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# Leading Diverse Teams in the Hospitality Industry: A Comparative Analysis of Berlin and Helsinki

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## Abstract

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The success of the hospitality sector is largely dependent on the leadership of diverse teams, which affects team morale, communication, and productivity. Knowing how leadership inspires teams and improves service quality is essential as companies deal with growing cultural diversity. This thesis compares leadership styles in Helsinki and Berlin to investigate cross-cultural leadership in the hospitality industry. The study examines how leadership styles impact motivation and, in turn, team performance, drawing on both qualitative research and first-hand experience. The results provide managers in multicultural hospitality settings with useful insights into the advantages and disadvantages of Nordic and German leadership styles.

**Key Words:** leadership styles, communication, cross-cultural, motivation, globalization

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# 1 Introduction

Cultural differences have a significant impact on teamwork, communication, and the general dynamics of the team, thus in the hotel industry it is crucial to be able to lead teams comprising people from several backgrounds well (Ahlvik, 2015, et al.). Businesses are understanding the strategic importance of cultural diversity more and more, thus it's crucial to know how to be a competent leader in several environments (Strand, 2017). This is particularly evident in the hotel sector, where cultural diversity greatly influences team dynamics, communication, and general behaviour (Ahlvik et al., 2015). This paper compares hotel sector cross-cultural leadership practices in Berlin and Helsinki to examine their differences.

The choice of this thesis topic came from both conceptual and pragmatic considerations. The author has over four years of experience in the hotel industry, hence they are personally familiar with both possibilities and difficulties. Good leadership has been demonstrated to transform the way teams operate and make them successful in a fast-paced, diversified environment, thus many individuals are fascinated by leadership these days.

The study inevitably concentrated on the practice of leadership in the hospitality industry. Having worked and lived in Berlin for one and a half years and Helsinki for four years has allowed me first-hand knowledge of the variances in the hospitality sector in both locations. It has also pointed out significant and valuable voids requiring deeper study.

The aim of the study is to provide hotel managers with practical knowledge and tactics to enable them to handle the challenges of cross-cultural leadership and simultaneously raise employee motivation and the general effectiveness of the company. The study is relevant for aspirant leaders from many backgrounds since, given the importance of leadership in multicultural environments, it provides a better knowledge of successful leadership techniques in an industry that is progressively globalised (Åkerblom, 2023).

## 1.1 Research Issue

Sometimes the hospitality industry is underappreciated as a good path for a fulfilling career. After choosing professions in sales or marketing, many feel there is more chance of success in other spheres (Baum 2019; Rivera 2020). This simplistic assumption ignores the complex dynamics of supervising several teams, guaranteeing constant service quality, and reacting

to quickly changing customer expectations (Kandampully et al., 2018). Furthermore, even although a lot of research has been done on traditional business sectors, scholarly publications emphasising leadership in hotel environments are somewhat rare (Marinakou & Giousmpasoglou, 2019). With a limited number of directly relevant scholarly sources, this study especially compares two cities: Helsinki and Berlin, therefore establishing a more specialised emphasis. These capital cities have unique qualities that make this comparison interesting and challenging for understanding leadership dynamics in urban hospitality environments: their different cultural makeup and approaches in service delivery.

The wide range of the hospitality sector, which includes cafes, restaurants, hotels, and various other businesses, presents another main challenge. Choosing hospitality comes with risks since every sector in the business operates with different internal fluctuations. Hotels run very different from cafes, and maybe surprisingly, restaurants can also run very different in their operations. Even in the same hotel, there are notable differences in operational methods. Consequently, broad presumptions might not always hold true in all spheres of the hotel sector. Still, these industries have a basic similarity: the need of excellent service and competent leadership to inspire staff members, which finally produces organisational success. Although this variety at first seem difficult for research, the focus on employee motivation and its effects helps to maintain the relevance of the study in several environments.

## 1.2 Importance of the Research

The hospitality industry stands out in the globalised world of today because of its natural variety, which includes a great range of cultural origins among staff members as well as guests (D'Netto and Sohal, 1999). In such a varied setting, good leadership is essential for preserving operational efficiency, improving team cohesiveness, and raising service quality (Chen, 2014). Effective management of several teams depends on people from all cultural, linguistic, and professional backgrounds coming together to create harmonic work environments, provide outstanding service quality, and guarantee long-term corporate success. In this dynamic industry, the ability to negotiate cultural differences and use diversity as a strength is progressively viewed as a competitive advantage (D'Netto and Sohal, 1999).

Widely known for their inclusive leadership approaches, which stress open communication, low hierarchies, and group decision-making, the Nordic countries. These ideals may create an environment in which diversity is not only welcomed but cherished, therefore affecting the

management and support of multicultural teams (Haavisto, 2022). Germany, on the other hand, is known for having a very organised and efficient work culture. As a result, leadership and management styles that reflect a different set of cultural standards are used there, such as putting more emphasis on formal hierarchies and processes that need to be done perfectly (Weibler, 2019). These different ways of leading make it possible to learn a lot about how cultural contexts affect how different hotel teams are run.

### 1.3 Research Questions and Objectives

*“How is teams' motivation influenced by leadership quality in the hospitality industry?” & “How does this affect team performance? - A comparison of Berlin and Helsinki”*

Significant Numerous scholars have conducted significant research, including Richard Lewis (The Lewis Model), Geert Hofstede (Hofstede Model), and Fons Trompenaars (7 Dimensions of Culture). Although this research was not conducted recently, its respective disciplines have derived significant benefits from it. Cultural influences, personal history, educational background, country of residence, and foreign exposure significantly impact leadership methodologies. This fundamental research provides critical understanding of the core components of behavioural features.

However, with the rapid changes in global dynamics and the increasing interconnectedness of societies, some aspects of these studies may no longer be as applicable to contemporary issues. Over the past few decades, cultural, technological, and economic shifts have transformed workplaces, communication methods, and leadership strategies, which may challenge the relevance of older frameworks.

Hofstede's studies, initiated in the 1980s (Wale, n.d.), focused on cultural dimensions reflective of that era and may not fully capture the intricacies of modern global interactions. Similarly, the Lewis Model and Trompenaars' cultural dimensions, which emerged in the 1990s (CrossCulture, 2015; EURAC, n.d.), were formulated based on an alternative understanding of cross-cultural management. While these models remain significant for historical context and foundational knowledge, their applicability to the diverse and technologically interconnected workforce of today may necessitate adaptation or enhancement to address contemporary challenges and nuances in leadership and collaboration across cultures.

Considering the minimum of 25 years of change since these investigations were conducted, it is reasonable to anticipate some criticism or resistance regarding their applicability today. Nevertheless, their significant impact on literature is undeniable, and they continue to serve as essential resources for understanding cultural dimensions and leadership methodologies.

## **2 Literature Review 1 – Culture**

Before delving into the main authors, it is important to note that this section does not offer full presentations of their respective frameworks. Rather, the focus is on their treatment of Finnish and German leadership styles, emphasizing the relevant cultural dimensions and terms that will help readers understand the key differences and similarities between these two countries' leadership approaches. The goal is to explore how leadership in these two cultures influences the management of diverse teams and contributes to employee motivation and organizational success.

### **2.1 Cultural Dimensions in Finnish and German Leadership Styles**

This study analyses how a leader's background affects culturally diverse team management, focussing on employee motivation and organisational success. Leadership style influences team motivation. A lack of direction or inability to reward work can demotivate teams, while leaders who provide constructive criticism, establish inclusive cultures, and recognise team achievements excite them.

Cultural and professional backgrounds affect leadership styles. Egalitarian leaders value open debate and team involvement, while hierarchical leaders centralise decision-making. Hierarchical leadership makes choices faster, whereas egalitarian leadership promotes inclusivity and innovation. Which style works best depends on the situation.

Employee expectations differ by culture. Effective leaders know their team's requirements and change their approach to motivate and succeed. In multicultural teams, clear communication standards, decision-making processes, and expectations from the start reduce misunderstandings and foster a more unified, productive workplace.

## 2.1.1 Classical Cultural Dimension Models

A lot of useful models have been made to help us understand how different cultures affect work and leadership. Three useful models by Richard Lewis, Fons Trompenaars, and Erin Meyer for understanding Finnish and German leadership styles can help us with this.

### **Richard Lewis's Cultural Types Model**

Richard Lewis's model categorizes cultures into three main types: Linear-active, Multi-active, and Reactive (Lewis, 2006).

- Germany is classified as strongly linear-active, characterized by task-oriented leadership, direct communication, and adherence to plans and schedules. German leaders typically prefer structured meetings, detailed preparation, and logical argumentation.
- Finland is categorized as linear-active with reactive tendencies. Finnish leaders value structure and planning but demonstrate more patience, stronger listening skills, and greater comfort with silence. This reactive element creates a less confrontational approach to problem-solving.

While both countries value efficiency and structure, German leadership tends to be more assertive and direct, whereas Finnish leadership incorporates more reflective and consensus-building elements (Lewis, 2006).

### **Trompenaars' Seven Dimensions of Culture**

Trompenaars identifies seven cultural dimensions affecting business relationships (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012). Key dimensions for Finnish and German leadership include:

- Universalism vs. Particularism: Both Finland and Germany value standardized rules over personal relationships, though Germany tends to be more extremely universalist, emphasizing consistent application of rules.

- Individualism vs. Communitarianism: Finnish leadership emphasizes collective decision-making more strongly than German leadership, which often grants more individual autonomy.
- Achievement vs. Ascription: Both cultures value achievement, but German leadership emphasizes technical expertise and qualifications, while Finnish leadership focuses more on demonstrated results and practical problem-solving.

Trompenaars' dimensions reveal that while Finland and Germany share many cultural values, Finnish leadership tends to be more communitarian and consensus-oriented, while German leadership often places greater emphasis on hierarchy, expertise, and clear rules (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

### 2.1.2 Meyer's Contemporary Cultural Framework

Erin Meyer, a professor at INSEAD Business School in France, has conducted extensive research exploring cultural differences and their effects on business. Her framework offers a more contemporary and nuanced approach to understanding cultural variations in business contexts, particularly relevant to today's globalized work environments.

A key concept Meyer introduces is the distinction between low-context and high-context communicators (Meyer, 2014). Finland and Germany demonstrate notable similarities in this regard, as both cultures prioritize communication that is precise, simple, and clear. This contrasts with high-context cultures, where effective communication is characterized by sophisticated, nuanced, and layered messaging (Meyer, 2014).

Other relevant dimensions in Meyer's model include:

- Evaluating: Both Finland and Germany tend toward direct negative feedback, though Germans are typically more direct than Finns in addressing performance issues.
- Persuading: German leadership often relies on deductive reasoning (theory first, then application), while Finnish leadership may incorporate more inductive elements (practical examples first, followed by conclusions).
- Leading: German leadership traditionally maintains clearer power distance than Finnish leadership, which tends to be more egalitarian.

The importance of effective communication based on these cultural understandings is well-acknowledged across organizations (Haavisto & Linge, 2022). The Nordic management style, which inherently supports equal rights and maintains low power distance within organizations, particularly emphasizes the necessity for precise and thorough communication (Andreasson & Lundqvist, 2018).

In the hospitality industry, where teamwork is paramount, communication deficiencies can significantly impact performance and operational effectiveness (Ly, 2019). The sector's heavy reliance on staff performance, where employee presence and efficiency directly influence guest service quality, makes maintaining effective communication channels imperative (Haavisto & Linge, 2022).

Since staff motivation is crucial and requires leaders to continually monitor and assist staff members while tackling cultural aspects influencing communication and leadership performance (Ly, 2019). Improving the performance of hotel businesses and matching communication strategies with organisational culture depend on effective leadership (Chen, 2014).

**FIGURE 1.1. COMMUNICATING**



Figure 1. Communicating Scale (Meyer, 2014, p. 39)

**FIGURE 4.1. LEADING**

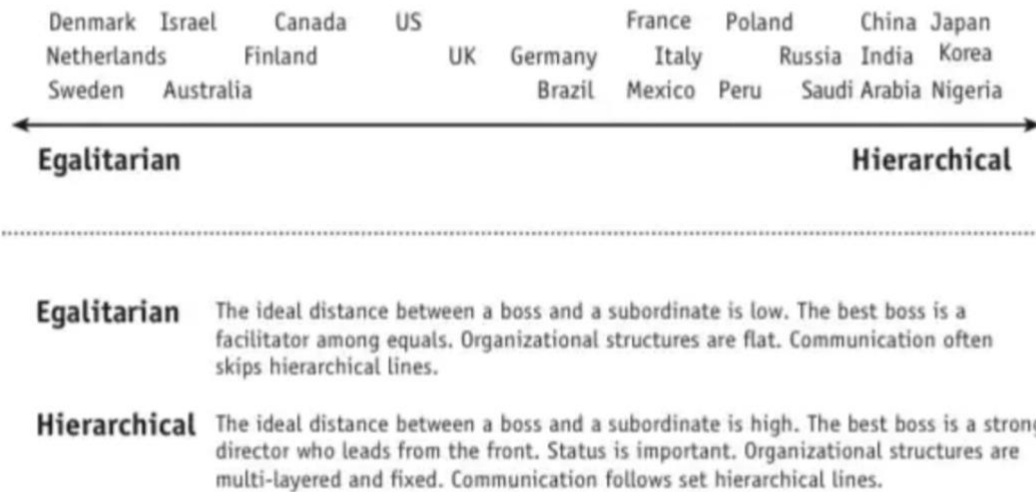


Figure 2. Leading Scale (Meyer, 2014, p. 125)

Figures 1 and 2 presented above display tables from Meyer’s (2014) work, which strengthen the preceding discussions.

## 2.2 Comparing Leadership Styles in Practice

### **Nordic vs. German Leadership Styles in the Hospitality Industry**

Nordic and German leadership approaches both emphasize efficiency and high service standards but differ in hierarchical structure, decision-making, and communication styles.

#### **Hierarchical Structure & Power Distance**

Nordic leadership features low power distance with flat hierarchies, participatory decision-making, and employee autonomy (Preuss, 2017). Finnish leaders empower employees, encourage feedback, and involve team members in decisions (Ahlvik & Björkman, 2015), creating collaborative environments that enhance service quality.

German leadership follows a more hierarchical approach with moderate power distance, clearly defined roles, and top-down decision-making (Meyer, 2014). This structured

approach ensures precision and reliability in high-standard establishments (Weber & Klein, 2020).

## **Communication & Leadership Style**

A key distinction between Nordic and German leadership lies in communication styles. Nordic leadership values openness and transparency, with leaders acting more as facilitators than authoritative figures. Decision-making is often consensus-driven, aligning with the broader egalitarian culture of Scandinavian societies (Andreasson & Lundqvist, 2018). This model aligns well with modern hospitality environments, where teamwork and flexibility play a central role.

German leadership, while evolving towards a more flexible approach, remains structured and efficiency driven. Communication follows clear procedural frameworks, ensuring that tasks are delegated efficiently, and expectations are well-defined (Brodbeck et al., 2016). While this method enhances organizational clarity, it may be perceived as less adaptable in diverse, fast-paced service industries compared to the Nordic model.

## **Impact on Hospitality Leadership**

Both leadership styles present strengths and challenges when applied to multicultural hospitality environments:

- The Nordic model fosters motivation and engagement by giving employees autonomy, making it well-suited for modern hospitality teams with diverse backgrounds.
- The German model enhances operational efficiency and consistency, making it effective in luxury hotels or large hospitality chains where precision is key.

Ultimately, hospitality leaders in both Helsinki and Berlin must adapt their approaches to balance structured efficiency with employee engagement, ensuring that leadership practices align with the dynamic nature of the industry.

## **3 Literature review 2 – Hospitality Sector**

### **3.1 Hospitality Industry Overview**

The hospitality industry is known for having demanding, high-stress jobs with high change rates (Huertas-Valdivia et al., 2019). Some of the things that are causing this trend are longer work hours, fewer benefits than in other industries (like paid holidays, sick leave, and parental leave), and much less job stability and protection. Job replacement is easier in the hotel industry than in other fields, like business, medicine, or education, because most jobs don't require as much specific knowledge. Because of these factors, hotel workers are less sure of their jobs and worry more about their place in the company and their future job prospects (Huertas-Valdivia et al., 2019).

The hospitality industry makes it hard to find long-term work because of the way it works, and the basic skills needed to do it. In this field, management techniques can have a big impact on how well work gets done, how happy employees are, and how much money companies make overall (Huertas-Valdivia et al., 2019). The way managers lead has a direct effect on operational results and the rate at which they keep employees. The type of leadership they choose can either help to balance out the tough aspects of the sector or make problems worse. To make hotel business models that last, we need to understand the connection between how managers run their businesses and how their employees feel about their jobs (Ghosh, Khatri, 2017).

### **3.2 Egalitarian and Servant Leadership in Hospitality Management: Comparative Analysis**

Servant leadership represents a comprehensive leadership philosophy that connects with followers across various dimensions. This approach enables followers to develop to their full potential by empowering their growth and development (Eva et al., 2019). The hospitality industry presents unique leadership challenges due to its service-oriented nature, high employee turnover, diverse workforce, and the constant balance between operational efficiency and exceptional guest experiences. In locations such as Berlin and Helsinki, hospitality teams often consist of a diverse range of members, including leaders from different backgrounds.

Erin Meyer (2014, p. 55) emphasizes the importance of low-context communication in such diverse teams. With team members from around the world, their communication styles, leadership understanding, and feedback practices differ based on their cultural backgrounds. Traditional hierarchical leadership models are increasingly being questioned within this sector as hospitality organizations seek approaches that can better address these industry-specific challenges. Among the emerging leadership paradigms, egalitarian leadership and servant leadership have gained relevance in hospitality contexts, offering frameworks that align well with the service-focused values of the industry while addressing contemporary workforce expectations.

### 3.2.1 Egalitarian Leadership in Hospitality

In the context of hospitality, egalitarian leadership stresses team members' equality independent of their level of organisational hierarchy. This strategy is especially important in modern hospitality industries where flattened organisational structures, cross-functional teams, and collaborative problem-solving have grown even more crucial (Tracey & Hinkin, 1996). Egalitarian leadership shows up in hotels, restaurants, and other hospitality companies in policies including participative decision-making, clear paths of communication across hierarchical levels, and less status differences between management and line-level staff.

The varied workforce of the hospitality sector, which consists of people from all cultural origins, generations, and educational levels, can especially gain from egalitarian techniques that respect every team member's own viewpoint. Studies by Enz and Siguaw (2000) revealed that creative accommodations sometimes use leadership strategies that more fairly distribute power and provide means for staff members at all levels to offer ideas for improvement of the services.

Equal leadership has been linked, when applied in hotel environments, with increased employee voice behaviours, enhanced creative problem-solving for guest issues, better team cohesion, and more organisational agility in reacting to changing market conditions (Raub & Robert, 2013). Clear decision chains are required for crisis management or in operations with high percentages of less experienced personnel who could need more direction, hence problems arise in circumstances when these conditions apply.

### 3.2.2 Servant Leadership in Hospitality

Servant leadership presents a particularly fitting model for the hospitality industry, as its fundamental principles align closely with the service orientation that defines the sector. First articulated by Robert Greenleaf (1970) and later developed by scholars including Spears (2010), servant leadership places service to others at the core of the leadership function – a natural extension of the hospitality industry's central purpose.

In hospitality contexts, servant leaders prioritize the development and wellbeing of their team members while maintaining stewardship of the guest experience and organizational resources. This model responds effectively to several industry-specific challenges, including the emotional labour demands placed on hospitality workers, the need for authentic service delivery, and the importance of employee satisfaction in driving guest satisfaction (Brownell, 2010).

Research examining servant leadership in hospitality settings has found positive associations with service climate, employee engagement, organizational citizenship behaviours, and ultimately guest satisfaction scores (Wu et al., 2013). Testani and Mayes (2021) demonstrated that hotels employing servant leadership principles experienced lower turnover rates and higher employee satisfaction compared to properties using more traditional leadership approaches.

The implementation of servant leadership in hospitality typically involves practical behaviours such as leaders demonstrating willingness to perform service tasks alongside staff, providing individualized mentoring and development, removing obstacles to employee success, and modelling the service attitudes expected toward guests. These behaviours help establish psychological safety and a culture where employees feel valued, leading to more authentic service experiences for guests.

## Key Similarities and Differences in Hospitality Contexts

Table 1. Comparison of Leadership Styles

Dimension	Egalitarian Leadership	Servant Leadership
Primary Focus	Equality of voice and influence across hospitality team hierarchies	Service to employees that parallels service to guests
Structural Approach	Often seeks to reduce status barriers between management and line staff	Often works within existing hospitality organizational structures while transforming relationship quality
Decision Authority	Distributed broadly, with input from all levels of hospitality operation	Leader retains authority but prioritizes employee needs and development

The table above displays a comparison of egalitarian and servant leadership styles.

## 4 Literature review 3 – Diversity and Team Leadership

### 4.1 Servant Leadership and Team Motivation in Hospitality

Leadership In the hospitality sector, which has specific difficulties because of high turnover rates, different teams, and strict service standards, leadership style defines employee engagement and performance (Huertas-Valdivia et al., 2019). Studies show that good leadership directly affects worker involvement, customer satisfaction, and retention as well as operational effectiveness.

In hospitality settings, two leadership styles—servant leadership and egalitarian leadership—have clearly produced positive outcomes. Emphasising shared decision-making and

inclusivity, egalitarian leadership has been connected to more entrepreneurial thinking among hotel teams, improved cross-departmental collaboration in hotels, and more creativity in food and beverage operations (Tracey & Hinkin, 1996).

Concurrently, servant leadership has been associated with high degrees of employee retention, customer focus, and service recovery efficacy (Wu et al., 2013). Brownell (2010) found that servant leadership leads to a "service transfer" effect in high-end hotels that value emotional intelligence and personalised care. This means that when employees feel respected and supported, they provide better service to customers.

Beyond operational effectiveness, leadership affects team motivation, which is a major factor influencing workplace performance (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Leaders in the hospitality industry, where long hours, emotional labour, and fast-paced events are typical, must adapt motivating strategies to different team configurations and cultural backgrounds (Nielsen et al., 2017).

In multicultural hospitality settings like Helsinki and Berlin, where teams often include workers from more than 15 different nations (European Cities Tourism Report, 2023), knowledge of these interactions is particularly important. In these cases, motivating strategies must be flexible and culturally relevant. Whereas servant leadership is best suited to the luxury and high-end service sectors, where emotional relationships with consumers are vital, egalitarian leadership may be more effective in diversified, innovative hotel operations (Testani & Mayes, 2021).

In multicultural hospitality settings like Helsinki and Berlin, where teams usually include workers from more than 15 different nations (European Cities Tourism Report, 2023), knowing these interactions is very important. In these cases, motivating strategies must be flexible and culturally relevant. While servant leadership is best suited to the luxury and high-end service sectors, where emotional ties with consumers are vital, egalitarian leadership may be more effective in diversified, innovative hotel operations (Testani & Mayes, 2021). These different but developing approaches in Berlin and Helsinki offer a great chance to adopt or modify a comparative paradigm for evaluating leadership effectiveness in multicultural hotel settings. At last, effective hospitality leadership calls for a mixed approach that upholds great service standards while supporting staff well-being. Understanding the cultural and motivating needs of their staff helps leaders to boost performance, raise visitor satisfaction, and lower attrition in this area of change.

## 4.2 Comparative Analysis: Helsinki and Berlin

Helsinki, Finland's capital, has a growing hospitality industry that thrives on diversity, with a significant portion of its workforce consisting of immigrants. Many hospitality roles require minimal language skills and prior experience, making the sector an entry point for workers new to the Finnish labour market. This diversity creates a unique leadership environment where cross-cultural communication and adaptive management approaches are essential.

The hospitality landscape in Helsinki reflects the broader Nordic leadership philosophy, as demonstrated by major operators like Scandic Hotels Group. Scandic's implementation of flat hierarchical structures demonstrates how Finnish hospitality organizations tend to emphasize collaborative decision-making and employee empowerment. During the pandemic crisis of 2020-2021, Scandic Helsinki Hub engaged employees from all departments in developing operational solutions, resulting in what former Operations Director Mikko Kankaanranta described as strategies that "not only preserved jobs but strengthened employee commitment during an unprecedented crisis" (Scandic Leadership Report, 2022).

Similarly, Helsinki's restaurant scene reflects Finland's cultural emphasis on equality and collaboration, with many establishments deliberately minimizing traditional kitchen hierarchies. This egalitarian approach is consistent with Finland's low power distance and preference for direct, open communication, fostering inclusive work environments where all team members are encouraged to contribute (Hofstede, 2001).

Berlin, in contrast, represents a hospitality market where traditional German management approaches are evolving to meet the demands of an increasingly international workforce and clientele. The city's hospitality sector demonstrates how structured leadership models can incorporate selective elements of participative management while maintaining clear operational frameworks. Kempinski Hotel Bristol Berlin illustrates this balance, where Executive Chef Franz Höllbacher preserves the traditional brigade de cuisine system while introducing innovation sessions that allow junior staff to contribute menu ideas directly to senior management.

These contrasting yet evolving approaches in Helsinki and Berlin provide an ideal comparative framework for examining how cultural context influences leadership in multicultural hospitality environments. Both cities feature diverse hospitality workforces but

operate within distinct cultural traditions, creating natural laboratories for studying the effectiveness of various leadership styles in motivating cross-cultural teams.

## **Real-World Applications: Leadership Case Studies in the Hospitality Industry**

### **4.2.1 Nordic Hospitality Leadership: The Scandic Case**

Scandic Hotels Group demonstrates distinctive implementation of Nordic egalitarian leadership within the competitive hospitality market. Beyond the typical flat hierarchies, Scandic has developed a proprietary "Everyone Matters" framework that transforms conventional management relationships. At Scandic Helsinki Hub, this manifests through:

- Cross-functional problem-solving teams that combine staff from different departments and hierarchical levels
- Data-driven decision authority granted to frontline employees without managerial approval
- Reverse mentoring programs pairing junior employees with executives

During the 2020-2021 pandemic crisis, this approach yielded innovative crisis management strategies. Rather than executive-dictated cuts, collaborative staff workshops generated creative solutions, including job-sharing arrangements that preserved employment while reducing costs by 18%.

According to Mikko Kankaanranta, former Director of Operations, "The survival strategies that emerged from our inclusive approach not only preserved jobs but strengthened employee commitment during an unprecedented crisis" (Scandic Leadership Report, 2022). Quantifiably, Scandic reports employee satisfaction scores 15% above industry averages and staff turnover rates 23% lower than competitors (Nordic Hospitality Benchmark, 2023).

### **4.2.2 German Hospitality Leadership: Kempinski Hotels**

Kempinski Hotels exemplifies the evolution of traditional German leadership principles through strategic modernization rather than wholesale abandonment. The Kempinski Hotel Bristol Berlin has developed a "precision flexibility" model that maintains structured decision-making while creating defined innovation spaces within the organization.

Unlike the widespread flattening seen in Nordic models, Kempinski preserves hierarchical clarity but implements targeted interventions:

- The hotel's "Innovation Incubator" program creates temporary hierarchy-free zones where staff from all levels collaborate on specific operational challenges
- Executive Chef Franz Höllbacher combines the traditional brigade de cuisine system with scheduled innovation sessions where junior staff present concepts directly to senior management
- The property's distinctive "Lady in Red" program empowers guest relations managers with carefully defined autonomy zones—allowing independent decision-making within precise parameters

This selective modernization approach has proven particularly effective in luxury contexts where consistent service precision remains paramount. The model yields distinctive metrics: Kempinski properties in Germany achieve guest satisfaction scores above 92% while maintaining staff retention rates approximately 30% above luxury segment averages (German Hospitality Association, 2023).

#### 4.2.3 Restaurant Leadership Case Studies

Restaurant operations provide instructive case studies of leadership principles applied in smaller settings with different operational dynamics:

**Nordic Example:** Copenhagen-based Noma demonstrates egalitarian principles in high-pressure culinary environments. Line cooks regularly contribute to menu development through "Saturday Night Projects" where any staff member can develop dish concepts. This approach has been adopted by Helsinki's Restaurant Ask, where Chef Filip Langhoff created "a kitchen without walls" where distinctions between front and back of house are minimized.

**German Example:** Two-Michelin-star Restaurant Tim Raue in Berlin combines traditional German hierarchical kitchen structures with selective servant leadership elements. While maintaining strict operational protocols during service, the restaurant implements comprehensive staff development programs where senior chefs are evaluated partly on their success in developing junior talent. This balanced approach has yielded impressive results: the restaurant maintains staff retention rates substantially higher than typical industry

averages for fine dining establishments, where turnover is traditionally a significant challenge (Raue, 2023).

## **Discussion**

The case studies presented demonstrate that while theoretical frameworks provide valuable lenses for understanding leadership in hospitality contexts, practical implementation often involves selective adaptation rather than wholesale adoption of any single model.

The comparative analysis of Helsinki and Berlin hospitality environments reinforces these findings. While leadership approaches in each city reflect broader cultural tendencies, successful organizations demonstrate flexibility and contextual adaptation. Both cities showcase the evolution of traditional leadership models toward more balanced approaches that preserve cultural strengths while addressing the unique challenges of diverse hospitality workforces. Section 6 will further explore these dynamics through empirical data collected from leaders in both cities, providing deeper insights into how these leadership principles appear in contemporary hospitality environments.

## **5 Methodology**

### **5.1 Research Questions and Approach**

This research aims to investigate two interconnected questions: "*How is teams' motivation influenced by leadership quality in the hospitality industry?*" and "*How does this affect team performance? - A comparison of Berlin and Helsinki.*" These questions emerged from my personal observations while working in the hospitality sectors of both Helsinki and Berlin, where I noticed distinct differences in leadership approaches and their apparent impact on team dynamics.

To address these questions comprehensively, I completed a qualitative comparative case study approach, which allows for an in-depth exploration of leadership practices in these two culturally distinct European capitals. This method is particularly suitable for examining the nuanced relationships between leadership styles, employee motivation, and team performance within specific cultural contexts. Rather than comparing Finland and Germany broadly, this research focuses specifically on Helsinki and Berlin. These metropolitan centres

represent unique multicultural environments that often go beyond traditional national cultural boundaries, especially in the hospitality sector.

## 5.2 Data Collection Methods

The data collection process consisted of two main components: primary research through semi-structured interviews and secondary research through literature review. For the primary research, I conducted interviews with hospitality professionals from both Helsinki and Berlin, including managers, restaurant supervisors, and team leaders.

The interview participants were selected based on their experience leading multicultural teams in the hospitality sector, with a minimum requirement of 1 year in a leadership position. The interview questions were designed to explore their leadership approaches, challenges faced when managing diverse teams, strategies for motivating staff, and perceptions of how their leadership style influences team performance. All interviews were recorded with consent, transcribed, and coded for analysis. The secondary research involved a comprehensive review of academic literature on cross-cultural leadership theories, motivation factors in the hospitality industry, and specific cultural characteristics of Nordic and German leadership approaches. This dual approach to data collection enabled the triangulation of findings, enhancing the validity and reliability of the research.

## 5.3 Analysis Framework

The analysis of the interview data follows a thematic approach, identifying patterns and recurring themes across the interview transcripts from both Helsinki and Berlin. This approach allows for systematic comparison of leadership practices between the two cities and their influence on team motivation and performance outcomes.

A crucial consideration in this analysis is the distinct multicultural nature of Helsinki and Berlin compared to their respective countries. Helsinki's city centre demonstrates cosmopolitan characteristics more aligned with global cities like London or New York than with other Finnish cities such as Oulu or regions like Lapland. Similarly, Berlin's unique cultural composition sets it apart from other German cities, particularly those in the southern or northern regions where migration levels differ significantly. Berlin's distinctive character has been shaped by historical events, including the city's division, Turkish migration in the 1980s, and post-Cold War developments. While Germany maintains a higher level of

diversity (23%) compared to Finland (13%) due to its longer migration history, both capitals represent exceptional cases within their national contexts.

This understanding informs the analytical framework of this study. While the analysis is guided by established theoretical frameworks such as Hofstede's cultural dimensions, I remain mindful of their limitations in metropolitan contexts. These cities have distinctive cosmopolitan features that go beyond traditional national cultural boundaries. They create unique micro-environments that often differ significantly from their countries' typical cultural patterns.

**The interview transcripts were organized and analysed using several key themes:**

1. Leadership approaches and styles
2. Motivation strategies
3. Cultural adaptation techniques
4. Team performance indicators
5. Challenges specific to multicultural environments

The analysing process allows for identification of both common patterns and distinctive differences between the two cities. Particular attention is paid to how leaders adapt their approaches to accommodate the multicultural nature of their teams, and which adaptation strategies appear most effective in each city context. The analysis also considers contextual factors such as workplace policies, and organizational structure that might influence leadership effectiveness beyond cultural considerations. This understanding is crucial for developing more applicable leadership models for urban hospitality environments.

## 5.4 Limitations and Challenges

One of the primary challenges in this research is the potential lack of comprehensive resources on leadership practices specific to the hospitality sectors in Helsinki and Berlin. While many studies exist on leadership in general, fewer research papers examine how leadership, multiculturalism, and the hospitality industry connect in these specific urban settings.

A significant methodological limitation involves the backgrounds of interview participants. Leadership styles may vary significantly depending on whether the leader is native to the country or foreign, especially within the culturally diverse hospitality industry. This variable adds complexity to the analysis and may influence the findings, as leaders from different cultural backgrounds might approach team management differently even within the same city context.

Another challenge encountered was securing sufficient comparative data from both cities. The relatively small sample size of interviews may not capture the full diversity of leadership approaches in each location. Additionally, differences in organizational structures and language considerations also present a limitation, as interviews conducted in English with non-native speakers may have affected the nuance and depth of responses. Some cultural concepts related to leadership might not translate precisely, potentially leading to minor misinterpretations despite careful analysis.

The research also acknowledges that leadership effectiveness is influenced by numerous variables beyond cultural factors, including individual personality traits, and organizational structures. While efforts were made to account for these variables, their full impact cannot be completely isolated from cultural influences.

Despite these limitations, this comparative analysis offers valuable insights into leadership practices in multicultural hospitality environments and establishes a foundation for future, more extensive studies in this area.

## **6 Result and Analysis**

### **6.1 Interview Findings**

#### **Helsinki Leadership Approaches**

- Restaurant manager with 7 years of leadership experience
- Assistant restaurant manager with 1.5 years of leadership experience
- Both working in restaurant/hospitality settings with multicultural teams

Helsinki leaders consistently emphasized flat hierarchical structures, with Helsinki 1 stating "Everyone is in the same level." This egalitarian approach aligns with Finland's low power distance score (33). They implemented daily feedback sessions and preferred quantitative performance metrics, contrasting with expectations about Nordic management styles. Despite consistent structures, they demonstrated situational adaptation: "I think I need to adapt my leadership style when facing challenges" (Helsinki 1).

### **Berlin Leadership Approaches**

- Brand & People Manager at X. Coffee with 11 years of leadership experience
- Shop manager at X. coffee roastery with approximately 2 years of leadership experience
- Operational manager with approximately 5 years of diverse multinational experience including work in Korea
- All working in specialty coffee/hospitality businesses with diverse international teams

Berlin leaders exhibited significant variation in leadership philosophies, reflecting Berlin's cosmopolitan coffee industry. Berlin 1's journey demonstrates common evolution: "I am not a control freak anymore; I give them the tasks and trust them." Berlin 2 offered a vivid multicultural leadership metaphor: "Managing a team is like taking care of multiple different animal babies and trying to teach them how to walk at the same time." Berlin leaders typically implemented monthly personalized goals rather than daily feedback, with stronger preference for qualitative observation over metrics.

## **6.2 Comprehensive Cross-Cultural Analysis**

### **Cultural Context Influence**

- Helsinki leaders emphasize egalitarian approaches consistently, reflecting Finland's established flat organizational culture
- Berlin leaders show more varied leadership approaches, reflecting both Germany's traditional hierarchical business models and newer, more collaborative approaches emerging in specialty hospitality businesses

- Berlin leaders' backgrounds (Czech, Korean) provide critical perspectives on traditional authoritative leadership models they've experienced or witnessed

### **Communication Patterns Across Cultures**

Communication emerged as a critical challenge across interviews. Berlin 3 observed: "Dutch people are very direct (low context communication). To some, they might come out hurtful, but initially they don't have any bad intentions." Helsinki leaders standardized around direct communication, while Berlin leaders customized styles based on team members' cultural backgrounds. Berlin 3 noted: "The biggest challenge is finding the common language" and "The more simple/direct it is, the better," suggesting simplification and clarity work best in highly diverse environments.

### **Team Management Approaches**

- Helsinki leaders prioritize participatory leadership, personally engaging in all tasks alongside team members
- Berlin leaders focus more on creating optimal environments, building trust relationships, and careful team composition
- Both approaches value inclusion, but express it differently: Helsinki through horizontal structure, Berlin through carefully crafted team dynamics

### **Performance Evaluation Contrasts**

- Helsinki leaders employ more systematic quantitative metrics and regular feedback cycles
- Berlin leaders emphasize qualitative observation, personalized goals, and individual development paths
- Berlin 3 bridges these approaches with both numerical performance indicators and personalized feedback strategies

### **Adaptation to Cultural Diversity**

- All leaders recognize the need to adapt, but Berlin leaders provide more specific examples of adapting to different cultural communication styles
- Helsinki leaders focus more on practical accommodations for cultural requirements
- Berlin leaders emphasize creating a common organizational culture that transcends individual cultural differences

### **Leadership Development Journey**

- All leaders describe evolution in their leadership approach
- Berlin leaders express more critical reflection on traditional leadership models from their countries of origin
- The Korean-background Berlin leader's journey from experiencing authoritative to developing collaborative leadership provides a particularly vivid example of leadership evolution

This comparative analysis reveals that while there are common themes in hospitality leadership across both cities, cultural context significantly shapes how leaders approach team management, motivation strategies, and communication styles. The specialty coffee/hospitality industry in Berlin appears to be developing leadership approaches that challenge traditional hierarchical models through leaders with diverse cultural backgrounds, while Helsinki leaders operate within Finland's established egalitarian business culture.

## **6.3 Team Performance Indicators and Motivation**

### **Performance Measurement Approaches**

Helsinki leaders favoured quantitative metrics, establishing clear numerical benchmarks aligning with Finland's uncertainty avoidance tendencies. Berlin leaders emphasized qualitative observation, focusing on team dynamics and customer interactions. Berlin 3's hybrid approach recognized that quantitative metrics provide objectivity while acknowledging cultural variations: "Work performance, it comes from the work being effective. Basically, by numbers." Leaders often initially gravitated toward measurement approaches from their cultural origins before adapting based on team composition.

## **Feedback Mechanisms and Cultural Sensitivity**

Helsinki 1 implemented daily feedback sessions reflecting Finnish direct communication. Berlin 2 developed monthly personalized goals providing greater autonomy between evaluations. Berlin 3's "sandwich method" demonstrated cultural sensitivity: "Giving negative feedback is challenging, I give it 1 to 1 to avoid the feeling of threat." Effective leaders calibrated approaches based on individual team member backgrounds rather than applying uniform methods, suggesting feedback flexibility matters more than specific methodology.

## **Structural Balance in Performance Management**

Helsinki leaders established consistent frameworks with situational adaptations, providing clarity while maintaining flexibility. Berlin leaders showed greater structural variation, reflecting diverse backgrounds and team compositions. Berlin 3's balanced approach using "numbers" while maintaining adaptation exemplifies effective integration. Leaders typically began with structures reflecting their cultural backgrounds before evolving based on team feedback, continuously calibrating frameworks rather than adhering to fixed models.

## **Psychological Safety as Performance Driver**

Both Helsinki and Berlin leaders emphasized psychological safety through different mechanisms. Helsinki leaders established safety through transparency and clear expectations, while Berlin leaders focused more on involvement and recognition. Teams with high psychological safety demonstrated greater innovation, communication, and retention. Team members from high power distance cultures often required more explicit encouragement to participate, while those from egalitarian backgrounds assumed participation opportunities without invitation.

## **6.4 Relationship Between Leadership, Motivation, and Performance**

Transformational leadership traits were consistently demonstrated by Helsinki leaders, who focused on inspiration and development, while Berlin leaders employed varied blends of transformational and transactional approaches. Berlin 3 successfully balanced collaborative involvement with clear expectations, stating "I wanted to have people involved, because then they feel part of the environment." Leaders typically evolved toward incorporating more transformational elements after recognizing their motivational impact, as purely transactional approaches confirmed less effective with diverse teams, while purely transformational

approaches sometimes lacked necessary clarity. All leaders demonstrated situational adaptation based on team member readiness and cultural backgrounds, with Helsinki 1 noting "I think I need to adapt my leadership style when facing challenges." Berlin 2's animal metaphor vividly illustrated different developmental needs, while Berlin 3 explicitly connected adaptation with empathy: "A leader needs to adapt into situations, able to make empathy, and taking initiatives accordingly."

Cultural variations in readiness indicators presented significant challenges, requiring culturally calibrated assessment approaches. While Helsinki leaders established structured collaborative processes, Berlin leaders showed greater variation from consultative to directive approaches, with Berlin 3 emphasizing both practical and motivational benefits of involvement.

Team members from hierarchical cultures often expected greater leadership direction, while those from egalitarian backgrounds expected higher involvement, and effective multicultural collaboration typically involved clear structure, explicit invitation for diverse perspectives, and careful facilitation. A learning orientation defined effective multicultural leaders across contexts, with Berlin 3 noting: "Leaders often are lacking experiences and they learn along the way. You need to look for resources. It's not enough by doing it." Cultural humility—recognizing cultural limitations and remaining open to different perspectives—emerged as a critical characteristic, and leaders who established explicit mechanisms for cultural knowledge sharing reported accelerated development of cultural intelligence and more effective adaptation to team diversity.

## **7 Conclusion**

### **7.1 Key Findings**

This research highlights the complexity of leadership, which cannot be fully captured by a limited set of theories or articles. Both leadership and diversity proved to be multifaceted topics, growing more nuanced as the research progressed.

The study uncovered several key insights about leadership in multinational hospitality contexts. Leadership practices tailored to specific locations, team compositions, and industry characteristics consistently led to better performance. This demonstrated that universal leadership models often fall short when environmental factors are not considered. While

communication emerged as crucial, selecting the right communication style for the team was equally important, as misalignment can significantly affect both productivity and team cohesion.

The research also revealed the challenges of managing multicultural teams. Teams with diverse cultural backgrounds require leaders who can address these differences with sensitivity and flexibility. Crucially, each team's unique characteristics demand individualized leadership approaches, challenging the common practice of applying a one-size-fits-all style.

Qualitative interviews with team lead in Helsinki and Berlin further confirmed that, despite cultural differences, effective leaders share common approaches. These leaders emphasized the importance of communication, continuous learning, and feedback. Reflective practice was key, with leaders constantly adjusting their strategies based on team dynamics. In both cities, leaders focused on creating psychologically safe environments where team members could express themselves freely.

Flexibility emerged as essential for success, measured by customer satisfaction, team performance, and overall well-being. Leaders who adapted their approaches to fit team needs achieved better outcomes than those who stuck rigidly to fixed leadership styles. The findings suggest that leadership in diverse environments requires a mindset that sees cultural differences as strengths rather than obstacles, contrasting with traditional methods that favoured homogeneity.

### 7.1.1 Leadership Challenges in Multinational Teams

Managing multinational teams in hospitality presents unique leadership challenges. Employees from diverse backgrounds bring rich life experiences, requiring leaders to navigate these differences effectively (Strand, 2017). For expatriate employees, motivation often stems from the desire to showcase their skills and improve their family's circumstances (Siim, 2015; Vanhatalo, 2017). This aligns with Nordic leadership values, which emphasize empathy and support for individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Leaders who recognize and appreciate the unique strengths of team members—rather than trying to standardize them—are more effective (Andreasson & Lundqvist, 2018; Strand, 2017). Multinational employees contribute distinct problem-solving, communication, and adaptation skills that benefit the organization (Strand, 2017; Ly, 2019). Managing this

diversity requires skilled leadership to ensure motivation remains high and performance is optimized.

Effective delegation based on individual strengths is key to managing diverse teams (Lundqvist et al., 2022). It allows leaders to monitor performance while ensuring workplace satisfaction (Preuss, 2017).

## 7.2 Research Contributions

The findings of this bachelor thesis offer important insights into leadership in multinational teams within the hospitality industry. One key takeaway is that leadership approaches should be tailored to the specific location, team makeup, and unique characteristics of the hospitality sector to achieve optimal performance. This suggests that applying a one-size-fits-all leadership style across different contexts can lead to inefficiencies, especially when local environmental factors aren't considered.

Effective communication is undoubtedly essential, but it's equally crucial to choose the right communication style for each team. Misalignment between a leader's communication approach and the team's preferences can negatively impact both productivity and team cohesion. The comparison between teams in Helsinki and Berlin highlights how cultural differences shape team dynamics, yet also reveals surprising similarities in how strong leaders handle diversity challenges. Leaders of culturally diverse teams must be adaptable and sensitive to these differences to foster positive team outcomes.

Another important contribution is the recognition that every team is unique, and as such, leaders must address their specific needs with careful thought and research. This challenges the common practice of using identical management methods for all teams, which doesn't work effectively in real-world settings.

Interestingly, Nordic leadership values—such as equality, empathy, and the recognition of individual strengths—have been found to resonate well in multinational hospitality teams. These principles can effectively cross-cultural boundaries when leaders consciously embrace and appreciate the diverse qualities each team member brings, rather than trying to homogenize these differences.

However, the study also highlights a critical nuance in applying Nordic leadership values. While egalitarianism and collaborative decision-making are central to Nordic leadership,

overly rigid application of these principles can inadvertently flatten or obscure important differences between team members. This creates a paradox, as the goal of embracing diversity is undermined by treating everyone as the same. The research suggests that effective leaders in multinational environments must strike a balance between egalitarian principles and the acknowledgment of individual differences, such as professional expertise, cultural background, and experience. The servant leadership model, which emerged from interviews with successful leaders, offers a potential solution by focusing on individual growth and valuing the unique contributions of team members. This balance between equality and equity is a crucial insight into leadership theory, especially in how Nordic values can be adapted to genuinely celebrate diversity rather than unintentionally suppressing it.

Success in these teams is redefined, moving beyond traditional measures to include customer satisfaction, overall team performance, and the creation of healthy, supportive workplaces. Leaders who were flexible and responsive to their team's evolving needs consistently achieved better outcomes across these metrics compared to those who adhered to a fixed leadership style.

Ultimately, leading in diverse environments requires a mindset that views differences as strengths rather than challenges. This is a departure from traditional leadership models that favoured homogeneity and overlooked the potential benefits of diversity. In a diverse team, diverse perspectives provide more avenues for problem-solving, but the key to success lies in managing that diversity while keeping the team motivated and united.

These contributions enhance the understanding of how leadership works in diverse teams within the hospitality field, offering both theoretical insights and practical approaches for leaders working in increasingly multicultural environments.

### 7.3 Theoretical Framework Evaluation

This research utilized four major theoretical frameworks to analyse leadership in multinational hospitality teams, each offering valuable insights, but with varying degrees of applicability to the studied contexts.

**Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions** provided useful insights into broad national differences, especially concerning power distance and uncertainty avoidance between Finland and Germany. However, the interviews revealed that Hofstede's framework oversimplified cultural adaptations in hospitality, where international experience plays a significant role.

While Hofstede's model was useful for establishing cultural contexts, it was less effective for analysing leadership behaviours in multicultural teams.

**Trompenaars' Seven Dimensions** offered more nuanced perspectives on leadership, especially regarding universalism vs. particularism and individualism vs. communitarianism. This framework captured the tension between standardized procedures (important in hospitality) and the adaptability required for diverse teams. Interviewee experiences aligned closely with Trompenaars' view of achievement being valued over ascription, although there were slight differences in implementation.

**Lewis's Cultural Types Model** was particularly effective for understanding communication differences between Finnish and German leadership styles. The distinction between Finland's linear-active with reactive tendencies and Germany's strongly linear-active approach explained many observed leadership patterns, particularly regarding comfort with silence and directness in feedback. This model was particularly relevant in the hospitality context, where communication efficiency is crucial for service quality.

**Meyer's Culture Map** was the most contemporary and practical framework for analysing leadership behaviours. Her dimensions on evaluating, persuading, and leading closely matched the challenges reported by interviewees. Meyer's low-context vs. high-context communication dimension was especially valuable in understanding how leaders adapted their communication styles to suit multinational teams. Of all the frameworks, Meyer's model most effectively captured the evolving nature of cross-cultural leadership in modern hospitality environments.

While each framework contributed valuable perspectives, the research shows that effective leaders in multinational hospitality settings develop contextual intelligence that goes beyond theoretical models. They tailor their approaches based on specific team dynamics rather than relying on national stereotypes, creating hybrid leadership styles that blend Finnish and German traditions while remaining responsive to team needs.

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# Appendix

## Appendix A: Interview Questions

### Section 1: Background Information

1. Can you tell me where you currently live and your role in the organization?
2. How many years have you worked in a leadership role?
3. Have you worked with culturally diverse teams, could you describe those experiences?

### Section 2: Leadership Style and Practices

4. How would you describe your approach to involving team members in decision-making? Can you share an example?
5. When conflicts arise from differences, how do you address them?
6. What strategies do you use to foster team cohesion?
7. How does the leadership style in your country affect team motivation and productivity?

### Section 3: Team Dynamics and Effectiveness

8. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of your team?
9. Feedback plays a crucial role in team performance. How do you approach giving feedback to your team members?
10. How do you balance cultural sensitivity with meeting team goals and keeping performance high?
11. Have you had to adapt your leadership style to address the challenges? Could you share an example of such an adaptation?

### Section 4: Deeper Dive

12. Can you share a time when you adjusted your leadership style to manage cultural diversity in your team? What challenges did you face, and how did you handle them?
13. In your opinion, what strategies or resources could enhance leadership effectiveness?
14. Reflecting on your leadership journey, how would you evaluate your success in leading?

## **Appendix B: Anonymous Participants' Answers**

### **Leaders Based in Berlin:**

#### **Participant 1**

**“X” is used to refer to the participant’s current workplace.**

1. Berlin, X. Brand & People Manager

2. 11 years, musical director

3. X is my first time working with international people Trying to understand their perspectives, it doubles the experience.

4. It depends, I put the rules and explain them.

5. I think so, they have different way of experiencing their feelings, so they react very different to situations. Although, I don't judge one person. I trust my own instincts, experiences.

6. Because of the people in my team. I met 4 different team so far, we are here to enjoy the work. Let's complete the rules, and we can talk about other things then work. I give them tasks and talk about fun stuff.

7. I make space for them to feel comfortable, I call them spontaneously to have hang outs, so they feel like they are home. And that increases their motivation. Section 3: Team Dynamics and Effectiveness

8. Working different type of people, family environments, culture background difference, makes the work fun and interesting. It sometimes slows down the process, because you need to find a common way of explaining things to each of them. You have a better foundation; I am curious what they think about my decision. I want feedback so everyone agrees not he decision that you make.

9. I am being straight forward; I get to the point right away. Good points first, then the negative one. I give them a timeline, to improve themselves and give them solutions to work on. Then, I monitor them. I think about their strengths, and not focus on weakness.

10. Showing the vision, I am very clear on what to expect. I am giving them space to feel confident themselves, so they do feel like they are responsible in the team, and they are vital to the shop.

11. Could you share an example of such an adaptation? I first observe, their body language enough to understand how they react. If you don't have any idea, I just ask them.

12. Yes, two different ones. Before when I was a musical director, all the responsibilities were on me. I needed to micromanage to maintain a successful work. When you work closely with people, this doesn't work at all. I am not a control freak anymore; I give them the tasks and trust them that they will do it properly. I see their strengths and give tasks accordingly. If they make a mistake, I don't point it out, but it was a mistake. Because I need to inform them so the whole team has a better team cohesion.

13. To manage people, the journey starts from the beginning. You need to be very flexible, details are important, but the bigger picture is always more important. Prioritising is a key, what's important for me. According to the big picture, I prioritize my way of managing.

14. Pretty high, 8/10 valid. I try to adapt into new environments, I am open-minded to different experiences. I don't judge people, and I am open minded to others.

## **Participant 2**

1. Berlin, operational manager

2. 5ish. I have lots of diversity because I lived in several different countries.

3. Yes, almost all my experience in they were all culturally diverse, even in Korea, I worked with multicultural teams in a broadcasting channel.

4. When I was a shoplead, deciding how the shlef display would be. Ther was two ways of approaching. Either I say they do, or I give suggestions than they give their options. I wanted to have people invloved, because than they feel part of the environment. I don't know everything, and my team helped me became a better lead. I was interested in how their head was working.

5. They arise, to distinguish the origin if it's cultural or personal differences. When I say something and they interpret in different ways. Dutch people are very direct (low context communication). To some, they might come out hurtful, but initially they don't have any bad intentions. This kind of differences need to be adjusted within the team by having open conversations.

6. Key is the communication, hearing them out. Acknowledging from both sides that there are differences.

7. In Korea, very authoritative unless you have a liberative childhood. A Korean child be used to having orders. Country has a long story of dictatorship. This resulted in less individualism.

8. Work performance, it comes from the work being effective. Basically, by numbers, There are many small steps along the way. Each person needs to be open to learning, curious. Not being persistent.

9. To a certain degree giving feedback is important. I would first explain why I'm giving that certain feedback. Giving negative feedback is challenging, I give it 1 to 1 to avoid the feeling of threat. Often starting with a positive one, like sandwich tactic. I keep it straightforward. And I always think twice, before giving a negative one whether is it personal or professional one.

11. When I was growing up, I only knew to be authoritative leadership. In the long term, it doesn't work out in my opinion. It was hard to adapt into a new way of leadership, because I didn't grow seeing one. There are many leadership styles. It's important to choose depending on your surroundings. These days, leaders need to learn more because the world is becoming more multicultural with all the migrations happening. A leader needs to adapt into situations, able to make empathy, and taking initiatives accordingly.

12. Just trial & error. Opening up and learning a lot. I read a lot of and listen a lot of different perspectives. Boarding your vision is important. Biggest challenge is finding the common language. The more simple / direct it is, the better. Creating your own culture within company is also very beneficial.

13. Leaders often are lacking experiences and they learn along the way. You need to look for resources. It's not enough by doing it. You need some sort of input externally to grow and be "successful".

14. It's a journey. Business aspect, numbers are showing that I am successful. Not only because of my leadership but definitely it has effects on the result. Personally, I learned a lot so far but there is always more to learn. Thus, I cannot really evaluate myself.

### **Participant 3**

**“X” is used to refer to the participant’s current workplace.**

1. My name is Ester and I live in Berlin, Schöneeweide. I work for a specialty coffee roastery called X as one of their shop managers.

2. This is my second position as a team leader. I worked for another specialty coffee roastery in Berlin for about a year and a half, last ten months of that time as a shop lead. Afterwards I had a month break and then I was hired for the manager position where I currently serve about a month ago. It is still very fresh.

3. Both of my leadership experiences, the previous and the current one, have been among a culturally diverse team. I come from Czechia, was raised in a Jewish household and have worked with people coming from many different countries and backgrounds. My previous team was involving a person from Croatia, Denmark, Hungary, Poland, Lithuania and Türkiye. Last one being you and I think it is very important to add that you are Muslim. While I was working for the previous company, I also was a lead to a person from Australia, New Zealand and Ukraine. On my current team, I have someone from Italy, Ukraine, Argentina, Chile and Scotland.

4. I still consider myself as a leader who is in the learning process. So far, I have discovered that my leadership skill asset can get quite narrow because of what comes to me naturally in my private life as well. I tend to turn to being very supportive, diplomatic and open to discussion rather than forcing change. That being said, my decision-making process starts with talking. Why do you prefer to do it this way? My preferred way would be this. Do we want to try it out and see if it is beneficial or if it breaks our workflow? It all comes down to explaining what is needed to keep the standard of the product that we make and how we can keep those standards in a fast-paced environment and under pressure. There is of course a couple of issues that arise with keeping the administration part of running a coffee shop intact. Those are explained but stay non-negotiable.

I have had a lot of the first case scenarios in my current position since I am used to a different style and the team has their own. I sat down with every team member in a one-on-one meeting and asked them what they want to keep regarding the shop and its structure by any cost. Then we talked about what I noticed and if they would like to try it "my way". The response was usually positive, and changes have been implemented in a few cases with small tweaks that allow a smooth transition. From where I stand, I am not there to make their lives harder by making them do something that is out of their comfort zone. I respect them in the same way I would like them to respect me, that has gotten me the furthest by now. I would not want to come to my workplace in the morning and realize that things have been changed without me knowing prior. Leading a team for me is not about making them see how correct I am but trying to find the sweet spot where all of us can work together for the common cause.

5. This might be controversial, but conflicts based on cultural differences do arise and they are for me personally hard to handle. I would love the whole world to function on a respectful basis but there are things that each one of us bring to the table when it comes to our background and no one is to be blamed for that, it is natural. There is a significant difference between how my current team members from Scotland and Italy communicate their needs. There is also a difference between me and all of them, that comes with the position itself but also from where and how I was raised. I can't expect everyone to have the same work-drive and ethics because everyone is different and has different point of view that comes with their background as well. Czech people are usually considered very hard working, willing to do over-time for example. People from South America from my experience value their time off much more. Same goes with the fact that an Italian person tends to be more vocal and straight forward when they don't like something whereas a person from Ukraine will just put up with it and keep going.

Then there is again a conversation to be held. I do respect their views on life and make them understand each other as well. Does it bother you that you stay over-time while another person just clocks out and goes home? And does it bother you because you wish you were more like that person or because they do not help as much as you do? Make them understand where the frustration is coming from and then again find a sweet spot. Make them explain their point of view to each other and if your team is built correctly, they will come to a compromise. One will stay longer next time if it's needed and the other one will go home on time to enjoy the rest of their day because most of the time in their position, things can wait until the next day. Building an enriching environment where people can grow on character bases is what brings higher purpose to working in a team and what people carry

on to their lives after they are no longer on the team.

A not so happy story is something that happened in my previous team, where because of the current political situation, I could no longer properly communicate with one of my team members (disclaimer, it was not you). In that moment I just shut down, was not able to raise the topic and avoided it. I took it too personally. I am now sure that it should have been handled differently from my side. It's a learning process - I also grow as a person while working.

6. There are the obvious ones, such as a common language which is default set to English. I do have two Spanish speaking people on my team right now and one of the first things I said should be changed is them speaking English even if there is no one else behind the bar. The explanation that made them do that was first, if there is another person present on the shift, they might think that they are talking about them. When they are alone, the customers might think that they are talking about them.

Then there is the purpose that brought us together. The team must believe that the product and atmosphere they are creating is important and amazing. It is impossible for any human being to do a bad job and be completely okay with it. There is always the shy voice in your head that tells you that you should be performing well, and you strive for it. In gastronomy, my strategy is to make the team believe that they make a positive

difference in everyday lives of the customers. I think this strategy is applicable to any company that wants to raise the employee's spirit. You must believe in what you are doing, and you must believe that the only way to achieve that is for the team to work together and work well.

There is also a certain luxury that comes with my position – I get to choose who joins and who leaves the team. It is not my favorite part of the job, but it is an important one. Is the person a good fit for the team's dynamic? Can they find any common ground? Because I don't like my team members to go to work and not have anything to talk about with the other person behind the bar and I love when team members hang out outside of work as well. When that happens, I know that things are going great. Is the person bringing in something that we were missing? I work with small teams, and I need every part of the general picture covered so that everything runs smoothly. I am very focused on evaluating each member not only as a professional but as a personality too. You can be the best barista of the universe but if the team has already tried to accept you and I can't see it socially working out, you must go.

To be honest, this was not very easy to pursue in my previous job especially with the people that the company wanted to keep at any cost or wanted them gone but at the beginning while people were still on probation, I had a couple of these uncomfortable conversations where I had to terminate them mostly because it was not a good fit for the team.

7. Funnily, I do not see the Czech way of running business or leading a team as something positive. I have had numerous conversations with my friends back home who have worked in those outdated company environments based around a leading person. There are of course some good examples, but I think they are highly influenced by the modern way of leadership. In gastronomy, I can't say I have ever worked in one of those back home, so I try to avoid making the same mistakes. I have read some books and learned in the process to get to this ideology that I implement right now.

What I was used to, was the typical stone age strategy of creating an artificial sense of fear and respect towards the leading person. A centralized ownership and management. Something that in every case destroys motivation and makes the employee feel like a tool rather than a person who contributes.

Something I do not understand is how can a leader think that unhappy and scared people can make money for them? Especially in a position where there is direct contact with the paying customer involved on daily bases, like in gastronomy.

I have a lot of hope that this is slowly changing because the gastronomy scene in Czechia is enormous, and the product is great but from my point of view at times not sustainable because of the working environment. People that worked and learned abroad are usually the ones doing it the better way.

8. Effectiveness is a very general word that can be understood from many perspectives. Is the person effective speed wise? Are they always keeping the workplace clean? Do they

serve the best quality coffee they possible can? Do they do well on the floor? Are they good at handling conversation with the customer? No one is the best at all things and that is when the word team comes in the picture and having everything covered is the most important part. Yet again it brings me back to the shared goal which is the end line that needs to be achieved. If the team is, no matter in which way, able to reach that goal, the team is effective. This might not happen in the same pattern for every team, so it is important to investigate how the team operates. If there is a simpler way for the team to do that, then you raise effectivity.

Since my team is small, I have the benefit of being able to evaluate them as individuals as well as placing them in the bigger picture. I can recognize what one is best at and advise them to show others how they do it. It is a process, you can not expect people learning something right away but if the learning part is always present, I consider the team effective for the benefit of the company and for them personally.

9. I could right now explain to you the always repeated phrase of the importance of on-site first-hand feedback that I of course encourage and support when I see it. That is a part of the learning process that I just described in the previous question. This type of simple feedback is usually very well received.

I do not give out any feedback sandwiches or how they call that. I am quite straight forward with how I imagine the feedback culture among my team. During those one- on-one meetings I told everyone that I will follow their journey as professionals as well as characters and I wish them to do the same for me. Every team member gets a monthly goal of their choosing and I monitor their progress during the month and talk to them about it when we meet behind the bar. I am now looking forward to seeing them all very soon again to evaluate during our next meetings. My biggest portion of feedback is regarding their goal and their growth. It is more about setting common expectations and giving them a field of focus for a longer period. This is of course possible once the person has reached the level of professionalism that is required for the job. I did not do this in my previous position, and it ended up with me not being able to monitor the progress of the team members which resulted in various problems.

At the same time, they give me feedback and share their expectations of me, which I try to complete. We talk about that in the same manner we talk about their goals. I am part of the team and even though my position is per say "higher", I must show the same amount of effort as they do. They would outgrow me otherwise.

Then there is the type of feedback that usually comes with a certain amount of affect. For those, we find a calm space and time, say what we have to say and then part ways to sit with it. They might tell me something that hurt them or was super uncomfortable for them and I might get offended at first, because of course I tried my best, but it was probably not the best for them in that moment. I think about it at home, they do the same and in the next days we meet to go over it again without the big emotions being involved. It is easier to find a common solution then.

10. Just as I try to balance any other sensitivity, I need the team to understand what is happening and why. As I already said, there are differences, regarding this question

maybe especially when it comes to dealing with uncomfortable situations. People from different backgrounds deal with these in different ways. Italian person will become vocal and suddenly greatly passionate, Ukrainian person will just shut down and finish the task. My Scottish team member will probably just walk away to have a cigarette and then joke about it and my former Croatian colleague will murmur for the rest of the day. The time they need to “recover” also varies.

They all need the solving procedure to be adapted to their temper. I will send the Italian person out to get some fresh air and the Croatian will be asked to sit down with me for a couple of minutes to talk about it. These two might also ask for it themselves. With the quieter ones you must make sure that they are heard because their perspective gets lost otherwise. After the big emotions are gone, we can continue working and I will go through the situation again in my time off and then bring it back to the team once I have come up with a solid game plan on how to solve it and prevent it reoccurring. During the high emotion period, everyone should have their needs met at the shortest amount of time possible, otherwise some of them get stuck in a bad mindset and the workflow is destroyed for the day.

11. This became a huge topic for me when I joined my new team. In my old position, there were mostly women my age or younger. My current team was mostly older men when I joined (I have never met their previous manager, but I know it was a man). My basic instinct is to “mother” people around me. I am a great caretaker and in my private life as far from bossy as it gets. I did not get rid of this caring part of me and their well-being is just as important as it was in the first case, but I knew that would not guarantee the respect I needed from the new team. I had to come up with a more rational and structured strategy and prove myself with actions. I had to convince them that I am not only very empathetic but also perfectly capable. I should have done that with the old team as well, yet again, it was my first leadership position and without any prior knowledge, I had to learn by hitting the wall at least once.

Then my Italian colleague came, and I immediately realized how important this approach is and will be. I don't know if you ever argued with an Italian person but let me tell you that it is very hard to rationalize with them unless you have some touchable proof of you working on your shared goal. You just must get the machine fixed and if you don't, they need to be reassured that it will happen with a set date. And if the date passes and it's not done, you

have some explaining to do. They are basically a living reminder notification. I appreciate that about this team member deeply, because they push me until I do it.

Others on the other hand need to be pushed, like my Scottish team member. Then I must set an actual reminder on my phone to not forget to remind them.

I was once told that managing a team is like babysitting adults. I would say it is more like taking care of multiple different animal babies and trying to teach them how to walk at the same time. It is different for chickens and for puppies of course. That's why I like small teams, because I have the capacity to focus on each one of them separately so that at the end the whole bunch is walking without my help.

12. I don't know. I feel like, I already answered this question above.

13. I already talked about the "shared goal" strategy. That is something that I read about in a book called *The Infinite Game* by Simon Sinek if I am not mistaken. It is more business oriented, but it gives some good advice on leadership as well. But otherwise, I am not much of an expert. I mostly try to mix in some basic psychology and human understanding into my job. I think that is the best way to go and the closest to me, I like to read about psychology in my free time. You can't really lead a team without being a people person.

I also already shared my understanding of effectiveness. You must accept that your way of reaching a goal is not the universal one, it needs to be adjusted because you are leading a team not just yourself. You need the team, you are not able to reach the goal on your own, therefore you must tune into them.

14. This would be a good question for my previous and my current team. As I already mentioned probably too many times, it is a process. Although I think I have many great qualities, that can make me to a great leader especially for a small team there were many errors I made in I my previous position that I wish not to repeat. I did a lot of self-work during that one-month break, and I realized that I want to continue my journey as a leader, and I can do better.

Since both of my leadership experiences were middle management placed, I sometimes struggle with my own morals when it comes to pleasing the company while keeping the team safe and content. My emphasis is specifically on that, I am here for the team and my task is to create a vision for them. I think that is something I managed to achieve in my previous position, I showed up for the team and I protected their needs, but while doing that I forgot the other roles that I must fulfil as a leader and those can be just as important. I am trying to

be a bit more holistic with my current approach, let's see if I am more successful this time. But really, that is something for the team to evaluate, I am their leader, I am here for them to be precise. For me personally, every solved issue among the team, any perfected skill, any reached personal goal, any time that team members come to work without worrying, is a success.

NOTE: I am simply stating what I have observed in my teams, there might be and most definitely are people who completely do not fit into those "labels" I created to be able to explain described situations. Diversity is important and nothing I said is meant in a pejorative sense - it is the opposite. I love working in an environment where we all can grow by learning from each other.

## **Leaders Based in Helsinki:**

### **Participant 1**

1. I live in Helsinki, Finland, working as an assistant restaurant manager.
2. I have worked in my leadership role for close to one and a half year.
3. One was working in hospitality and wine making in Italy, where many of the workers in the vineyards were from the Republic of Senegal.

In this experience, there were challenges as far as language barriers. I saw how this was handled from both sides. I had already heard talk about racism in Italy, which sadly showed in the way they approached this situation. Not to say that this is the general attitude, but many of them seemed impatient and annoyed by the fact that communication got in the way of efficacy but made minimal effort to teach a language to have in common.

Our foreign colleagues did everything they could to understand what was communicated and expected of them. They all showed immense respect and gratitude towards the people and culture, even though they were frustrated and not necessarily always welcomed the way that they deserved. My second and most valuable experience has been during my time in Helsinki. Our company was founded in Norway, now having branched out to Sweden and Finland. It was early on decided that we would be a multicultural company using English as our main working language, and we have ended up with more than 20 different nationalities.

4. I tried to make sure each team member understands their own and their colleagues' value. Therefore, I spent a lot of time having conversations with my teammates about just that, both one on one and in service. Conversation is key and communicating the fact that you as an employee always will be seen and heard, was my focus to build this kind of confidence. This in turn will make it easier to speak your mind when decisions affecting the team, are to be made.

As a general example I have always told my team to suggest solutions for making routines and service easier and more practical, seeing as they are the ones working the systems every day. After having worked for a while like I previously mentioned, it seemed that most team members find it easier to step forward with their thoughts and suggestions.

5. Usually I try to promote mutual understanding before interfering. It might help to ask the involved parties some questions about the other person.

“Why do you think they acted like this? Might there be a different thought behind it than what you first perceived?”

Seeing as it is most common to assess your surroundings based on your own values and opinions, changing point of view like this is a very good exercise to handle conflict based on differences in both background, culture, and personality. Often this will be a sufficient catalyst for them to continue the process by themselves.

6. This might be controversial, but I am a firm believer in building social relations outside of work – especially in fast paced stressful work environments. Knowing your colleagues somewhat as persons will promote contribution to your team (“if I don’t do this, someone I care about will have to pick up the slack”), and potential conflicts during a busy time might become less impactful as your relationship with the person is stable and secure.

7. My country is known for mostly practicing a flat structure inclusive leadership style, which I have practiced to the best of my ability.

As I previously touched on this really seems to have a positive effect on motivation and productivity – employees are looking forward to going to work and seeing their friends/good colleagues – and will in turn make an effort in work tasks to accomplish more together and/or not burden their peers.

8. There will always be room for improvement and in some cases there might be bigger challenges than other, but the development as far as teamwork and effectiveness has had a healthy development.

9. In addition to the routinely follow-up conversations with each employee, we have worked on giving as much feedback as possible when working. When faced with a given situation, getting feedback about that particular matter increases likeliness of them remembering and learning for future reference.

Feedback of course needs to be communicated in a pleasant manner in order for it to actually be perceived as constructive.

10-11. A prominent challenge in leading a culturally diverse team in the same direction is adjusting communication based on how it is perceived. Explaining further, it is not uncommon to forget the fact that different cultures have different styles of leadership and even sociocultural factors playing part in current employment.

Whilst one person is used to being heard when voicing their opinions, another might have experienced negative consequences for using their voice at all. Example: Some will be looking forward to the routinely follow-up conversation as a time to chat, others will battle the fear of being told off or even fired.

The latter here will for example require a leader to offer reassurance beforehand to make the employee feel comfortable and secure (again also in order for them to perform optimally at work). Working in these situations, it is important not only to know each individual, but to know their culture and what professional settings look like from all sides.

12. Can you share a time when you adjusted your leadership style to manage cultural diversity in your team? What challenges did you face, and how did you handle them?

13. The demanding and non-definable task of being a leader can only be managed with a pretty self-sufficient team. In order to be effective, delegating what can be delegated is key. With proper training and trust in all parts of the organization not only will things get done, but loyalty from employees towards leaders will increase greatly.

This will (hopefully, potentially) decrease sick leave and turnover, which in turn demands less resources for covering shifts and training new employees. Excess resources will either be available for other use, or result in increased value.

14. In all honesty I think the measurement for success as a leader lays in the eye of the beholder – my wonderful colleagues. In the course of my leadership journey, I have had the privilege to gain the trust of many people and have felt that every time an employee asks to talk to me about anything, that is the true token of success.

## **Participant 2**

**“X” is used to refer to the participant’s current workplace.**

1. Finland, Helsinki, X

2. Almost two years now in X as a restaurant manager but in general as a leader in different type of leadership roles (restaurant manager/assistant restaurant manager/duty manager/store manager) over 7 years in total.

3. Yes in my all workplaces I have had multicultural team, I have had positive experiences only, different cultures and people in general makes the team stronger for having different aspects and styles of working for example work ethic and effort.

4. I’m trying to often ask their opinion how they would do things/how they feel it’s the best way to do things etc. guide them/coach them into "right" direction if they feel unsure about things, make sure everyone feels they are being seen and heard.

5. I’m not sure what do you mean with differences here (?) but if you mean that differences for example like not following rules or something like that giving different effort/doing different than others like being lazier ofc have a talk about wrong behaviour/act and follow it up after

6. With low hierarchy/ everyone is in the same level/ for example dishes are everyone’s job not only kitchen porters and as a leader I will also take part on the "shittiest" tasks and not just give an order for employees to do those, also I think everyone needs to know everyone, with 5 to 5 meetings, follow up talks, motivating employees, trying to give employees a mutual goals to work on, staff meetings, social gatherings

7. I don’t know what Finnish/ Finland’s leadership style is so can't talk much about it.

8. With different type of indicators we get from the post systems and numbers like: staff cost, atv, efficiency rating etc but ofc also by just seeing how my team works daily in their shifts, are they working slower/faster than usually etc.

9. Trying to give feedback daily after every shift, at least weekly having 5 to 5 talks, have follow up talks at least 2 times a year, having an employee survey 2 times a year, posting guest feedbacks for the whole team weekly and monthly basis, also giving it straight when I see something good or also if I see something not so good to give also constructive feedback.

10. I'm not sure if I again understood the question correctly but by being considerate about cultural indicators like if someone needs to pray during working hours I will make it possible for them to go pray / if someone is fasting I can make a plan that they get to have their break as soon as the fasting period ends etc but at the same time being fair for the others in the team as well so that everyone has same advantages and rules.

11. Not sure again if I understood this question correctly but I would say my leadership styles are combination of coaching, visionary, affiliative and democratic in general so, yes, I think I need to adapt my leadership style when facing challenges like if someone is being constantly late or doing something against the rules, I have adapted my leadership style to be more commanding and pacesetting to correct the wrongdoing.

14. First time when I became a leader it was without any experience and without any training how to become a leader/manager. so, I would say it was a rocky start and I did many mistakes with that team. Also, I was in my early twenties when I got the leadership position, and I was the only manager there after the owner who was not considered or behaved as a leader (subway restaurant).

Also, in that same workplace all my colleagues (after the promotion all my employees) were my closest friends. I would say now that my leadership style then was more commanding like "do what I say," and pace setting like "do as I do" since I felt like I got the promotion only out of being the "role model" and "best worker" in that place. I don't think I "lead" the team back then at all, I think I only set a standard/model how to work and behave and I got to do orders and schedules with other office stuff on the side. after that workplace I got a smaller leadership role in a different company where I got to learn how to be a leader and lead your team from actual leaders in that company (also how definitely not to lead your team a what type of leader I don't want to be) and how they lead their teams and soon gained with more responsibility myself and got promoted to higher leadership positions. After that I also started internship school for one year of leadership, but I felt like there wasn't anything new for me after being a leader for 5 years already, so I never graduated from there.

So, I would say my journey has been self-learned, watching other leaders around me, how I want to lead and what type of leader I want to be, I have seen good examples and bad ones as well and those experiences together have shaped me to be the leader I am today and I'm proud to say that I feel like I'm a good leader to my team. I know how to support, I'm people person meaning that I just don't look at numbers since we work with people, I can be strict when needed and I'm setting goals and I can motivate my team for the best possible result. I'm working as an example myself and I'm not asking more from anyone what I'm not doing myself, I'm trying to train other leaders under me to take my spot anytime and I'm kind and understanding person in general.

### **Participant 3**

**“X” is used to refer to the participant’s current workplace. Personal names are shortened to initials to protect personal privacy.**

1-2-3. Hello, I currently live in Helsinki, Finland. My role in the organization is Restaurant Manager (I will be substitute for the original RM that is leaving for one year for parental leave). I work in X, in Helsinki Central Station. I'm working with the organization since April 2022. I've been in a leadership role for the past two years, first as a Shift Leader and then Assistant Restaurant Manager. And yes, in X the organization has a big variety of cultures from around the world Italy, Finland, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Iran, Morocco, Nepal, Russia, Gambia and so going on. I can't remember all the nationalities. Working with a big variety of different cultures is very interesting and at the same time you get the opportunity to learn about cultures around the world and how is the different thinking in the outside world and that is very precious for personal development. Only working directly in contact with different cultures you learn a little of every culture.

3-4-5. The approach involving team members in decision-making involves first what is the goal, first, that brings the leader team to decide. Is about budget? Is about company needs? Is about goals for the company itself? All questions that in different moments of the history brings different strategies. Mainly the approach in decision making is made in a group with 3 or more people and the solution for the specific decision goes under discussion and we try to be all of us on the same page and we bring pros and cons on each one of us on the table to have a bigger view of the picture and to make it easier to make a decision that satisfies all at the same time. If we do wrong, we go again under questioning and we discuss a different approach and solution.

When conflicts arise from differences, we usually take on the side the interested conflict and try to solve it as soon as possible to avoid that negativity based on differences goes out of control and creates a hostile environment spreading around. We try to understand what is happening and why and we look for a solution that accommodates everyone. If not, then the leader team takes a decision for it to make it work, but we never had this kind of issue in X. The team leader tries to keep people motivate and interested by following the policy of Family Tree, meaning that we are all a big family, and few members have the full responsibility on everyone, and the common goal is to keep a safe and clean environment. Racism and sexual harassment are strongly avoided since this can lead to severe consequences.

6-7-8. Effectiveness in our team is evaluated not only on what the signal individuals can do by themselves, but also how the communicate in terms of needs when help is required. With Feyza (author) I've been working long time on the skill of asking for help, and this is something that I will never stop working on with my team, since asking for help is what brings the company to the final goal that is "HAPPY GUESTS ALWAYS". Feedbacks are the most important tasks for our leaders in the organization. Feedback is key to help employees to improve and keep them motivated. As a team leader, we focus on giving positive feedback and constructive feedback. We never bring up negative feedback since this last one will bring motivation down, instead we focus on complementing and letting them know what to focus more on to get better at, not because they are not good enough but because there is always room for improvement. Us as a leader we are not perfect, and we value very much feedback from employees that makes us be better day by day. No one is born leader.

With culture differences we value a lot everyone's needs and must. We don't ignore any request and try to accommodate everyone in every request. As a leader, you are always under the spotlight, as I always say, and I've learned this from my mentors D. and M. They always told me that being a leader is not an easy task and that I'll have to adapt myself to other needs to satisfy them and, when my team trusts me, they will satisfy my needs. But is also very important if not my first rule as a leader, be in the first line with your team, and with time your team will join you in that line and will not give you, their back.

9-10-11-12. Adjusting leadership style to manage cultural diversity is not that easy as many people might think. Might be instead one of the most difficult challenges to face when being in the leader role. The time when I had to adjust myself as a leader to meet satisfaction with a different culture was in the beginning of my role.

I am Italian, and in my culture being “overfriendly” is normal. Here in Finland, I noticed that people like to have their space and time and I had to control my friendliness and be more emotionally contained to be as they need me to behave to have respect and avoid misunderstandings at all costs. Something that I have practiced in the last year to improve leadership effectiveness is learning about psychology by reading books about it and reading books about leadership.

Outside there are a lot of books that help new-born leaders to improve, because leadership is not only skills with people but is also reading and understanding people and people's needs and satisfy them. Because a leader without a team that believes in him is not a true leader. To succeed you need help. Alone you don't go too far almost never. I think that my leadership journey has thought me a lot, and I'm very happy about the result. Sometimes is difficult but no one ever told me that is going to be an easy process. I think that I still have a lot to learn as a leader, but I think my success in leading my team is quite positive. I know that they count on me, and they know I count on the always. I wouldn't be here without my team

### **Appendix C: Tables and Figures**

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