

The meaning of cultural diversity among staff as it pertains to employee motivation¹

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Recent trends in increasing ethnic diversity in Park Hyatt Hamburg brought up the question on how cultural diversity is linked to employees' motivation. The study focuses on the relationship between cultural diversity and employees' motivation. The research is based on twelve, forty-five-minute, semi-structured interviews with front office and housekeeping employees of Park Hyatt Hamburg. It reveals that cultural diversity plays an important role in the motivation of employees as most employees mention atmosphere and teamwork including cultural diversity as the most motivating factors. Most of the employees responded positively to cultural diversity. However, deep level dissimilarities including different standards and values can lead to negative outcomes. These findings are consistent with published research and literature on the subject. An important factor with regard to the perception of cultural diversity is the cultural competence of the employees. Therefore, it is recommended that the employment of culturally diverse employees is favourable, though attention has to be paid when employees have a very different culture from other employees, as it can lead to conflict.

Keywords: cultural diversity, motivation, cultural competency, team work

Introduction

The importance of globalisation is increasingly leading to an international mobilisation of human resources as well as cross-border exchanges causing a worldwide immigration flow (Craig & Douglas, 2006). This shifting scale of citizenship leads to discussions of cosmopolitanism, global citizenship and cultural diversity (Dower, 2000; Carter, 2004). Further, the increase of international migration to industrialised countries can be identified as causing a higher share of ethnic minorities in countries such as Germany. The number of ethnic minorities in Germany in 2014 was approximately 8.2 million; which is approximately 10% of the German population. By contrast, it was approximately 7% in 2013, indicating a strong growth of ethnic minorities in Germany (FAZ, 2015).

This recent trend of increasing ethnic diversity and the high number of ethnic minorities is also reflected in German companies and the amount of multicultural employment is increasingly leading to a culturally diverse workforce (FAZ, 2015). As a result, it is essential that managers pay attention to the management of cultural differences such as language, culture, age, gender, religion or ethnicity (Grin, 2004; Köppel, 2008; Amadeo, 2013). This includes the process of integration as well as the management of teamwork among the employees. According to Włodarczyk (2011), the motivation of employees is one of the most important factors needed to enable good teamwork. Therefore, the question arises: what is the link between a culturally diverse workforce and an employee's motivation?

Despite the fact that cultural diversity is becoming more and more important, the literature in regards to this link is ambiguous (Al-Jenaibi, 2011). Most diversity studies focus on nonvisible diversity types such as job tenure and functional background (Finkelstein, Hambrick & Cannella, 2009).

Nonetheless, cultural diversity also includes differences in visible characteristics including gender and race (Richard, Barnett, Dwyer & Chadwick, 2004). On one hand, numerous diversity studies have found that cultural diversity can increase the effectiveness of employees and strengthen creativity and innovation (Adler, 2002; Köppel, Yan & Lüdicke, 2007; Köppel, 2008).

And in contrast, studies have concluded that working in heterogeneous groups is less effective. These studies also suggest that cultural differences can lead to barriers and conflicts, especially deep-level dissimilarities that are negative for group cohesion (Harrison, Price & Bell, 1998; Białostocka, 2010; Martin, 2014). As a result, negative emotions arise and productivity suffers (Martin, 2014).

Workforce diversity

There is no clear idea of whether cultural diversity increases or decreases an employee's motivation, as indicated by the inconsistent findings. Looking at the hotel, Park Hyatt in Hamburg, it can be stated that employees with different cultural backgrounds work together, making the hotel a highly cultural diverse workplace. These cultural differences include primary dimensions such as race, age and gender as well as secondary dimensions such as religion and education. Depending on the department, a different level of cultural diversity can be noticed.

The housekeeping (henceforth: HSK) department is made up of 63 employees with mainly German, Ghanaian, Afghan, Algerian, Turkish, French and Belgian nationalities. The most predominant religions are Christianity and Islam, and the languages spoken are French, German, English and Turkish. On the other hand, there are 54 employees in the front office (henceforth: FO) department who speak German

and are mainly Christians. The main nationalities found in the FO department are German, Afghan, Egyptian, Turkish and Polish, where most of the employees grew up in Germany. The other departments in Park Hyatt Hamburg such as human resources, marketing and sales and accounting are mainly made up of German and Christian employees; therefore the FO and HSK department is the main focus of this research. When examining the HSK department, it can be seen that many male Turkish employees work in this department and sometimes have a different ethnicity and religion, leading to a different role allocation of gender. Therefore, it is sometimes hard for them to accept orders and criticism from a female supervisor. If a female supervisor has the feeling that her feedback is not accepted due to her gender, it can be demotivating.

Cultural diversity

The link between cultural diversity and employee's motivation is very two sided. On one hand, it can increase innovation and creativity (Cox, Lobel & McLeod, 1991; Adler, 2002; Köppel, 2008). However, it can also lead to barriers, resulting in miscommunication (Martin, 2014). This ambiguity is also underlined by personal experiences in the Park Hyatt company. It can be seen that cultural competencies seem to play an important role when it comes to cultural diversity. In order to get a clearer image, a review is given in the following discussion of different topics. First of all, a definition and description of cultural diversity as well as motivation are given to provide a proper understanding. Afterwards, both the advantages and disadvantages of cultural diversity are looked at. Due to the fact that cultural competencies seem to play an important role, this topic is described in more detail at the end of this review.

Cultural diversity can be seen as a characteristic of a group with two or more people. It normally refers to demographic differences which distinguish one from another within the group (McGrath, Berdahl & Arrow, 1995). These differences include biological characteristics such as genitalia, physical differences including skin colour, or stylistic differences, for instance dress codes (Cox, 2001; Green, López, Wysocki & Kepner, 2002). This is in agreement with Parvis (2003), Grin (2004), Köppel (2008) and Amadeo (2013), who state that cultural diversity includes factors such as skin colour, gender, language, nationality, religion, culture, sexual orientation and ethnicity. Referring to Powell (2011), these different dimensions can be divided into two different sections, namely primary dimensions and secondary dimensions of diversity. Primary dimensions of diversity are personal characteristics which cannot be changed such as race, physical and mental abilities, age and sex. Secondary dimensions of diversity represent personal characteristics that are changeable and can be acquired or modified, for instance income, parental status, education and religion. In conclusion, it can be stated that cultural diversity can be divided into primary and secondary dimensions. Now that the term cultural diversity is clear, the term motivation is explored.

Employee motivation

Motivation can be defined as the process which accounts for employee's persistence, direction and intensity of effort towards reaching a goal (Pinder, 2008). Therefore, if an employee is motivated, he or she will continue with a task until it is fulfilled. Further, motivation can be distinguished between

two dimensions, namely intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. According to Otis, Grouzet, and Pelletier (2005), intrinsic motivation means an engagement in an activity for inherent reasons. On the contrary, one is extrinsically motivated when he or she engages in an activity due to instrumental reasons such as grades, rewards or verbal reinforcement (Sansone & Harackiewicz, 2000; Otis, Grouzet & Pelletier, 2005).

Different motivation theories show what is important in order to have a satisfied employee. Frederick Herzberg differentiates between the hygiene and motivation factors in the two-factor theory. It is stated that on one side there are hygiene factors that avoid dissatisfaction, but also do not lead to satisfaction, and on the other side, the motivation factors satisfy and motivate an employee. Parts of the hygiene factors include supervision, relationship with supervisors and relationship with peers. Recognition, growth and advancement are, on the other hand, motivation factors (Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman, 1959).

A more recent theory, namely the goal-setting theory, states that setting difficult and specific goals leads to higher employee motivation. Edwin Locke already suggested in the 1960s that a major source of work motivation is the intention to work towards an aim (Locke, 1968). A specific goal shows an employee what exactly is expected from him and how much effort he needs to put into the task (Tubbs, 1968; Earley, Wojnarowski & Prest, 1987; Locke & Latham, 2006).

All in all, it can be said that there are different theories stating that, for instance, recognition, growth and specific goals motivate an employee. Nonetheless, it has to be taken into consideration that the reasons for the different levels of motivation depend on each individual employee and the situation. As the terms cultural diversity and motivation are clear, a closer look can be taken at the positive and negative aspects of cultural diversity.

Positive aspects of cultural diversity at the workplace

Cultural diversity includes many different characteristics and, depending on the individual and the situation, the reasons for an employee's motivation differ. Consequently, the relationship between cultural diversity and motivation also varies. According to Köppel, Yan and Lüdicke (2007), a culturally diverse workforce increases the profit of an organisation, the customer satisfaction as well as the image of the company. On one hand, it decreases the number of conflicts and the rate of turnover, and on the other hand, it increases the satisfaction and effectiveness of employees as well as customers (Cox & Blake, 1991; Larkey, 1996).

Creativity and innovation are strengthened, and diversity helps to create new ideas (Adler, 2002; Köppel, 2008). This fact is also underlined by an older study conducted by Cox, Lobel and McLeod (1991) and Esty, Griffin and Schorr-Hirsh (1995), who declared that cultural differences improve creative problem solving. However, these beneficial outcomes are mainly gained when group members share similar preferences in an organisational culture such as values and goals (Chatman, Polzer, Barsade, & Neale, 1998; Jehn, Northcraft & Neale, 1999).

Appointing staff based on their cultural backgrounds can win new markets, and products targeting certain markets can be developed (Esty, Griffin & Schorr-Hirsh, 1995; Adler, 2002; Köppel, 2008). Martin (2014) states that building in-house

cultural talents enables companies to integrate smoother into foreign cultures, and workplace diversity enhances the chance of staff to overcome culture shock.

Employees from a different cultural background often speak several languages, have cultural competencies and are highly motivated (Franken & Kowalski, 2006). Another advantage of a culturally diverse work force is that workers with different cultural backgrounds often have different ways of thinking. This leads to the fact that they analyse and solve situations and problems from a variety of perspectives as they often bring distinctive experiences, providing the organisation with a beneficially vast and sound base of knowledge and information (Esty, Griffin & Schorr-Hirsh, 1995; Martin, 2014). This is also underlined by a study conducted by Al-Jenaibi (2011), who researched the scope and meaning of cultural diversity in organisations in the United Arab Emirates. Based on that study, group work with culturally diverse people helps “to overcome cultural differences through shared experiences” (Al-Jenaibi, 2011, p. 71).

Negative aspects of cultural diversity in the workplace

Even though recent literature remarks on the advantages of cultural diversity in the workplace, including a higher level of creativity and increased competencies, it can be stated that these benefits do not reflect as effective in actual practice as it does in theory (Al-Jenaibi, 2011). When cultural diversity is not handled properly it can also lead to disadvantages. One of the main drawbacks is miscommunication, which often arises through language barriers and a different perception of non-verbal language. Employees with different backgrounds encode and decode messages in different ways leading to a higher possibility of misunderstanding, collision and tension (Kim, 2001; Wang & Mattila, 2010; Martin, 2014). In addition, barriers and difficulties in general can be created due to, for instance, religious differences and dysfunctional adaption behaviour (Martin, 2014).

Working in a culturally diverse field, the tendency of employees to get entangled in interpersonal conflicts is intensified. This is due to dissimilar beliefs, thoughts, opinions, traditions, norms, trends, values and customs (Białostocka, 2010). The challenge with regard to this is that not all dimensions of cultural diversity such as age, gender and skin colour are visible. For instance religion, politics and culture are less visible, leading to the fact that it takes some time to understand another’s culture. Pelled (1996) elaborates that diversity incites intergroup bias which can lead to negative outcomes in group work. In addition, the primary dimensions of diversity, which are highly visible, can lead to discrimination, stereotyping and prejudices if there is little to no experience in working as a group (Fiske, 1998; Hunter, 2009). These prejudices and discrimination can lead to losses in work and personnel productivity (Devoe, 1999).

On the other hand, it can be seen that deep-level similarities such as equal values and thought patterns lead to a positive group cohesion. On the contrary, deep-level dissimilarity is negative for group cohesion (Harrison, Price & Bell, 1998). This again can create conflicts between employees that can but do not necessarily have to be based on work issues. A conflict could also have historical or regional causes, leading to negative emotions among workers and lost productivity (Martin, 2014).

The connection between cultural competency and cultural diversity

Looking at the previous two sections, it can be seen that the existing literature is not always in agreement. Questions arise over why such differences occur. Based on several pieces of literature, one of the main factors generating a different perception of cultural diversity is the level of cultural competencies the employee has, including their ability for cross-cultural communication (Odenwald, 1996; Köppel, 2008; Hopkins, Nie & Hopkins, 2009; Sharma, Tam & Kim, 2009; Hoefnagels, 2014). Cultural competency can be described as “a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioural skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts” (Bennett, 2008, p.97). According to Deardorff (2009), there are three main dimensions when it comes to cultural competency, namely knowledge/comprehension, skills, and attitude/motivation. Attitude includes openness, curiosity and respect, whereas knowledge refers to factors such as cultural self-awareness and deep cultural knowledge. Lastly, skills refer to observing, evaluating, listening, relating and interpreting skills.

An insufficient level of cultural competency among the employees can lead to negative outcomes for the team, whereas the salience of culture can be reduced if the level of cultural competency is high (Köppel, 2008; Hopkins, Nie & Hopkins, 2009). Further, cross-cultural communication is important in order to avoid miscommunication. Particularly when it comes to communication between the supervisors and culturally diverse employees, a good understanding is crucial (Sadri & Tran, 2002).

In summary, it can be declared that cultural competency, including its three dimensions of skills, attitude and knowledge, plays an important role in the understanding of cultural diversity. Cultural diversity can be divided into two areas. On one side, there is a primary dimension of cultural diversity, including changeable, personal characteristics, and on the other side, there are secondary dimensions of diversity, namely personal characteristics which are unchangeable (Powell, 2011). Further, the motivation of an employee is either intrinsic or extrinsic (Otis, Grouzet & Pelletier, 2005). When looking at the advantages, as well as disadvantages of cultural diversity, an inconsistency can be seen.

On one side, there are many positive sides, such as the concept that cultural diversity reduces the number of conflicts and staff turnover, and diversity increases creativity and innovation (Cox & Blake, 1991; Esty, Griffin & Schorr-Hirsh, 1995; Larkey, 1996; Adler, 2002; Köppel, 2008). On the contrary, literature can also be found that questions the positive sides of cultural diversity for an employee. Referring to Martin (2014), barriers and difficulties can arise and the risk of interpersonal conflicts is increased (Białostocka, 2010). This shows that there is no clear consensus on whether cultural diversity results in higher or lower employee motivation. However, according to Odenwald (1996) and Köppel (2008), one reason for such inconsistencies can be found in the level of cultural competency which an employee has. An insufficient level of cultural competence among the workers can generate negative results (Köppel, 2008). Therefore, research in this field requires a greater exploration on how cultural competency changes the relationship between cultural diversity and an employee’s motivation. In order to find such data and

explanations, a research design that allows the interviewer to gain an insight into motives for certain opinions and behaviours should be explored.

Research approach

This research was conducted as a requirement for the degree in International Hospitality Management at Stenden University of Applied Sciences located in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands. It was carried out by a Bachelor student, following a ten-month internship at Park Hyatt Hamburg, Germany, and adapts a grounded approach. By means of qualitative research, it is possible to investigate the motives and perceptions of certain subjects and get a deeper insight (Verhoeven, 2011). Consequently, 12 semi-structured interviews with employees of Park Hyatt Hamburg were conducted. The interviews were carried out in July 2016 to enable the researcher to have enough time for transcribing and coding the interviews.

Aim

The aim of this research is to explore front office and housekeeping employee experiences of cultural diversity and the impact this has on their motivation.

Research questions

1. How does the employee perceive the cultural diversity in his/her department?
2. What are the employee's experiences in the past with regard to cultural diversity (e.g. education, prior work)?
3. What are the main factors that motivate the employees at the FO/HSK department?
4. What are the main factors that demotivate the employees at the FO/HSK department?

Over the past few years cultural diversity in work places has grown extensively and it is continuing to grow. As a result, the interviewer demonstrates the outcomes of cultural diversity and which factors play an important role when it comes to an employee's motivation. This is done with the help of exploratory research. This research is intended to be the basis for more conclusive research by exploring the issue of cultural diversity (Singh, 2007). Information was gathered with the help of semi-structured interviews, which means that the interview contained a list of topics. This type of interview was chosen since it gives the respondent a lot of freedom to contribute what they perceive as important and at the same time gives the interviewer the flexibility to "go with the flow" of the interview (Boeije, 2010; Verhoeven, 2011).

The main aim of this research was to discover the background of the information gathered. Open interviews are a collection method which is about the way people perceive things, which makes it subjective with their own interpretations (Verhoeven, 2008). This enabled the interviewer to intervene in case something unexpected happened and to measure and reveal the opinion and perception of the target group as well as their behaviour. Further, demographic traits such as gender, nationality, age and ethnicity were taken into consideration (Verhoeven, 2008). The interviews were conducted in German as not all employees speak English sufficiently. Information and not numbers were gathered which underlines the significance of discovering the opinions of participants about this topic (Maso & Smaling, 1998).

Overall, it can be summarised that qualitative research is favourable for this kind of topic as it is an open approach that provides a wide range of information and enables flexibility for different individual situations.

According to Verhoeven (2011), there are several instruments that may be used in order to conduct qualitative research. The purpose of this research paper is to provide a broad and rich exploration about the topic of cultural diversity. Therefore, it can be concluded that observations are not suitable, as the focus of this research is on the opinions and experiences of employees who work in a culturally diverse work environment. Instead, it is better to conduct semi-structured interviews. Prior to the interviews several topics were created on which the interviews were based. However, other questions were also asked, depending on what the interviewer perceived as important. This was done to improve the outcomes of the research.

In total, 12 interviews were held, taking approximately 45 minutes each, including the extra time spent on introductions and explaining the project and terms. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed. Afterwards, the researcher coded these interviews based on the transcription to reveal a rich and broad understanding of the data. Before the interviews were conducted, a pilot interview was held to test if the questions were chosen wisely. Based on those results, it was decided that the guidance questions were appropriate.

The population of this study is the 177 employees that work at Park Hyatt Hamburg. However, since it is virtually impossible to interview each and every employee, a section of the population was sampled (Verhoeven, 2011). Purposive sampling was necessary, as a specific group of interviewees were chosen based on specific attributes and characteristics (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Boije, 2010). The objective of this research was to interview a wide spectrum of culturally diverse employees in regard to nationality, age, gender and religion.

Seven employees from the FO and five employees from the HSK department were interviewed. Six of them were female and six male, as the perceptions of males and females can differ (Brizendine, 2006). The average age of employees at Park Hyatt is approximately 31 years. In order to represent the average, six interviewees between 20 and 30, four employees between 30 and 40 and only two employees between 40 and 50 were interviewed. To get a high variety of culturally diverse employees, six Protestants, four Muslims and two non-denominational employees were interviewed. Additionally, five German employees, four foreign employees and three employees with a German and a second nationality were interviewed as standards and values differ among nationalities and therefore the perceptions are also different (Reisinger & Turner, 2003). Lastly, attention was paid to the cultural experiences with the intention of seeing the connection between cultural competencies and the perception of cultural differences. Consequently, six employees were interviewed who had no contact with other cultures during their education, and another six who had contact with other cultures during their youth. However, after conducting the interviews, it was noticed that all interviewees had contact with other cultures at some point.

Verhoeven (2011) states that qualitative research requires a qualitative analysis. This involves the interpretation of audiotapes, photographs and/or videos. As previously

mentioned, the instrument for this research was interviews. For these interviews, different questions were prepared and twelve interviews were organised and scheduled with the help of the human resources manager of Park Hyatt Hamburg. In order to record the interviews, a recording device was brought to each interview, guaranteeing that no important information was lost. Each interview was conducted in a private room at the Park Hyatt Hamburg in order to avoid distractions and to make sure that the interviewees were in a familiar environment. The interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes and open-ended questions were utilised, which provided the opportunity for a unique insight (Becker & Verhoeven, 2000). During the interviews, beverages and chocolate were provided to ensure that the employees felt comfortable.

The research was based upon several semi-interchangeable steps. This is recommended by Jorgensen (1989), Charmaz (2009), and Boeije (2010) to get the best results. First, data was collected from the interviews. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, allowing the researcher an accurate coding process (Charmaz, 2009). Afterwards, open coding took place which is the act of “breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data” (Strauss & Corbin, 2007, p.61). Thus all data was read and divided carefully into segments. These segments were compared and, based on the topic, sorted into labelled groups. In this process the information gained was disassembled into components and fragments and named by giving them a code (Jorgensen, 1989; Charmaz, 2009; Boeije, 2010). Such a code could represent an analytical or theoretical concept, but it could also be descriptive or practical (Lewins & Silver, 2007). The purpose of the coding was to highlight the main information that was gained during the interviews (Charmaz, 2009; Boeije, 2010). After the open coding, the axial coding took place during which the labels and codes were categorised to enable the researcher to create a concept (Strauss & Corbin, 2007). Lastly, the selective coding was conducted. During that step, central themes which emerge from the different categories were looked for. This allowed the creation of a rich exploration and included a theoretical, abstract view (Charmaz, 2009; Boeije, 2010).

Based on Wilson and Joyce (2016), people talk more when they remain anonymous compared to when their names are published. Consequently, the interviews were conducted on an anonymous basis. No names and departments are mentioned on the transcribed interviews in order to make sure that the data cannot be linked to the employees. Instead, numbers from one to twelve were used so as to be able to quote and refer to the different interviews. Before the interviews were conducted, the interviewee was informed by the researcher that the interviews are handled confidentially and anonymously and that the tape is erased after writing the report. Therefore, the interviewees knew that any information given during the interview was not linked to their name. As the interviews were conducted on an anonymous basis and no confidential data was used, the research can be published.

Findings

First, employees' perception with regard to cultural diversity is discussed. Each interviewee mentioned that due to workplace diversity one can learn a lot from one's colleagues, for instance about different traditions, habits, or religions as well as

languages. Take, for example, interviewees (12) and (4) who referred to traditions and eating habits:

For instance, at the moment there is Ramadan and due to that I learn a lot from working colleagues how it works and that you cannot eat after sunrise and before sunset and about the Sugar Festival. (12)

Even though it might only be the lunch which is made up of bread and olive oil, I always find it interesting to learn about other lifestyles. (4)

Both interviewees talked about completely different areas, namely religious traditions and eating habits, but they both mentioned what one can learn from culturally diverse work areas. Such differences enrich the workplace, as indicated by several interviewees stating that cultural diversity provides different insights, ways of thinking, ways to solve problems and perspectives and opinions. For instance, beverage preferences were discussed:

When a guest complaints about something, we sometimes bring them a bottle of wine and one of my French colleagues told me once that French people only like red wine from their own country and not from, for instance, Chile or South Africa. And therefore we always try to make sure that French people get a French wine. (12)

In this case it can be seen that employees with other cultural backgrounds might have different cultural knowledge which was, in this case, the knowledge about the preferences of French guests. Such knowledge is also profitable for the company because the employees are more sensitive to other cultures and thus improve guest service. Further, cultural diversity improves the workplace, as it makes it more interesting, bringing variety to the work. Based on a small number of interviewees, it makes the work itself more fun, challenging and exciting. Additionally, better results can be achieved due to the fact that bigger fields of knowledge are covered, based on one interviewee, and a higher level of creativity is obtained, which was remarked by a few interviewees. Interviewee (2) gave an example about a new idea for a children's room:

You are much more creative. For instance, we have a lot of Arab guests and once an Arab colleague told me that it is important for the Arab people that their children are entertained since they always have someone at home who takes care of the children. Therefore, we came up with the idea to create a kind of children's room in one of the conference rooms with a Wii and toys and things like that. (2)

This example illustrates that due to a colleague's help and knowledge, the interviewee was much more creative and was able to come up with a new idea, in this case the creation of a children's room. Lastly, working with colleagues who are culturally different also provides advantages in private life. Quite a few interviewees commented that it is helpful for travelling and it makes it easier to adapt to a different country and culture. Generally, many interviewees commented that they prefer working in a diverse workplace due to the previously mentioned points.

Nonetheless, many disadvantages were also raised. Almost all interviewees indicated that conflicts and problems arise when the differences are too big. This includes differences in character, values, attitude, and mentality. Different examples

were stated with regard to this, such as the directness of Germans, as well as the value of being punctual:

In Europe things are said in a direct way. In Asia, for instance, this is not done. They like beating around the bush and that can lead to problems because the other person might feel offended and therefore does not like working anymore. (5)

For instance, punctuality. I mean there is a reason why I tell a cleaner to come at a certain time. Because I cannot tell the guests at 3pm that their rooms are not ready yet because one of my cleaners arrived two hours late. (1)

These are examples of how big differences in culture can lead to conflicts and problems. In this case, the German characteristic of being direct is mentioned, and that punctuality is very important in Germany. Next to big differences, communication problems can also lead to problems if there is no common language, but also the perception of non-verbal language can lead to misunderstandings. Punctuality was mentioned by several interviewees:

It is not about the language itself but about what is meant. For example punctuality, when I tell my colleague to meet at 9:15...then it is clear language-wise, but nevertheless it does not always mean that the colleague will be there at 9:15. (4)

This example shows that even though things might be expressed in a clear way, in this case the time, the understanding of the content can differ. Furthermore, six interviewees mentioned that he/she did not experience any disadvantages with regard to cultural diversity due to the fact that he/she was raised in different cultures and was always in contact with them. Overall, it can be concluded that the majority of interviewees perceive the work with culturally diverse people as motivating, and only a small number revealed that they find it neither motivating nor demotivating. They explained that the work with other cultures should not be generalised and it is more important to have a good team:

I would not say that I find it motivating. I do not mind, I want a good team. It does not matter if the people come from other countries. It just has to work. But I cannot say that I find it demotivating. (7)

This example shows that factors such as personality and working behaviour are more important than the person's cultural background.

Factors influencing culturally diverse workforces

Different factors also came up that explained whether cultural diversity is seen as positive or negative. Firstly, certain conditions have to be met, including a basic understanding of language, otherwise cooperation is not possible. In addition, a high number of interviewees commented that it is important that both sides are willing to adapt and get involved. Interviewee (4) mentioned an example of different attitudes. He/She met an Arab man while travelling who perceived the attack on the World Trade Centre as positive:

If someone has such an attitude and does not accept any other opinion, then it is difficult to discuss it and no matter how open you are, if the other one is not open at all, then it does not work. (4)

This example shows that cooperation between culturally diverse employees only works if both parties are willing to adapt to the other culture.

Certain characteristics are crucial when it comes to cooperation with culturally diverse workforces. It is important to be open of other cultures, and one interviewee indicated that it is essential to show respect and tolerance. Further, some interviewees indicated that the way one grew up also plays a major role in the interaction with other cultures:

My parents were really open for other cultures... For instance, we had an exchange student for half a year...that lived with us. He came from Brazil and therefore I learnt as a child already to be open towards other cultures. (1)

This shows that the way one is raised can be linked to how open one is towards other cultures. As for Park Hyatt, it was remarked by numerous interviewees that most employees grew up in Germany and therefore have a similar culture to the German employees, which limits the differences:

Most of the colleagues are foreign but they grew up in Germany or have lived in Germany since they were very young and therefore they often adopt the behaviour and standards of the Germans. As a result the differences are most of the time not very big. (1)
In my opinion it also depends on where the people grew up...I think I would feel more differences with a colleague who is 30 years older than to a Turkish colleague who is my age and was born in Germany and lived here his whole life. (4)

Experience with other cultures

Most of the employees have had contact with other cultures due to travelling. However, interviewee (8) brought up that one does not even have to travel in order to meet other cultures:

To be honest, I think that one can gather cultural experiences every day on the street, in the supermarket, in the gym or while going out. One does not have to travel far. One simply should not close the eyes. (8)

This underlines the fact that one can experience other cultures while remaining in Germany if he or she is open to it. In addition, a few interviewees lived or grew up abroad, for example, interviewee (9), who lived in America and India for several years, and interviewee (10) who grew up in Kosovo and came to Germany as a refugee. A small number of employees grew up with other cultures and a handful of interviewees lived with foreign people. However, half of the interviewees said that they did not work together with other cultures during their education, while only a few interviewees had contact with other cultures while going to school. Nonetheless, even though most of the employees are culturally open and enjoy working with other cultures, it is still unclear what kind of role cultural diversity plays in overall motivation.

While taking a look at the factors that are the most motivating for employees, it is clear that the majority of the interviewees perceive extrinsic factors as most important, such as the team or the boss:

I definitely find the colleagues very important. From the executive staff to the colleagues in the department, everyone is always motivated and helpful. That is great. Then it is nice to come to work and the atmosphere is automatically better. (9)

This shows that pleasant colleagues as well as supervisors are highly motivating. This factor was followed by praise and recognition that a high number of interviewees also mentioned. Different opinions surfaced with regard to money. On one side, it was declared that money is not the most important factor. On the other side, a few employees stated that money is an important motivator for them. Moreover, some of the employees said that a good atmosphere, including respect for each other, is very important and that there has to be variety in the workplace. Lastly, one employee expressed that guest contact is a motivating factor.

Moving on to the intrinsic factors, only a few factors were mentioned by a small number of employees. These factors included challenges, making progress, learning new things and development opportunities. Employees have different perceptions about what they perceive as demotivating, but most of the factors were linked to bad teamwork:

I find it very demotivating to work with people who do not like me or the other way around. Then I am not motivated to come to work and to do my tasks properly. So teamwork is really important to me. (8)

Getting on well with colleagues plays a crucial role when it comes to motivation. Other employees summed up that ungratefulness is the most demotivating factor at work:

I find it frustrating when I put a lot of work into something and then no one comes and says thank you or well done. Or when I take over a task from a colleague but he does not even say thank you. (2)

This demonstrates how ungratefulness can lead to demotivation. In congruence with the motivating factors, it was mentioned by a couple of interviewees that impolite, dissatisfied guests and a negative atmosphere are also demotivating. With regard to the duties, two employees stated that having to do impossible tasks is demotivating. Only one employee mentioned factors such as misunderstandings, stress, no responsibility, lazy and unreliable colleagues, and monotonous work as demotivating.

Overall, it can be seen that all of the employees had experiences with culturally different people and most of the interviewees remarked that the advantage of working with other cultures is that one can learn a lot. On the contrary, the most mentioned disadvantage was that too great a difference can lead to conflicts and problems. The majority of motivating factors were extrinsic, such as praise and the team, while most demotivating factors were working with a bad team and ungratefulness. In order to evaluate these findings, they are critically compared to the established literature from the beginning of this report in the following discussion.

Conclusion

Cultural diversity is linked to an employee's motivation since the majority of employees mentioned that teamwork and atmosphere, which also includes cultural diversity, are the most motivating factors. Further, most employees referred positively to cultural diversity. On one hand, this can be explained by the fact that all of the interviewees have experience with other cultures and therefore are culturally competent. This is also underlined by Odenwald (1996) and Köppel (2008), who state that the main factor generating a different perception of cultural diversity is the level of cultural competencies. On the

other hand, it can be seen that most of the foreign employees who work at Park Hyatt Hamburg grew up in Germany and therefore are quite similar to the German employees. Therefore, deep-level dissimilarities are limited. Regarding these, all twelve interviewees said that deep-level dissimilarities such as different values, mentality or attitude can lead to conflicts and are therefore demotivating. This is in line with Harrison, Price and Bell (1998) and Martin (2014), who all state that deep-level dissimilarities are negatively linked to group cohesion and lead to conflicts. Combining these two facts, it can be assumed that the number of negative experiences with regard to cultural diversity is limited because most employees are similar on a deep level, including standards and values.

Finally, a comparison of these findings with the research questions and the themes of the selective coding showed that they are in congruence with previous research. However, during this research, a link was discovered between motivation and cultural diversity as most employees perceive the team as the main motivator that also includes cultural diversity.

Several limitations need to be acknowledged. First, generalisation is limited as this study focuses on the hotel sector. The context of this research focuses on one hotel in Germany and therefore is an emic approach (Berry, 1997). In order to refine and elaborate on this study, it should be expanded to other areas. Furthermore, the conducting of the interviews was more difficult than expected due to the fact that some employees were not willing to be interviewed due to the fact that they felt too uncomfortable to do so. They could not be convinced by the researcher even though the interviews were conducted anonymously.

Additionally, the researcher faced some language problems with regard to some interviewees. For instance, one interviewee who grew up in Kosovo barely spoke German and English and therefore it was hard to conduct the interview with her. Nevertheless, the insight provided by a refugee who came to Germany approximately 20 years ago was very relevant to the outcomes of the research.

Lastly, the only source of data was interviews. This could have led to the fact that the interviewees felt under pressure to answer the question quickly and did not have enough time to think about a question. Triangulation could improve the trustworthiness of this study. Different methods could be used as well as different sources to collect data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Note

¹ This paper is based on the Management Project undertaken by Laura Velten in support of her studies toward a Bachelor of Business Administration (Hotel Management) at Stenden University of Applied Science.

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