Multiculturalism in the Recruitment Process of a Finnish Hotel Group

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Recruitment is an important process of a company’s operation and it can easily make or break it. Highly motivated and talented staff play a huge role in a company’s success, so recruitment should be a carefully planned out process to sort out the stars among the crowds. Talent can be found anywhere around the world, from any nationality and from any background. So how has the Finnish hospitality industry sorted out the talent for their hotel staff?

This thesis is a qualitative research of the recruitment of multicultural employees in a Hotel Group in Finland. The purpose of this thesis is to research Front Office Managers’ conceptions on multicultural candidates in the recruitment and selection processes. In addition to the Front Office Managers, the Human Resources Administrator of the Hotel Group was interviewed to give a wider perspective on the hotel group’s recruitment process and how they have taken into consideration multiculturality among their hotels.

There were 4 research questions. What kind of changes has the industry went through and what kind of changes are expected in the future? What attributes and qualifications are required for a position of a Front Desk Agent? What are the recruitment processes and selection methods leading to the decision of hiring a new employee? What are the advantages and challenges of having a multicultural team?

The theoretical part focuses on first studying multiculturalism in Finland and the qualities and attributes of a multicultural workforce. It will also explain recruitment processes and selection techniques and have a look on some studies made among immigrants who are applying for jobs. The empirical research was implemented by doing qualitative semi-structured interviews among Front Office Managers of a Finnish Hotel Group. All together five managers were interviewed from four units of the Hotel Group. In addition, the Human Resources Administrator was interviewed to get a bigger picture of the concern’s recruitment processes.

The research suggests that the conceptions of the Front Desk Managers were neutral on the subject. However, the current Front Desk teams consisted mostly of Finnish employees. Most managers would be open to a more multicultural team but in order for that some changes should be made in the qualifications needed for the job position.

Keywords
Multiculturalism, Recruitment, Selection
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1 Introduction

Globalization makes people, ideas, languages, traditions and products move across borders and lets people experience different cultures in their home country. It is no longer difficult to find food products from the Mediterranean in the Finnish supermarkets or purchase Asian technology from a small-town shop. With globalization comes the term multiculturality which is a current discussion topic all over the world. People are wondering where to draw the line on immigration and how to embrace all the positive elements that come with new cultures in addition to prevention of the negative effects of immigration.

When looking at the hospitality industry around the world, it will become clear that it is one of the most diverse fields in business. The reason why is easy to see, it is a worldwide business with a lot to offer in almost every country in the world. Hotel guests are multicultural, so it makes sense to have multicultural staff and management. My first work experience was at a luxury hotel in Qatar where my co-workers came from all over the world. When I moved back to Finland and started my current job I noticed almost all of my co-workers were Finnish. Looking at the biggest European metropolitan cities and their hotel staff, there is much more diversity and I started wondering why is that not common in Finland.

Hospitality industry in Finland has a lot of growth potential and lots of new hotels will be opened in Finland in the near future creating competition to the existing ones. The industry creates a remarkable amount of jobs and employs a large amount of people. All the jobs and tax revenue created in the industry stay in Finland. The hospitality industry employs 140 000 professionals and it is 5,5% of the total workforce in Finland. 8,3 million foreign visitors come to Finland every year, creating 21,9 million overnight stays and bringing 4 billion euros to the country. (Matkailu- ja ravintolapalvelut MaRa Oy 2018.)

Recruitment is a process of searching for potential candidates for an open position in a company. Selection is gathering information on the applicants and making a well-informed decision on a most appropriate candidate to fill the position. Both of the processes need to operate efficiently and in harmony in order for the organization to remain an effective management of their staff. For example, if the recruitment search for candidates is effective and the company has received a multitude of applications, the process might still fail if the selection techniques are inappropriate for the company. In the purpose of finding the most appropriate candidate, both of the processes are valuable. (Dowling, Festing & Allen 2008, 109.)
1.1 Purpose of the thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to research a Finnish Hotel Group’s Front Office Managers’ conceptions on multicultural candidates in the recruitment and selection processes. In addition to the Front Office Managers, the Human Resources Administrator of the Hotel Group was interviewed to give a wider perspective on the group’s recruitment process and how they have taken into consideration multiculturality among their hotels.

There were four research questions. What kind of changes has the industry gone through and what kind of changes are expected in the future? What attributes and qualifications are required for a position of a Front Desk Agent? What are the recruitment processes and selection methods leading to the decision of hiring a new employee? What are the advantages and challenges of having a multicultural team?

The limitations in this thesis are on the Front Office Manager’s perspective and only on the selection of employees, which is a part of the recruitment process. The object is not to evaluate the complete recruitment process in detail, just to find out conceptions on selection of employees. However, in order to do so it is important to understand the whole recruitment process of the company and for the sake of clarity the Human Resources Administrator was interviewed.

1.2 Structure of the thesis

The theoretical part will first look into Multiculturalism in Finland and the most common nationalities immigrating to Finland. What are the Finnish attitudes towards multiculturalism and does it affect the legislation of the country. It will continue to evaluate multicultural workforce in general and the benefits and challenges it may arise. Next it will look into recruitment and selection techniques most commonly used by recruiters. Finally, the theoretical part will introduce the idea of anonymous recruitment.

For the empirical part a research was made for a Finnish Hotel Group and six managers from the Hotel Group were interviewed in the process. The study was conducted as a qualitative study. The research method was a semi-structured interview. The data was analyzed systematically by transcribing the interviews and transferred in to results of the study. The discussion part of this thesis analyses the validity and reliability of this thesis critically, keeping in mind the difficulty of this topic.
2 Multiculturalism

For a long time, the world has been divided by countries, religions, ethnic groups and their disagreements. Countries have fought for their independence of having their own land for their own people. At the same time ethnic minorities in different countries have been fighting for the same rights as others, for respect and acknowledgement of the validity of their culture and religion. (Rosado 1996, 1-12.) The world is starting to reach a point in history where these boundaries are becoming a hazy memory and most of the existing countries are evolving into a mixture of different cultures and ethnicities.

Rosado (1996, 2) defines multiculturalism as a system of beliefs and behaviors that recognize the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society. It acknowledges respects their cultural differences and accepts and encourages everyone’s contribution to the organization or society. It values the opinions, ideas and hard work of a person from any background, any sex and any religion. (Rosado 1996, 2.) In Finland the term multiculturality is often perceived confusing. Usually the term multiculturality is seen as being open and accepting to different cultures. Speaking negatively of ethnic groups is highly frowned upon. According to Leppävuori (2015), sometimes the word multiculturality may be connected to negative issues such as radical Islam and fighting against radicalism. (Leppävuori 2015.) Rosado’s definition is highly unbiased while Leppävuori is suggesting that the definition of multiculturalism is depending on the attitudes of the person using the word.

2.1 Multiculturalism in Finland

In Finland there is a Non-Discrimination Act which gives everyone the same right to get educated and develop themselves, receive service and go forward in their career. No person can be discriminated against judging by their age, nationality, language, religion, political views, family ties, health, disability or sexual orientation. This law came into effect in 2015. According to the law discrimination means that someone is being treated differently than others or it can also mean harassment. In recruiting having a requirement of nationality or language skills when it is irrelevant to the job title, is also illegal. (Yhdenvertaisuuslaki 2015.)

Finland has been perceived as a multicultural nation for centuries. The biggest ethnic groups in Finland are Finnish Swedes and Sami people. These groups have a civil right to develop their own language and culture. Sami people have a cultural autonomy and their
own Sami court system. Swedish is the second official language in Finland and everyone has the right to receive service in Swedish from the public systems such as healthcare. Sami people have the same right in their areas of the country when it comes to their language. There is a civil right in Finland to practice and express any religion. Everyone also has the right to be or not to be in any religion. (THL 2017.)

While multiculturalization is happening, the far-right movements and anti-immigration organizations are waking up. According to Hahtola (2016), in Finland many people are opposed to the idea of multiculturalization for many different reasons. Some might view it as a risk to the Finnish society and the Finns forgetting their own culture. Others are worried about unemployment rates and the Finnish social security being abused by foreigners. (Hahtola 2016.) There are a few political parties that oppose immigration and multiculturalism very publicly such as Perussuomalaiset. This party is concerned of the traditional values of Finns and the defense and the security of their homeland.

In the past year 2017 the biggest numbers of immigrants applying for Finnish citizenship came from Russian Federation, Somalia and Iraq. From Russia over 2000 immigrants became citizens and from the other two countries over 1000 immigrants. The rest of the new citizens came from countries such as Iran, Afghanistan, Estonia, Turkey and Sweden. For these countries the amounts stayed in hundreds. In the year 2017 the biggest numbers of refugees came to Finland from Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia and Eritrea. (Maahanmuuttovirasto 2017.)

Table 1. Grounds for Immigrating to Finland (modified Maahanmuuttovirasto 2017).
The biggest reason to immigrate to Finland is family ties. Multicultural marriages are getting increasingly more popular and many people find themselves immigrating after love. Family ties can also mean for example moving after a relative who has been granted refuge or moving because of a job to Finland. Another large factor in immigration is mobility inside the European Union. Since the establishment of the European Union it has been relatively effortless to move inside its member countries. No need for any additional work permits or visas which motivates people to go after a higher standard of living or just better opportunities outside of their home country.

Helsingin Sanomat magazine executed a research among Finnish people and found out that most of the partakers are rooting for a stricter limit to immigration. Half of the partakers thought that especially immigrants from Somalia and Iraq are unable to integrate to the Finnish society since they come from such different culture. The people against immigration are especially rooting for a lessened amount of social security for immigrants and stricter rules to granting refuge to its seekers. (Kettumäki 2015.)

What is common with Kettumäki’s (2015) and Hahtola’s (2016) findings is that Finns seem to be afraid of losing their own roots and culture in a mixture of other traditions from around the world. Both also think that Finnish people feel threatened that foreigners may abuse the social security of Finland. The social security is relatively easy to get access to, and immigrants are entitled to many of the benefits. Then again, most of them also pay taxes from their paycheck which will be spent covering the social security expenses. What can be drawn from this is that integration of immigrants is crucial for the society and when it is done right, immigrants contribute to the society the same way citizens do.

For immigrants to integrate to the Finnish society successfully, the attitudes of Finnish people and the treatment of foreigners are important. However, the most important factor in successful integration is finding employment. Finding a job when moving to a different country can be difficult. Issues with finding employment may come from language barriers, lack of education or work experience in the field or no proof from it and reluctance of offering a job for a foreigner, especially an asylum seeker. (Crawford 2016.) Regardless of an individual’s background, the best way to start integrating to a society is working in an organization or a company with local people, gaining friends and knowledge on the local culture and from the way of living.
2.2 Multicultural workforce

Multicultural workforce is a workforce that consists of employees from various cultures. The term multicultural workforce refers to employees being heterogenous in many dissimilar traits, but all connected to the common objective of the organization. Different cultures bring their unique perspective to the job which can result in to bringing out creativity in the company. When Diversity Management is done right it can bring out strong benefits such as different development ideas, better connections to a global market place and the ability to adapt in different situations. (Bhardwaj, Sharma & Deepshikha 2017, 60.)

Malik, Chitranshi and Madappa define multicultural workforce as all job positions in a company from the top management to the interns and trainees are considered diverse. All of the employees should undergo multiculturality trainings and by doing so, develop skills and knowledge on cultural differences. These kinds of trainings can eliminate ignorance among employees and create a culturally tolerant environment for the whole business. (Malik & al. 2017, 331.)

Hospitality business is known for its multiculturality globally. Labour shortages and changes caused by globalization, demography and economy, have driven hospitality businesses to hire staff from less developed countries. (Baum, Dutton, Karimi, Kokkranikal, Devine & Heams 2007, 230.) Finnish workplaces are considered to be tolerant and diverse, even in the Finnish legislation many laws can be found preventing discrimination, like the aforementioned Non-Discrimination Act.

The biggest number of immigrants coming to work to Finland in 2014 came from India, Ukraine, Russian Federation and China (Euroopan muuttoliikevirasto 2014, 9). Some of these cultures are quite different from the Finnish culture, such as India and Turkey. There were almost 10 000 work aged immigrants moving to Finland in the year 2016. Most of them will start a career in Finland but it is still difficult for them to find a job. Currently in Finland there are 140 000 immigrants working full time. (Suomen virallinen tilasto 2016.)

When today's workforce is becoming more heterogenous day by day, many companies are under pressure to diversify their staff. Legislative pressure, in addition to peer pressure, has activated firms across the world to address the needs of their diverse customers and staff. (Garnero, Kampelmann & Ryxc 2014, 431.) Any business that wants to succeed in the global market must ensure that their workforce is diverse, and the company is ensuring diversity is a part of their business conduct. (Losey, Meisinger & Ulrich 2005, 110.)
2.2.1 Benefits of Multiculturality

The society benefits from foreign employees. Immigrants work and pay taxes just like anyone else. Over half of the people arriving to Finland were the age of 20-34. This means that they are all in the age that they could be working full-time. In addition, they were raised in a different country, so all the money the society spent on their childhood, like healthcare and education, was from another country instead of Finland. In addition, usually immigrants might also emigrate back to their home country when they are retiring, which saves the costs of retirement in Finland. (VATT 2014, 8-12.)

People immigrating to Finland are benefiting a lot when from moving from developing countries. Their standard of living gets better, and their salaries rise, especially if they are coming from conflicted countries with war and poverty. (VATT 2014, 12.) Finland is considered to be a safe country and provides social service for all of its citizens.

According to Rintala-Rasmus and Giorgiani, immigrants themselves feel like their language skills and cultural knowledge are an advantage for a company. They feel like they have a positive attitude towards their job and the customers and that their culture enriches the work community. Many of them have went to a highly qualified school in their home country or worked in the same field gaining valuable and different experiences. (Rintala-Rasmus & Giorgiani 2007, 46.)

Multiculturality is seen as a positive value playing a part in a firm’s reputation. It can create a new kind of demand when customers prefer companies with a diverse workforce. (Garnero & al. 2014, 431.) For example, in a hotel far away from home, travelers will be more than delighted to receive service in their own language. In addition, when it is general knowledge that a certain company enforces multiculturality, applicants with new talents may come from anywhere in the world. Multiculturality may become an important asset for the company. Different backgrounds create different skills and diversity at the workplace can lead the workplace being more enjoyable environment when employees feel like everyone can benefit from different educational or work backgrounds (Garnero & al. 2014, 431).

The European Commission conducted a study in 2013 which revealed several advantages from multiculturality at the workplace. It showed that active and diverse staffing policy is beneficial to an organization because it helps to motivate and engage talented employees, supports innovation and creativity among employees and strengthens the company values and reputation. It improves the motivation of the employees, develops
the service level and customer satisfaction and helps the organization when it is short of staff. (Rintala-Rasmus & Giorgiani 2007, 38.) Multiculturalization and workforce diversity may lead into knowledge spillovers from the more experienced employees to the newcomers (Garnero & al. 2014, 431).

2.2.2 Challenges of Multiculturality

Challenges of immigration and multicultural workforce for the society are likely small. It can be seen as bigger competition in the job markets for local employees. Similar challenges can be seen also in the home countries of the immigrants. If emigration is high, it can affect negatively the productiveness of the country and it can affect the consumer price levels. The fact that the most educated and talented people of a country are most likely to relocate can result into affecting the wellbeing of the remaining citizens. For example, if a huge amount doctors emigrated from conflicted countries to more developed ones, the local hospitals may suffer of staff shortages. However, immigrants usually keep a connection to their home country and support their family members in need. (VATT 2014, 13-14.)

The downsides to multiculturality can be for example misunderstandings and communication problems within an organization. These come to the picture when there are either poor or no language skills at all. Personal conflicts may arise when individuals involve their personal opinions on such matters as religion or nationality in their work life. This may happen even with the firm stakeholders which may undermine performance. (Garnero & al. 2014, 431.)

According to Toivanen and Väänänen (2018), one out of four immigrants think that they are overqualified for their current job. This means that they are employed in a position that does not require a degree in that field. They might have a degree in something completely different or even the same exact field, but some factors are limiting their ability to work in a higher position. This can cause demotivation for the foreign employee. The biggest difficulty is language barriers in the workplace and it may cause confusion and misunderstandings among foreign workers. (Toivanen & Väänänen 2018.)

A study was conducted in the United Kingdom among Hospitality Industry migrant workers. The study found that the level of education was high among the multicultural employees, which created over-qualification for the immigrants. The biggest obstacle was the
lack of and the level of English skills. Many immigrants felt they might have been underestimated and assigned low-skilled work duties resulting from language barriers. Underestimation may result into underutilizing the employee’s skills. (Baum & al. 2007, 437-438.)

Finnish language skills are a discussion topic among applicants and recruiters in Finland. According to Rintala-Rasmus and Giorgiani (2007), if the Finnish language skills are insufficient it can be a deal breaker in the employment. The organization would need to invest in the employee training programs to find trainers with language skills. In addition, the managers need language skills and the whole staff needs to be able to communicate with the foreigner. (Rintala-Rasmus & Giorgiani 2007, 49.)
3 Selection and Recruitment

Staff is considered to be the most valuable asset of a company and it is well known that people of an organization make a difference. Selection and recruitment of new employees is a very important process since it correlates with the company’s success. According to Rashmi, the management of many companies have admitted that they would change 40% of the company staff if they could, since they have been selected due to inefficient selection methods. (Rashmi 2010, 2.)

Rashmi defines recruitment as a process that paves the way for the selection process, by producing potential candidates who could be capable of filling the vacant position. The object is to attract suitable candidates and examine the attributes and qualifications to provide for the selection process. (Rashmi 2010, 11.) Mallet & Wapshott define recruitment as a process that all companies have to go through many times during their existence. Every company handles recruitment processes differently, and every manager has their own style of selection. Recruitment starts when organizations find current staffing insufficient. The need for new staff might come from company growth or maybe even from a client insisting more attention from certain members of staff. The staffing might be also affected from the personal motives of leaders, such as a relative needing employment. (Mallet & Wapshott 2016, 50.)

Techniques used in recruitment vary from firm to firm and might depend on the position being filled. It is quite unusual to see recruitment processes that have many stages including for example personality tests. Smaller businesses usually focus on a more informal approach to recruiting staff and look for employees who can contribute to the business from the first moments they join the team. Small and medium sized businesses usually do not focus on detailed assessment processes as some of the larger companies might do. (Mallet & Wapshott 2016, 50-52.)

When selection methods of a company are inefficient, it may result in to hiring an individual who can’t complete the assigned tasks satisfactorily, don’t fit in to the team and lack abilities of teamwork or are simply incompetent. This causes various extra costs for a company from for instance medical fees, interview expenses and so on. The most expensive cost however, comes from re-recruitment. (Rashmi 2010, 2.)
3.1 Recruitment Process and Selection Techniques

Recruitment starts from an absence or shortage of talent. The need may arise from for instance a vacant job position, re-trainings or merging roles. (Rashmi 2010, 5.) When deciding to start recruiting new personnel, a company should do an organizational analysis to clarify the future plans of the company and define the predictions of the situations they are in. The next step would be analysing the job position and what tasks does it include to create a job analysis. It is important to know what kind of person the company is looking for to join their team and what should they be capable of. (Honkanen 2005, 62-63.)

Figure 1. Recruitment Process

A job analysis should include job description and specification and a person specification. Rashmi defines job description as a written statement to describe the duties of the vacant position. It should include responsibilities, most important contributions and outcomes of the position, required qualifications and relationships of co-workers on the particular job. Person specification provides criteria to assess effective performance and creates a basis for job advertisements. The specification should outline the skills the candidate must have in order to perform in the position. For instance, educational requirements, training experience and other personal qualifications. (Rashmi 2010, 12-14.)

The criteria for the job description should be defined by listing attributes that came up during the analysing process of the position and it should be made clear what each of them mean. For example, if the position requires the ability to communicate, it means that the candidate should be able to communicate clearly verbally and literally. They should also
be ready to use other languages to communicate, in addition to their native language. Lastly the criteria should be put in order of importance and find out the priorities required in the position. (Honkanen 2005, 68-69.)

As shown in Figure 1, when the job description is clear the next step is to publish the job advertisement. Most of the job applications are promoted online these days and firms are especially attracting Millennials by choosing their job advertisement to be posted in social networks. Networks that can be used can be example LinkedIn and Facebook in addition to the job advertising pages. Social media helps to establish their brand and create relationships during the whole recruitment process. For the future businesses it is becoming increasingly more important to have social media presence but in addition to strengthen their brand through it. When trying to attract future talent social media creates a way to present their company’s culture and values to the applicant. The company’s brand should be well communicated to the applicant also on the recruitment channel. (Hatum 2013, 81-82.)

When the job opening is well marketed, and the applications start pouring it, it is time to utilize selection techniques. In all selection techniques the point is to evaluate and survey the applicant’s attributes, competences and talents. Employers conduct research on potential candidates with systematic methods designed to show suitability of an individual for the desired position. These methods aim to evaluate or predict the candidate’s performance in their duties examining their thought process, action models, attributes and talents. The management of the organization and the supervisors use the results to make decisions. (Honkanen 2005, 12-14.)

In different countries there are different methods that are preferred in organizations. In the United States recruiters may prefer hiring applicants with good references and try out their capabilities for the position by trial work periods before making the final decision on an individual’s employment. In Australia and United Kingdom, the emphasis is more on the application form and interviews. (Chan & Kuok 2011, 424.)

When planning the selection methods, it is important to choose the most appropriate and reliable methods. In addition, the qualifications of the recruiter to use the selection methods chosen should be considered. As a method a multitude of tests may be used, such as questionnaire types of tests, simulations or samples of work. However, the most common and reliable method is a job interview. (Honkanen 2005, 70, 102-104.)
When job interviews are done right, it gives an opportunity for both the applicant and the recruiter to give and receive important information. Interviews are widely considered to be an important part of the selection of a new employee and very rarely it is excluded from the recruitment process. However, it is a sensitive situation which is used to make decisions with very little information. If the interviewer is lacking expertise or is behaving inappropriately, it may send a negative message of the whole organization. To prevent this, interviews should be planned beforehand so that the attention can be shifted to observe the candidate’s reactions and answers. (Sundvik 2005, 108-109.)

Interviews can be roughly divided into two categories. Structured interview means having a set of questions ready and to go forward systematically during the interview. Another option is to have an unstructured interview and ask questions more freely based on the topic of discussion. A structured interview increases the reliability of the interview and especially inexperienced recruiters prefer this method. There is no need to focus on thinking of the questions to ask and the interviewer can focus on the candidate and their answers. However, the unstructured method is preferred by the applicants since they feel like they can have an impact on the direction of the discussion. (Sundvik 2005, 110.)

In addition to the answers given by the candidate, the recruiters also pay attention of the nonverbal communication. Things that may draw attention can be the movements of the candidate’s head, hands, position of legs and feet, eye contact, the tone and the manner of speaking. Some things can come across positive such as eye contact in an appropriate manner, when in excess it may turn the situation negative. Many of these things can be affected by culture and create unpleasant situations or misunderstandings in an interview setting. (Sundvik 2005, 116.)

3.2 Challenges in Recruiting Multicultural Workforce

Multiculturality is beginning to be conceived as a resource for companies around the world. Organizations make decisions to highlight their diversity and update their company policies to come across anti-racist and tolerant to the crowd. Even though there are rules and regulations controlling this issue and defending the victims of discrimination, it is still happening all over the world. Immigrants have the skills and knowledge to work in higher positions but often foreigners can be found employed in minimum-wage positions, unable to reach up to their professional potential.

As a challenge for the recruiter is to be able to estimate the applicant’s language skills and their degrees which have been completed abroad (Rintala-Rasmus & Giorgiani 2007, 49).
There may be a lot of differences between the Finnish education system and the education one may have from a different country, which makes it difficult for recruiters to interpret the education level of a candidate.

According to Laroche (2008), cultural perceptions may also affect recruitment. In a regular job interview a candidate is usually asked to tell the recruiter something about themselves. In Western countries the expectation is to be informed of the applicants professional and educational history in their own words. In the Middle East the appropriate answer can be their full family history and background. This may come across unprofessional in the eyes of a Western recruiter. In addition, having a diverse resume with many short-term jobs can be seen as a negative quality in the Western world, when in developing countries it may be seen as good experience from different fields. (Laroche 2008.)

One issue that could result into discrimination could be implicit biases in the recruiters’ practises (Laroche 2008). Implicit bias is an unconscious association of members of a certain ethnic group with certain abilities and traits (Benedick & Nunes 2012, 240). This means that a person may associate unwillingly certain nationalities and ethnic groups with negative behavior. For example, gypsies of being thieves or women being family oriented instead of career oriented.

According to Benedick and Nunes, studies over the history have shown how stereotypes may unconsciously affect conceptions on potential employees and affect employment decisions. Discrimination, whether it is conscious or unconscious, can distract employers’ hiring decisions and limit opportunities for ethnic groups. Studies have revealed that when interviewing multicultural individuals, the recruiters may pay more attention to the traits of the individual that are associated with a certain ethnic group that may confirm stereotypes. This can result to the recruiter has made decisions that they believe are unbiased when they actually have not. (Benedick & Nunes 2012, 238-240.)

### 3.3 Applying for a job

A study was made by Vartia, Bergbom, Giorgiani, Rintala-Rasmus, Riala & Salminen in Finland in 2007 to gain information on multicultural workplaces and their efforts on recruiting and integrating employees to the Finnish work communities. The respondents worked in companies from the public and private sectors. They came from 9 different companies and different fields such as cleaning companies, schools, public transportation and hospitals. The study focused on Estonian and Russian immigrants but all in all the respondents
came from 36 different countries, some of them also from Finland. (Vartia & al. 2007, 9-13.)

According to Vartia & al. (2007), two out of three immigrants felt that their Finnish skills are fairly good, however every tenth respondent thought that their Finnish skills were poor. This was dependent on the time they had been living in Finland and majority of those who had been in Finland for over 10 years felt confident with their language skills. The immigrants were eager to study more Finnish. (Vartia & al. 2007, 9-13.)

The most common ways for foreigners to contact employers is through phone, writing a letter or an email or internet sites. Many immigrants feel like having a foreign name or speaking Finnish with a strong accent can be an obstacle moving forward in the application process. Some of the foreigners taking part of the study felt they would rather not speak with their future employer over the phone when applying because of the negative effect of speaking broken Finnish. Many felt that Finns have a privilege when applying for jobs. Some immigrants have even experienced a remarkable change in job offers when they have changed their foreign name to a Finnish last name. However, these experiences are not limited to only Finland. The respondents have experienced similar kind of behaviour in other countries when applying for jobs. (Rintala-Rasmus & Giorgiani 2007, 42-43.)

After overcoming the obstacle in getting a job interview, foreigners find it easier to move forward in the application process. During a job interview they can bring up their knowledge and talents instead of just representing the country they are from. (Rintala-Rasmus & Giorgiani 2007, 43.) The study by Vartia & al. showed that two thirds of respondents felt they were treated well and equally during the recruitment process, but seven percent felt like they were treated wrongly, most of them coming from Sub-Saharan Africa. (Vartia & al. 2007, 9-13.)

Other studies made in Scandinavia and the Nordic countries showed that many circumstances can affect the recruitment of immigrants, such as home country, the country where they went to school, social connections and the length of their stay in the host country. Circumstances that can affect recruitment positively are tight bonds between the country of origin and host country, a high educational level, immigrating at a young age, knowledge of the local language and personal attributes. (Rintala-Rasmus & Giorgiani 2007, 38.)
A study conducted in Finland by Timo Jaakkola in 2000, revealed that the most important parts of immigrants getting employed are their contacts through Finnish friends and the services of an employment agency. As an obstacle in getting employed was the tough competition in the job markets, high unemployment rate and the fact that foreign work experience is not seen as valuable as experience from Finland. In a study made by Forsander in 2002, the groups who felt most discrimination in recruiting processes were from Somali or Arab backgrounds. Speculation was that they could not utilize the Somali know-how as well because the attitudes were negative. It was stated that in the end it is difficult to separate discrimination from attitudes and actual circumstances that can affect the work performance. (Jaakkola 2000, in Rintala-Rasmus & Giorgiani 2007, 39.)

For many immigrants finding a job is crucial, and every respondent could agree, regardless their education or occupation. A job has an important significance financially but also socially. The immigrants will build relationships and live a “normal” life. All of the respondents had a will to contribute to the Finnish society and create an identity through their occupation. (Rintala-Rasmus & Giorgiani 2007, 44.)

### 3.3.1 Anonymous recruitment

The percentage of foreign applicants varies from 3% to 50% in the companies being part of the study in Finland in 2007, but the amount is difficult to state, since the statistics are not compiled by nationality. In the application process immigrants are being treated equally to any Finnish person applying to a job. Every organization is following the Non-Discrimination Act and one of them has started an Anti-Racism Program. (Rintala-Rasmus & Giorgiani 2007, 47-48.)

The city of Espoo did an experiment by executing an anonymous recruitment to find an Area Manager to the city libraries. The applicants filled out a regular application online but afterwards the background of the applicant was removed. They were left with occupation, education and work experience after removing name, address, age, gender, birthplace, marital status, nationality and first language. The applying process is anonymous until the interview, after which the process continues in the regular way. (Seies 2014.)

The recruitment took at least ten times the effort of a normal recruitment process but for the manager in charge of the recruitment it has been an eye-opening experience. It makes you notice which things are crucial in the recruitment process. Anni Kääriäinen, the selected new Area Manager, is wondering if she would dare to take a chance on anonymous
recruitment. She mentions that she might be worried if a potential candidate could become invisible if they can't prove all of their abilities. However, she states that the anonymous recruitment was a great experience and she thinks it has a positive effect for the applicants in the beginning of the process. (Seies 2014.)

The city of Helsinki has also tried anonymous recruitment by removing the name of the applicant, gender, place of birth and other personal information. By the year of 2014 city of Helsinki had arranged 20 anonymous recruitments in the youth services and social and health sector. The city youth centre director Tommi Laitio stated that when anonymous recruitment is implemented systematically and broadly it decreases the risk of discrimination. (ESS 2014.)

Another experiment has been conducted by large firms in the United Kingdom, such as Deloitte and HSBC. They have implemented a process to screen applicants without their names and some of them even took out the names of the schools that the candidates went to. The purpose was to remove any kind of unconscious bias that might affect the process. A software company took part of the experiment and the most important part of the recruitment for the company was a work sample demonstrating the kinds of tasks that individuals would be performing when employed. They found that the process did decrease the risk of overlooking talent and lead into them hiring someone who could be turned down in a standard hiring process. (Joseph 2016, 3.)

Both of these experiments are suggesting of unconscious bias affecting standard recruitment processes. However, not too many companies are willing to invest in a more time consuming and expensive process in the sake of diversity. Still, unconscious biases should be taken into consideration by any managers in charge of recruitment.

3.4 The Future of Diverse Recruitment

Globalization is playing a big part in increasing diversity, but the work is not done yet. Everyone should recognize all people as workforce talent regardless of their background. Driven by immigration the presence of people from different nationalities and their role in the society is growing as entrepreneurs and parts of management teams. (Losey, Meisinger & Ulrich 2005, 112-113.)

According to Chitranshi & al. (2017), one of the most remarkable causes creating mismanagement of a multicultural environment is being unable to lessen the gap between different cultures. Industries in the service sector, such as hospitality, need awareness and
knowledge of other cultures. Some cultures may be more sensitive and traditional, and it is crucial to understand the customer base of a company. In addition, certain positions in a company require tolerance towards multicultural environments, such as Human Resources. (Chritranshi & al. 2017, 325.)

To improve Diverse Management, the Human Resources Department should look into their hiring process and think what could make them unbiased and fair in the selection of new employees. Including culturally sensitive tests may help and building the interview structure in a way that helps evaluate different backgrounds. Important part is to pay attention to individual achievements to reduce the stereotypes. (Chritranshi & al. 2017, 331.)

Babcock (2017, 2-3) suggests that hiding names and changing them to numbers, or hiding addresses to prevent socioeconomic discrimination may help, when presenting resumes to the hiring managers. This prevents any kinds of unconscious judgements against the candidates, which can happen very easily. All in all, it is about understanding that everyone has these unconscious biases. The company will need to recognize them and find a way to give everyone an equal chance. (Babcock 2017, 2-3.)

In August 2018 the biggest co-operative shop alliance in Finland, S-group announced that they will be starting an anonymous recruitment. They are a part of a Job does not discriminate -project, which is targeting changing attitudes in working life and decreasing discrimination. Other companies who are a part of this project are for example Finnair, Valio, Fortum and Nokia. The project is implemented by Elinkeinoelämän Keskusliitto or EK. (Lehtonen 2018.)

Developing tourism is one of the biggest objectives for the Finnish government. In the year 2018 the North Ostrobothnia ELY Centre implemented a national Travel Deal project to help the process of employees and employers to find each other in the Tourism industry. The objective of the project is the shortage of knowledgeable workforce and they want to improve the image of the Travel industry and enhance the co-operation of businesses in the industry. (Elinkeino-, liikenne- ja ympäristökeskus 2018.) Part of the project is to market open positions to immigrants who may not see the job openings in Finland easily. They have launched a webpage which collects all of the job advertisements in one place and in English. The web address roughly translates into “the travel industry needs immigrants”. They have marketed the web page for example on bus stops around Helsinki. (Matkailudiili 2018.)
A Finnish study which was partaken by recruiters suggested that recruiters saw immigrants as loyal and customer-oriented employees and they felt that they enrich the workplace. The study showed that supervisors had been treating employees equally and given equal appreciation and support. This was the opinion of both the Finnish employees and the immigrants. (Vartia & al. 2007, 9-13.)
4 Confidential
5 Research methods

Qualitative research is focusing on human experiences and perceptions on the issue. When doing qualitative research, the researcher uses more open-ended questions and often uses a semi-structured interview model. Qualitative research is most often conducted when the subject is hard to understand or measure, and there is a need to dig deeper into the subject. Participants need to have an exposure and experience to the subject. (Bouikidis & Rutberg 2018.)

The most common ways to gather data in qualitative research are interview, questionnaire, observation and information based on different types of documents. The method selected usually depends on the research situation. If the research is more formal, it is more common to use experimental methods and more structured interviews. If the research is more informal, it is more natural to use observation, conversations and autobiographies as a method. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 71.)

Roughly looking at qualitative and quantitative research, the difference is more to less precise data. When choosing a research method, it is important to know what you are trying to research. If your research problem is limited to how, instead of how many, qualitative research is the more appropriate choice. (Silverman 2010, 14,118.) This thesis focuses on the conceptions of the managers, which can be difficult to measure in numbers. It is also difficult subject to understand and needs to be studied a little bit in more detail. Open ended questions which give more detail to the research data are more appropriate for the research problem of this thesis.

5.1 Interview

The idea of an interview is asking questions about a person’s actions or their opinions. When doing an interview, the interviewer has the chance to repeat or clarify their questions to correct misunderstandings and have a conversation with the interviewee. Advantages of doing an interview are also that the interviewer may also observe the body language and tone that the answer is given. As a disadvantage, interview is a very time-consuming research method and sometimes it may be also expensive. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 71-74.)
The research for this thesis was constructed by a semi-structured interview. This interview model moves forward in certain pre-selected topics and detailed questions. These themes selected are based on the knowledge that the researcher already has of the subject. Semi-structured interview model highlights the interviewee’s conceptions and the things that they find significant in the subject. The structure of the interview can vary from keeping strictly in the questions designed for the interview to allowing also observations and intuitions to guide the direction of the interview. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 75.)

5.2 Qualitative Content Analysis

Analysing the interview data starts by transcribing it, which can be done by listening to the interview tapes and writing them word by word in to a document. This document can work as notes from the interview and it defines what the interview data contains according to the researcher. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 92.)

When doing content analysis, the objective is to organize the collected data to make conclusions. The analysis is based on interpretation and rationalization, which will move forward from empirical material to more theoretical outlook on the phenomenon being researched. Miles and Huberman (1994) divide the content analysis in to 3 categories. First, reducing the material then clustering it, meaning dividing it in to groups and lastly, creating theoretical concepts. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 101,109.)

When reducing the material, the transcribed interviews should be edited in a way that all the irrelevant information to the study will be eliminated. It can be done by either summarising the information or dividing it in to parts. Methods, such as colour coding or underlining the expressions brought up during the interview. Whole quotations from the interviewee can be classified in to themes at this point. Clustering phase of the analysis goes through the original quotations from the interviews to find similarities or differences regarding the answers. This creates a layout for the research and preliminary description from the phenomenon being researched. Lastly, when the relevant information to the research has been identified, the data will be used to create theoretical concepts and conclusions. The answers to the research questions will be built from these. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 109-112.)

In this thesis the data was analysed by first transcribing all of the interviews one by one. After transcribing, all of the interview data was divided into groups question by question. A template was created and the answers from all managers were reduced to themes to find similarities and differences. In the middle of the template themes found from answers
were gathered together. On the right on the template, the themes were defined a little bit more clearly with straight quotations from the answers that were used to clarify the conceptions.

After the data was transferred to the template and divided into themes, it was carefully read through and colour coded to three different categories. First category being mutual answer, all of the interviewed managers gave this answer. The second category was that a few of the managers had the same answer and the third was that only this manager had this answer. The finished analysis template can be seen in Appendix 2. After careful evaluation of the results the data was transferred in to text.
6 Results

The interviews for this research were conducted with five Front Office Managers in charge of recruiting from four different hotels from a Finnish Hotel Group. In addition, the Hotel Group’s Human Resources Administrator was interviewed. The interviews were conducted in a quiet setting in the hotel’s spaces. All of the interviews were recorded.

The work experience of the managers taking part of this research varied from a couple of years to 30 years. Half of them were quite new to the managerial position and recruitment and rest had a longer experience from the position. The Human Resources Administrative stated that there are 38 nationalities in addition to Finnish working in the Hotel Group. In the Front Desk teams the nationalities are most commonly Finnish, with two exceptions from Russian and Australian nationalities.

6.1 Changes in the Hospitality Industry in Finland

With the differences in the amount of managerial experience in mind, the perceptions on workforce changes over the years in the industry varied. Most of the managers however, could agree that the workforce has changed to be younger and more international over the years. Many individuals have gone abroad to get work experience. One manager mentioned that these days people are more multitalented and come from different industries and backgrounds. People are also moving around more easily and switch workplaces more often which creates pressure for the hotels to keep employees in their company.

When asked about predictions for the future of the Finnish hospitality workforce, all of the managers mentioned that there will be a lot of new hotels opening in Helsinki in the near future. This will create new jobs and new competition in the field. Few of the managers mentioned that technology might be affecting the job situation in the future, for example check-in could be turned in to an electronic process and Front Desk Agents might not be needed anymore. One manager mentioned these technological changes and expressed concern to the idea of real customer service disappearing. This manager would prefer things staying the same as they are now.

A few managers expressed concern for the future jobs in the hospitality industry. They mentioned the current labour shortage in the restaurant businesses and they are fearing that it could spread in to hotels. One manager also brought up concierge services disappearing in result of guests starting to use their smartphones to search things to do online.
The Human Resources Administrative mentioned that everyone in the field is wondering where to find future personnel for their hotels. The Administrative mentioned that the focus should be on the schools where young professionals are trained, and it could be one solution to the issue. Multicultural employees from abroad could also be considered as a resolution to the workforce shortage.

6.2 Attributes and Qualifications of a Front Desk Agent

When asked about attributes and qualifications of becoming a Front Desk Agent, all the managers agreed on customer service skills. Some mentioned it as customer service mindedness, some as experience, but all of the managers could agree that it is an important attribute needed in the job. One mentioned that it is possible to train the hotel systems to anyone but customer service is something that can’t be taught. It comes from experience and personality traits of the individual.

In addition, few managers brought up attributes such as compassion, friendliness and helpfulness inside the team and across departments as important attributes. Other attributes that were mentioned in the interviews were communication skills, multitasking skills and prioritizing guests’ needs over in-house tasks. Two of the managers brought up as a minimum requirement two certificates needed in the hospitality industry in Finland. The first one is a Hygiene Proficiency certificate and the second one is Alcohol Legislation certificate. Both of them test the knowledge of safe operation of food and alcohol products in restaurant operations.

When the question if Finnish skills are crucial in working in their department was brought up, the managers had a few various opinions. Few of them felt that it is necessary to know Finnish when working at the Front Desk. Half of the guests are Finnish, so also half of the emails from the guests that the Front Desk Agents answer daily are in Finnish. A few managers felt that it can be unfair to Finnish speaking employees if some of their colleagues can’t speak the language and leave some tasks for others to do. One also felt that training is more difficult in a foreign language.

In comparison, some of the managers felt that Finnish skills are not a necessity. If the personality and other qualifications make the individual a good addition to the team, they will not see the lack of language skills as an obstacle in hiring that person. One of them highlighted that Finnish can be learned, and a second manager mentioned that they could always try if it would work out within the probation period when starting a job.
6.3 Recruitment Process

The Human Resources Administrative explained in detail the full recruitment process of the Hotel Group. The recruitment process starts when a manager notices a need for extra personnel in their department and review if they want to search inside the company for new employees or offer extra shifts for their current employees. Other option is to open a position in addition for applicants from outside of the company. After deciding on interim or open application, the managers set a schedule for the recruitment process and write the job advertisement. After drafting the job advertisement, the managers send it for the Human Resources Administrative to be reviewed and published on media and different sites.

At the moment the Hotel Group is only publishing their job advertisements on Finnish job pages. In addition to this the job advertisements are published on the company’s own websites and social media platforms, which can be found globally. The job advertisements are translated in English if the manager in charge of the recruitment requests it. Most of the job advertisements are currently posted in Finnish.

After the publication of the job advertisement, the responsibility shifts completely to the managers. All of the applications considered in the process should be processed through the company’s job application channel. The Human Resources Administrative gives the managers access to the job applications in the channel, where they can mark applicants for example potential, interviewed not chosen, chosen and so on. The managers use interviews and analysis of resume and the cover letter of the applicant as selection techniques and after all of these steps the selection is made on employment of the applicants.

All of the managers seem to follow the general recruitment process of the company. Few managers mentioned that it is easier to go through applications when they are all in the channel and in the same format. One also mentioned that all of the applications are went through carefully and none of them are left unread. If an application happens to come via email, the applicant is usually directed to send the application to the recruitment channel for it to be considered.

When it comes to receiving applications all of the managers said that they receive some foreign applications. Internship applications are more common among foreigners. The difference to Finnish applications is that foreigners prefer contacting the manager directly and sending emails. One stated that in their last recruitment 2 out of 20 applications received were from foreign applicants and in English. Foreign applications were described
by a few managers as more generic and looking to get any job possible, not precisely that exact position in that exact hotel.

6.4 Selection techniques

All of the managers mentioned that experience usually sparks their interest in a candidate. All of them also specified that the experience can be from a Finnish hotel or from abroad, it doesn’t really play a role in the selection. One manager highlighted the knowledge of the city and hotel systems as an advantage. Another manager pointed out how impressed they are if an applicant has work experience of being a travel guide, especially for a Finnish travel agency, because it is known for being a difficult work position.

Most of the managers mentioned that they pay attention to the way the applications are written and if it is specifically written for their hotel. Some of them stated that they will notice if the application is made quickly or if the applicant has spent some time drafting it together. One pointed out that they will instantly see if the application is just a generic letter sent to many different workplaces.

The most important selection technique being used in the Hotel Group is an interview. Most of the managers prefer having an unstructured or semi-structured interview, where the conversation flows more freely, and the atmosphere is more relaxed. Only one manager mentioned their preference being a structured interview with a questionnaire paper, because it feels fairer to the applicants to have the same interview as everyone else. The Human Resources Administrative mentioned that Hotel Group provides a template of questions to use during an interview and especially managers who are new to recruiting like to use it as a tool. Currently the Hotel Group is updating the recruitment material and is holding info sessions for the managers about the changes.

During the interview candidates are usually asked about their background and their former workplaces. A few managers like to ask about hobbies and interests to find out a little bit more about the personality of the applicant. One manager asks also how the applicant’s friends would describe them. Another manager wants to know what the applicant knows about their hotel, and why did they apply there.

The question that all of the managers like to ask is to describe a difficult situation that the applicant has encountered in their previous workplace and how did they resolve it. This question was described to show the stress-handling and problem-solving skills of the applicant. One manager mentioned that they like to ask a little bit tricky questions to test the
applicant’s reaction and see if they completely freeze in a difficult situation. A few of the managers want to ask about previous jobs and reasons the applicant decided to change workplaces.

Behaviour of the applicant is usually being observed during the interview by these managers. One manager mentioned that in addition to the interview, the behaviour before the interview plays a role. Playing on their phone or almost falling asleep before the interview may come across as disinterest.

One manager stated that they tend to read through the applicant’s CV before the interview and make up questions from there. Another manager mentioned that they usually like to contact the references mentioned in the application beforehand and ask about the person at their previous job or school from their previous manager or teacher.

6.5 Decision

When landing on a decision of the candidate to be hired, all managers mentioned that the final decision is made on their gut feeling about the person. One manager mentioned that they are looking for a missing piece to the group and most of the managers could agree that it is important to fit the current team. Skills, knowledge and experience play a role in the decision, but every manager stated that personality has the biggest effect on their decision.

One manager mentioned that being talkative during the interview and having a sense of humour is an advantage for the candidate. Another manager likes to put the whole team on a spectrum and see if the new hire would be a good fit and bring something new to the team whilst fitting in to the group. One wanted to see from the applicant that they really want this position and show it during the interview. Another manager mentioned that the last say comes from the manager themselves. If the manager does not think they will get along well with the applicant, they will not be chosen.

What was not brought up by any of the managers during the discussion about making the decision, was multiculturality. None of the managers mentioned that foreign experience or a foreign degree would affect their final decision. In addition, language skills were not mentioned by any of the managers in the decision phase.
6.6 Advantages and Challenges

As advantages for having a multinational team, the managers saw language skills and cultural knowledge. Few managers mentioned that there would be more interaction and mutual understanding with multicultural guests. Most of the managers also mentioned that when people have different kinds of backgrounds, it can create a learning experience for the whole team and a possibility to exchange ideas and knowledge. One manager mentioned that people from different cultures than Finnish might have great skills with guest interaction and small talk, where Finns are not usually at their comfort zone because of their cultural traits. None of the managers brought up the topic of multiculturality affecting the firm’s reputation in a positive manner.

As challenges all of the managers saw misunderstandings. If there is too much of a language gap it can create difficult situations and it can affect the communication among the team. In addition, cultural misunderstandings were mentioned. One manager brought up that there might be different kinds of perceptions of time between different cultures. Finnish people are very efficient and punctual, when some other cultures can be a little bit more flexible when it comes to timing. Another manager also brought up difficult situations among guests or the team, when some cultures might have difficulties to disagree in fear of losing their face.

One manager who has hired an English-speaking team member stated that they have started to speak a lot more English during the day, to take care of mutual meetings and emails in English and translated some of the instructions and systems in the reception. Finnish comments in reservations can be translated with Google translate and very rarely there are any situations where the English-speaker would have issues regarding language, according to this manager. Advantages that their team have experienced are the exchanging of new and different ideas. They have not experienced a lot of challenges, only issues they have experienced come from Finnish emails that need language skills to be taken care of.

6.7 Anonymous Recruitment Process

When bringing up the idea of anonymous recruitment to the managers, most of them expressed their interest in trying it out. A few of them mentioned it would bring more emphasis on the work experience and their application letter. Most of them could agree that it would most likely lead them in to hiring someone unexpected to the open position. Only one manager felt it would make recruitment more difficult, since they would not be able to
find out as much about the candidate's background without personal information. This manager would not like to try anonymous recruitment, because of a preference to make a well-informed decision about a new hire.

The Human Resources Administrator also found the anonymous recruitment idea very interesting and mentioned that it can be fairer to the applicant if the recruiter focuses more on their accomplishments and competences for the desired position. The Administrator also brought up that the responsibility in the decisions regarding these matters is with higher management, but maybe in the future this kind of recruitment could be discussed.
7 Discussion

The purpose of this thesis was to research a Finnish Hotel Group's Front Office Managers’ conceptions on multicultural candidates in the recruitment and selection processes. In addition to the Front Office Managers, the Human Resources Administrator of the Hotel Group was interviewed to give a wider perspective on the hotel group’s recruitment process and how they have taken into consideration multiculturality among their hotels.

There were four research questions. What kind of changes has the industry went through and what kind of changes are expected in the future? What attributes and qualifications are required for a position of a Front Desk Agent? What are the recruitment processes and selection methods leading to the decision of hiring a new employee? What are the advantages and challenges of having a multicultural team?

7.1 The Most Important Results

The changes that the industry has experienced were related to globalization. Most of the managers felt that the field has become more international and multicultural. One manager mentioned especially restaurant industry going through an international makeover in the last couple of years. As Matkailu- ja ravintolapalvelut MaRa Oy has stated in 2018, the hospitality industry in Finland will be expanding with new openings creating more jobs and more competition. All of the managers could agree with this statement but had various conceptions on the issue. Some feared for labor shortage in the future because of all the new jobs in the industry and some were predicting technology taking over some job positions in future.

The most important attribute of a Front Desk Agent is customer service skills. Other qualities brought up such as communication skills and teamwork skills were also important to most managers. For qualifications two hospitality industry certificates were mentioned and former experience from customer service related jobs. The cruciality of Finnish language skills had various opinions. Some managers felt like the customer service quality might decrease and the lack of language skills can make the customer service process slower, especially service through emails. Some managers felt that it can also be an asset to have multilingual staff and it may increase the customer satisfaction and interaction. The minimum language requirement for these managers was English language skills.

The recruitment process of the Hotel Group follows a similar kind of path with the process introduced in the theoretical part of this thesis. The most important finding was that in this
Hotel Group the managers are in charge of most of the phases during the process. The only phase where the Human Resources department gets involved is the job advertisement publication. The selection methods used in this Hotel Group are application, CV and interview. The most important factor for all the managers when they are making a decision of hiring an employee is the personality of the candidate.

As Rintala-Rasmus and Giorgiani discovered in their study in 2007, language skills and cultural knowledge are seen as advantages with multicultural workforce. In this research the findings were similar. All of the managers could agree that cultural traits can enrich the work community in the eyes of guests and in addition, the Front Desk team. Knowledge spillovers that Garnero & al. discovered in their study in 2014, were also brought up during this research. Many managers felt that employees from foreign hospitality backgrounds can bring new ideas and skills to the workplace. What Garnero & al. also discovered in their research, was that misunderstandings and communication issues were seen as challenges. Communication among the teams is crucial and insufficient language skills can cause misunderstanding according to the managers in this research. Another issue seen to cause misunderstandings was cultural differences among the team members.

7.2 Conclusions and Further Research

This research suggests that in this Hotel Group the conceptions on multiculturalism are neutral. It is not frowned upon, but it is not encouraged either. The managers seem to be very neutral on the subject or at least want to come across neutral to the topic, perhaps their own or the company’s reputation in mind.

Many managers seem to be open to the idea of hiring multicultural staff, but for some reason the front desk staff is still mostly Finnish. Biggest obstacle in hiring multicultural staff came out to be the lack of Finnish language skills, and many mentioned that if this requirement was removed it could further the recruitment of multicultural staff. Still, one manager has seemed to figure out a way to work past that issue and has an English-speaking employee in their team. Keeping in mind that Finland is a quite conservative country, customers’ attitudes could play a role in the issue. Many customers may prefer being served in Finnish and having English-speaking staff could face some negative feedback.

However, all of the managers brought up the industry growing, and new hotel units being opened in the near future. This will result in to new jobs, but will the industry have enough hospitality employees seems to be a question in the managers’ minds. This might open up
the discussion on multicultural workforce in the near future as a solution to a possible labor shortage. One issue that was mentioned was the lack of potential multicultural applicants. This issue could be fixed by making the Hotel Group visible abroad in foreign job advertisement pages and hotel management schools.

For further research, the same subject could be looked into in more detail by interviewing job applicants, rejected applicants and current staff to see if they feel that they have experienced discrimination in the recruitment process. Other subject to research could be how to affect the staff selection in the company to become more multicultural? Could diversity training be applied for managers and current staff and would it affect the situation anyhow? Would anonymous recruitment be an option to affect the situation?

7.3 Evaluation of the Thesis Process

The subject of this thesis is difficult, and it caused some discomfort in some managers during the interview phase. The questions were answered quite generally speaking because of the sensitivity of the subject, and it might affect the results. Especially the questions regarding nationality made one manager uncomfortable, and rest had to take time to think about their answers more carefully. This may affect the reliability of this research. It can be difficult to get honest opinions on this subject, because the managers might be concerned of the company’s and their own reputation. Subjectivity of the researcher could have also affected the interview answers. However, many answers to the same questions were similar and created saturation for the results. Many managers seemed to have similar conceptions on the issue.

This research would not have been possible to measure in numbers and quantities, so qualitative research method was appropriate. The questions were made to be as neutral as possible referring to the theoretical part of the research and the target group for the research was appropriate. However, regarding the validity of this research, the questions could have been more straight-forward to get more honest answers. The subjectivity of the researcher as an employee of the Hotel Group could have played a role in the interview process. If the questions would have been different and more straight-forward, the result could have been different.

Process management of this thesis was excellent. There were some difficulties in defining the objective and purpose of the research, but after that issue was resolved the process continued smoothly. The commissioning party was easy to work with and the managers
were willing to cooperate throughout the interview process. The thesis process was very efficient, and it was finished one month before the deadline.
References


Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview structure

- Please introduce yourself. How long have you been working in the industry and as a manager?

- How do you see that the Finnish hospitality workforce has changed over the past years?

- How many nationalities do you have working in your department?

- What kind of attributes or qualifications are needed for the position of a Front Desk Agent in your hotel? Why do you think these are the most important ones?

- Tell me about the regular recruitment process of your department?

- Can you tell me about the selection techniques you use in recruitment? (Henkilöarvoinnin menetelmiä, jota käytätte valintaprosessissa)

- Is the knowledge of Finnish language crucial in your department? Why?

- Do you receive a lot of applications from foreign applicants? Based on your experience do their applications differ anyhow from Finnish applicants?

- What sparks your interest in a candidate when reviewing applications? Based on what do you invite candidates for a job interview?

- What do you usually ask the applicant during an interview?

- When you land on a decision about the new employee, what is the reason why you selected that certain individual? (For example, the last employee that you recruited)
- What do you see as an advantage with having a person joining your team from another nationality?

- What do you see as a challenge with having a person joining your team from another nationality?

- How do you see the hospitality industry in the future regarding the job markets (työmarkkinat)?

- What kind of changes could improve the recruitment of multicultural individuals?

- Anonymous recruitment, would you try it?
### Appendix 2. Analysis of Interview Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Specific answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>Front Office Manager for 1 year, shift leader for 8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workforce changes</td>
<td>OTAs, more international workforce, international vibe, changes more in restaurant business</td>
<td>A lot of people moving to and from Finland, exchange students, restaurant business has completely changed over the last 5-10 years with international entrepreneurs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationalities</td>
<td>2 Finnish and Russian</td>
<td>In housekeeping department 3-4 more nationalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attributes &amp; Qualifications</td>
<td>Compassion, friendliness, communication skills, multitasking abilities, prioritizing</td>
<td>Able to prioritize in house tasks and guest needs fulfilled, Communication skill is the most important attribute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment process</td>
<td>A need → open applications in the system → opening a position &amp; setting a timeframe for the recruitment → going through applications as they arrive → going through applications → interview</td>
<td>2-3 weeks usually timeframe for a recruitment, when they recruited a night manager they got 10 applications, out of those 2 were interviewed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection techniques</td>
<td>Analyzing the application letter, analyzing the behavior before and during the interview, unstructured interview model</td>
<td>Was this letter written for hotel X or for multiple work places? Is this person falling asleep waiting for the interviewer or looking around their surroundings?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finnish skills</td>
<td>All language skills are valuable, would be good to know Finnish but not necessary, emails could be troublesome since they are</td>
<td>Finnish can be taught if there is a will to learn it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foreign applications</strong></td>
<td>Received but not too many, they are more generic and more focused on getting ANY job</td>
<td>Hotel business is seen as easy, so foreign applications seem to be just trying their luck with getting a job</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Interest in a candidate</strong></td>
<td>If the letter is written for Hotel X and how it is written, experience doesn’t matter where it is from, but from Finnish schools you know what to expect.</td>
<td>If the candidate uses interesting language and selection of words, Finnish education system is familiar, and I know what a 3rd year student knows at that point.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interview questions</strong></td>
<td>Background of the person, specifics of former workplaces, hobbies, observing the reactions and storytelling abilities.</td>
<td>I like to read the CV before the interview. Hobbies can tell about the person and their attributes a little more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Decision</strong></td>
<td>Skills, experience and knowledge, fit to the group, personality has the biggest role.</td>
<td>Can our team learn new things from them and vice versa, placing the applicants on a spectrum of the team abilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advantages</strong></td>
<td>Interaction with same nationality guests.</td>
<td>Chit chat and small talk abilities that Finns usually lack.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disadvantages</strong></td>
<td>Cultural differences, guests from certain nationalities only seasonally.</td>
<td>Time and efficiency differences.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Job markets</strong></td>
<td>More internationality, more hotels opening, new technology.</td>
<td>New technology could lead into less employees working, Guest interaction transferring to smartphones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes</td>
<td>Tolerance for English speaking staff increasing, not as important to speak Finnish anymore</td>
<td>10 years ago, maybe frowned upon to have English speaking staff, now it’s more common so maybe in the future it is even more common</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anonymous recruitment</td>
<td>It could work</td>
<td>More open minded and it could reduce prejudices and attitudes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All managers agreed  
Some managers agreed  
Individual opinion