

Student name: Nuri Begum

Student ID: 2015310

Lecturer: Dr Ernest Balutie Wavei

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Use of Generative AI in Assessment

For this assessment, Generative AI was used responsibly to support the research, structure, and proofreading of this project:

- **ChatGPT (<https://chat.openai.com/>)** was utilised on **5 March 2025** for assistance in structuring the executive summary and appendix of this project, ensuring clarity and concise communication of research findings.
- **Grammarly (<https://www.grammarly.com/>)** was employed on **5 March 2025** to review and improve the grammatical accuracy and readability of the final submission.

No Generative AI tools were used for the direct creation or writing of the content submitted, ensuring that all text remains original work.

All use of AI adhered to the guidelines stipulated by UWTSD, maintaining transparency and academic integrity. Copies of all drafts, notes, and original observations have been retained and are available upon request.

The Role of Cultural Diversity in Enhancing Guest Experience and Employee Performance: A Case Study of Marriott Hotel Cardiff

Abstract

This project looks at the impact of cultural diversity on guest satisfaction and employee performance at Marriott Hotel Cardiff. With an increasing need for diverse workforces in the hospitality industry, Marriott Cardiff strategically has employed staff who are fluent in multiple languages, such as English, German, Romanian, and Dutch, to cater effectively to its international customers.

Observations and guest feedback found that cultural diversity significantly improves guest satisfaction by enabling personalised and culturally sensitive interactions. Multilingual communication allowed for guest comfort, with high ratings noted for staff attentiveness and customised services. However, research also identified challenges such as language barriers, occasional inconsistencies in service personalisation, and perceived unequal career advancement opportunities, particularly for non-British employees.

To improve the benefits of cultural diversity, Marriott Cardiff should implement structured cultural competency training, create clear mentorship programs to support career advancement for underrepresented employees, and enhance internal communications. Addressing these areas should ensure greater consistency in guest experiences and raise employee performance and morale.

Contents

Introduction	4
Background Information	4
Research Aim & Objectives	5
Aim:	5
Objectives:	5
Research Questions	5
Significance of the Study	6
Literature Review	7
Understanding Cultural Diversity in Hospitality	7
Cultural Diversity & Guest Experience	8
Cultural Diversity & Employee Performance	9
Theoretical Frameworks	10
Research Gaps	12
Research Methodology	12
Research Design	12
Data Collection Methods	13
Ethical Considerations	14
Limitations	14
Case Study: Marriott Hotel Cardiff Overview & Findings	14
Marriott Cardiff Hotel Overview	14
Key Findings from Research	15
SWOT Analysis	21
PEST	22
Discussion	24
Interpretation of Findings in Relation to Existing Literature	24
Comparison of Marriott Cardiff's Practices with Hospitality Industry Standards	26
Contradictions & Unexpected Findings	28
Challenges in Diversity Management at Marriott Cardiff	30
Conclusion	32
Recommendations & Practical Strategies	33
For Hotel Management	33
For Employee Development	34
Future Research Suggestions	35
References	37

Introduction

Background Information

In major hotels chains such as Marriott, cultural diversity plays an important aspect within the careful practices and operations of the hotel, given that many employees and guests often come from diverse backgrounds (Cooks-Campbell, 2023). This specifically refers to the inclusion of staff from different nationalities, ethnicities, languages and cultural traditions, working together to be able to provide a high-quality service (Darby, 2024). As hotels attract more international customers, there is a greater need to have a diverse workforce to be able to help in understanding and meeting the different expectations of diverse guests (EHL, 2024).

A diverse workforce is known to provide better guest satisfaction by making them feel more welcome, being inclusive, providing multilingual communication and ultimately providing a more personalised unique experience (Scott, 2024). Guests are known to feel more comfortable when they know that the people serving them better understand their cultural preferences, dietary needs and communication preferences (Harri, 2024). Furthermore, diverse teams often drive more innovative practices and can collaborate better, leading to better overall service standards (Moore, 2024). However, diversity in the workforce may also introduce challenges including language barriers, cultural misunderstandings and varying ethical understanding (Reynolds, 2018). These can be overcome with effective management and training.

Marriott Hotel Cardiff, located in South Wales, represents a good case study in an effort to understand how cultural diversity can influence guest experience and the performance of employees. Being the Welsh capital city, offering a range of touristic opportunities, concerts and as well as being a business hotspot, this hotel is known to

attract many international visitors (UK Parliament, 2022). Whilst prioritising a diverse workforce, Marriott Cardiff has to overcome challenges and opportunities in managing employees who come from different backgrounds. This project explores the impact that cultural diversity can have on guest satisfaction and staff performance and well as the best strategies they can utilise to improve service quality and operational efficiency (Muhammad and Qadri, 2016).

Research Aim & Objectives

Aim:

The impact of cultural diversity on guest satisfaction and employee performance at Marriott Hotel Cardiff can be assessed by identifying the challenges and strategies for improved diversity management.

Objectives:

Evaluate how cultural diversity among employees can include greater guest satisfaction and service quality.

Analyse the challenges and benefits that cultural diversity can introduce to enhance employee performance and teamwork.

Identify key strategies that Marriott Cardiff can incorporate to effectively manage cultural diversity for improved guest experience and staff productivity.

Research Questions

- How does cultural diversity amongst different employee effect guest satisfaction and service quality at Marriott Hotel Cardiff?
- What are the main challenges and benefits of cultural diversity in enhancing employee performance and teamwork?

- What strategies can Marriott Cardiff use to better manage cultural diversity for improved guest experience and staff productivity?

Significance of the Study

The outcomes of this project can provide useful insights to hospitality managers, HR professionals and industry researchers on utilising cultural diversity to improve service quality and workforce performance. Understanding the role of diversity can help hotel managers incorporate better training programs, hiring policies and service enhancements specifically for international guests.

For HR teams, this project outlines strategies for address workforce integration challenges, communication barriers and team collaboration, especially key in a multicultural environment. Through these best practices in diversity management, Marriott Cardiff can improve team efficiency, employee morale and service delivery.

This study further contributes to the wider discussion of cultural diversity in hospitality, providing practical case study insights for other hotels and industry stakeholders. These findings will benefit not only Marriott Cardiff, but also any other international hotel brand which aims to improve diversity for healthier business performance and guest satisfaction.

Literature Review

Understanding Cultural Diversity in Hospitality

In hotel management, cultural diversity is the presence of employees from various ethnic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Lacalle, 2021). Cultural diversity promotes these employees to work together and deliver higher-quality guest experiences. As businesses are expanding globally, there is an increasing greater need to serve international travellers, suggesting that diversity is a key factor in excellent service (Seah, 2021). A diverse workforce can help hotels cater for the specific needs of guests from different cultural backgrounds by offering unique tailored services which can be appreciated by the guest (FHA, 2024).

A key component of cultural diversity in hotels is the presence of multilingual and multiethnic workforces. Accordingly, to Swanson (2025), hotels who prioritise proficiency in multiple languages can better serve international guests by reducing the communication barriers and improving the overall guest experience. Furthermore, employees from different cultural backgrounds can contribute unique perspectives on problem solving and customer relations, which can aid the service delivery Kimberlee (2019). This is especially important for global brands such as Marriott, who offer services across diverse cultural landscapes and hence rely on an inclusive workforce to maintain service quality through different regions (Wesley et al., 2024).

However, managing a culturally diverse workforce does not come without challenges. Unique perspectives and cultural misunderstandings can also cause problems in operational efficiency (Moloney, 2022). For examples, in some cultures, direct eye is seen as respectful, whereas in other cultures, it may also be perceived as inappropriate or aggressive (Uono and Hietanen, 2015). Misunderstanding of these

types of cultural nuances may lead to unintended service disappointments, reducing guest satisfaction (Eckhart, 2024). Therefore, hotels must be considerate of the context of such cases and incorporate cultural competency training programs to educate the employees on these practices on cultural sensitivity and communication methods.

Cultural Diversity & Guest Experience

By providing personalised experiences tailored to different cultural expectations, guest satisfaction and service quality is significantly improved. When hotel staff are able to demonstrate that they understand their specific cultural customs, dietary restrictions and service preferences, these guests tend to feel more comfortable and valued (Seo, 2012). For example, providing halal or kosher meal options, offering multilingual assistance and incorporating cultural greetings into customer interactions, e.g. saying “As-Salaam-Alaikum” to muslim guests, can significantly improve guest experiences (Karagiannis, 2024).

Case studies further show that culturally diversity can have a great impact on guest satisfaction. A study of two hotels found that the hotel with a diverse and culturally trained workforce received higher guest satisfaction scores, particularly from international travellers (Padma and Ahn, 2020). Greater positive feedback was given to culturally aware staff, who were able to accommodate diverse guest preferences, ranging from language support to culturally appropriate customer service. Another study analysed guest reviews from various hotels and found that customers greatly appreciate teams which are more culturally diverse, as they perceived the hotel to be more inclusive and caring about their workforce culture (Miguel, 2024).

However, further challenges such as language barriers can create misunderstandings between staff and guests, leading to miscommunication and disappointments in service delivery (Al Shamsi et al., 2020). If different employees have differing interpretations of customer service standards, such inconsistencies may negatively impact service standards. For example, some cultures prioritise efficiency and direct service, whereas other cultures may regard hospitality and personal engagement as more important (Huang et al., 2022). To overcome these difficulties, cross-cultural training programs, diversity workshops and standardised service protocols can be implemented by hotels to minimise any potential damage to service quality (Buckley, 2023).

Cultural Diversity & Employee Performance

Cultural diversity can also have an impact on employee performance, teamwork, and innovation in hotel operations. Diverse team members can bring different perspectives that can lead to creative problem solving, adaptability and improved service delivery (Rock and Grant, 2016). People from different backgrounds can offer unique insights, giving hotels an opportunity to develop more innovative approaches to customer engagement and operational efficiency.

A key concept which is worthy of notice, is Cultural Intelligence (CQ), referring to a person's ability to function effectively in a diverse cultural setting (Earley and Mosakowski, 2004). Employees with higher CQ tend to perform better in multicultural workplaces, as they are capable of navigating through different communication styles, work ethics and service expectations more efficiently (Hanna, 2019). Marriott, recognising the importance of CQ, have initiated CQ training programs for its

employees. This has proved to improve teamwork, higher job satisfaction and better guest interactions.

Cultural diversity in the workplace can present challenges in team unity and conflict resolution. Employees from different backgrounds may have different expectations regarding leadership levels, leadership styles and workplace interactions. For example, some employees may come from cultures where direct feedback is encouraged, while others might prefer indirect communication, e.g. by means of delivery through another person (Meyer, 2023). Without careful management, these differences in understanding may result in workplace conflicts, decreased job satisfaction as well as reduced productivity (CIPD, 2020).

Such challenges can be addressed by implementing mentorship programs, leadership initiatives and diversity-aware workshops, helping create a more inclusive work environment (Martinez, 2024). Studies suggest that workplaces which promote inclusive cultures often experience higher employee retention rates, improved collaboration and enhanced service quality (Ifeoluwa Malomo, 2024). By focusing on cultural diversity as a strength, rather than a challenge, hotels can help create a more fluent and committed workforce help drive business performance.

Theoretical Frameworks

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory

Hofstede's framework features six different types of cultural differences that have an influence over behaviour in the workplace. These feature Power Distance, Individualism vs Collectivism, Masculinity vs Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long-Term Orientation and Indulgence (Wale, 2024). Understanding these can help explain how employees from different cultural backgrounds view different decision-making

processes, teamwork strategies and leadership principles in hospitality. For example, employees who come from high power-distance cultures may be more likely to expect a hierarchical leadership strategy. Whereas those who come from a low power-distance culture would be more used to open communication and team-based decision making (Shah, 2015).

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory says that people often tend to define themselves to be based on group memberships (Madeson, 2024). This includes groups such as nationality, ethnicity or professionalism. In the hospitality industry, this may have a negative influence on the unity of the team and may even impact workplace relationships. For example, in a diverse team, if most of the team are from the same cultural background, they might prefer to speak in their native language (Tsang, 2020). This may lead to other employees feeling left out or could lead to customers lacking a sense of belonging. However, hotels which actively promote cultural inclusivity through cross cultural training and language support can reduce this likelihood of these types of challenges taking place (Grobelna, 2015).

Servqual Model

The SERVQUAL model is a tool which assesses service quality by considering Reliability, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy and Responsiveness (Nde et al., 2010). Cultural diversity is heavily influenced by Empathy and Assurance, given that guests of diverse backgrounds may expect different levels of interactions and attentiveness (Eichbaum et al., 2022). By evaluating how closely Marriott Cardiff's workforce aligns with the SERVQUAL dimensions, the hotel can amend its guest experience strategies accordingly.

Research Gaps

Despite the importance of cultural diversity in hospitality, most research fail to address key problems in the industry and hence, several gaps remain. Whilst most existing research focuses on large hotel chains in the west, there are limited insights into how diverse workforces are being implemented in non-Western regions (Baum et al., 2007). Furthermore, whilst most research focuses on the benefits of cultural diversity, there is a lack of practical frameworks on how diverse teams can integrate into normal daily hotel operations (Leifels and Zhang, 2023).

Another key gap within the research space includes finding a way to quantify the direct impact that cultural diversity has had on business performance. Even though many surveys would indicate an increase in guest satisfaction, there is a clear lack on quantitative data on how this had led to revenue growth, employee retention and operational efficiency (Suraihi et al., 2021). This project aims to address these gaps by conducting a thorough case study on Marriott Cardiff, offering practical insights into diversity management, guest experience and staff performance.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This project follows a case study approach, exploring how cultural diversity at Marriot Hotel Cardiff impacts the guest experience and performance of employees. This method allows for an in-depth analysis of real-world hospitality operations, providing context specific insights (Selin, 2022).

A qualitative research method was utilised given that it allowed for detailed analysis of employee interactions, service quality and workforce diversity. This can help capture observational data and real-world events which may not be directly reflected in quantitative research (Tenny, Brannan and Brannan, 2022). This project relies on both direct observation during hotel placement, as well as secondary data collection from online sources, offering a wider understanding of diversity related challenges and benefits.

Data Collection Methods

During a placement at Marriott Hotel Cardiff, many non-participant direct observations were made, and an account was made for how cultural diversity influenced this workplace and the how it impacted guest satisfaction. Employee interactions were a key focus area, observing teamwork, communication, and service delivery among culturally diverse staff. Guest engagement involved identifying how guests responded to staff based on cultural familiarity and language capabilities. The operational impact was also assessed, with an effort to find if diversity enhanced or introduced challenges to hotel efficiency. Observations were systematically recorded, prioritising anonymity and confidentiality.

Secondary data were also used to support observational findings. Academic literature and industrial reports helped examine past and ongoing research on diversity in hospitality. Guest reviews were also assessed through TripAdvisor and Google Reviews, helping evaluate how cultural diversity influenced customer satisfaction. The perspectives of employees were also obtained through Glassdoor and Indeed, helping understand staff experiences regarding inclusivity and career development. Utilising

both sources helped contextualise the finding and can compare Marriott Cardiff's diversity practices against broader industry trends.

Ethical Considerations

Whilst this research involved observing workplace interactions and using public online data, ethical practices had to be considered. Firstly, confidentiality and anonymity were observed, ensuring that details of employees or guests will not be identifiable. All observations were non-intrusive with the hotel operations, ensuring a fair study environment. Only open-source guest review and employee feedback were analysed, ensuring ethical compliance. This research has been approved through the Moodle Ethics Form submission, hence aligning with UWTSD research standards.

Limitations

Despite a thorough methodological structure, there are still certain factors which limit the scope of the research. Given that the observations are specific to Marriott Cardiff, there is limited generalisability to other hotel locations. Furthermore, relying on online reviews may not be 100% representative of the actual guest satisfaction of the hotel, considering personal biases. Hence reviews from multiple websites had to be cross-referenced. Finally, as non-participant, not conducting interviews limited the depth of personal perspectives.

Case Study: Marriott Hotel Cardiff Overview & Findings

Marriott Cardiff Hotel Overview

Marriott Hotel Cardiff offers 205 rooms spread over ten floors (Marriott, 2025). Originally opened in 1986 as the Holiday Inn, it was rebranded to the Marriott Inn in

1992. Thanks to its location in the heart of Cardiff—near St. David’s Shopping Centre, Cardiff Castle, and the Principality Stadium—this four-star hotel benefits from a lively setting that attracts significant foot traffic. Services include an on-site restaurant (Browns Restaurant), a 24/7 fitness centre gym and six different event rooms.

Marriott Hotel Cardiff features a diverse, multicultural team, with staff speaking English, German, Romanian and Dutch. Marriot International’s global figures suggest that half of the senior leaders are women or are from minority ethnic groups, which shows their efforts towards diversity and inclusion (Wesley et al., 2024). Employees are made to go through cultural awareness training, ensuring that they understand the expectations of different guests.

Marriot Cardiff also follow an inclusive hiring process, allowing applications from diverse backgrounds, including those with disabilities and those from minority ethnic backgrounds (PIW, 2025). They also offer mentorship programs, leadership development workshops and employee resource groups. These ensure that their employees all have equal career growth opportunities. All employees are also privileged with the TakeCare program, which helps support wellbeing of staff through fitness events, mental health resources and career development tools (Kohll, 2019). The strong commitment to diversity has led to Marriott earning a spot on Fortune’s 100 Best Companies to work for, for every year since 1998 (Yingling, 2023).

Key Findings from Research

Guest feedback suggests that Marriot Cardiff has a strong reputation for customer service, given that many travellers have said that the staff are friendly and

professional. Employees are often said to be helpful and welcoming, helping create a positive guest experience.

The multilingual staff who are fluent in English, German, Romanian and Dutch help cater for international guests (Expedia, 2025). This proved to make communication smoother and give the workers an opportunity to provide a more personalised service. Furthermore, Marriotts cultural awareness training has enabled the employees to understand what preferences different guests might have, reducing the likelihood of any misunderstandings (Al-Monawer, 2023). Yet, it was noticeable throughout the placement that language barriers did occasionally affect the experience, e.g., the lack of Welsh speaking employees at Marriott was a missed opportunity to add to a better experience for Welsh customers.

It was noticeable how the diverse workforce of Marriott Cardiff had a significant impact on how well the team perceived cultural sensitivity, particularly for non-English-speaking guests. When guests were able to speak in their native language with the employees, it was clear through their tone and language that they mostly felt more comfortable and at ease. Multilingual staff members play an important role in reducing these language barriers, allowing for a smoother service. A TripAdvisor review highlighted how a staff member greeted a guest in their native language, making them feel more valued and welcome (Tripadvisor, 2025). Another guest appreciated how the hotel was accommodating of their dietary requirements- offering both halal and vegetarian options. These examples demonstrate Marriotts commitment to cultural inclusivity, enhancing the guest experience.

Marriotts customer first approach allows guests to feel personally attended to, a factor which is also reflected in high guest satisfaction scores. Reviews on Booking.com rate Marriott Cardiff's staff at 9.0/10 – revealing high service standards and guest

engagement (Booking.com, 2025). Many guests also appreciate how staff members remember personal preferences, such as specific meal choices, room preferences, and check-in arrangements. Furthermore, many reviews highlight the restaurant team's ability to recognise regular guests and their preferences – highlight how certain members of staff had the attention to detail. The front desk staff were also commended for going the extra mile, and offering guests local recommendations and special requests, making the staff have a strong reputation for offering a personalised service. Marriott has been able to enhance the employee's ability to cater for diverse guests by hosting a 'Cultural Awareness Day program' (Gandhi, 2019). In this day, the employees were able to practise greeting customs, communication styles and hospitality expectations of different cultures. For example, it was made clear to staff that Asian guests often prefer a polite and reserved service approach, while American travellers expect a more informal and engaging interaction. Additionally, Middle Eastern guests might be more appreciative of privacy-conscious services and customised amenities, e.g. halal food options and prayer room facilities, which some reviews suggest being covered well at Marriott Cardiff (halalbooking, 2025). By adapting different service styles to cultural expectations, Marriott Cardiff have successfully increased overall guest satisfaction and loyalty.

Despite having a multilingual team, Cardiff Marriott still does face challenges through language barriers, particularly when many common guest languages aren't known by the employees, such as Mandarin or Arabic. Some guests did mention in reviews that there might have been some difficulties in communication, especially when attempting to make special service requests (Marriott Reviews, 2025). Marriott have recognised this need to cater for a wider range of languages and have trailed AI translation tools

in their hotels (Kholafat, 2024). However, these have not been widely implemented in Cardiff.

While a lot of guests report exceptional service, there are a few reviews which suggest inconsistencies in their personalisation, arguably due to flaws within the cultural awareness training. Through observing the way employees speak with customers, it was clear that some employees excel at cultural awareness, whereas others struggled to apply different service styles. Different occupancy periods also make service personalisation more challenging. At times where the hotel was very busy, it was noticeable how guests were often overlooked or were receiving standardised treatment, instead of tailored experiences. Furthermore, it is notable how despite the fact that Marriott follows international brand standards, some guests mentioned in their reviews that they expected better Welsh culture integration into the hotel. This includes Welsh language greetings, or Welsh inspired decorations.

Marriott Cardiff features a multicultural workforce, ensuring a good balance between innovation, problem solving and adaptability. Employees from different backgrounds can bring different skills and perspectives, enhancing team collaboration and efficiency. However different work styles and different perceived career progression limitations still present key challenges (Sullivan and Al Ariss, 2019). Through placement, observations indicated that cultural differences can be set aside and instead can be linked to promote team growth, by having a strong leader. Despite strong support of Marriotts inclusive environment, some suggest that these advancement opportunities which are available, aren't as equally accessible by all groups.

Ensuring a diverse workforce can help promote create problem-solving, given that people from different backgrounds can introduce new perspectives into customer service and hotel operations. Through observations, it was clear how multilingual employees often assisted one another, advising one another through their different experiences, allowing to enhance the experience of international guests. Culturally diverse teams improve service adaptability, as they are familiar with different customs and hospitality expectations (Grobelna, 2015). It is common for employees to mentor one another, especially in cases where a new member of staff is being trained and introduced to the Marriott service culture. A staff member once mentioned, “Every day is a learning experience. We teach each other new ways to communicate and improve service”.

However, there may also be team communication problems which come as a result of different expectations of leadership and work practices. While some employees may prefer direct communication and leadership levels, other may alternatively seek a more informal and collaborative approach. This may occasionally lead to misunderstandings which can weaken the unity within a team. Language barriers may cause delays in hotel operations, especially in high pressure environments such as the restaurant or front desk reception (Fischer, 2024). Through observations, its clear how Marriott has emphasised how important their cultural training is, but incorporating more team-building activities can help team members foster better relationships.

The TakeCare program, offered to all employees by Marriott International, supports employee well-being, career development, and financial stability, allowing employees to feel greater satisfaction with their career (Rodriguez, 2020). Senior employees are granted global mobility opportunities, allowing them to transfer to international locations (Yingling, 2024). It is clear how Marriott’s performance recognition culture is

helping boost the motivation of employees, allowing them to be recognised for their efforts. A restaurant team member at Marriott Cardiff commented “There’s a strong sense of teamwork, and I know I can build a career within Marriott”.

However, career advancement barriers are prevalent, especially for employees outside of the UK. Despite having relevant qualifications and experience, these groups are often overlooked for promotions. Upon speaking with different employees, an opinion stated that career growth is more dependent on having a senior “sponsor”, rather than merit. Furthermore, it was reported that many hotel employees face work-life balance problems, with many workers feeling burnout during the busiest seasons. Marriott should make it a priority to overcome these challenges by introducing better clarity behind promotion criteria and make vertical communication more easily accessible.

Marriott Cardiff features an inclusive work environment, where employees feel supported and valued. Upon speaking with employees, it was made clear that Marriott has significantly improved their commitment to reducing workplace discrimination by introducing DEI initiatives. Furthermore, Marriott demonstrates a commitment to gender diversity, as reflected in their many managerial positions being held by women (Marriott Int, 2023).

However, cultural bias and work-life balance problems still do exist amongst employees at Marriott Cardiff. One employee reported that they feel as though people from non-western backgrounds are less valued in the decision-making process. Research suggests that religious holidays and cultural observances are not always accommodated, creating scheduling tensions (Teachout, 2024). A housekeeping supervisor stated “Local employees seem to get promoted faster. I wish there were

clearer career pathways for everyone”. Focusing on implementing better mentoring opportunities for employees at Marriott Cardiff may promote better internal networking opportunities, strengthening communication amongst workers.

SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis was performed on Marriott Cardiff to better understand their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

A key strength of Marriott Cardiff is the fact that the employees are able to speak multiple languages, helping cater for international guests and reducing language barriers. Combined with Marriotts standardised training, ensures that the employees are made to offer the highest quality of customer service. Marriott has also demonstrated strong D&I initiatives (rated 4.2/5) by employees, promoting a positive work environment (Marriott DEI, 2024). Senior employees are able to benefit from global mobility opportunities as well as access to training programmes and wellness initiatives, all which help boost engagement and hold retention.

However, weaknesses include despite speaking multiple languages, staff may struggle with the inability to understand widely spoken languages, such as Mandarin and Arabic (Lane, 2021). Furthermore, as newer employees may lack cultural training, there may be problems with miscommunication and inconsistent service quality. Differences in cultural norms and practices may also cause workplace misunderstandings. Without strong leadership foundations, these misunderstandings may contribute negatively to the unity of the team. Employees may perceive favouritism in promotions, which may damage team morale.

Marriott Cardiff have the opportunity to expand their cultural competency training focusing on key guest demographics. A study should be performed, identifying the backgrounds of common guests at the hotel, and hence a focus should be steered

accordingly. Developing mentorship programs can help ensure equal leadership progression for all employees. Collaborating with Cardiff's tourism board can help them form cultural packages, catering to potential markets (e.g. Indian weddings, Middle Eastern travellers). Adopting AI translation chatbots into the Cardiff Marriott hotel help determine its effectiveness.

Some factors which threaten the growth of Marriott Cardiff include misinterpretations of gestures or etiquettes, which some cultures may not approve of (Thompson, 2023). Balancing standardised services with cultural personalisation is a challenge which will take time to adjust to. As the UK faces challenges with the job market, workforce reductions have shrunk the talent pool (Lawrence, 2024). High turnover risks losing experienced and multilingual staff.

PEST

PEST analysis was conducted to better understand political, economic, social and technological factors which influence the operations of Marriott Cardiff.

Political factors such as post-Brexit immigration laws have reduced the availability of EU hospitality workers, making it more difficult for Marriott Cardiff to be able to hire experienced, multilingual staff (Insight Hospitality, 2023). The government's stance on immigration may further impact workforce diversity unless hospitality visa schemes are introduced (Hennessy, 2024). Marriotts DEI policies are in line with UK equality laws, which mandate non-discriminatory hiring and pay transparency. Local Welsh government initiatives promoting Welsh culture may influence Marriott Cardiff, e.g. using bilingual signage, and hiring Welsh-speaking staff (CRC, 2021).

Economic factors include the increasing high wage competition in the UK (AFR, 2023). This puts pressure on Marriott Cardiff to offer more attractive salaries and benefits to

retain talent. The cost-of-living crisis could lead to employees requesting pay rises, or opportunities to work overtime (Jones, 2023). Economic downturns may lead to budget cuts on diversity training. However, in strong economic periods, the hotel may also be able to invest more in cultural training and staff development. Recovery in global travel further increases the demand for multicultural services, creating an opportunity to attract international guests (UNWTO, 2024).

Social factors include how travellers are increasingly expecting inclusive services (e.g., halal, vegan, gluten-free options) (Mohammadi et al., 2023). Not including these options could worsen customer satisfaction. Social media influences diversity related guest experiences, making cultural competency significant for managing reputation (Jin, 2023). Given that Cardiff has a multicultural identity, there is a need to balance local heritage with an internationally friendly atmosphere (Mohamed, 2017).

Technological factors include how there is a rise in the use of AI chatbots and translation tools (Kelly, Kaye and Oviedo-Trespalacios, 2022). These have proven to enhance guest communication, improving service accessibility. Online check-in and digital concierges are attractive to the tech-savvy international guests (Revinate, 2022). However, there is a need to maintain balance in automation efforts, to avoid alienating for less tech-comfortable visitors. The use of Virtual Reality may aid the hotel in training and the use of e-learning platforms can help personalise online cultural awareness training programs (Rachael, 2024).

Discussion

Interpretation of Findings in Relation to Existing Literature

The research findings confirm that cultural diversity can have a positive influence over guest experiences, as predicted according to previous reports. Literature indicates that multicultural staff can enhance guest satisfaction by offering culturally appropriate interactions, catering for a more personalised service (Johnson and Grier, 2013). This matches research at Marriot Cardiff, where multilingual employees and cultural awareness training have improved guest engagement. A study highlights how hotels with a diverse workforce often report higher guest satisfaction rates, particularly from international guests. This is reinforced by the fact that Marriot Cardiff have an 85% guest approval rating for culturally aware staff (Taiwo, 2024).

However, some challenges do arise when incorporating cultural diversity into the workforce. Existing research shows how communication barriers and service inconsistencies are still at risk in multicultural work environments. Furthermore, some reviews of Marriot Cardiff indicate an inconsistency in the way they have been treated by staff (D, 2019). This supports the argument that thorough management principles are essential for standardising service delivery.

Additionally, previous studies suggest that cultural misunderstandings can have a negative impact on customer satisfaction. This aligned with observations where some staff, despite receiving full cultural training, failed to fully meet the guests' cultural expectations. Further developments to cross-cultural training programs are required to fill knowledge gaps.

Cultural Diversity and Employee Performance

Research findings suggest that a diverse workforce can help foster innovation and adaptability (James, 2024). Observations at Marriott Cardiff found that unique ideas were often drawn within teams which were found to be more multicultural. Managers were found to encourage creative problem solving. These findings align with research that suggests that cultural diversity introduces new perspectives, enhancing organisational creativity.

However, research also shows how there are challenges in diverse work environments, including team unity problems and hence the need for strong conflict resolution methods (Chami, 2022). At Marriott Cardiff, it was observed that some employees found difficulty in amending to different work styles and cultural expectations. This supports the idea that strong leadership is required, helping motivate and support staff along tough transition periods.

Research also shows how diversity training and leadership development solutions help reduce workforce challenges (Mattina, 2024). It was observed at Marriott Cardiff, that the management teams were working on hosting cultural sensitivity workshops, which align with industry best practices for fostering inclusivity. However, some employees believe that despite efforts by management, cultural biases in career progression will always exist. This shows the need for organisations to continuously reassess promotion policies to provide equal opportunities for all employees.

Hospitality Industry Standards on Cultural Diversity

Research shows that top hotel brands are prioritising cultural diversity as part of their corporate strategy. Marriott Cardiff's approach aligns with their global vision. Similar to Hilton and Accor, Marriott Cardiff recruits employees from diverse backgrounds, making sure that their workforce is representative of their international customer base

(García-Rodríguez, Dorta-Afonso and González-de-la-Rosa, 2020). Marriot Cardiff has invested in cultural awareness programs and inclusivity workshops, ensuring they are ahead of the curve when it comes to training their staff.

Comparison of Marriott Cardiff's Practices with Hospitality Industry Standards

Diversity Hiring and Recruitment Practices

Research shows how leading hotel chains have implemented global diversity hiring policies to ensure an inclusive workforce. Marriott Cardiff have followed this by also hiring employees from various cultures and ethnic backgrounds. They have also made efforts towards implementing bias-free hiring policies e.g. structured interviews and competency-based assessments. They specifically mention in job descriptions that they encourage applications from multilingual and international candidates.

Competitor analysis shows that other major hotel brands such as IHG and Radisson have introduced more AI-driven recruitment tools to ensure greater transparency and inclusivity in hiring (HARRINGTON, 2017). Marriott Cardiff similarly could utilise AI-driven tools to further enhance diversity in talent acquisition.

Training and Development Programs

Marriott Cardiff has invested heavily in diversity training, clearly demonstrating a commitment to the cause. Cross-culture communication workshops can help improve guest interactions. Unconscious bias training can help reduce misunderstandings and improve guest relationships. Language courses give employees an opportunity to develop multilingual service capabilities. These initiatives are consistent with what is offered by other major hotel brands including Hilton, four seasons and Hyatt where training programs are mandatory for all staff (Swiss, 2024). However, these other hotels offer better structure to their training programs, awarding certifications,

establishing their qualifications as industry recognised. Marriott Cardiff could similarly introduce certification-based diversity training to enhance their credibility in this space.

Service Delivery & Cultural Sensitivity

The research findings support the idea that Marriott Cardiff's multilingual workforce enhances guest experiences, aligning with previous studies which emphasised the importance of language skills in hospitality. Leading hotel brands such as Hyatt and Shangri-La have incorporated advanced translation technologies which offer real-time translation and AI-driven guest communication tools (McDowell, 2025). Marriott Cardiff could utilise similar tools to allow for seamless communication with guests. While Marriott Cardiff offers some level of personalisation, competitors utilise more advanced AI guest preference tracking customisation tools that track cultural preferences for returning guests (Patov, 2024).

Career Progression & Inclusive Leadership

A key industry benchmark is how the hotel pushes for career progression for diverse employees. While Marriott Cardiff provides some leadership development programs, competitor hotels have more structured mentorship and sponsorship programs to help elevate those from underrepresented backgrounds. This includes IHG's "Future Leaders" program, which fast tracks diverse employees into more senior roles (Muysken, 2019). Four Seasons also offer a global mentorship initiative, which pairs minority ethnic employees with senior executives for long-term career development (MENTin, 2021). This shows that Marriott Cardiff have the opportunity to strengthen their leadership development framework by introducing sponsorship initiatives for workers of high potential from diverse backgrounds.

Contradictions & Unexpected Findings

Cultural diversity presents a mixed impact on guest experience at Marriott Cardiff, improving service personalisation whilst also creating inconsistencies. Research suggests that multicultural teams can cater towards a wider range of guests by offering the culturally relevant services. Yet it is evident that offering different service styles also can also lead to variability in guest experiences. While having multilingual staff can lead to improved communication, it was found that there are inconsistencies in communication due to varying service expectations among workers from different backgrounds. Some guests might appreciate a formal, professional service, whereas others may expect a more relaxed and engaging interaction. Cultural differences among staff also influenced how they perceived operational priorities. For example, employees accustomed to North American service models, often emphasised efficiency. Whereas employees who are from Mediterranean hospitality backgrounds, prioritised warmth and guest engagement (García-Rodríguez, Dorta-Afonso and González-de-la-Rosa, 2020). It was found that some guest complaint had originated from differences in greeting customs, responsiveness, or body language. This highlights the challenges associated in balancing personalised service with consistent company standards.

While multilingual capabilities initially were suggested to be a strength, they also present challenges. Some guests mentioned that they felt uncomfortable when they would hear staff speaking a different language, fearing that they would be speaking ill of them. Additionally, people have reported how errors in translation has led to misunderstandings in food orders or check-in details. Furthermore, guests who were of the same cultural background as certain staff members expected preferential treatment, leading to internal confusion and mistreatment. This is in alignment with

previous studies which suggest that although cultural diversity can expand service capabilities, but it must be complemented by structured training and standardisation to prevent inconsistencies. Unexpected problems in multilingual services highlight the importance of clear language policies to ensure communication enhances guest experiences, instead of potentially damaging it.

Marriott Cardiff promotes diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) as core values, yet there seems to be an inconsistency between what is shown in corporate policy and actual career progression opportunities. The hotel has a clear stance on the need for diversity in leadership, yet some staff from minority ethnic backgrounds felt as though they had fewer chances for promotion, contradicting the companies inclusive image. Unfortunately, many employees suggested a preference for local or western born candidates for management roles, despite the company's global image as an inclusive employer. Additionally, while diversity training was common, some employees felt as though it wasn't properly integrated into the workplace culture. Instead, some employees felt as though the training was rushed, and treated more like a corporate checkbox. These contradictions counter the assumption that strong DEI policies automatically lead to an inclusive work environment.

Another unexpected discovery was that teamwork in diverse groups is not always as collaborative as one might expect. While hospitality research typically indicates that culturally diverse teams have more creative problem-solving skills, observations at Cardiff Marriott suggest that different work expectations led to inefficiencies. Employees from different cultural backgrounds had different views on leadership principles and work ethics, which often caused friction and communication delays. Some staff members preferred a hierarchical leadership structure, whereas other anticipated a more open leadership structure, which led to misunderstandings. Without

strong leadership to overcome these differences, diversity may create tension rather than synergy. Marriott Cardiff should consider redesigning team training programs to address cultural work styles, ensuring that diversity becomes a strength rather than a challenge.

Challenges in Diversity Management at Marriott Cardiff

While Marriott Cardiff can benefit from a multicultural work environment, there remain challenges in workforce integration, service standardisation, and long-term diversity success. A major problem is balancing cultural standardisation with service personalisation. Employees must maintain Marriott's core service expectations, while utilising their unique cultural strengths. While guests may expect personalised services, excessive personalisation may create inconsistencies, leading to uneven guest experiences. Clear service policies are required to be able to standardise different aspects of hospitality, e.g. greeting protocols and conflict resolution. Implementing structured cultural competency training and developing a global hospitality framework can improve brand consistency.

Another key challenge includes overcoming cross-cultural conflicts. While diversity can enhance innovation, it may also cause workplace tensions, when employees have different ideas of leadership principles, communication and service priorities. Through observations at Marriott Cardiff, it was clear that some employees preferred autonomy whilst others expected structured leadership. Furthermore, it was also evident that there was work pace misalignment as some staff prioritised efficiency whilst others focused on relationship-building. Cultural differences also influenced attitudes toward feedback. Some employees preferred direct communication, whereas others would find that approach too confrontational. Marriott Cardiff must train their managers in being able to implement cross-cultural mediation techniques, anonymous conflict

report systems, and team-building activities which can help workers appreciate different work styles.

An ongoing challenge in cultural diversity management at Marriott Cardiff is dealing with guest biases towards certain employees. As some guests may prefer to be served by employees of a specific background, it may lead to awkward reassignments. It is common for guests to assume that employees with accents or different cultural backgrounds are less knowledgeable. This has a significant impact on staff confidence and morale. Furthermore, guest expectations of service formality often arise from cultural stereotypes, making it even more difficult for staff to be able to balance professionalism with personal service styles. While Marriott Cardiff hopes to offer unbiased service, employees may struggle to handle discriminatory guest preferences professionally. To mitigate this, Marriott could put more effort into educating their guests through welcome materials, e.g. a pamphlet which details diversity as a core value. They could further train staff on how to handle discriminatory requests assertively, whilst implementing fair service reassignment policies to prevent bias from impacting staff morale.

Marriott Cardiff also faces challenges in managing inclusivity in leadership and career progression. Some minority ethnic employees feel underrepresented in management, despite the companies aims with diversity. There is also a disconnect that exists between cultural training and what exists in real-world inclusivity. Some employees still believe that promotion decisions still favour western leadership styles. Enhancing inclusivity should involve the introduction of mentorship programs for culturally diverse employees, review leadership selection criteria for unconscious bias, and conduct annual employee satisfaction reports to assess inclusivity effectiveness.

Conclusion

This research has explored the impact of cultural diversity on guest satisfaction and employee performance at Marriott Hotel Cardiff, highlighting both the benefits and challenges which exist in a multicultural workforce. The findings confirm that cultural diversity can enhance service personalisation, multilingual communication and cross-cultural awareness- all of which can contribute to higher guest satisfaction levels. Guests are appreciative of the chance of being able to communicate in their native language, receiving culturally tailored services and experiencing inclusive hospitality practices. This highlights the need to follow diverse hiring practices and cultural competency training. However, service inconsistencies, language barriers, and varied guest expectations present ongoing challenges.

For employees, cultural diversity offers an opportunity to foster innovation, problem-solving and teamwork. Different perspectives can allow for more dynamic and adaptable strategies. However, findings indicate that communication barriers, differing leadership expectations, and perceived career advancement limitations can often create workplace tensions and disparities in promotion opportunities. While Marriott Cardiff has started to take positive steps towards inclusivity through, leadership developments, and DEI initiatives – some employees feel as though Western leadership styles remain favoured, limiting advancement for non-UK staff.

A key takeaway is that cultural diversity alone does not guarantee an inclusive or high-performing workplace. Success is dependent on effective training, structured career progression pathways and strong leadership. Maximising the benefits of diversity would involve Marriott Cardiff having to continue expanding mentorship programs, refining diversity training and considering the adoption of AI-driven solutions to

improve language support. Furthermore, standardised service frameworks can be used to balance global hospitality standards with cultural flexibility to ensure consistency in guest experiences.

Ultimately, this project addresses the ongoing discourse on cultural diversity in hospitality, offering practical insights for hotel managers, HR professionals, and industry researchers. Marriott Cardiff, and the wider hotel industry, must view diversity not as a challenge, but as a strategic asset.

Recommendations & Practical Strategies

For Hotel Management

Enhancing diversity management at Marriott Cardiff can be done by strengthening cultural training programs, improving language assistance and fostering cross-cultural employee engagement. As Marriott Cardiff already offers diversity training, service inconsistencies persist due to different cultural interpretations of hospitality. This can be overcome by making cultural competency training mandatory, ensuring everyone understands core hospitality standards, and guest expectations. This can ensure that everyone is on the same page. Interactive learning methods can be used, including role-playing exercises, guest interaction simulations and cultural immersion workshops. Additionally, a guest-centric approach should be encouraged, training employees to personalise interactions while maintaining service consistency. These training programs should be continually evaluated, incorporating both guest and employee feedback. While multilingual staff can improve guest experiences, language gaps still cause miscommunication. Marriott Cardiff should expand staff language training, focusing on common guest demographics, e.g. Mandarin, Arabic and Spanish (Lobetréau, 2023). Introducing AI translation tools and real time multilingual chatbots

can assist non-English-Speaking guests, whilst language identification name badges can help guests easily locate staff who are able to speak their language. Furthermore, cross-cultural employee engagement should be a priority, as diverse teams often struggle to work with unity, due to different expectations with communication and work ethics. Marriott Cardiff should organise monthly or yearly cultural exchange events to encourage employees to learn from each other's backgrounds. Cross-cultural team-building activities and departmental cross-training can also improve adaptability, collaboration and cultural awareness. Implementing these strategies can help Marriott Cardiff improve workplace inclusivity, service quality and overall guest satisfaction.

For Employee Development

To strengthen employee development at Marriott Cardiff, the hotel needs to implement structured leadership training programs, tailored specially to multicultural team dynamics. Based on observations of communication barriers and differing expectations of leadership styles, these programs should emphasise practical skills in cross-cultural management, conflict resolution and inclusive leadership. Interactive workshops with scenario-based simulations can enable supervisors to effectively manage diversity, promoting better team spirit and reducing the internal misunderstandings. Furthermore, Marriott Cardiff should introduce mentorship initiatives, prioritising career progression for minority group employees. Despite Marriott's strong emphasis on diversity, feedback from employees suggested perceptions of unequal promotion opportunity, particularly among non-Western staff. A formal mentorship scheme pairing minority ethnic employees with senior leaders would offer clear pathways to career advancement, providing targeted guidance, career coaching and networking opportunities (Iheduru-Anderson and Shingles,

2023). Mentors can help mentees overcome cultural barriers, navigate through internal promotion processes and ultimately build confidence in leadership skills. Mentors act as a pillar of communication that an employee can reach out to any time they encounter a problem, regardless of how big or small it may be. Transparent and structured promotion criteria should be adopted to ensure fairness. Advancement should be based purely on merit rather than informal networks or cultural backgrounds. Investing in tailored leadership training and structured mentorship programs, Marriott Cardiff can significantly enhance employee engagement, foster a genuinely inclusive workplace. Such strategies can ultimately reduce perceived biases, improve retention rates, and contribute positively to the reputation of Marriott Cardiff as an attractive and inclusive employer within the hospitality industry.

Future Research Suggestions

Additional research can help enhance understanding within the hospitality industry. Future research should consider other Marriott branches throughout the UK, or even in other countries. Examining hotels in diverse cultural and regulatory contexts, such as non-Western markets, can help provide insights into global diversity management strategies. Comparing Marriott Cardiff with branches in larger cities, such as London, Dubai, or New York, could help find best practices that can enhance diversity management locally (Deady, 2020). Furthermore, assessing Marriott's diversity policies against competitors like Hilton, Four Seasons, IHG, and Accor can help determine whether practices align with industry standards. Future studies should try to investigate the financial impact of cultural diversity (Herath et al., 2023). This includes consideration of how diversity might influence critical financial metrics, including revenue per available room (RevPAR), overall profitability, and guest retention rates. A cost-benefit analysis of diversity training programs could help find

the return on investment (ROI) for these initiatives, building a better justification for resource allocation. Future research should also find how diversity training programs grow, their effectiveness in reducing cultural misunderstandings, and whether targeted leadership development initiatives increase diversity in management. Tracking guest satisfaction trends over multiple years could potentially highlight whether refinements in diversity policies have proven to be effective. Collectively, these research suggestions would help Marriott Cardiff and similar hotels to optimise cultural diversity strategies for enhanced guest satisfaction, employee performance, and financial success.

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