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“How do hospitality leaders and employees perceive and experience cultural diversity in social interactions in the workplace?”.

AUTHOR

ADVISOR:

Tone Therese Linge

Student number:

245598

261310

Name:

Anna Shirin Pollestad Kadir

Alexander Alberto Kumle

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore how cultural diversity in social interactions between co-workers in the hospitality industry. The research question is “*How do hospitality leaders and employees perceive and experience cultural diversity in social interactions in the workplace?*”. To answer this research question, a qualitative, exploratory research design was used to collect narratives. This through semi-structured interviews. The interview questions focused on topics related to cultural diversity and social interactions, such as perceptions of cultural diversity, and experiences with cultural diversity. The interviews were transcribed, and analyzed following the format of a thematic analysis.

The results chapter presented the overall findings from the interviews. In the discussion chapter, we grouped the most relevant findings into following three main categories; 1) Employees and leaders in culturally diverse workplaces, 2) Communication in the multicultural workplace, and 3) Social interactions in the multicultural workplace. The discussion led to the following main findings; Despite some practical challenges such as language barriers in communication due to language differences, the participants experienced and perceived cultural diversity as a positive factor in their workplace. Language policies was not suggested to prevent language barriers, but it could also prevent social exclusion due to language clusters. Social interactions in the workplace were perceived to be important for those who believe interpersonal relationship with co-workers contribute to a more satisfying work environment. The majority of the participant perceived personality to be the most central factor of people of the way people are different from each other, and stressed the importance of avoid stereotyping and generalization of others based on factors such as nationality, age, and gender.

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Foreword

This master thesis was written for our master's degree in Service leadership in International Business at the University of Stavanger. Our master's thesis is about cultural diversity and social interactions in the workplace, specifically in the hospitality industry. The topic is relevant for today's evolved and globalized world, where people with broad diversity backgrounds work together towards common goals.

We want to thank our families and friends for their support during this project. We would also like to thank our supervisor, Tone Therese Linge, for being a good supporter and motivator in addition to good advisor. The University of Stavanger, with the Norwegian Hotel School, has helped with good guidelines and facilitation. This project has been possible thanks to their support.

Introduction

Different studies on cultural diversity have investigated how people experience working in a culturally diverse workplace. Some studies have looked into how cultural differences, such as language differences between co-workers may cause challenges in social interactions (Spencer-Rogers & McGovern, 2002). Other studies have discussed whether different diversity dimensions can be used to predict people's behavior and attitude towards what they experience around them. For instance, some studies argue that one can use people's nationality to assume whether or not they prefer to invest time and effort in gaining interpersonal relations with co-workers (Hofstede, 1980 as cited in Nathan, 2005; Hamden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2004).

Other studies consider intersectionality and argue that one cannot view people sharing one cultural factor as a monolithic group, because these people have differences in other cultural factors that have to be taken into account (Sparks et al., 2021). There are also studies reflecting on the importance of intercultural competence which concerns with how communication, awareness and intercultural adaptability can be used to bring different people closer to each other (Iles, 1995).

This research project aimed to answer the research question “*How do hospitality leaders and employees perceive and experience cultural diversity in social interactions in the workplace?*”. We wanted to focus on cultural diversity in social interactions because social interaction is argued to be a leading factor for people searching for interpersonal relationships with others they desire to be connected to (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, as cited in MacDonald & Borsook, 2010). An individual's mix of cultural characteristics may for example include the individual's age, nationality, religion, gender, and political view (Daniels & Greguras, 2014). Gutentag et al. (2018) define diversity as “any significant difference that distinguishes one individual from another”. With this definition, one can say that two

individuals who are different from each other in cultural factors such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, and sexual orientation, are culturally diverse from each other.

Since the early 1970s, there has been an influx of people worldwide who have searched for work and career opportunities in Norway (Egerdal, 2017). This is especially evident within the Norwegian hospitality industry where NHO Reiseliv (2022) report that 17% of this industry's workforce are people with immigrant background, and 44 % of people working at Norwegian hotels and restaurant are people with immigrant background (NHO Reiseliv, 2022). As research such as Ruchika et al. (2017) describe the hospitality industry as highly diverse in cultures, it is interesting to gain insight in how workers in this industry perceive and experience cultural diversity in their social interactions.

This master thesis collected primary data through 15 face-to-face, semi-structured interviews where the research participants were invited to share narratives focusing on our research topic. The research participants were sampled from different hotels in Nord-Jæren in Rogaland, Norway. Five of the interview participants were leaders, and ten were non-leaders. Including both leaders and employees was done to see if they had different perceptions and experiences of cultural diversity in social interactions. The research participants of this master thesis were sampled based on their nationality. However, cultural diversity concerns more than nationality; examples may be gender, sexual orientation, race, age, language, and socio-economic status. Therefore, we considered all other cultural aspects relevant to the research participants.

Further into this master thesis, the structure is carried out in the following order. Firstly, we explore academic literature relevant for the research question, such as cultural diversity, social interaction theory, and cultural diversity in social interactions including factors such as language, communication style, power distance, interpersonal relationships, stereotypes, and intercultural competence. Secondly, the methodology section explains the

chosen research design, method used for data collection, participant sample, data sampling process, method of data analysis, challenges and limitations, reliability and validity, and ethical considerations. Thirdly, the primary data results were grouped and presented through three main categories. Fourthly, the discussion chapter interprets and examines the primary findings, secondary literature, and the research question. Lastly, the conclusion summarizes how the key findings addressed in the discussion respond to our research questions, and how these key findings can be relevant for further studies.

Literature review

This chapter presents a review of relevant literature for this thesis and research question on cultural diversity and social interaction in the workplace. The chapter consists of three main sections: cultural diversity, social interaction theory, and cultural diversity in social interactions. Firstly, the authors reflect on two different perspectives on culture, namely culture-as-code and culture-in-context. Subsequently, we define cultural diversity. Secondly, the authors define and discuss social interaction theory in relation to the research context. Lastly, different cultural factors are addressed concerning how they can impact social interactions between co-workers. Some described factors are stereotyping, age and life situation, power distance, and intercultural competence.

Cultural diversity

Bjerregaard et al. (2009) states there are two main approaches of culture in cross-cultural studies; culture-as-code, and culture-in-context. The culture-as-code perspective can be linked to functionalist and positivist tradition because this perspective view culture as something that is “self-contained and stable that can be identified and generalized” (Bjerregaard et al. (2009, p. 207). For instance, the culture-as-code perspective typically homogenizes people based on nationality (Hofstede, 1980, 2001; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005 as cited in Nathan, 2015, p. 102). As culture-as-code is often based on

overgeneralization and only acknowledging cultural diversity based on nations, one may even consider the term essentialist view when describing this perspective (Holliday, 2011; McSweeney, 2009, as cited in Nathan, 2015, p. 102). When looking at cultural diversity from a culture-as-code aspect, it decontextualizes the concept and limits the intercultural encounters (Shenkar et al, 2008, as cited in Bjerregaard et al., 2009, p. 208). Because culture-as-code view everyone within a particular nation as a monolithic group, without considering other factors such as context, Bjerregaard et al. (2009) suggest shifting from culture-as-code to a culture-in-context approach. With a culture-in-context perspective, one looks at culture outside of the homogenous view and treats culture as being “situated and produced in a context of social, economic or political relationships; characterized by the process; shaped by the agency; and influenced by actors’ socially shaped interests or experiential knowledge” (Bjerregaard et al., 2009, p. 219). The context would be embedded into the cultural meaning (Bjerregaard et al., 2009).

In this master thesis, we view culture from a culture-in-context approach, focusing on how nationality, in combination with other diversity dimensions such as age, gender, socio-economic status, religion and sexual orientation, contribute to create different diversity experiences in different contexts (Brennan et al., 2020). When studying culture diversity, it is important to consider the aspects of intersectionality which concerns with people’s individual overlap of diversity dimensions (Sparks et al., 2021). Two individuals sharing the same age or socio-economic status may experience different contexts differently as they are different in other diversity dimensions such as sexual orientation or religion. Intersectionality may therefore be defined as “(...) an overlap of various social identities, as race, gender, sexuality, and class, contributes to the specific type of systemic oppression and discrimination experience by an individual” (Dictionary.com, 2022). Although some of the previous studies and concepts we refer to are originally embedded in a “culture-as-code” perspective, we apply

these as sensitizing concepts (Bowen, 2006), that can contribute to understand various aspects of culture in different workplace contexts and interactions as they are made salient by the informants participating in our thesis.

A relevant model to highlight how individuals are so different from each other in terms of cultural characteristics is the diversity wheel, introduced by Marilyn Loden and Judy Rosener in 1991, but later redefined by Lee Gardenswartz & Anita Rowe in 2003 (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2009). See figure 1 below. Grasenick and Kleinberger-Pierer (2021) states that “the wheel is being used in various variations” and that organizations have adapted the dimensions specifically to their characteristics, creating a variety of diverse wheels.

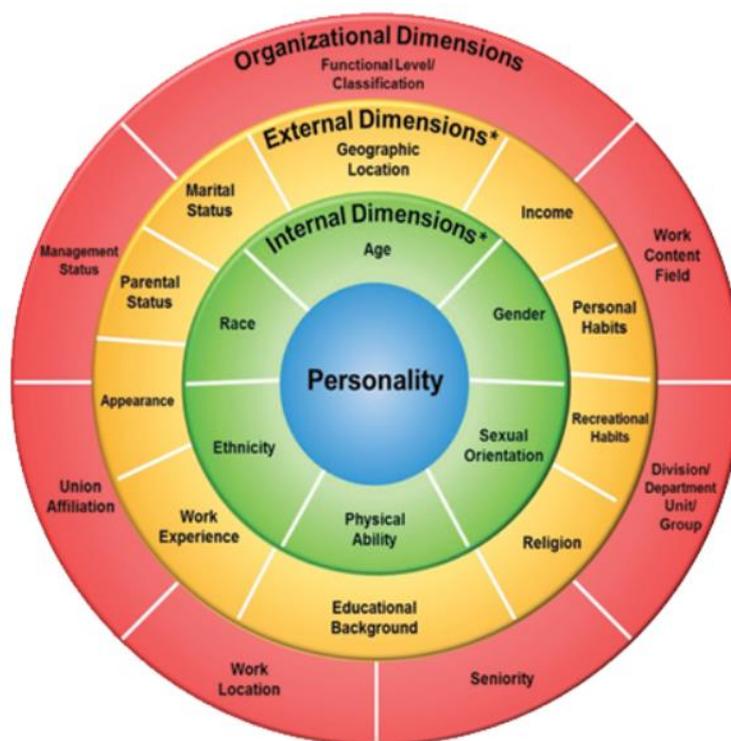


Figure 1. Diversity wheel (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2009, p. 37).

As illustrated in the model, an individuals' diversity may consist of four dimensions of cultural characteristics. The model shows how personality is center of how individuals differ from each other. Gardenswartz & Rowe (2009) also stress that including personality in the

center is essential and organizational membership on the periphery. That personality should always be placed in the middle with the other dimensions around. This is supported by Grasenick and Kleinberger-Pierer (2021) as they argue as the personality is too difficult to change. The internal dimension includes individuals' primary factors such as age, gender, and race, and the external dimension includes individuals' secondary factors such as geographic location, socio-economic status, personal appearance, work experience and religion (Gardenswartz & Rove, 2009). While primary factors shape people's core identity, the secondary factors "refer to those aspects of our identity that contribute to our core but fundamentally do not change who we are" (Manoharan & Singal, 2017). Mateescu (2017) describes how cultural factors may be perceived as visible or invisible. For example, primary diversity factors such as race and gender are likely to be more visible than secondary diversity factors such as religion and socio-economic status (Mateescu, 2017). The fourth and most outer dimension includes the individual's functional level, work content and field, seniority, work location, management status, union affiliation and division/department (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2009).

In this master's thesis, we are looking at how cultural diversity in social interaction in the participants' workplaces influence them as individuals. This research study used nationality as the primary criterion when recruiting research participants. However, other diversity dimensions were also taken into consideration where these were made relevant by the informants during the interviews and when analyzing the preliminary data results.

Social interaction theory

De Jaegher et al. (2010, p. 442) state that "social interactions are complex phenomena involving different dimensions of verbal and nonverbal behaviour, varying contexts, numbers of participants and – frequently – technological mediation". Communication is a big part of social interactions, and while verbal communication includes the use of language, nonverbal

communication happens through body language and gesticulating (Tjora, 2018). In this master thesis, we apply the term social interaction in relation to how two or more people are engaging with each other through examples such as “(...) conversations, collaborative work, arguments, collective action, dancing and so on” (De Jaegher et al., 2010, p. 441).

Social interactions between co-workers can be both work-related and non-work-related (Lin & Kwantes, 2015). The non-work-related interactions are any interaction that is not focusing on the accomplishments of work-tasks (Lin & Kwantes, 2015). Such interactions may consist of phatic communication, a term that Maíz-Arévalo (2017) define as “speech which is used to express or maintain the connection with others in the form of shared feelings, goodwill or general sociability, rather than to impart information exchange”. In addition to phatic communication, there are many other elements of social interactions between coworkers, such as eating lunch, going for a smoke, drinking coffee, playing games, or exercising. Pluszczyk (2020) argues that small talk is ideal for breaking the ice with co-workers who are not well known to each other. For instance, one can identify whether common interests exist. Because many people spend most of their time at work, many people experience more social interaction with their co-workers than they have with family and friends. It is reported that the COVID-19 pandemic caused people across the world to experience a decline in their psychological well-being because governmental requirements of the home office took away the majority of face-face interactions that people had with others (Lal & Dwivedi, 2009; Okabe-Miyamoto & Lyubomirsky, 2021).

It is argued that co-workers who invest time in informal social interactions with each other are likely to establish strong interpersonal relationships (Pereira & Elfering, 2013). Such bonds between co-workers can lead to positive outcomes such as improved job satisfaction, better co-worker collaboration, lower employee turnover rate, and greater sense of belongingness and inclusion in the work environment (Szostek, 2020). Having that said, there

is literature discussing that not all people perceive informal bonds with coworkers as necessary to do a good job as well as enjoy their job, because they are more task-oriented than relationship-oriented (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2004; Van Engen et al., 2001). For instance, Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars (2004) state that task-oriented workers care so much about accomplishing their tasks that they are likely to avoid taking care of social interactions that they find irrelevant for the task.

While many studies have focused on generalised perceptions of social interactions in the work context, it is according to Lin et al. (2015, p. 242) yet more to explore in terms of “how much these daily interactions influenced by personality or social culture”. This master thesis focuses on how individuals working in multicultural hospitality workplaces perceive and experience social interactions with co-workers.

Cultural diversity in social interactions

Under this section some factors that can affect the perception and experience of cultural diversity in social interactions are highlighted, which are; language, communication style, power distance, interpersonal relations, stereotypes and intercultural competence.

Language

As globalization motivates more and more people to cross borders, openness and knowledge of linguistic diversity become increasingly critical, with a particular reference to the workplace context (Sanden, 2020). Luring & Klittmøller (2015) use multinational corporations to describe corporations with a significant mix of languages represented within the workforce. One advantage is that the corporation becomes more prepared to speak and negotiate with customers in more than one language. However, language differences within the workforce may also cause practical challenges such as language barriers in workplace communication.

Within the hospitality industry, an industry known for employing many immigrant workers, it is not unusual that people's limited abilities in the workplace's host language can become a problem for effective work communication. For example, "German waitresses may work under the supervision of a senior American waiter who in turn reports to an Asian restaurant manager, also reporting to an English general manager" (Spencer-Rogers & McGovern, 2002, p. 302). Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern (2002, p. 610) state that "Members of a dominant ethnolinguistic group may experience feelings of impatience and frustration when communicating with non-native speakers of a language". Language barriers can also be experienced as a significant managerial challenge for leaders, and Madera et al. (2014) discuss that there are hospitality managers who have become motivated to resign from their positions as a result of too much frustration, confusion, misunderstandings, stress, and dissatisfaction caused by language barriers. There is also literature discussing how foreign hospitality workers perceive language proficiencies as a factor that makes managerial positions more difficult to achieve (Lefrid et al., 2022).

Because language helps us establish and maintain social bonds with others, exchange information, persuade others, and express our emotions and needs, language is an indispensable part of our everyday lives (Pluszczyk, 2020). Similar to how language barriers can challenge work-related communication, it can also become a huge issue when co-workers intend to establish or strengthen their social bonds. As a strategy to overcome language barriers in the workplace, studies such as Luring & Klittmøller (2015) promote the use of language policies. There is literature such as Fredrikson et al. (2006) who report how some employees can lack openness to language policies, and Frederikson et al. (2006) state that this is often about the domestic workers. However, other studies report that the use of a shared language that is more suitable for all workers reduces the chance for language clustering in the workplace (Tange & Luring, 2009).

Communications style

As previously mentioned, communication is often a big part of social interaction (Tjora, 2018). Madera et al. (2014) explain how communication is vital in the process of how employees learn how to do their assigned jobs, how they understand their workplace's standards, rules and policies, how they can give and receive feedback. Many job descriptions emphasize excellent, practical, strong, interpersonal, written, and oral as typical indicators of attractive communication skills (Coffelt & Smith, 2019). Odine (2015) and Ripley (2014) talk about how a strong communicator always consider who the receiver of a message is, this because one cannot neglect how different people absorb information.

Besides communication skills, it is also important to consider communication style which reflects how the different people behave in communication with others (Fitzgerald, 2002). Examples of ways to see how people differ from each other in communication are how much interest they show in a conversation, how much they get themselves involved in a conversation, how they consider when to start and when to stop talking, what they perceive as polite and rude, whether they want to listen more than talking themselves, how they organize and present information, whether they find disagreements discomfoting and whether they perceive silence as acceptable or awkward (Fitzgerald, 2002). Kapoor et al. (2003) explain that people who tend to be direct in what they genuinely want to say, and that focus on their ideas and interests, and why they think their thoughts and interests are good, can be described as individualistic communicators. Furthermore, Kapoor et al. (2003) use the term collectivistic communicators to describes people who are more in-direct in what they mean to say, and focus more on how the group collectively can achieve something and how the outcome will be beneficial on a collective level.

Fitzgerald (2002) expresses how people's communication style depend on features such as individual habits, para linguistics, proxemics, haptics, and cultural background.

Furthermore, Fitzgerald (2002, p. 79) argues that “the different communication styles that participants bring to an interaction constitute one of the factors that most contributes to problems in intercultural communication”. Fitzgerald (2002) suggests the use of a lingua franca to be useful in intercultural communication where the participants otherwise would have struggled to successfully interact with each other.

Power distance

The term power distance considers to how much inequality in power status that people accept in their relationships with others (Daniels & Greguras, 2014). Furthermore, Daniels & Greguras (2014, p. 1203) argue that “after individualism/collectivism, power distance is the most frequently studied cultural value in organizational research”. In the workplace context, power distance reflects the “degree of acceptance of unequal distribution of power” between leaders and employees (Dai et al., 2022, p. 1). Even though Hofstede is known to be one of the most well-known scholars on power distance (Hofstede, 1980 as cited in Karibayeva & Kunanbayeva, 2018), it is important to mention that Hofstede “conceptualized his taxonomy of cultural values at the national level” (Daniels & Greguras, 2014, p. 1203). As this master thesis follows the culture-in-context approach, it is more relevant to depend on other researchers who conceptualize cultural values such as power distance on a individual level. A suitable study may therefore be Dia et al. (2022) who describe how factors such as leadership style as well as employees’ perception of their leaders have a strong influence on how different people value power distance. Other factors influencing people’s individual perception on power distance may be age, work experience and job satisfaction (Daniel & Greguras, 2014).

Stereotypes

Relevant research discusses how stereotypes can give people specific assumptions about other people with different characteristics than themselves, such as age, sex, nationality, race, social class, and life status (Bauer et al., 2020; Greenhaus et al., 2010; Hogg & Cooper, 2007). Lippmann first described stereotypes in 1922 and Sumner in 1906 as “pictures in the head” (as cited in Hogg & Cooper, 2007, pp. 361-362). In later years, stereotypes are defined as “(...) simplified and generalized assumptions about a particular group” (Bauer et al., 2020, p. 112). For instance, stereotyping could be against white men in leadership positions, women and people of colour, or other people from whom you feel a psychological distance. Mateescu (2017, p. 26) states that “Visible diversity (...) represents a preferential basis for stereotypes, prejudices and biases more so than invisible diversity (..).” The Britannica dictionary perceives any stereotype as “an often unfair and untrue belief that many people have about all people or things with a particular characteristic” (The Britannica Dictionary, 2022).

Assumptions and prejudice could be both negative and positive (Hogg & Cooper, 2007). Having that said, a study on relationships between diversity and outcome shows that “(...) diverse groups actually feel less cohesive, experience more conflict, misunderstand each other more, have higher rates of turnover, and have lower team performance” (Bauer et al., 2020, p. 111). Subsequently, the same study shows that people who work with people they feel dissimilar to, experience that the interpersonal relationships are weaker. Bauer et al. (2020) question whether this could be due to that people as individuals or groups unconsciously stereotype each other.

Intercultural competence

Because communication helps us establish and maintain social bonds with others, exchange information, persuade others, and express our emotions and needs, communication is an indispensable part of our everyday lives (Pluszczyk, 2020). Communication between

people from diverse cultures can be described as intercultural communication (Croucher et al., 2015). Intercultural competence is perceived to be important in intercultural communication, and Fan et al. (2022, p. 417) view intercultural competence as “an ability to distinguish cultural differences, understand locals’ world view, and reflect on cultural differences”. Gaining knowledge about your own culture and others’ cultures is essential to creating good relations in different situations (Haugan, 2020).

However, a lack of intercultural competence may be a reason for why co-workers with cultural differences sometimes find it challenging to communicate and interact with each other, this because they do not understand why they think, perceive and experience things differently (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992). Bhawuk & Brislin (1992) suggest that the skill of intercultural competence is a fundamental criterion that multinational corporation managers should review when hiring. The better everyone working in a culturally diverse workplace understand how attitudes, beliefs, values, perceptions and behavior vary between different cultures, the more misunderstandings that distract organizational performance can be avoided (Fan et al., 2022).

However, intercultural competence is often hard to achieve in reality, and it is argued that intercultural competence is not an optional endeavor but rather a foundation for ethical and practical professional practice (Arredonso & Toporek, 2004; Marsella & Pedersen, 2004., as cited in Collins & Arthur, 2010, p. 217). Subsequently, Arredondo & McDavis (1992) state that everyone faces challenges related to identifying cultural differences from ourselves, but what is more important is to create a goal of infusing culture effectively and making practice more manageable. This can be done by developing codes of ethics, collecting more competence, using multicultural counselling and organizing according to various conceptual models (Collins & Arthur, 2010).

Employees' intercultural competence may be improved by more focus on (1) cultural awareness: understanding differences, (2) communicative competence: communicating across differences, (3) cognitive competence: acknowledging stereotypes, (4) valuing differences, and (5) gaining synergy from the differences (Iles, 1995, p. 56). The communicative competence could be language and communication, including non-verbal communication. For example, where language barriers hinder an employee from doing what was asked by the leader due to a misunderstanding. IT could also create unnecessary discussions as one or several parts misunderstand. Having multicultural teams is also likely in the workplace, and being aware of stereotypes on cross-cultural interactions should be explicit, open and shared. Furthermore, valuing differences is vital as team members/coworkers could find similarities and things in common, rather than differences. Therefore, it should be focused on drawing people together and using them as an advantage. According to Iles (1995), these improvements in competencies should create a good synergy as the members are interculturally competent. Moreover, they are interculturally competent at "(...) the affective, cognitive and communicative levels and can master the earlier steps to enable communication and integration across acknowledged differences and explicit stereotypes to occur in a climate which values diversity rather than seeking to ignore, suppress or disparage it" (Iles, 1995, p. 58).

Methodology

In this chapter, we describe what we did in terms of research design, the method for data collection, participant sample, data sampling process, and method for data analysis. Furthermore, we describe the challenges and limitations we experienced while conducting the preliminary study. Lastly, we describe our considerations regarding the quality of our data findings by evaluating the data's reliability and validity through four sections transferability, verifiability, credibility, and reliability.

Qualitative design

We used a qualitative research design to answer our research question “*How do hospitality leaders and employees perceive and experience cultural diversity in social interactions in the workplace?*”. A qualitative method design was suitable to gain individual narratives, for our exploratory study, on how the participants experienced and perceived cultural diversity in social interactions at their workplaces (Gummeson, 2000). There are also different analytical methods within the qualitative methodology, and examples include phenomenology, storytelling, grounded theory, and thematic analysis (Johannessen et al., 2020, p. 231). In this research, we used storytelling through the usage of narrative interviews.

Method for data collection

Kvale & Brinkman (2015) describes how a qualitative interview functions like a conversation with some form of structure and purpose. This was suitable as we wanted to collect personal narratives focusing on real-life examples of how the research participants experience cultural diversity in social interactions in the workplace in our research questions (Johannessen et al., 2020, p. 105). To collect the narratives, we designed the interviews to be semi-structured (Gummeson, 2000). The usage of semi-structured interviews allowed us to design open-ended questions that enabled the participants to answer freely. In addition, collecting real personal answers gave us a unique set of data material for further analysis and interpretations. Based on this method, we designed an interview guide including an outline of topics and questions, which allowed us to ask follow-up questions suited for situations where the interviews take new directions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 156).

Participant Sample

We conducted 15 interviews with participants sampled from a selection of different hotels located in the Stavanger area of Norway. The names of these hotels are not included in this study regarding the participant’s right to have their identity kept confidential. Five of the participants were leaders, and ten were employees. We did this to see whether the participants

in leader positions may have different thoughts and experiences of cultural diversity in social interactions. Subsequently, this could be because they have another role in the workplace and are generally not as social in the day-to-day work tasks, or that they are the ones working for the social interactions and cultural diversity at the workplace and may have a bias as they hope their initiatives work.

We used email to reach out to participants. As we were aware of how the recruitment process can be challenging and time-consuming, especially when it comes to leaders, snowball sampling was used. This method allowed us to use participants themselves to recruit or suggest other participants (Statistics How To, 2022). Our goal was to recruit participants who primarily varied in nationality. However, the participants were welcome to address all other cultural factors relevant to their narratives. The main characteristics of the sample show that most of the participants are from European countries, all the leaders have Norwegian nationality, most of the participants are female, and work experience ranged from a few months up to several years.

To keep the names of the interview participants confidential, the five interview participants that are categorized as leaders will be referred to as Participants A1, A2, A3, A4 and A5, and the other ten interview participants who are classified as employees will be referred to as Participant B1, B2, B3, B4, and so forth. An overview of the leaders' profiles is given in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Profile of leaders

Leader	Work experience in hotel	Gender/Cultural Background	Type of leader
A1	7-8months	Female/Norwegian	Reception manager
A2	1 year	Female/Norwegian	House Keeping manager
A3	7 years	Male/Norwegian	Restaurant manager
A4	17 years	Female/Norwegian	Food & Beverage Manager
A5	18 years	Female/Norwegian	Hotel Director

An overview of the employees' profiles is given in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Profile of employees

Employee	Work experience in hotel	Gender/Cultural Background	Department
B1	4-5 months	Female/North-American	Restaurant
B2	3 years	Male/Pakistani	Reception
B3	2 years	Female/Norwegian	Reception
B4	10 years	Female/Finish	Reception
B5	1-2 years	Female/Norwegian	Reception
B6	1-2 years	Female/Norwegian	Guest Host
B7	6 months	Male/Hong Kongese	Banquet waiter
B8	6 years	Female/Lithuanian	Restaurant
B9	8 years	Female/Spanish	Housekeeping
B10	8 years	Female/Dutch	Guest Host

Data sampling process

To better understand how to design a good interview guide, we followed suggestions from Brinkmann & Kvale (2015, p. 128-129), who, among other relevant considerations, describe how researchers can thematize, design, script and transcribe an interview. Firstly, we had to clarify and decide what specific questions in the best way could help us answer our research question, “*How do hospitality leaders and employees perceive and experience cultural diversity in social interactions in the workplace?*”. Despite our regular use of existing literature to theoretically underpin our questions, it was necessary to design questions that all participants could easily understand. A significant factor in our question design was to make sure that the questions were scripted in an order that could contribute to a natural conversation flow in the interviews. Therefore, we followed the concept of frame setting suggested by Integrerings- og mangfolddirektoratet (2010). The interview guide is shown in Appendix 2 further below.

When conducting qualitative interviews, one has the chance to either be a “storyfinder” or a “storycreator” (Gummesson, 2000). Because we aimed to collect narratives told by the participants themselves, it was important for us to avoid asking leading questions that could make it difficult for them to decide what and how much to answer. Based on this, our suggested script had to consider that the participant’s answer could take the interview in directions where it became logical to change the sequence order of the questions. Therefore, it was essential to build the interview script with flexible questions that could be asked at different points of time during the interviews. When creating the frame setting for our interview guide, we used guidelines from Brinkmann and Kvale (2015). The followed frame setting for our interview guide is described in table 3 below.

Table 3: Frame setting interview guide

STEP	Description	Example	Question example
Step 1) Frame setting	Loose talk, participant information	Topics, anonymization, duty of confidence	“Do you have any inquires before we start?” “Is it okey for you that we record this interview?”
Step 2) Mapping experience	Transitioning questions	Experience, participant profiling	“How long have you been in the industry?” “How would you describe culture diversity?”
Step 3) Focus	Key questions	Search for narratives related to themes	“Have you ever experienced being socially excluded at your workplace due to your cultural background? If yes, can you please tell us about this/elaborate on this?” “Can you tell us about a situation where your leader had to take action due to challenges caused by cultural diversity?”
Step 4) Summarizing	Summarizing our understanding	Clarification, other questions, ending.	“We have now looked a little on...” “Is there something more that you would like to add?”

When the interview guide was approved, both by the Norwegian Senter for Research Data (NSD) and our supervisor, we contacted the participants to arrange a time and place for

conducting the interviews. Before the interview, we sent them a information letter and a consent form. This is seen in Appendix 1 below. We encouraged them to read both documents thoroughly and asked them to bring the consent form signed for the interviews. As we wanted to make sure that all participants had completed this important request before doing the interview, we got extra copies of both documents for the interview. All interviews were recorded and in addition to the recording device, we decided that one of us should write notes while the other one asked the questions.

While most of the participants did their interviews in their respective workplaces, some wanted to meet up in other places such as cafés and public libraries. To avoid making other non-participants aware of the interviews, we agreed with the participants that we would contact them directly when we arrived at the agreed location.

After conducting the interviews, we transcribed them. According to Brinkmann & Kvale (2015, p. 206), “transcribing interviews from an oral to a written mode structures the interview conversations in a form amenable to closer analysis and is in itself an initial analytic process”. Here we had to listen to the recordings carefully and transcribe each interview thoroughly, word by word. Some of the interviews were conducted in Norwegian, and these had to be translated into English. The translation was done carefully to grasp the participants’ actual experiences and stories. However, the translation of the interviews may raise a question of reliability as the translation might not fully capture the participant's intent (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 210). To cross-check the translations, we double-checked some of the interviews. The transcriptions got saved on an encrypted file to ensure guidelines from NSD were followed.

Method of data analysis

As a method to analyze interviews that in the best possible way could develop findings relevant to our research question, “*How do hospitality leaders and employees perceive and*

experience cultural diversity in social interactions in the workplace?” we decided to use thematic and narrative analysis (Christoffersen & Tufte, 2011). To have a theoretical template for conducting a thematic analysis of narrative interviews, we followed the four-steps process suggested by Gummesson (2000, p. 240).

Firstly, we read through the transcripts from the interviews to gain a first impression of what kind of insight the interviews gave us. We had to thoroughly read transcripts several times to ensure we gained a solid overview of the overall findings. Because we are two researchers, we decided to read through the transcripts individually and compare our impressions and thoughts. Secondly, we highlighted all key findings that we perceived as essential and relevant for our research question. When looking for key findings, we stressed the importance of having an open mind and avoided having a narrow search for findings in the data. Even though our literature review gave us some ideas for themes to look for, it was necessary to remember that our exploratory study aimed to investigate whether our primary findings addressed new themes and not only considered the existing literature. This would be difficult to achieve if we failed to be open-minded towards everything the participant included in their interviews.

In the third step, following Gummesson (2000), we compared all key findings to evaluate whether there were any similarities between them in terms of themes. After dividing the key findings into logical theme groups, we gave each group a category title. In the fourth step, we divided each category into smaller sub-categories to enable us to go into as many details as possible (Gummesson, 2000). Following the first round of grouping the key findings into categories and sub-categories, we discussed and analyzed whether we could define and justify the choice of the different categories, this to make sure they were relevant to our research question. Following Christoffersen & Tufte (2011, p. 187), identifying themes helped us to reduce unnecessary data without losing important data. When reading through

the interview transcripts, we had to have an open mind and avoid only searching for specific answers. Because we are two researchers, we decided to read through the transcripts individually while taking notes. After that, we compared our impressions and thoughts.

Challenges and limitations

There were some practical challenges and limitations during our master thesis project. Even though our main focus was to recruit research participants who varied in nationality, we hoped our sample would have a balance between female participants and male participants. However, due to an overrepresentation of female workers in the hospitality industry, we realized that recruiting as many male participants as female participants still focusing on a variation in nationality would make the recruitment stage longer than the limited time we had. This is why only two out of fifteen research participants were males.

Because we recruited participants of different nationalities, the language selection in the interviews had to be considered. Because we as authors have Norwegian as our first language and have advanced English skills, we decided that the participants were free to choose whether their respective interviews should be conducted in English or Norwegian. However, as many participants were neither fluent in Norwegian nor English, we experienced some language barriers during the interviews. We acknowledge that these language barriers may have affected some of the participants' ability to communicate the desired answer they had verbally. In addition, transcribing the interviews conducted in Norwegian was much more challenging and time-consuming than transcribing the ones conducted in English. Therefore, the Norwegian interviews had to be translated into English without misinterpreting the answers.

Many participants said they had only worked in the hospitality industry during the Covid-19 pandemic. Because of this, our result may not give a total reflection of how it is to work under normal circumstances. In addition, some of the participants with more extended

experience may have been laid off due to the pandemic, which could have impacted their memories of experiences of working under normal circumstances. Alternatively, we could have done some observations or focus groups. With observations, we could have observed at the participant's workplace. However, even though observations can give an overview of what is happening, they cannot explain why things are happening. The use of focus groups could have created discussions and conversations with more perspectives involved. However, some participants may find it uncomfortable to talk about sensitive topics in front of others, especially in front of their closest co-workers and leaders.

Reliability and validity

In this section, we describe how we considered the quality of our primary data results. One method of improving the data quality was to achieve data reliability which in qualitative research indicates that there is consistency in the interview response of the different research participants (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Because we collected narratives, we expected that the participant's answers to the different research questions would vary a lot. However, it was essential to design research questions that all the participants could have a shared understanding of, so their narratives at least addressed the same theme. As a result, we argue that most of our participants gave concise responses, which is evident in our findings presented in the results chapter.

Besides verifying reliability, data validity is another vital element to keep in mind to improve the quality of our data results (Johannessen et al., 2020). The data validity was concerned with whether our interview question investigated what we wanted them to explore (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 129). The interview questions were thoroughly designed based on the main theoretical themes identified in the literature review. The main theory addressed in the literature review was considered relevant for the overall research question. Because our research approach can be categorized as exploratory, we could not predict what the

participants would answer. However, when designing the interview question, it was essential to create questions that allowed the participants to respond freely and identify findings that, in a meaningful way, could help us answer our research question. As a result, no interview questions led to any participant responses being a complete track from the research question. In addition to considering the overall reliability and validity, we proceeded with a sub-evaluation of our data's trustworthiness, credibility, transferability and verifiability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, as cited in Johannesen et al., 2020).

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of our study is related to what data is embedded, how it is collected, and how it is handled (Johannesen et al., 2020). To improve the trustworthiness of our research data, several measures were taken before, during and after the data collection. Firstly, one of the primary purposes of doing the literature review was to develop a theoretical foundation that could be used to support the design of interview questions. To improve the trustworthiness of the literature review, analysis, and results, we focused on finding peer-reviewed scientific research publications. Although some of the studies were acknowledged studies dated before the millennia, we also looked at more recent studies. The trustworthiness was further enhanced by having several rounds of revising the interview questions, and a draft was sent for approval at the Norwegian Center of Research Data. This also ensured that interview questions would not conflict with their guidelines. Finally, during the data collection, we wanted to gain more trustworthiness in the interviews by providing that participants' identities were kept confidential. This is to encourage them to feel more comfortable saying what they truly mean instead of being conscious that others could find out what they answered.

Furthermore, we used approved recording devices to make sure we could transcribe the data precisely how and what the research participants communicated. To avoid presenting

wrong results, we had to listen to the recording several times to ensure that we knew and understood exactly what the participants answered. To ensure that transcripts were correct, both researchers cross-checked each other's work. This was especially important for the transcript, where translation was necessary. The overall strategy to improve the study's trustworthiness throughout the paper explained the relevancy of our research decisions, giving the readers insight into how the study was conducted from start to finish. In our data, we shared all relevant information with the readers.

Credibility

Credibility is concerned with checking "(...) in what degree the researchers approach on findings in a right way reflects the purpose with the study and represents the reality" (Christoffersen & Tufte, 2011, translated from Norwegian by authors, 30.02.2022). Because our research question concerns how cultural differences are experienced in social interactions in the hospitality industry, we found it helpful to recruit participants working in this industry as these could give credible, real-life examples and experiences. The participants had many arguments related to our topics and came with new aspects to consider, and their thoughts seemed well thought through, well-grounded and justified (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

To gain more accurate questions, the participants could choose whether they wanted to do their interviews in English or Norwegian, depending on what they were most comfortable with. Especially with narrative interviews, the questions are asked in a manner where the participants can decide themselves how much and what to share. Therefore, it was essential for us as researchers to avoid interrupting them while sharing their narratives. As some of the interviews were done in neither our mother tongue nor the participants', we made sure to ask clarifying questions to secure that both parties had a shared understanding. This applied to both the questions being asked and the answers given. This made it easier to analyze and

discuss their arguments. Another means to secure our data credibility was to make sure that we frequently controlled that our interpretations were well justified.

Transferability

External validity is transferability and regards whether the specific research could be used in other studies or settings. For example, if research about communication could be transferred into research about economics. Or if research about communication in one context is relevant to communication in another context. Subsequently, a question about the generalization of the study could be raised to see if the research's results, findings, and analysis could be used in other areas than originally researched (Johannessen et al., 2020). This master thesis project does not intend to create generalizable results. As all the interviews are individual and unique, where the participant could speak openly, other researchers might find different answers, viewpoints, and results. However, the interview questions are created based on thorough research from literature review.

Furthermore, the readers are given all information used in creating, analyzing, discussing, and concluding throughout the paper, gaining higher credibility. Our master thesis project opens for new thoughts and dimensions of diversity, and social interactions, which could be used for further research in the field. Some other hotels might find the results and topics similar to what they are experiencing at their hotels. Still, at other companies, where diversity is a common aspect, could use some of the arguments, thoughts etc., from this paper as grounds for new ideas and improvements internally.

Verifiability

This term concerns with how researchers can reduce the likelihood of their researcher bias to influence the primary results, e.g. through sampling bias, information bias, question bias and response bias (Johannessen et al., 2020). One example of a mean to improve the

verifiability of our master's thesis, was to avoid asking leading questions during the interview that could reduce the participant's opportunity to answer freely. By using narratives, one could argue that it is the participant who sets the story and not the researcher. Furthermore, the literature review referred to some researchers with different angles and opinions, such as culture-as-code and culture-as-context, evident in the literature review. This is to ensure that we can have a balanced discussion considering different viewpoints and perspectives. During the interviews in this master project, it appeared new aspects that were not addressed in the initial literature review. This encouraged us to frequently broaden our literature search and revise our literature review, improving the verifiability.

Ethical Considerations

Before conducting the interviews, we had to get the Norwegian Center of Research Data (NDS, 2020) to approve that our interviews could be collected, processed, saved, and legally handled (NSD, 2020). In addition, the NSD guideline required us to design a consent form for participants, an interview guide, and an information letter regarding how the interview data was going to be managed. Despite stating in the consent form that the participants' answers would be analysed and presented in our master thesis, the information letter clearly stated that their identities would be kept confidential for anyone else than us as researchers.

Results and findings

Our thematic analysis identified the following three main categories: perceptions of cultural diversity, language, and social interactions in cultural diversity. We also identified different sub-categories within each of these three categories, see Table 4.

Table 4: Main categories and sub-categories

Perceptions of cultural diversity	Language	Social interactions in cultural diversity
Perception and understanding of cultural diversity	Language barriers in work-related communication	Perceptions of social interactions
Cultural diversity facilitation	Language barriers in non-work-related communication	Social interaction and cultural differences
	Perceptions of language policies and requirements	Gender-based discrimination

Perceptions of cultural diversity

Under this category, the participants talked about understanding and perception of cultural diversity, and cultural diversity facilitation. Table 5 includes quotes that illustrate these two sub-categories.

Table 5: Sub-categories with quotes, category one

Sub-category	Illustrating quote
Perception and understanding of cultural diversity	<p>“A society who is open for everyone. Here in the chain I work for, we constantly highlight that we love to include people with uncomplete CVs. Diversity is not just about language, religion, ethnicity, culture. It is also about career background, political view, and differentiation among people”.</p> <p>Participant A4</p>

Cultural diversity facilitation	<p>“Me personally stood in front when it came to creating a policy that would make the lunch time much more inclusive”</p> <p>Participant A4</p>
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Perception and understanding of cultural diversity

For cultural diversity, we asked the participants about how they understood the concept of cultural diversity and how they perceived and experienced cultural diversity in their work environment. On their understanding of cultural diversity, the participants stated that cultural diversity is about how cultural factors shape who we are, how we behave, how we look, how we experience the world, and get along with others. One of the leaders, Participant A5, said that cultural diversity was a positive thing for her and stated that

The older I have become, the more have I become aware of those different cultures background is great. Whether it is country, religion, age and everything, the more diversity the better. For me, culture diversity means people from different countries, with different religions who work together for common goals. (Participant A5, 2022).

Many participants frequently mentioned the factors that shaped cultural diversity in their workplace as nationality, and language. Examples include participant B7, who stated that

We have different languages, different ethnicities, people believe in different religions, and different factors in life matter differently from one person to another. Having a common language is of course vital as we all need to be able to take part in the daily workplace communication. (Participant B7, 2022).

Further, when asking participant B2 what he thought regarding cultural diversity, his first response was, “First of all, language”. Also, participant B8 said that cultural diversity is about people with different backgrounds, stating that “you know, they may be from different countries, they speak different languages, and they look different”.

Besides language and nationalities, other cultural factors such as looks, age, skin colour, religion and differences in resume. Participant B1 stated that when thinking of diversity, she thought of “(...) people with all types of backgrounds with all of their own stories. Like where people have lived life from different perspectives, and they all have their own experiences which should like shape them to have their own opinions”. Most statements were like this.

Another cultural factor mentioned in some of the interviews was sexual orientation. For instance, participant A4 explained that there was a bigger stigma around being homosexual when she started working in the kitchen. Some participants talked about gender as a cultural diversity factor. Participant B5 said that “I think I first think of more cultures and ethnicities but the way I think further I think of orientation...” and Participant B6 said that “I think, maybe not a wide selection, but a wide selection, haha. That it is very different in terms of cultures, interests, and gender as well”.

One of the leaders, Participant A4, also added another layer that diversity should not only be about the previously mentioned topics but stated that diversity is

A society who is open for everyone. Here in the chain I work for, we constantly highlight that we love to include people with uncomplete CVs. Diversity is not just about language, religion, ethnicity, culture. It is also about career background, political view, and differentiation among people. (Participant A4, 2022).

Besides describing cultural factors in the workplace, some participants also shared their opinions regarding cultural diversity. Most examples showed positivity towards cultural diversity in the workplace. However, a few reflected on whether organisations used cultural diversity to strengthen their reputation outwards. For example, participant A3 mentioned how Petter Stordalen bragged about having employees from almost all countries. Petter Stordalen is the board leader of Nordic Choice Hotels and are known for his work within the hospitality industry (Brekke, 2021). However, participant A3 stated that “(...) the problem is that you may not always get the full benefit of diversity, because they are hidden in departments where you only have a task you have and should do”. Furthermore, participant A2 said she was the only Norwegian working in the house keeping department, and stated “But with this department, one has to remember that they spend most of their workdays working alone. They get assigned a list of tasks, and they have very limited time for small talk with each other”.

Participant A3s point also got addressed by participant B2 who talked about how the degree of cultural diversity depended greatly on the different departments where people worked. She explained that there was little cultural diversity in departments focusing on guest contact, such as the reception. Whereas in departments with almost no guest contact, such as housekeeping, there was a lot of cultural diversity.

(...) you find other departments where almost everyone looks the same and speak the same language. This is the way I see it. In those departments where they have lot of guest contact in terms of formal information sharing, there is not a lot of diversity in terms of language. Here, most people of the people speak Norwegian more or less fluently. (Participant B2, 2022).

Cultural diversity facilitation

Participant A3 had said he had no specific commitments to facilitate cultural diversity, but referred to that leaders in his former workplace always included non-alcoholic beverages and halal meat at all staff gatherings. Several of the employee participants also addressed leaders' use of language policies. For instance, Participant B1 said how her leader had told her that the workplace was very diverse with a lot of different people on her first day. Participant B1 stated, "From the second I got like hired and started working, it was like okey, English. And that is just how it is". Furthermore, participant B7 explained how his leader allowed him to attend Norwegian classes in the workplace to improve his Norwegian skills.

Some employee participants said that their leaders did not do much to manage challenges caused by cultural diversity. Participant B9 gave an example where many of her Asian co-workers frequently had social gatherings outside work hours without inviting any of the other non-Asian housekeepers, and that "the leader cannot do anything about it" as this is it was happening outside the workplace.

Language

Among the 15 interview participants, there were in total eight different mother tongues represented: Norwegian, English, Spanish, Urdu, Lithuanian, Dutch, Finish, and Cantonese. With no exceptions, all the interview participants could tell that their workdays require them to sometimes or often use a second language. When we asked the interview participants about their perceptions of being part of a multilingual workplace, they all told us they were open to it. Under this category, the participants talked about language barriers in work-related communication, language barriers in non-work-related communication, and perceptions of language policies and requirements. Table 6 includes quotes that illustrate these five themes.

Table 6: Sub-categories with quotes, category two

Sub-categories, category 2	Illustrating quote
Language barriers in work-related communication	“We do have 3 people working here that do not speak or understand a single word of English. So that can indeed cause some challenges” Participant A5
Language barriers in non-work-related communication	“Whenever she comes to just small talk about whatever she has on her heart, I sometimes get very lost in the conversation” Participant B2
Perceptions of language policies and requirements	“If you do not understand a standard order note from coming from the waiter, you cannot have the job” Participant A4

Language barriers in work-related communication

The majority of the participants had narratives to share regarding situations where language barriers caused practical challenges in work-related communication. However, participant B2 did, in his interview, admit that he once failed to do an important task given by his manager because he did not understand her dialect. For example, in a Northern Norwegian dialect, the manager had requested him to prepare a conference room for the following early morning. But because Participant B2 was not very used to this Norwegian dialect, he prepared the wrong room, to his manager’s immense frustration. To prevent the same mistake from happening again, Participant B2 said they “agreed that she would start to write down the most important tasks that I had to do”.

Participant B8 from Lithuania said that whenever she experienced that the language barrier made it difficult for her to understand her tasks, she would keep asking for more details until she knew exactly what to do. However, in her interview, she expressed that “The problem would be bigger if I just made a guess of what to do and ended up something completely different than what I was expected to do”.

Both Participant A2 and Participant A5 mentioned that employees sometimes are not honest when they do not understand a message due to the language barrier. Participant A5 said she believes some of her co-workers found it too embarrassing to admit when they do not fully understand a message. Further on, Participant A5 explained at the end of her interview that it was vital for a workplace that everyone remembers to be “open and honest”, especially if they find something unclear. Participant A2, who supervised people working in housekeeping, explained that she had several times experienced that some of her employees would pretend that they understood her instructions when they did not. Participant A2 stated that “I rather spend some time repeating my instructions instead of having to re-do a task that could have been solved on an earlier stage”.

Participants B10 and B8 shared their experiences of how misunderstandings can be caused when people have different ways of interpreting a message even though it is given in a language everyone understands. For example, at the beginning of her work experience in Norway, Participant B10 was confused when she and her Norwegian co-workers discussed what floors to manage. When her Norwegian co-workers talked about the first floor, she believed they referred to the floor located one level up from what she perceived to be the ground floor. However, she soon realized that the first floor from a Norwegian’s point of view equates to the floor that she was used to describing as the ground floor. Participant B8 described an incident where she had said “shush” to her British co-worker because she wanted him to talk a bit quieter. Participant B8 explained that saying “shush” in Lithuania is a standard norm, and no one takes it as an offence. However, her co-worker got mad because being shushed in the UK was perceived as rude.

Language barriers in non-work-related communication

Approximately half of the interview participants could think of experiences where language barriers made it difficult to connect with others at work socially. For example,

participant A4 expressed dissatisfaction with those situations where co-workers group themselves into a social click in the lunch cantina because they share the same primary language. Participant A4 shared an experience where one of her employees had started to cry at work because she often felt excluded by her close co-workers. They all used to have their lunch conversations in a language she could not understand. Participant B4 from Finland shared similar concerns as she many times experience to get both confused and suspicious when some of her co-workers would tell jokes to each other in Norwegian right in front of her.

Participant B4 said she was not happy about how some of her Norwegian co-workers working in the kitchen department did not show her much support when she tried to practice her Norwegian skills. She said she often tried to interact with them in Norwegian, but they had just cut her off and encouraged her to instead speak with them in English. Participant B4 could also tell that she sometimes felt that some of her Norwegian co-workers would prejudice her general knowledge and skills in hospitality just because she does not speak Norwegian fluently. She stated that “I mainly talk with my colleagues English, because in that way I can sound more wiser and cleverer and show that I actually know what I'm doing”

Participants such as Participant B8 and Participant B7 said that they always felt that all their co-workers made sure to use a language that made it possible for everyone to understand.

Every co-worker I meet at my workplace always include me into the conversation.

Two co-workers may speak their shared language when others are not there, but the moment they see someone with different language backgrounds walk towards them, they do not hesitate a second to start using English. (Participant B8, 2022).

Perceptions of language policies and requirements

Some participants told us that they support language policies. Some said there were against it, and some were uncertain. Participant A4 said that she has no problems expecting people at her workplace to either use Norwegian or English. This to prevent the work environment from becoming too polarized in terms of language clicks. Despite her expectations as a leader, she does understand that employees sometimes forget about this. Still, she found it even more important to remind them so often until it eventually became the norm. When A4 was asked whether she had experienced complaints from her employees due to her expectations, she answered no. She also added a personal belief of how she thinks everyone understands the reasonings behind why she, as a leader, actively enforces her expectations.

Participant A5 said that she favoured language policies regarding formal communication. As a General Manager, she viewed it as essential to go in front as a role model for the other department leaders. Therefore, during meetings with all staff members, she would always speak in English. This had a dual function. Partly to allow everyone to understand and show the other leaders how information should be shared. In contrast to Participant A4, Participant A5 said she was not very strict regarding what language people use in their break times. In A5's perception, it does not make sense to expect everyone to use Norwegian or English as some people neither understand Norwegian nor English. However, A5 does support having policies that encourage people to try to use language that includes as many as possible.

Participant A3 did share an experience from his previous workplace where everyone working in the restaurant was told only to speak Norwegian. As Participant A3 could remember, two main arguments justified this policy. The first one reflected how people might lose focus in doing their job because they might fear whether co-workers speaking a foreign

language are talking negatively about them or others. The second argument reflected how the management would use the Norwegian policy as a strategy to make people better at Norwegian, as this would take time if everyone kept using their language.

Out of the 15 interview participants, Participant B6 and Participant B4 believed that policies on what language to speak at work were unnecessary. They both claimed that everyone working in their workplace knew how to speak English. Participant B2 shared opinions about whether it is appropriate for some co-workers to talk in a language they know other nearby co-workers cannot understand. He said that he had no problems understanding and accepting that people sometimes desire to use their language to be able to express what they fully think.

I think we all can agree that having a conversation in your own mother tongue is very comfortable because you do not have to put much effort into what to say. I have done that myself many times when I have been working with other people from Pakistan. (Participant B2, 2022).

Besides sharing their perceptions of language policies of what language to use in the workplace, the participants also shared their perceptions regarding language requirements and language skills required in different positions and departments of their workplace. For example, participant B2 from Pakistan explained that he has no problem trying his best to speak Norwegian with the guests in the reception, his co-workers, and his leaders; his work description required him to do so. However, he said he had problems understanding why his leaders were not allowing him to switch to English in those situations where he struggled to understand the reception guests.

(...) I did not understand a single word of what he was saying. Based on this incident, I asked my leaders about advice of what to do in such situations. They advised me to take pen and paper into use. However, when I questioned whether it could be easier and quicker to just switch to English, my leaders made it clear that this was not a desired option. (Participant B2, 2022).

A4 said she found it a little optimal to have a chef that could not understand Norwegian. She stated, “If you do not understand me when I instruct you to make a certain dish, you cannot have the job. If you do not understand a standard order note from coming from the waiter, you cannot have the job”. Participant A1 answered that she has to require all her employees working in her reception department to be able to speak Norwegian. When she was asked why this was a requirement, she answered that she did not know the exact reason behind this decision made by people above herself.

All the five leaders participating in these interviews were Norwegian and fluent in Norwegian. Even though all the leader participants are Norwegians, some participants referred to how some non-Norwegian leaders talked Norwegian more or less fluently. For instance, Participant B1 referred to her closest manager from Latvia and stated that

(...) we all see the logical side of it. Of the director of the hotel being Norwegian as well, we are in Norway. Talking Norwegian as like a first language or mother tongue is very important to be able to run a whole hotel here. My closest boss, she speaks Norwegian as well, she learned it. (Participant B1, 2022).

Participant B1 said she understands why the majority of the leader positions at her workplace were filled by people who at least know how to speak and write Norwegian. She

argued that the leaders have a lot of work externally for the hotel and that these things usually go in Norwegian. Such as talking to people, organizing events, talking to suppliers, legal documents, etc. Ending her argument with, “That is in Norwegian here, these days so it makes sense to me why my bosses speak Norwegian. I think their kind of work that they have to do it becomes a requirement”.

Participant A2 did, in her interview, say that she would never expect her employees in the housekeeping department to speak Norwegian. But she also said, “You do not have to look like Kari Nordmann and speak fluent in Norwegian. Having that said, the higher up in position you aim, the more Norwegian skills is expected from you”. Furthermore, participant A2 also stated that

Because let’s say we get one job seeker that speaks both Norwegian and English, but he is not really fit for the actual job he is applying for. And then you have the other candidate that does not speak any Norwegian at the time she is applying for the job. But her personality is exactly what have been looking after for many months? How can I let go on candidate two just because she does not speak Norwegian? That doesn’t sound strategic in my head. (Participant A2, 2022).

Participant A2 also argued that it is a very tricky question and that in general, when hiring, one should have thought this through in advance.

For the leader participants, we asked whether and how they used their position to engage in cultural diversity in the workplace. For the employee participants, we asked whether they perceived their leaders to be involved in cultural diversity in the workplace. For example, two of the leaders, Participant A4 and Participant A5, mentioned how they committed themselves to language policies. While Participant A5 said, she used language

policies mainly for formal purposes such as information sharing. Participant A4 explained how she used language policies to reduce social exclusion, especially in the staff cantina. Another example of leaders' engagement in language policies was given by participant B10. She talked about her previous work in Brussels, where the hotel management had to make measures and create policies to reduce misunderstandings in communication between staff due to language barriers. The misunderstandings resulted from Brussels being a bilingual city where some only speak Flemish, some only speak Dutch, and some only speak French. Participant B10 said that the staff were free to choose what language to use at work. However, as this caused a culture where some felt excluded, participant B10 explained that the management had to make people start using English so everyone could be included in communication and social interactions.

With like the mix of people so they could like be more like okay let's speak Flemish and you speak Dutch so we can just talk in Dutch or Flemish with each other. But then I was like but then we exclude the other people so let's just speak in English so that everyone can be part of the conversation. (Participant B10, 2022).

Social interactions in cultural diversity

Under this category, the participants talked about perceptions of social interactions, social interaction and cultural differences, and gender-based discrimination.

Table 7: Sub-categories with quotes

Sub-categories	Illustrating quote
Perceptions of social interactions	<p>“That’s super important. Each workday, you spend minimum 8 hours at this workplace which means that you spend more time at work with your co-workers than you do at home with family. If you want to get and maintain good relationships with your co-workers, you cannot only talk about work because work is not everything that matters for you”</p> <p>-Participant A5</p>
Social interaction and cultural differences	<p>“Or if an employee knows the top manager is also a soccer fan, there is no problem for that employee to go and have a chat about last night’s game with the top manager. When leaders invest time in getting to know their employees, despite their position, they get to learn so much more important about the people they are responsible to lead”</p> <p>-Participant B2</p>
Gender-based discrimination	<p>“And I was like; Well, I am here to prepare hot food as that is what I applied for? And these male leaders were so surprised”</p> <p>-Participant A4</p>

Perceptions of social interaction

As an opening question to base some of the participant's knowledge and pre-thoughts on social interactions, we asked them to describe this term in their own words. Both Participant B3 and Participant B5 were evident that social interaction is about communication between people. Participant B3 stated that social interaction is about “Talking to other people

and being part of something social. Like you and me now, talking between to people”.

Participant B6, who had a very similar answer as Participant B3, added that “(...) also internet-interactions counts, but I hope that one still retains a bit of the face-to-face part. Just simple that there is only one communication that happens between people”.

We asked the participants whether social interactions are necessary for co-worker relationships and whether cultural diversity could make social interactions challenging. The number of social interactions with co-workers varied among the 15 participants. For example, participant B8 believed that any employee, including her own motivation to social interact with co-workers, depends mostly on how much you get along with them. She said in her interview that “If you do not like them, why would invest so much time talking about things that are not relevant for the job you are supposed to do alongside with them?”. However, in Participant B8’s case, she said that she loved bonding with many of her co-workers because she liked them well.

Participant A5 said that she loves spending time bonding with everyone at her workplace. She stated that it is vital to establish and maintain strong co-worker relationships with her co-workers simply because she spends more time with them during a typical week than she does with her kids and partner. She also argued that co-workers who want to have a solid social connection could not go eight hours every day only discussing work-related matters simply because work is not everything that matters in life. In addition to her perception of social interaction, Participant A5 explained she has great respect and understanding towards those at her workplace who do not think in the same way as her.

(...) that’s me as a person. However, I know that many including lot of the people working here come to work do their job with as little social interaction with others as possible. And I truly respect that not everyone has the need to share all kinds about

who they are outside work. Nothing in their contracts say something about that they have to remember to make sure they get friends at work. (Participant A5, 2022).

Participants B6, Participant B1 and Participant A1 also argued that the many hours they spend at work makes it even more essential for them to take time for social interactions with co-workers. Participant B6 stated that

(...) at least for me it is important that you become a little friend with people you are at work with, like that... these are the people I see the most, almost more than the woman I live with in a way. (Participant B6, 2022).

In contrast to the majority of the other participants, Participant B9 said she does not see the necessity of having a strong social connection with co-workers simply because that is not relevant to the work tasks she is employed to do. If she wants to talk to friends or make new friends, she has plenty of time to do this outside work. Besides not needing social interactions with co-workers,

Social interaction and cultural differences

Some participants shared narratives reflecting how cultural differences impacted social interactions between themselves and co-workers. The mentioned factors were stereotyping, life situation and age, power distance, and intercultural competence. However, Participant B10 explained that she experienced some stereotyping coming from the Netherlands. The stereotyping was about the legalization of weeds and other drugs, assuming that "(...) as your Dutch you must have smoked weed and you must have been using it, did you bring it into the country and things like that". Participant B1 and Participant B8 told stories about internal jokes between themselves, and other colleagues based on where they came from. Participant

B8 is from Lithuania and explained that many lack knowledge about the Baltics, creating misinterpretations, such as their history. The participant stated, “I do not get angry or annoyed. I just think that they did not pay attention to their history teacher, or that they have not learned so much about the Baltic countries history”.

Participant B2, who works as a receptionist, said that he often would have co-workers from the restaurant department coming over to him to socialize and talk about things that have nothing to do with the work tasks. In contrast, Participant B2 said he does not experience a lot of social interactions with his co-workers working in the housekeeping department.

Furthermore, he said that in his experience, these co-workers would come and give a simple hi right before their shifts start and a simple goodbye the moment their shift is done. Even though Participant B2 mentioned that many of the people working in this department come from Eastern European countries such as Poland and Lithuania, he believed that their lack of effort to have social interactions with him and others had more to do with their life situation and age rather than their nationality. He said that because many of his coworkers have exceeded 30 years, they are likely to have a family to care for outside work hours. This contrasts with many of his young co-workers working as waiters and bartenders.

Similar to Participant B2, Participant A4 did also reflect on how age and life situation can impact people’s motivation to socially bond and connect with co-workers. Being in her mid-30s today, Participant A4 claimed she used to invest much more time trying to become friends with her co-workers when she was in her mid-20s. She said that she believes that young people who have not settled down yet tend to be much more open to having a big social circle compared to older people who are settled down just like herself today. Even though Participant A4 said she now spends less time socially connecting with co-workers, she stated she believes friendly and informal bonds between co-workers are essential for the work environment.

(...) I am not the biggest fan of small talk. But to take a coffee break as well as having a friendly bond with a co-worker is in my mind very important. We cannot focus on work 100 % of the time we are here. It is important to have some fun, to laugh together. (Participant A4, 2022).

Participant BP explained that she experienced those few times she would initiate a conversation with her Asian co-workers, they would start to complain too much about everything in life. This strengthened her desire to not interact with them unless she had to. Participant B3 told us that she had experiences where she could sense that male co-workers from other stricter cultures than her own would be judgmental when she shared private things about herself. Participant B1 said that she finds it interesting to work in a country where the locals have no issues discussing how much they get in salary. This topic is taboo in the US, where she is from. Further on, she stated that she believes people in Norway do not have a problem being open about their income since this information is publicly available on internet databases.

Participant A5 felt that cultural differences had made it difficult for her to become friends with people working in the housekeeping department as a general manager. She described that she felt that many of the employees did not want to get to know her initially because they came from cultures where there is a strong hierarchy between employees and leaders. She tried to convince them that in Norway, all employees should always feel welcome to both talks and be honest with even their top leaders, such as herself as general manager. Participant B2 also shared his view on how the hierarchy in Norwegian workplaces is much looser than in many other countries, such as his home country, Pakistan. He said that for him working in Norway, he knows he is welcome at any time to directly approach anyone

in the top management team, regardless of if it is for formal or informal purposes. He argued that such leader-employee is non-existing in many other cultures.

Take my employees in the housekeeping department. It took such a long time before I finally felt I had managed to become friends with them. I remember they very focused on respecting the hierarchy, and you could clearly tell that they had “there is the boss, there is the boss”, in mind whenever I walk their direction. (Participant A5, 2022).

The language was mentioned by many of the participants as one of the critical reasons why it could be challenging to interact with co-workers with different cultural backgrounds socially. For example, Participant A1 and Participant A4 said that they would find it difficult to become friends with co-workers who neither speak Norwegian nor English.

B8 did, in her interview, argue that her Lithuanian background made her more open to her Russian manager’s humor compared to many of her co-workers. However, Participant B8 also claimed that she relates much more to American culture than Russian culture because she grew up with American concepts such as Disney Channel and YouTube. In addition, Participant B10 explained that she had experienced that the differences in communication style between Norwegians and Eastern Europeans could challenge social interactions sometimes. Another example is A2, who said she was surprised when she realized that the one Spanish co-worker was the quietest of the housekeepers.

There is one in our department that is very clear in the way she perceives work to be work, and private life to be private life. She is Spanish. And I am surprised, because I thought Spanish people loved to talk all the time. So, as you can understand, I do have stereotypes in my head too. (Participant A2, 2022).

Participant B10 acknowledged that believing that people from Eastern Europe are known to be very strict and straight forward is very a stereotypical way of thinking. However, she told us that she had observed how this often confused her Norwegian co-workers. Participant B10 was not the only one to address stereotyping and presumptions regarding others 'cultures. Participant A4 said she found it remarkable that some of her former Asian co-workers in the kitchen “were actually so much more open and naughtier in their humor than most other people I worked with”.

Gender discrimination

Some of the participants mentioned discrimination during their answers about diversity. Therefore, some participants also got asked about their thoughts on discrimination. Here, the standard description was about having prejudices about others, often towards someone unlike themselves. However, these pre-made assumptions are also often negative, treating the pre-judged group or individual poorly than others. For example, participant A3 stated that discrimination is constantly being treated unfairly “(...) based on preconceived notions about a person, often based on how someone looks”. Also, all participants had very similar thoughts and ideas about the topic, regardless of being an employee or a leader.

Furthermore, we asked if they could tell us about a time, they or someone they knew had been discriminated against in the workplace because of their cultural background. Again, none of our participants believed that they had experienced this.

Another aspect that came up was that many female participants mentioned stories of discrimination toward women. Participant A2 mentioned one episode that she had experienced where another male employee actively discriminated against women, explaining that

He was new at our workplace, and he was the only male within that department. There was also a lady who started just a couple of months prior to him who got promoted to be our new supervisor. And this guy could not at all understand why a women got the chance to become a leader when they already had hired a man into that department. So, he kept openly saying so many bad things to her that really shocked me. And he also argued that there were certain tasks that only he could do simply because girls should never to such male-based tasks. So, I was not very comfortable working alongside with him. (Participant A2, 2022).

Furthermore, Participant A2 explained that some of her staff had been harassed by customers, saying, “I have been told a few stories from my girls where they have received comments from male guests that I do not even want to repeat her. I do know that many Norwegian men have their thoughts about let say women from Thailand”.

Moreover, Participant A4 said that she had experienced discrimination due to being a woman. Participant A4 said that “when people asked me where I was working, and I answered the hot kitchen, it could often take days before they were convinced that I actually knew how to work with hot food...”. During those years, it seemed to be more common to have male chefs in the hot food and women doing the cold food and dishes, Participant A4 explained.

Summary of findings

It seemed like both the leaders and the employees had similar thoughts and perceptions of cultural diversity in social interactions. In figure 2 below, the main findings from our participants are presented.

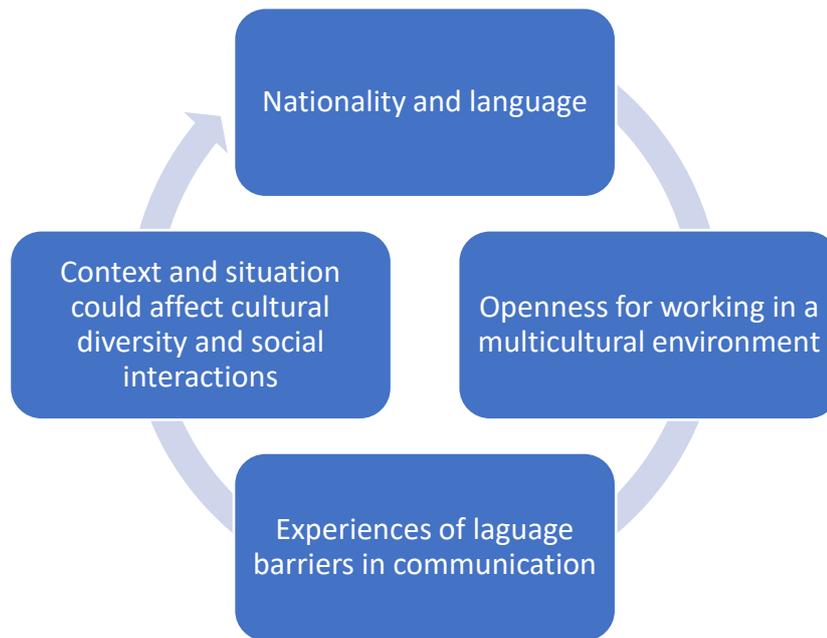


Figure 2. Summary of findings.

As seen in the model, differences in nationality and language were the most typical cultural variables that participants mentioned when they shared their understandings and perceptions of cultural diversity in the workplace. Other highlighted variables were age, gender, sexuality, skin color, and religion. The participants often describe how different factors outside of nationality and language could affect cultural diversity and social interactions because all humans have individual differences. All participants showed openness to being part of a multilingual work environment. However, most participants had experienced that language differences within the workforce could cause difficulties in work communication and social interactions.

There were divided opinions about language policies in the workplace. While some participants experienced language policies to be useful and essential, others did not see their necessity. Divided opinions were also the case in terms of language requirements in leader positions. No participants had personal experiences of being discriminated against based on a cultural variable, but some participants had observed others to be the victim of this. Where some participants had experienced to be stereotyped, others had experienced to stereotype

others. Only one participant did not see the need to get along with co-workers to do a good job.

Furthermore, all the participants seemed to be very open towards working in a multicultural environment and had mostly good experiences with that. However, there were some examples told of some challenges related to working in a culturally diverse workplace. Whenever the participant told stories of incidents or thoughts of challenges, they always said that they could understand the circumstances around it, and it seemed like they did not believe that the nationality was the reason for the specific incidents. More, that the incidents happened due to several other factors such as the setting around that specific incident. It was therefore not evident that one singular factor could be seen as more important than others for the participants perceptions or experiences of cultural diversity in social interactions.

Discussion

The researchers will conduct a detailed interpretation of key findings described in the previous chapter in the discussion. The researchers will discuss how these key findings relate to the literature review and the research question, "*How do hospitality leaders and employees perceive and experience cultural diversity in social interactions in the workplace?*". The overall findings of the discussion will be used as a foundation for the conclusion chapter. As presented in the previous chapter, we grouped relevant results into three main categories; employees and leaders in culturally diverse workplaces, communication in the multicultural workplace, and social interactions in the multicultural workplace.

Employees and leaders in culturally diverse workplaces

Under this category, the following sub-categories are further discussed; cultural diversity in the workplace, and leaders in culturally diverse workplaces.

Cultural diversity in the workplace

The literature review identified factors that will contribute to cultural diversity in a workplace, such as gender, sexual orientation, race, age, language, socio-economic status, religion, and nationality (Mateescu, 2017). When the participants were asked to mention what factors they would use to describe culture diversity in their workplace during the interviews they were not given any examples of cultural factors. This is a conscious method to avoid leading their answers to specific areas of cultural diversity. Instead, we wanted to investigate whether the participants had similar or different understandings and perceptions compared to the theory in the literature review. That nationality and language were the most frequent examples mentioned was not very surprising as we could read in the literature how hotels in Norway have a high representation of different nationalities due to many immigrant workers (Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002; NHO, 2021).

Something we perceived to be more unexpected, however interesting, was the fact that there were only a few participants who addressed other cultural factors such as such as background, career, sexual orientation, gender, age, and religion in their description of cultural diversity in their workplace. This could be because globalization has become more common in recent years, and intersectionality has entered a new perspective in the workplace (Sparks et al., 2021). However, this does not mean that the other participants who did not mention these other factors as mentioned above do not acknowledge these aspects as cultural factors, but it may instead be because they do not find these relevant for their personal picture of cultural diversity. (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2009); Gardenswartz and Rowe (2022); (Iles, 1995; Sparks et al., 2021)

Participant A4 stated that diversity for her was more than just birth place, saying, “It is also about career background, political view, and differentiation among people”. Participant A4 also said that

Culture diversity is first of all positive things. The older I have become, the more have I become aware of those different cultures background is great. Whether it is country, religion, age and everything, the more diversity the better. For me, culture diversity means people from different countries, with different religions who work together for common goals. (Participant A4, 2022).

Based on the above quote from participant A4, one could argue that Aghazadeh (2004) had a point when stating that a multicultural workplace has a more significant likelihood of finding the most qualified people than workplaces that are only prepared to attract candidates of similar cultural characteristics. Furthermore, another example used was Mateescu (2017), who discussed how cultural diversity increases a workplace's ability to adapt to change. Moreover, as the findings suggested that the participants of this study were open for cultural diversity in their workplaces in relation to social interactions, we may argue that this would be crucial to gain the positive advantages related to diversity as mentioned in the literature (Aghazadeh, 2004; Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2009; Mateescu, 2017). If the participants would have a negative attitude towards cultural diversity in the workplace, we could potentially have gotten different outcomes from the narrative interviews. It is difficult to determine why the participants in this study were positive and perceived cultural diversity how they did. Some researchers, such as Grigoryan and Schwartz (2021) believe this could be due to a person's values both in context and relations.

Even though the participants described several practical challenges of working alongside co-workers with different cultural characteristics, none of them could think of any major disadvantages of being part of a multicultural workforce. Instead, we did register that many of the participants repeatedly said how cultural diversity made their workplace more

inclusive. However, one cannot forget that parts of the result indicate the diversity factor of language was sometimes perceived as the root to why some people could feel excluded; this with a particular reference to language clusters in informal social interactions. One can therefore argue that Tange & Luring (2009) present a valid point when they stress that language policies can reduce the chance for language clustering in the workplace.

Leaders in culturally diverse workplaces

A few participants talked about leader commitment in cultural diversity, more specifically how leaders can take actions to facilitate cultural diversity in the workplace. For example, participant A3 referred to how he and the other leaders at his hotel always offered halal meat at staff events. He also said that actions had been taken to reduce alcohol consumption during these gatherings to make it more inclusive for everyone. Another example was participant B7, who told us that his workplace had offered non-Norwegian speakers to attend Norwegian classes. Based on this we may argue that the leaders did not have detailed and concrete means with regards to diversity and social interactions, however practical matters seemed to be dealt with as they would come up. It would seem like the leaders' commitment could be connected to a culture-as-context approach, where several aspects play a part of cultural diversity (Bjerregaard et al., 2009; Brennan et al., 2020).

However, when the participants talked about their leaders' commitment of cultural diversity in social interactions it did not appear to be in relation to the cultural differences at the workplace, rather towards including everyone. This not only based on a coworker's nationality, but based on the common characteristics of the specific group of individuals, considering not only their nationality but their food allergies, ages, life-situations, language skills etc. As Participant A3 referred to the halal-food-option for those who were Muslims, he also mentioned gluten-free food for those with allergies. It seemed that the managers did not focus on diversity as nationality, however on diversity as individual characteristics from

person to person. This, trying to make it more inclusive for everyone with a special need or wish, making it more about the individual's personality which could be connected to literature previously mentioned (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2009; Grasenick & Kleinberger-Pierer, 2021).

Participants, such as participant A4 seemed to be proud when talking about how the top leaders in her hotel chain promoted recruitment campaigns focusing on hiring people with gaps in their resumè. On the other hand, participant A3, questioned whether many hotel chains promoted cultural diversity more as a mean to improve their brand image. Participant A3 referred to a hotel chain CEO in Norway who had said, “Wherever you come from, there is someone who speaks your language in our hotel” But subsequently, participant A3 added, “That may be true in theory, the only problem is that probably a hundred of those nationalities work in places in the hotel that you will never talk to”. Such a statement may draw a parallel to studies discussing whether cultural diversity is used as “window-dressing”, as described by Wrench (2005), to improve reputation and competitive advantage (Manoharan & Singal, 2017).

Communication in the multicultural workplace

Under this category, the following subcategories are further discussed; language differences in work-communication, non-work-related communication between coworkers, and language policies and requirements.

Language differences in work-communication

As mentioned in the literature chapter, NHO (2021) report that that almost 45 % of people working in hotels and restaurants in Norway have immigrated to the country. The high representation of foreign workers was not only apparent in our participant sample, but also in the participants’ descriptions of their co-workers. That all the participants said they were open towards language differences at the workplace, is not very surprising as one can

assume that the majority of hospitality workers are aware of the typical international work environment (Ruchika et al., 2017). Even though almost all of the participants could talk about experiences of practical issues caused by language barriers, the results indicate that it was only individuals among the Norwegian participants who seemed to experienced language barrier more frustrating and problematic than the others. This may indicate that language barriers are perceived to be a bigger problem for those who are native in the workplace's host language compared to those with other native languages, and this issue was also raised in the study by Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern (2002) on how domestic workers lack patience towards language barrier with foreign co-workers. However, it may be that the other non-Norwegian participants in our research did experience language barriers as frustrating too, but without sharing this in their interviews.

The examples given by some of the leader participants can be compared to Madera et al. (2014) who described how language barriers within the workforce could make hospitality leaders frustrated and dissatisfied. Madera et al. (2014) also discussed how too many language barriers in the workplace could even motivate hospitality leaders to resign from their positions. However, no leaders participating in this research indicated that the language barrier in the workplace had impacted their motivation to remain as leaders.

Even though participant A2 was one of the leader participants who used the word "frustrated" when she referred to situations where she had to repeat herself multiple times. Furthermore, she stated how she would never set Norwegian as a requirement in her hiring process as such criteria could take away the best candidate for housekeeping work. Participant A2 said that she would not let language barriers come in the way for immigrants to work for her. One can argue that participant is very different example than one of participant B2's former leaders who he described as a leader who avoid distributing important work tasks to employees who lacked Norwegian skills.

Non-work-related communication between coworkers

All participants had experiences where language barriers had caused difficulties in non-work-related communication. For instance, participant A2 used the word “strenuous” to describe a situation next to the coffee machine when she tried to chat with a co-worker who could hardly speak Norwegian or English. In addition, several participants said that they had short conversations with co-workers with limited skills in both Norwegian and English, often only including essential words such as “hello” and “goodbye”. As referred to in the literature, language plays an important role when people intend to establish and maintain social bonds, for example, by sharing each other’s emotions and needs (Pluszczyk, 2020). Therefore, it makes sense that co-workers perceive it to be difficult to have long conversations that go beyond basic words when there is too much language barrier between them.

However, conversations only consisting of essential words may not necessarily be due to language barriers but due to other factors such as lack of time or interest for more extended conversations. For instance, both participant A2 and participant B9 indicated how people working in housekeeping rarely had time for long conversations at work. Such argument can be linked to Participant A3, who reflected how he tried to say often short words such as “how are you” to his co-workers in the housekeeping department, this because he knew they did not experience a lot of chats with others at work.

Language policies and requirements

The participants had divided perceptions regarding the necessity of language policies, as well as when to use language policies. One example shown in the results is how participant A5 said she was in favor of using English as the common language for formal information sharing, this because she believed it to be important that all members of staff could keep themselves updated on what was going on in the hotel. One can argue that this makes participant A5 to stand out as an inclusive general manager as she is willing to communicate

information in a different language than her own native one, and her example can be compared to studies like Lauring & Klitmøller (2015) who argue that the use of a common language makes formal information sharing more inclusive. Having that said, participant A5 seemed to be less engaged when came to language policies in the informal settings happening in the workplace such as in lunch breaks, this as a contrast to other leader participants like participant A2 and participant A4 who wanted to prevent language clusters. While the viewpoints from participant A2 and participant A4 can be compared with research such as Tange & Lauring (2009), one may argue that participant A5's view on how leaders should be careful to interfere and regulate social interactions between co-workers taking place outside work hours, finds to some extent support in the interview with participant B9 who explained that leaders should and cannot control whether co-workers include each other in social settings that are not related to work.

Despite being in favor of language policies within lunch breaks, neither participant A2 nor participant A4 mentioned anything about whether they used language policies in formal work contexts. It is challenging to state whether or not this was because they do not see the same necessity as participant A5. However, it is worth mentioning that while participant A5 is a hotel director with the responsibility to everyone working at her hotel, the other four leader participants are department managers. Participant A1 is, for instance, the department manager of a hotel reception, and she mentioned that everyone working here is expected to know Norwegian. In contrast to participant A5 who has to communicate information to employees with many different language backgrounds, participant A1 only has to be concerned about a group of employees where everyone speaks the same language.

The very few who appeared to be somehow skeptical towards language policies, were participant B4 and participant B6 from Norway. The literature review referred to research by Fredrikson et al., (2006) who discuss how some domestic employees of a Danish corporation

lacked openness towards policies around using English as the common corporate language in order to facilitate better communication opportunities for non-Danish employees. This may indicate that participant B4 and participant B6 may lack openness to language policies because they feel it prevent them from using their own native-language in a workplace located in their own home country.

Participant A1 said in her interview that she required her receptionists to manage Norwegian. Participant A2 on the other hand, perceived it to be a dilemma in whether it was right to expect people to speak Norwegian as she argued how most people in Norway are capable of understanding and speaking English. Having that said, it is important to highlight that while A2 and her co-workers in housekeeping are in charge of a type of work that involve little guest contact, participant A1 and participant B2 do.

Most participants indicated that Norwegian was more or less expected in leader positions at their workplace. However, the participants had different opinions on whether it was right to expect people in leader positions to know Norwegian. Participant A4 said in her interview often had to explain the Norwegian labor law to her foreign workers. One can argue this example underpins participant B1's argument of why leaders in Norway should understand Norwegian.

Social interactions in the multicultural workplace

Under this category, the following subcategories are further discussed; importance of social interactions in the workplace, factors affecting cultural diversity in social interaction, and discrimination.

Importance of social interactions in the workplace

The authors wanted to get insight in what the participants perceived to be social interactions in the workplace setting. The literature review addressed terms such as phatic communication which is described to be communication that does not focus on formalities

and information exchange (Maíz-Arévalo, 2017). The literature review did also refer to small talk who Pluzczyk (2020) argued to be ideal for co-workers wanting to get to know each other more. Coffee break, jokes, lunch conversations, and updates about life outside work, were all examples that were brought up in many of the interviews. This indicates that the participants perceive social interactions at work to concern with talk and activities that is not part of their formal work tasks.

Most of the participants talked about how they had social interactions with their co-workers. Two of the better examples were participant A5 who described informal chats with all her co-workers as “super important”, and participant B1 who early in her interview claimed that “If I am going to do my job well, I need to enjoy it. And the people I work with are a huge part of that”. There are numerous of scientific publications who all agree that social and informal encounters between co-workers boost critical aspects such as trust, individual performance, team collaboration, work performance and employee retention (Brimhall & Mor Barak, 2018; Pereira & Elfering, 2013; Szostek, 2020). The literature review chapter did also address how social interactions with co-workers had an impact on individuals’ psychological well-being (Lal & Dwivedi, 2009; Lam & Lau, 2012; Okabe-Miyamoto & Lyubomirsky, 2021; Taniguchi, 2018). For instance, participant A2 explained how her house keepers spend their entire days working on their own, hence why she felt it was important to encourage them to at least eat their lunch in the staff cantina where they get some socialization. Having that said, participant A2 said she respected those who did not seemed to have a strong need for socialization with others. Despite the many potential benefits of social interactions between co-workers, the authors got the impression that not all of the participants perceived social interactions to be very important nor necessary to enjoy work. Such finding human challenge studies arguing how humans have a strong need for social connections with others (Lal & Dwivedi, 2009; MacDonald & Borsook, 2010).

Why some of the participants found it more important to have social interactions in their workdays and others not, could be difficult to determine. One may assume that the people working in for example housekeeping have such a hectic and time-oriented work-schedule that they feel it to be “waste of time” socializing with others as they might get behind schedule. Another assumption may be that some of the older coworkers already have a social network built and therefore do not see the need for gaining new friends. However, it did not seem like the differences in regards to a need for social interactions was due to nationality as previously mentioned as a culture-in-code approach (Nathan, 2015; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2004), however more based on the individual steering towards a culture-as-context approach (Bjerregaard et al., 2009; Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2022).

Factors affecting cultural diversity in social interaction

The data results showed that the participants addressed the following cultural differences in social interactions in the workplace; stereotyping, age, life situation, power distance, inter-cultural competence

Stereotyping

When it came to stereotyping there were a few of the participants who said they had experienced to be stereotyped at work. For instance, B8 experienced that many of her coworkers assumed that all Eastern Europeans were like Russians. Another example is participant B10 who mentioned how lot of people believe that doing drugs is common for all Dutch people. It seemed like the stereotyping was based on pre-made-assumptions, similarly to definitions by Hogg and Cooper (2007) and Bauer et al. (2020). However, none of these two participants seemed to be very bothered about this, and they both explained that these stereotypes could due to understandable reasons such as lack of cultural knowledge. Furthermore, it did not seem to be perceived as stereotyping affecting the participants negatively for example by giving them less opportunities or being treated differently, partly

contradicting Hogg and Cooper (2007). A reason for this may be how people sometimes too easily vouch for incorrect portraying of other countries. For instance, participant B8 said many people believed that Lithuania is very aligned with Russian culture, but she argued that Lithuanians have a much stronger relationship to American culture. Participant A2 shared one example where she believed she had stereotyped Spanish people on how they all love to talk with others. She stated that

And I am surprised, because I thought Spanish people loved to talk all the time. So as you can understand, I do have stereotypes in my head too. I have experienced that Spanish people always are so good with hospitality, they are very open, they talk loudly. But with this employee, she come to work to only work, and everything else she finds irrelevant. (Participant A4, 2022).

Based on the participants answers, stereotyping is based on overgeneralization and coding based on nationality. Stereotyping based on nationality may draw a parallel to Hamden-Turner & Trompenaars (2004) who argue that people 'interest in interpersonal with others in the work environment is influenced by their nationality. Hamden-Turner & Trompenaars (2004) did in fact argued that Spain was one of the countries where people are known to be little motivated to place much effort into getting to know their co-workers if they find irrelevant for their assigned work tasks. We could identify one example from the results that one hand could be linked to Hamden-Turner & Trompenaars (2004). Participant B9 from the Spanish Island Grand Canaria said that she was the very opposite of many others Spanish people who loved to talk with co-workers during the workday. She said that she did not have

the need, nor understood why she should spend her time at work to make friends out of her co-workers as she already had this outside work.

However, despite the one example by participants B9, we identified several examples that clearly indicate that it is too simplistic and generalizable to assume that nationality influence whether people enjoy social interactions with co-worker. Most of the participants indicated that it would be wrong to put all people from the same country into the same boxes, this because the identity of the individual itself is created by more aspects than only nationality, such as gender, age and sexuality. They will create their own cultural identity. Whenever participants mentioned people from another country who are different, they often highlighted that they do not stereotype or categorize all people from that place to be the same. That this seemed to be one case of one person. For example, participant B6 talked about a Filipino who does not feel comfortable talking about specific topics such as sex. However, participant B6 made it clear that she knew this was probably most likely due to her Filipino co-worker's personality, and not just because she is from the Philippines. Her example is very aligned with The inner circle of the diversity wheel by Gardenswartz & Rowe (2009) who focuses on the personality dimension. According to Scott Williams, "Appreciating personality diversity means respecting the strengths and limitations of each individual, and knowing how to capitalize on each individual's strengths" (Williams, n.d.). Connecting this back to Gardenswartz & Rowe (2009), one can see that the usage of the diversity wheel is a complex tool. However, it does not put people into boxes, which could create stereotypes and biases. We may argue that the individual's personality is a floating perspective because the personality is dependent on the individual and not necessarily due to your birth or religion. As an example, it would be wrong to categorize all Muslims from Iraq to be very aggressive or all people from Asia to being very loud. This because it could become negative stereotyping and being based primarily on "pictures in the head" as Hogg & Cooper (2007) addressed.

It did not seem like there was a lot of stereotyping based on factors such as race or religion. However, participant B9 repeatedly talked about people from Asia in a negative manner in her narratives. In several of her narratives, she spoke of Asian people and the Asian coworkers she had, often in a negative sense. For example, she said, “But those who come from Asia they have a very different culture than us and it is perhaps they have more problems to integrate and other groups”. Later she also said,

Also, I think here, especially with Asian people they are a bit jealous so it's hard to talk about privately with them because afterwards they, aah, they complain because if you have someone like that, for example with the rooms, if you get small room a Today, if you get four floors or no floors, they have, I do not know why they do not talk about someone private at work just with each other. Not with the rest. But no one with the rest. So, there was a day that I said OKAY end, job is job, you can do a 100% good job of yours without explaining to anyone in private. They do not have to be friends to do a good job. I'm thinking so. So, I try not to talk about my private life. (Participant B9, 2022).

Based on the narratives it seemed like participant B9 was bothered by Asian people. There could be several reasons for this. One reasons could be due to too many negative experiences with her Asian co-workers. She did for instance seemed to have a very negative opinion about those time her Asian co-workers met up for social gatherings outside work, without anyone of the non -Asian housekeepers such as participant B9 herself. Another reason may be that she lacs knowledge about Asian culture and people from Asia, hence why she may find it difficult to work with them. Such potential reason is relevant to link with literature

by Bhawuk & Brislin (1992) stating that lack of intercultural competence between co-workers can cause problems challenges in social interactions.

Despite few examples of stereotyping towards people, we could sense some tendencies for stereotyping based on what department people worked in. By this we mean stereotyping for examples by the staff in the reception towards staff in the housekeeping. For example, many of the participants said that in the kitchen there are often a more brutal communication-patterns. Participant A4 explained that often when working in the kitchen the atmosphere and high-speed working environment can get stressful, which consequently can create some tension and/or sometimes aggressive communication. Participant A4 had experience working in the kitchen. Also, participant B6 talked about the harsh environment in the kitchen and stated that some of the leaders at her hotel had “(...) a bit like Italian leadership style like "if you need to know, we will tell you" then it is not like you really feel excluded in the sense that you are kept out in a way”. On the other hand, when we spoke to some other participants who worked in the kitchen and restaurant, they did not really experience it that way. For example, participant B1 said that she felt very lucky with her current work, because everyone got along very well. Subsequently, she stated that “I think, for me personally it very much depends on who I am talking to...”.

Going back to the literature, stereotyping is seen in the participants similarly as for example Aghazadeh, 2004; Hogg & Cooper, 2007; Geenhaus et al., 2010; Bauer et al., 2020, on that it often is based on differences from yourself. Almost everyone who mentioned the housekeeping department, explained that in that department they believed that there were a lot of people from different countries and that they did not speak that well Norwegian nor English. Many of the participants explained that they did not have much to do with the housekeeping staff on a regular basis. We could therefore argue that these biases were made because of a lack of knowledge or due the fact that they did not know each other on a personal

level. For example, participant B6 spoke of a housekeeping lady from the Filipins who had gotten hired during the pandemic. In the beginning participant B6 explained that they did not speak that much, but then stated that "...the more I have become acquainted with her, I understand what she actually knows". Based on this, one can draw a parallel to Bauer et al (2020) who argues that people who work together that feel dissimilar have more conflicts than people who feel connected. We would argue that when participant B6 got to know more about this Filipino housemaid, she would more easily know her capabilities and more easily collaborate further.

Furthermore, it seems like most of the participants were quite aware how stereotypes, regardless of visible or invisible, could create a lot of tension for example between coworkers at the workplace. This correlates to Bauer et al (2020), who questioned whether unconscious stereotyping could affect the interpersonal relationship between people. A finding that we perceived to be a great example of how portray the same image of everyone sharing a cultural similarity is when participant A4 asked the question "But what is Norwegian?" when talking about a typical Norwegian co-worker.

Age and life situation

As shown in the results, both participant B2 and Participant A4 explained how they perceived age and life situation to have an influence on motivation to socializing with co-workers outside work hours. As participant B2 mentioned taking care of kids and household as a likely reason for why many of his co-workers 30 years and older rarely took part in socials after and outside work hours, one may argue that participant A4 to some extent contradicts this as she said her main reason to not spend much time with co-workers outside work hours was because she preferred to go home and relax for herself. Having that said, participant A4 did state that she used to more motivated to socialize with co-workers outside work hours when she was 10 years younger, this because she at this stage of her life perceived it to more important to expand her social network in comparison with her need for this today. Based on this, one may argue that participant A4's example that life situation can influence people's need for hanging out with co-workers outside work hours. In the same way as we cannot for sure know whether participant A4 has kids or not, it is also unknown for us whether participant B2 actually knows that the majority of his co-workers over are in a life situation where kids and household take up most of their time outside work, or if this is rather something that participant B2 assumes.

Power distance

Some of the participants talked about examples of leader-employee interactions that we find relevant to connect to the concept of power distance (Dia et al., 2013; Hofstede, 1980 as cited in Karibayeva & Kunanbayeva, 2018). While participant A5 said she believed that national differences in workplace hierarchy could be the reason for why some of her house keeping employees displayed some uncertainty when she tried to become friends with them through informal interactions, we suggest to also consider whether other intersectionality perspectives besides nationality may have an influence here. For instance, it may be that some these employees regardless of their national background feel that they do not have the

necessary knowledge, experience, competence, or workplace status to perceived as an interesting conversation partner for someone in a top leader position like participant A5. It may also be due to that some these employees have a personality that makes them little interested in spending much time bonding with others at work regardless of what position others may have. Here, it is relevant to remember Grasenick and Kleinberger-Pierer's (2021) argument on how a person's personality is in the core of how the person is culture wise. Participant B9 was a clear example of someone who preferred to keep informal conversations about private matters outside her workdays.

A third possible explanation for why participant A5 experienced difficulties in getting closer with her house keepers may be due to that house keepers are known to have a type of work that leaves little or no time for informal interactions with other co-workers and leaders. This was acknowledged by different participants. One may suggest that such example gives a reminder on how what people do or how people do things in the workplace does not always have to be due to cultural factors, but also due to practical factors. Additionally, just because an employee do not engage much conversations with a leader, it does not mean that this has to be due to the employees' fear of defying power distance and hierarchy. It may simply be because the employee have other co-workers that have more similar interests which contribute to a more rewarding conversation.

Intercultural competence

Several parts of the results showed that gaining skills in Norwegian was important for many of the participants and their co-workers. This appear to be especially important for immigrant workers who aimed for leader positions. Here it is relevant to refer back to Lefrid et al. (2022) who mentioned how language proficiency was suggested to be a factor that many immigrant workers experience prevent them from achieving leader jobs. We have already discussed how a workplace could take different actions to facilitate for cultural diversity, and

as seen in the results, some participants got support from their workplace to learn Norwegian through Norwegian courses. One may therefore argue that competence in the Norwegian language was one clear example of how some of the participants tried to improve their intercultural knowledge. That the participants of this thesis perceived intercultural competence to be important in their job, support arguments from scholars such as Iles (1995) and Bhawuk & Brislin (1992).

Having that said, as many of the participants mentioned how English was the most common language used in their workplaces, one may question whether this makes it more challenging for those immigrant workers who try to learn the Norwegian language. Language policies of using English as common language at work did of course help in situations where the aim was to make sure that everyone could understand important information, as well as that everyone could be included in social conversations. However, one may question whether these language policies about using English may slow down the progress for those who would like to improve their competence in Norwegian. Besides language policies, one cannot forget the example by participant from B10 from Finland who said she constantly experienced that her Norwegian co-workers told her to stick to English whenever she tried to improve her Norwegian skills by communicating with them in Norwegian.

Discrimination

In the last few decades, organizations have become more obligated to meet women's demand for equal treatment in their workplace environment, this especially regarding equal pay and equal career opportunities regardless of sex (Coron, 2020). For example, Norway has a law regarding equal pay for both women and men with similar jobs (Regjeringen.no, 2022). Participant A4's story on how male leaders at her former workplace almost not allowed her to work with preparation of food due to her being a woman, is without doubt an example of workplace discrimination. Another example of discrimination of females in the workplace

was participant A2's story on how a former male coworker from Romania who actively discriminated his female coworkers and especially the female leader. A third example of discrimination, more in particular harassment, was how participant 2 also mentioned that her employees had experienced sexist comments and behavior from male hotel guests. These examples of discrimination are hard to connect to cultural differences. Participant A2 told us that she had raised this issue regarding her former Romanian co-worker with other coworkers from Romania, and stated how they had answered how "(...) this way type of attitude is very standard profile for typical gypsy Romanian or Romanians coming from small, isolated villages". However, she also stated in the end of her explanation that "All the Romanian males that work here are not like him at all. It has just been him so far". This indicated that one individual males' action does not represent all other males with the same ethnicity. Participant A2 other examples of sexist behavior by guests did not mention anything about these customers' ethnical background, and participant A4 did not specify other cultural characteristics of her former male leaders who had question her ability to manage preparation of hot food.

Because our sample consisted of only 15 participants, it would be unreasonable to conclude that the findings regarding discrimination and harassment towards females represent the experience of all females in the entire hospitality workers. One could also question whether a different sample, only consisting by male hospitality workers, could have given other results and experiences.

Conclusion

In the conclusion we answer our research question that is "*How do hospitality leaders and employees perceive and experience cultural diversity in social interactions in the workplace?*". Furthermore, the conclusion include the following topics; research purpose,

main findings, contribution of this study, and limitations and Recommendations for future research.

Research purpose

This research project aimed to answer the research question “*How do hospitality leaders and employees perceive and experience cultural diversity in social interactions in the workplace?*”. In order to answer this research question, we went through three main steps. First, we reviewed relevant literature that helped us to produce a theoretical framework addressing concepts such as intersectionality, culture-as-code and culture-as-context, diversity wheel, intercultural competence, workplace communication, and social interactions in the workplace (Brimhall & Mor Barak, 2018; Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2009; MacDonald & Borsook, 2010; Sparks et al., 2021; Spencer-Rogers & McGovern, 2002). Secondly, based on our choice of using qualitative exploratory research design, we designed an interview-guide that would help us to conduct semi-structured interviews that could collect personal narratives from 15 research participants. The participants were sampled from hospitality workplaces in the Stavanger-region in Norway, and five were in leader positions and ten were in employee positions. Lastly, we transcribed the interviews and conducted a thematic analysis.

Main findings

The discussion of the thematic analysis resulted in three main categories and eight subcategories. Both main categories and sub-categories were based on key findings from the participant narratives. Under the first main category from the discussion chapter (p. 57), titled “Employees and leaders in culturally diverse workplaces”, two sub-categories were identified: 1) Cultural diversity in the workplace, and 2) Leaders in culturally diverse workplaces. In terms of cultural diversity in the workplace, we highlight two main findings. Firstly, even though this was not something that the participants did think of often, they all seemed to be openminded towards being part of a multicultural work environment. Secondly, we registered

that nationality and language were the two most frequent dimensions of culture referred in the interviews. In terms of the second sub-category of the discussion, concerning leaders in culturally diverse workplaces, we highlight the following main finding; While some of the employee participant mentioned concrete examples of what their leaders did in terms of handling cultural diversity among staff, e.g., language courses, language policies, halal meat, and reduced focus on alcohol consumption at staff gatherings etc., it did not seem like that the leader participants themselves thought much of how their role as leaders could better facilitate or accommodate different needs in the workforce caused by cultural diversity.

In the second main category presented in the discussion, titled Communication in the multicultural workplace, three sub-categories were identified: 1) Language differences in work-communication, 2) Non-work-related communication between coworkers, and 3) Language policies and requirements. In relation two sub-category 1 and 2, we highlight the following two main findings. Language differences did often cause language barriers in both work-communication and non-work-related communication, but the participants had no big issues with problems with as long as everyone in their workplace give notice as soon as they start struggle to understand what others say to them. To better face these challenges due language barriers, the participants mentioned solutions such as language policies, and several of the participants described how language policies contributed to a more inclusive work environment, this because it allowed everyone to take part in social interactions.

In the third main category, in the discussion, titled Social interactions in the multicultural workplace, three sub-categories were identified: 1) Importance of social interactions in the workplace, 2) Factors affecting cultural diversity in social interactions, and 3) Discrimination. Regarding the importance of social interactions, one key finding was that most of the participants seemed to have a strong need for interpersonal relationships with coworkers, this because they felt this played an important role for their satisfaction while being

in the workplace. Several of the participants did also communicate how social interactions were key to learn about each and each other's differences and how these differences could contribute to better collaborative outcomes. When it came to factors affecting cultural diversity in social interactions, many of the participants shared experiences of how cultural diversity could contribute to how people in the workplace think and behave differently. However, here it is important to highlight that the participants, with one exception, found it important to stress that an individual's action cannot represent all other individuals sharing the same cultural factor, such as gender, age or birthplace, this because an individual's characteristics is defined by more than just one cultural factor.

Based on the above main findings, we conclude that the participants experienced and perceived cultural diversity as a positive factor in their workplace. This because they seemed to have a positive attitude towards people being very diverse in general, and were very open-minded towards people different from themselves. Despite some of the practical challenges of cultural diversity in the workplace such as language barriers, it seemed like cultural diversity did by no means demotivate the majority of the participants from engaging themselves in social interactions with co-workers. Social interactions in the workplace were arguably seen as something the participant perceived to be especially important in workplaces like their own where the many differences within the workforce made people even more curious to learn about each other's background and experiences. The excitement of getting to know your co-workers on a more interpersonal level may not be the same in those workplaces that lack diversity.

Contribution of the study

Practical implications

This section presents some of the practical implications that our study contributes with. One practical implication of our study is that hospitality workplaces such as hotels are

often much more diverse in cultural dimensions in comparison with other types of workplaces, this because the many different types of departments, job positions, and requirement linked to skills, experience and education enable individuals with often very different backgrounds and personality types to work side by side with each other. Other types of workplaces that for example require a certain type of education, may have less diversity between the employees. The hospitality industry is therefore a great case to research for those who aimed to gain more knowledge on cultural diversity in the workplace context.

Another practical implication is how our study shows how people with experiences of working in a multicultural work environment are more likely to gain the relevant knowledge in order to steer away from stereotyping. Being part of a multicultural workforce is likely to give people frequent indicators and confirmations on how aspects such as context, intersectionality, and personality make it unreasonable to generalise people's needs, desires, sets of thoughts, and actions. In addition, our study implies that cultural diversity does not become a hinder for social interactions in the workplace as long as people are patient and openminded towards each other. Employees who do not get themselves involved in social interactions with co-workers with cultural dissimilarities may have prejudices that is very deviant from the reality.

Theoretical implications

As we followed a qualitative explorative research approach, we have considered whether or not our study can further develop theories suggested by previous studies researching the similar topics. One of the key concepts addressed in our theoretical framework was the cultural dimensions building up the diversity wheel (Gardenswartz and Rowe, 2009). Here, it was suggested that personality is in the core of an individual's way of being. Even though language clusters in the workplace was evident in our study, as similarly to Tange and Luring (2009), our study does clearly imply how people's personality is what

people think the most of when considering whom to get closer with in the workplace. And as people's personality is suggested to be the one cultural factor that make people most diverse from each other, our study does to some extent challenge previous studies arguing how people may connect better with co-workers they find themselves similar with (Bauer et al., 2020).

Limitations and Recommendations for future research

Broader representation of cultural dimensions in participant sample

As mentioned initially in our research, our participant sample emphasized mainly on having a variety of nationalities. However, as both our primary data results and secondary data, such as the literature on the diversity wheel made us more aware of, the many cultural perspectives that contribute to how people think and behave, we recommend future research on the same topic to base the participant sample on a broader representation of cultural dimensions.

How to facilitate a multicultural workforce

Our research did not intend to focus the managerial aspects of workplaces with cultural diversity, this because our focus was on individuals' experiences and perceptions. Having that said, because several of our participants referred to some examples of how leaders can take specific actions to better facilitate and accommodate different needs in a multicultural workplace, we suggest that future research with a more specific focus on leaders, can explore how leaders can become more aware of the many possibilities of actions that can make the workplace more inclusive for everyone regardless of their cultural characteristics.

Observe what is happening

Our study sampled narratives by conducting semi-structured interviews. An individual's narratives does give a clear insight on how the individual think, perceive and experience the surrounding environment. However, the way one individual perceives and

experience a particular setting or situation in the workplace does not answer how the same setting is perceived and experienced on a group level. Therefore, future research on cultural diversity in hospitality workplaces should consider using longitudinal research method, where the researcher could for instance observe what is happening rather than being explained what is happening. As an example, one could observe whether different variables such as amount of work or type of work may affect social interactions between people with different cultural dimensions. Another example could be to observe and compare whether co-workers sharing the same primary language engage in more social interactions with each other than co-workers that do not. In addition, a longitudinal study could be also suitable to identify changes over time.

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Appendix 1: Information letter to participants

Are you interested in taking part in the master thesis project

”What factors do hospitality leaders and employees perceive as important for social interactions and inclusion in a culturally diverse workplace”?

This is an inquiry about participation in a master thesis project where the main purpose is to learn about what factors hospitality leaders and employees perceive as important for social interactions and inclusion in a culturally diverse workplace. We wish to gain insights on diversity in the workplace including both positive thoughts and negative. This in relation to social interaction and social inclusion at the workplace. 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 the master project of Anna Shirin Pollestad Kadir and Alexander Al Kumle, where the purpose is to gain insights on stories and thoughts from the participants own thoughts on the topic. Subsequently, we wish to interview both leaders and employees as we hope this can contribute to getting insights with different perspectives and thoughts. We are interested in the personal thoughts, that combined can give us insights on their experience with diversity in the workplace. This based on semi-structured interviews, with possibility to let the participants say what they believe to be important, where we ask the participants to tell us stories about their own experiences and answer some questions. Participants are allowed not to answer any questions if they want to.

This will further be used in a master thesis assignment.

The answers will be used to create discussions on diversity challenges and possible positive outcomes of social interactions and inclusion in the workplace, in the paper. All participants and companies will be anonymised and interviews will be deleted after master thesis is graded.

Who is responsible for the research project?

University of Stavanger, Faculty of Social Science.

Norwegian School of Hotel Management

Students:

Anna Shirin Pollestad Kadir

Alexander Alberto Kumle

Supervisor:

Tone Therese Linge

Why are you being asked to participate?

Participants are chosen from the hospitality industry, hotels and restaurants, specifically from the Rogaland area in Norway. The participants are a mix of employees and leaders, where about five are leaders and ten employees. This to gain more insights on the topic.

Approximately 15 participants are asked to join the interviews.

Participants will be contacted directly through us or via contact person within the concerning company. This should be done through email.

What does participation involve for you?

The interviews will be based on face-to-face interviews on agreed location. They will take approximately 30-60 minutes to complete and are very open, which means there are no wrong answers. The participants decide themselves how much they want to answer, and all questions are open for the participants own interpretations and thoughts. The questions will be based on a narrative format, which means that the interviewers will ask you to tell a story when something happened, for example “tell us about a time you felt that you did not get included based on your culture?”.

The interviews will be recorded on a approved device, later transcribed and used in analysis and discussion of master thesis. After project is done and master thesis is graded at latest 07. September- 2022 all recordings will be deleted.

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.

All information will be handled ethically and is not shared. All participants and companies will be anonymised.

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).

- *Tone Therese Linge, supervisor of project, can get access to the personal data.*
- *All interviews will be recorded on a approved device, that is not possible to go online and all documents will be on encrypted decive in order to ensure that all personal data is being handled ethically. All names and companies will be anonymised and separated from the rest of the collected data.*

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

The project is scheduled to end 07.09.2022. *All material collected will on that date be deleted from all servers and devices.*

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 *University of 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:

- *University of Stavanger* via *Anna Shirin Pollestad* or *Alexander Al Kumle*, and supervisor *Tone Therese Linge*.
- Our Data Protection Officer: _____.
- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: personverntjenester@nsd.no or by telephone: +47 53 21 15 00.

Yours sincerely,

Alexander Alberto Kumle
aa.kumle@stud.uis.no

Anna Shirin Pollestad Kadir
shirin-as@hotmail.com
+ 47 45 244 421

Consent form

I have received and understood information about the master thesis project “*What factors do hospitality leaders and employees perceive as important for social interactions and inclusion in a culturally diverse workplace?*”, of *Anna Shirin Pollestad & Alexander al Kumle*, and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- to participate in *interview*
- to be recorded*
- for my personal data to be processed outside the EU – if applicable*
- for information about me/myself to be published in a anonymous matter*
- for my personal data to be stored till project is finished*

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project,
15.07.2022

(Signed by participant, date)

Appendix 2: Interview Guide

Interview guide for master in international service leadership at University of Stavanger, spring 2022

“What factors do hospitality leaders and employees perceive as important for social interactions and inclusion in a culturally diverse workplace?”

Faze 1: Framing (10 minutes)	1. Loose talk (5 min) - Casual Smalltalk, not recorded
	2. Information (5 min) - We will tell them a little about the topic of our conversation. - <i>“This interview is to be used in our master thesis project in service leadership. Our problem statement is “What factors do hospitality leaders and employees perceive as important for social interactions and inclusion in a culturally diverse workplace?”.</i> - <i>“Participating in this interview is completely anonymized and we will have duty of confidence. No name, personal information or other information that could “reveal” who</i>

	<p><i>you are is included. We have brought an information letter before we start, that we would want you to read”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>“The interview should take about 30-60 minutes, regarding how much you want to tell us. That is up to you. We have 20/23 questions”.</i> - <i>“Do you have any other inquiries before we start?”.</i> - <i>“We would also like to use a recording device (approved by UIS’s guidelines). Would you please write your signature on our consent form if you approve us recording this interview?”</i> <p>Recording starts.</p>
<p>Faze 2: Mapping on experience (10 minutes)</p>	<p>3. Transitioning questions (10 min)</p> <p>General questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>“For how long you have been in the industry?”</i> - <i>“Have you been a coworker? For how long?”</i> - <i>“Have you been a leader? For how long?”</i> - <i>“What is your cultural background?”</i> - <i>“Do you have any experience from working in culturally diverse workplaces/work environments?”</i> - <i>“What do you think about when we say diversity?”</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>“What do you think of when we say discrimination?”</i> - <i>“What do you think of when we saw social inclusion?”</i> - <i>“What do you think of when we say social interactions?”</i>
<p>Faze 3: Focusing</p>	<p>4. Key questions (30 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Have you ever experienced communication challenges in your workplace because of culture differences? If so, could you tell us what happened?”</i> - <i>How important is it for you to create and maintain social relationships with your coworkers?</i> - <i>Have you ever experienced difficulties in creating and maintaining social relationships to coworkers because of culture differences? If so...tell us what happened”</i> - <i>Can you tell to what extent social interaction and social inclusion is important to you?</i> - <i>Have you ever experienced being discriminated in your workplace because of your cultural background? If so, could you tell us what happened?”</i> - <i>If not, do you know of any coworker that has experienced it? If so, could you tell us what happened?”</i> - <i>“Have you ever experienced being socially excluded in your workplace?</i>

	<p><i>If so, could you tell us what happened?”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>^ If not, do you know of any coworker that has experienced it? Could you tell us what happened?”</i> - <i>Tell us about a time or a situation where your leader’s actions have directly or indirectly affected the way you and your coworkers socially interact and include each other at work</i> - <i>Have you ever experienced that your leader has taken a specific action to manage cultural diversity challenges in your workplace? If so, could you tell us what happened?”</i> - <i>“Have you ever experienced that your leader in a particular situation has failed to manage culture diversity challenges in your workplace? If so, could you tell us what happened?”</i> - <i>“What factors do you perceive as important for social interactions and inclusion in a culturally diverse workplace?”</i> <p>Questions only for leaders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>“Tell us about a situation that you especially remember where you had to take specific actions to manage culture diversity challenges”</i>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>“Tell us about a situation that you especially remember where you had to take specific actions to manage social interactions challenges among your employees”</i> - <i>“Tell us about a situation that you especially remember where you had to take specific actions to manage workplace inclusion challenges among your employees”</i> - <i>“What factors do you perceive as important for social interactions and inclusion in a culturally diverse workplace?”</i>
<p>Faze 4: Looking back/summarizing (10 minutes)</p>	<p>5. Summarizing (10 min) Summarizing our understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>“We have now looked a little on...”</i> - <i>“You mentioned that...”</i> - <i>“Have we understood you correctly?”</i> - <i>“Is there something you would like to add?”</i> - <i>“We would like to thank you for participating and helping us. Continuing is our process of transcribing the interview. Would you like us to send you a copy of the final transcription for approval?”</i>