly discriminated or stereotype for certain positions in some industries just by having a different name that imply ethnicity or race.

Instead, the informants of this study showed to have the tendency of choosing someone that have the above characteristics (experience, good appearance and good communication skills) in order to feel more secure about their choice. A very similar way to behave as cited in the rational laziness study.

The following section shows the limitations and recommendations for future research and, afterwards, the conclusion of this study.

### **Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

The main challenge of this study was, at first, to hear back from the contacted managers. The country was in the beginning of what would become a world pandemic. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the researcher was restricted to collect more data as Norway had a long period of lockdown and social distancing. The managers were contacted, yet majority was under much emotional distress due to the period uncertainty that the researcher felt the need to step back and let things go back to normal before reaching out to them again. However, the gathered data was significant in value and provided sufficient information to conclude this study to some extent.

The limitations of the present research include that the restaurants were not classified by the numbers of Michelin Stars they have, neither for their size. The study shows context-specific results and more research needs to be done to evaluate the Michelin Star field in other cities. In addition, further research should focus on multiple fields of the high-end side of hospitality as well as in the other steps of a hiring process. Another interesting approach for future research would be to conduct a study following same managers across time and observe if their hiring practices change over time.

The last chapter presents the conclusion to this study, restating the goals, reflecting about the reasons that might have led to the results as well as reflections about what can be done for the future and how it can contribute for society.

### **Conclusion**

This research goal was an attempt to understand how managers perceive a candidate when they are taking the first look at a resumé during a hiring process for a Michelin restaurant and if it exists any kind of stereotype or discrimination when hiring for certain tasks.

Studies from the U.S. presented features of discrimination and stereotyping beyond reasonable doubt by hiring managers attitudes towards applicants names in the hotels, retail stores, furniture manufactures and printing fields (King et al., 2006; Madera, 2018; Shih, 2002).

Birkelund (2016) presented a Dutch and a Swedish study also confirming discrimination towards candidates with Arabic names. However, the author investigated the matter further and presented the concept of Rational Laziness, stating that sometimes, human beings are just lazy and pick the candidate who will bring less uncertainty.

The findings of this study show some inconsistency to the theoretical reviews presented. Since it did not show discrimination neither stereotyping expressed in their choices during a hiring process. There was no mention about race or ethnicity as being important by any of the informants, neither any mention about checking a candidate's name as a first during a screening process.

Therefore, out of the three main concepts explored in this study: discrimination; stereotyping; and, rational laziness; the informants' choice was to stay with what seemed to be a safe hiring, meaning that the rational laziness concept was prevailing in the research. Showing that managers take into consideration i) work experience; ii) appearance; and, iii) communication skills.

Although the degree of which one of the traits influence in a hiring decision was not clear, the existence of them together in a candidate seem to be of highly importance in order to a manager. The good appearance and good communication skills, may seem subjective and appear to draw the line between employees who will work with customers, considered a high-status job and, the backstage employees, considered low-status task.

The reasons for the discrepancy between the literature review and the results might be that the majority of the informants were immigrants in Norway. Therefore, knowing the struggle of being a foreigner they put aside the differences and look into what matters for the job at that time.

Further research is encouraged, such as, looking into born-locally only managers, also investigate the other stages of a hiring process, as well as to investigate the degree that these traits play a role in the final hiring. In addition, would be interesting to conduct studies in different restaurant settings, such as fast food, franchises and seasonal places.



This study will be a useful guide for both the restaurant management and aspiring hospitality practitioners to positively respond on the challenges of human resources undertaking.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A. Interview Guide

Introduction – present topic, get consent on the record.

➤ Personal questions:

What is your educational background?

What is your main occupation?

Is there anything else you would like to share about yourself as a person or as a manager?

➤ Job related/personal questions:

How long have you been working as a manager in the restaurant business?

How do you like it?

How you organize, plan, and prioritize your work?

➤ Hiring practices questions:

Tell me about your recent recruiting experience, interviewing or hiring an employee. What does it take to find the right person for a job?

In your experience, what is the key to developing a good team?

### **KEY QUESTIONS – Hiring processes**

What is the first thing you look in a candidate when you need to hire someone new?

Is there anything that, if you see in a resume, you put the candidate out of the process or as not-priority candidate, if so, what is it?

➤ About the staff:

Do you have, in your team, people who are not fluent in Norwegian? What's the approximately percentage of your staff who is not Norwegian born?

How long have they been working in here?

How is your turnover rate? For all staff.

Why do you think your rate is as you say?

Can you tell me about an experience that you had with your diverse team that you had to adapt something to make people who do not speak the language feel as part of the team?

What kind of challenges do you face as a manager having a diverse team?

What is the downside of having a diverse team for you as a manager, for you, in Oslo?

What is the benefit of having a diverse team for you as a manager in Oslo?

If you could change anything about your job and/or your team, what would it be?

Is there anything else you would like to add?



## **Appendix B. Letter to the Participants**

Are you interested in taking part in the research project?

### ***“Human Resources Practices in Fine-Dining Restaurants in Oslo”***

*This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to investigate the best HR practices in the fine dining industry in Oslo. In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.*

#### **Purpose of the project**

This is a Master Thesis project Hospitality Managementt for the University of Stavanger Hotel School. This study in involves the exploration of concepts within management and hiring processes. The goal of this project is to investigate how managers believe to be the better approach to hire staff for their team. Current studies in the hospitality field combine concepts within sociology and psychology to understand the hiring decisions that take place. Thus, this project intents to explore in depth the perceptions of hiring managers in the industry in order to give a more qualitative approach that goes beyond numbers for further reflection in the matter. A personal in-depth interview will be made, and the information processing will be anonymous.

#### **Who is responsible for the research project?**

The Norwegian School of Hotel Management - Universitetet i Stavanger.

#### **Why are you being asked to participate?**

The sample has been selected through the Michelin Guide 2019 and a total of 10 restaurant managers will be asked to participate. Due to the short amount of time and resources to conduct this study, the sampling strategy will be purposive sampling, whereas the restaurants

from the Michelin Guide 2019 will be pre-decided by the author. The sampling will start with the Michelin-star restaurants found in the organization website and the researcher will gather contact information of leaders within the restaurant by email and/or phone call. All respondents will be kept anonymous.

### **What does participation involve for you?**

The study is of qualitative nature, in-depth interview will be conducted to managers or hiring managers from restaurants considered in the Michelin Guide 2019 in Oslo. They will be asked open-ended questions that will be recorded and then transcribed for better analysis and reflection of the researcher and during the interview process, the subjects will be presented with made-up resumes from job applicants and the researcher will ask them to evaluate the candidates. All respondents will be kept anonymous.

If you chose to take part in the project, this will involve that you answers my questions and they will be recorded and later transcribed, all data will be kept encrypted and anonymous. You can't be identified. It will take approx. 45 minutes. The interview includes questions about your hiring standards and practices as a manager Your answers will be recorded electronically.

### **Participation is voluntary**

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

**Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data**

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

The only people who will have access to your data is me, the researcher.

I will replace your name and contact details with a code. The list of names, contact details and respective codes will be stored separately from the rest of the collected data and I will store the data on a research server, locked away/encrypted, etc.

No participant will be recognizable in publications or not, and to what extent.

**What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?**

The project is scheduled to end in September 2020. The recordings will be deleted and only the anonymised transcriptions will be kept giving opportunities for future researches to go back and investigate them again.

**Your rights**

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

access the personal data that is being processed about you

request that your personal data is deleted

request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified

receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and

send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

**What gives us the right to process your personal data?**

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with Universitetet i Stavanger, NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

**Where can I find out more?**

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

Universitetet i Stavanger via Tone Therese Linge (associate professor) and/or, myself, Lucelia Kallhovd via email or phone. For professor Linge at [tone.linge@uis.no](mailto:tone.linge@uis.no) and +47 51833743. Myself at [lucelia.ferreira30@gmail.com](mailto:lucelia.ferreira30@gmail.com) and +47 41227520.

Our Data Protection Officer at UiS: E-mail: [personvernombud@uis.no](mailto:personvernombud@uis.no)

Responsible for Data Protection at UiS: Chief Information Security Officer (CISO): Marina Davidian/E-mail: [marina.davidian@uis.no](mailto:marina.davidian@uis.no)

NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email:

([personvertjenester@nsd.no](mailto:personvertjenester@nsd.no)) or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

**Yours sincerely,**

**Lucelia Kallhovd**

**(Researcher/Student).**