

Organizational Determinants and Employee Perceptions of Diversity Management in the Greek Hotel Sector

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Abstract: This study examines the adoption and perceived impact of diversity management practices in the Greek hotel sector, integrating insights from the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Institutional Theory.

Drawing on survey data from 315 employees in four- and five-star hotels across all 13 administrative regions of Greece, the findings reveal that the implementation of diversity practices is significantly associated with hotel ownership structure and star classification, but not with size. Hotels with formal diversity policies are more likely to be perceived as offering equal recruitment opportunities and ensuring impartial treatment. By situating these results within RBV and Institutional Theory, the study demonstrates how organizational attributes influence the strategic integration of diversity initiatives and how such initiatives shape employee perceptions of fairness and inclusion.

This research addresses a notable gap in the literature by providing large-scale, context-specific evidence from a Southern European hospitality setting.

Practical implications highlight the need for hotel managers and policymakers to embed diversity strategies into broader business planning, thereby enhancing competitiveness, fostering inclusion, and advancing corporate social responsibility.

Keywords: Diversity Management, Resource-Based View, Institutional Theory, Hotel Sector, Employee Perceptions, Equal Opportunities

Introduction

Diversity management in the tourism and hospitality industry has gained increasing scholarly and practical attention over the past two decades, as it is closely linked to key issues of equality, inclusion, and sustainable business development (Kalargyrou & Costen, 2017; Madera, 2013). In a globalized and highly competitive environment, tourism and hospitality organizations are called upon to leverage workforce diversity not only as a matter of ethical responsibility and legal compliance but also as a source of strategic advantage (Yang & Konrad, 2011). According to the Resource-Based View (RBV), the unique skills, perspectives, and experiences of a diverse workforce can constitute valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources that enhance organizational performance and innovation (Barney, 1991; Yang & Konrad, 2011). Similarly, the Institutional Theory suggests that external pressures from

regulatory bodies, professional associations, and societal expectations shape the adoption of diversity-related practices, particularly in service industries with high public visibility such as hospitality (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 2008).

Despite this theoretical recognition, empirical evidence remains uneven across regions and sectors. The majority of hospitality diversity research has been conducted in Anglo-American and Asian contexts, focusing largely on general human resource management strategies rather than on diversity-specific mechanisms (Shen et al., 2009; Manoharan & Singal, 2017). Studies in Southern Europe—and particularly in Greece—are scarce, with the existing literature offering limited insights into how diversity management is operationalized in practice and how it affects employees' perceptions of fairness, inclusion, and equal opportunity (Kalargyrou & Costen, 2017). Furthermore, few empirical studies have examined the relationship between organizational characteristics—such as ownership structure, hotel category, and size—and the actual implementation of diversity policies in hospitality settings (Elkhwesky et al., 2019).

This study addresses these gaps by investigating the extent to which diversity management practices are adopted in the Greek hotel sector and by examining their relationship with both organizational attributes and employees' perceptions of workplace equity. By doing so, the research contributes to the theoretical debate on how RBV and Institutional Theory can be applied in the context of hospitality diversity management, providing evidence from an underexplored geographical and cultural setting. The findings offer novel insights into the interplay between structural hotel characteristics, strategic diversity management practices, and employee attitudes, thereby advancing academic understanding and offering practical guidance for industry stakeholders seeking to align diversity strategies with competitive and socially responsible business goals.

Theoretical and Practical Contributions with References

This study makes several contributions to both theory and practice. From a theoretical standpoint, it extends the application of the Resource-Based View (RBV) by demonstrating how diversity management practices can function as strategic resources that generate value in service-intensive contexts (Barney, 1991; Yang & Konrad, 2011). The findings illustrate how organizational characteristics—specifically hotel ownership structure and category—shape the adoption of diversity management practices, thereby offering empirical evidence that enriches the Institutional Theory perspective on the influence of external pressures and legitimacy-seeking behaviors in the hospitality sector (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 2008). Furthermore, the study addresses a well-documented research gap by providing large-scale, quantitative evidence from the Greek hotel industry, an underexplored context in the diversity management literature (Kalargyrou & Costen, 2017; Elkhwesky et al., 2019).

From a practical perspective, the research offers actionable insights for hotel managers, policy-makers, and industry associations. By linking diversity management practices to employees' perceptions of fairness, impartiality, and equal opportunity, the study highlights the potential of such practices to strengthen organizational culture, enhance employee engagement, and improve service delivery (Madera, 2013; Sabharwal, 2014). The results underscore the importance of embedding diversity strategies into broader human resource and business planning frameworks, not as isolated compliance measures but as integral components of long-term competitive positioning and corporate social responsibility (Shen et al., 2009; D'Netto et al., 2014).

The Concept of Diversity and Its Management

Diversity refers to the range of human differences, including both visible characteristics (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity) and less immediately observable attributes (e.g., religion, educational background, cultural values) (Malik et al., 2017). In organizational contexts, effective diversity management involves systematic policies, processes, and initiatives aimed at fostering inclusion and equity for all employees (Yang & Konrad, 2011). Beyond its ethical and legal dimensions, diversity is increasingly recognized as a driver of innovation, employee satisfaction, and customer engagement—factors that are particularly critical in the hospitality industry, where service quality is shaped by interpersonal interactions.

Theoretical Perspectives on Diversity Management in Hospitality

Two prominent theoretical frameworks provide valuable lenses for understanding diversity management in tourism and hospitality: the Resource-Based View (RBV) and the Institutional Theory. The RBV posits that human capital—when characterized by heterogeneity in skills, experiences, and cultural backgrounds—can constitute a valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) resource that underpins sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Yang & Konrad, 2011). In the hospitality sector, diverse teams can contribute to service innovation, enhance problem-solving capacity, and improve customer satisfaction through culturally attuned service delivery.

The Institutional Theory emphasizes the role of external pressures—regulatory frameworks, professional standards, and societal norms—in shaping organizational practices (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). In hospitality, these pressures may come from international hotel chains adopting global diversity policies, government regulations promoting equal employment opportunities, or consumer expectations for socially responsible brands. By combining RBV and Institutional Theory, diversity management can be understood both as an internally strategic resource and as an externally legitimizing practice.

Diversity Management in the Hotel Sector

The hospitality industry is inherently multicultural, shaped by globalization, international mobility, and the high proportion of minority groups in its workforce (Kalargyrou & Costen, 2017). As a result, managing diversity effectively is essential for maintaining competitiveness, ensuring operational efficiency, and enhancing brand reputation. Key diversity management practices in hotels include bias-free recruitment and selection (Shen et al., 2009), intercultural training (Madera, 2013), leadership commitment to inclusion (Ng & Burke, 2005), employee resource groups and mentoring (Thomas, 2004), and measurable accountability frameworks (Kalev et al., 2006).

While these practices have been widely studied in North America, Northern Europe, and parts of Asia, the Southern European hospitality context remains under-researched, with limited empirical evidence on the scope and effectiveness of diversity management practices.

Gaps in the Literature

Despite the acknowledged benefits of diversity management for organizational performance, the literature on its implementation in the hospitality sector reveals three critical gaps:

1. Geographical gap – Limited empirical research exists for Southern Europe, particularly Greece, where the hospitality industry plays a central role in the economy but where diversity-related HR practices have not been extensively documented.
2. Organizational characteristics gap – Few studies examine how factors such as ownership structure, hotel category, and size influence the adoption of diversity practices, despite their potential to shape organizational culture and resources.
3. Perception gap – There is scarce quantitative research exploring the relationship between the actual implementation of diversity management practices and employees' perceptions of fairness, equal opportunity, and inclusion.

This Study's Contribution to the Literature

By addressing these gaps, this study advances the theoretical integration of RBV and Institutional Theory into the domain of hospitality diversity management. It provides empirical evidence from the Greek hotel sector, examining both the organizational determinants of diversity practice adoption and its perceived impacts on equity and inclusion. In doing so, the research not only enriches the diversity management literature in an underrepresented regional context but also offers practical insights for aligning diversity strategies with competitive advantage and social responsibility.

Research Hypotheses

For each key hypothesis, both the null and alternative forms are defined, along with the corresponding independent and dependent variables:

H1 There is a relationship between the level of implementation of diversity management practices and the ownership structure of the hotel.

H2 There is a relationship between the level of implementation of diversity practices and the hotel category.

H3 There is a relationship between the level of implementation of diversity practices and the size of the hotel.

H4 here is a relationship between employees' perceptions of equal opportunities in recruitment and the degree of implementation of diversity practices.

H5 There is a relationship between the level of implementation of diversity practices and perceptions of impartiality and fair treatment.

Sample Description

This study draws upon a sample of 315 employees working in four- and five-star hotels across all 13 administrative regions of Greece. The target population was defined based on data from the Hellenic Chamber of Hotels (HCH) and the 2021 annual survey conducted by the Institute for Tourism Research and Forecasts (ITEP). A non-proportional stratified sampling method was employed due to the uneven geographic distribution of hotels in the country. Each administrative region was treated as a stratum, and sample weighting was based on the number of hotel establishments per region.

Priority was given to regions with a higher concentration of upscale hotels, such as South Aegean, Crete, and Attica, to enhance the analytical power of the study. Of the respondents, 67.6% were women and 32.4% men, with the majority aged between 18 and 35 (59.7%). In terms of education, 57.8% held undergraduate or vocational degrees, while 13.3% had obtained postgraduate or doctoral qualifications.

Most participants were employed in five-star hotels (66.3%) with over 100 rooms (71.4%). In terms of ownership structure, most respondents worked in hotels that were part of local or international chains. Regarding job roles, 36.8% were employed in the front office/reservations department, followed by food and beverage services. Additionally, 62.9% held non-managerial positions, and the majority (69.5%) had up to five years of tenure at their current place of employment.

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was developed following a structured instrument design process. Key variables were defined based on the research hypotheses and

relevant literature. The independent and dependent variables are presented in the following table:

Table 1: Key Variables of the Questionnaire

No.	Variable	Variable Type	Description
1	Ownership structure	Independent	Organizational characteristic
2	Hotel category (stars)	Independent	Organizational characteristic
3	Hotel size (rooms)	Independent	Organizational scale
4	Equal recruitment opportunities	Dependent	Perception of fairness in hiring
5	Impartiality and fair treatment	Dependent	Perception of equitable practices
6	Implementation of diversity management practices	Dependent (in H1–H3) / Independent (in H4–H5)	Central implementation variable

Data Analysis Methods

Data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics v.27. Descriptive statistics (absolute and relative frequencies) were initially used to explore the distribution of responses. The normality of continuous variables was tested using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. As the data did not follow a normal distribution, non-parametric tests were applied.

The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to compare group differences, and Chi-square (χ^2) tests were employed to examine associations between categorical variables. When the expected cell frequencies were below acceptable limits, Fisher’s Exact Test was applied. The significance level was set at 5% ($p < 0.05$).

Table 2: Hypothesis Testing Summary

Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Test Used	p-value	Interpretation
H1	Ownership structure	Degree of diversity practice implementation	χ^2	0.033	Statistically significant relationship
H2	Hotel category	Degree of diversity practice implementation	χ^2	0.005	Statistically significant relationship
H3	Hotel size	Degree of diversity practice implementation	χ^2	0.601	Not statistically significant
H4	Implementation of	Perception of equal recruitment	χ^2	< 0.00	Statistically significant

	diversity practices	opportunities		1	positive association
H5	Implementation of diversity practices	Perceived fairness/impartiality	Kruskal-Wallis	< 0.001	Statistically significant differences

Presentation of research results

Hypothesis 1 (H1)

Regarding the investigation of the relationship between the degree of adoption and implementation of diversity management practices in hotel enterprises and their ownership structure, the Chi-square test revealed a statistically significant association ($p = 0.033$) between ownership type and the application of diversity management practices in hotels. The Chi-square value, $\chi^2(6) = 13.718$, confirms the correlation between these two variables. Since the p-value is less than the significance level (0.05), the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, supporting the conclusion that ownership structure is related to the implementation of diversity management practices.

Specifically, individual hotels and local hotel chains are more likely not to implement any diversity management practices, with rates of 44.9% and 43%, respectively. In contrast, employees of national and international hotel chains predominantly reported being unaware of whether any diversity management practices were applied (50% and 40%, respectively) (see Figure 1).

This statistically significant association suggests that hotels with different types of ownership (e.g., family-owned versus large chains) may vary in how they integrate and apply strategies for managing and leveraging diversity. For instance, large chains or international franchises may have more structured and rigorous diversity management policies compared to family-run businesses, which might lack the resources to implement such practices or may not prioritize their importance to the same extent.

Hypothesis 2 (H2)

Regarding the investigation of the relationship between the degree of adoption and implementation of diversity management practices in hotel enterprises and the hotel’s star rating category, the Chi-square test revealed a statistically significant association between the hotel category and the implementation of diversity management practices ($\chi^2(2) = 10.614$, $p = 0.005$). The p-value being less than the significance threshold (0.05) leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0), thus supporting the assertion that the hotel’s star rating is related to the application of diversity management practices.

Specifically, within the 4-star category, a higher percentage of hotels (49.1%) do not implement any diversity management practices. Conversely, in the 5-star

category, the majority of employees (41.6%) reported being unaware of whether such practices are implemented at their workplace.

The relatively high percentage of employees in 5-star hotels who are uncertain about the existence of diversity management practices may be due to several factors: such practices may have been adopted by the hotel but are not sufficiently communicated or perceptible to all staff, or the implementation of these practices might be ineffective in some cases.

Hypothesis 3 (H3)

Regarding the investigation of the relationship between the degree of adoption and implementation of diversity management practices in hotel enterprises and their size, the Chi-square test indicates that there is no statistically significant association between the hotel's capacity and the application of diversity management practices ($X^2(6) = 4.599$, $p = 0.601$). Since the p-value is considerably higher than the predetermined significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$), the null hypothesis (H_0) is not rejected. Therefore, the decision of whether a hotel invests in adopting and implementing diversity management practices does not appear to be influenced by its size.

Hypothesis 4 (H4)

Concerning the exploration of whether the implementation of diversity management practices by the enterprise affects employees' perception of equal opportunities in recruitment and staffing processes, the Chi-square test reveals a statistically significant relationship between the application or non-application of diversity management practices and employees' views on whether equal opportunities are provided to all job candidates during recruitment and staffing ($X^2(2) = 42.654$, $p < 0.001$). Consequently, H_0 is rejected, and we accept that employees' perceptions of equal opportunities are related to the implementation of diversity management practices. Specifically, among all enterprises that do not apply any diversity management practices, the majority of employees (58.6%) believe that equal opportunities are not provided to all candidates during recruitment and staffing. Conversely, in enterprises that do apply such practices, the majority (59.7%) believe that equal opportunities are offered. These findings highlight the positive impact of diversity management on promoting equal treatment in employment.

Hypothesis 5 (H5)

To investigate the relationship between the implementation of diversity management practices and employees' perceptions of impartiality and fair treatment in the workplace, descriptive statistics were first examined regarding how participants rated the presence of impartiality and fairness in their hotel workplace across different levels of diversity management practice implementation. Subsequently, the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test revealed a statistically significant relationship between whether the company implements

diversity management practices and the ratings given by employees on impartiality and fair treatment in their hotel ($X^2(2) = 34.499$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and it is accepted that employees' perceptions of impartiality and fair treatment are significantly associated with the application of diversity management practices.

Specifically, pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni correction revealed statistically significant differences between all pairs of levels of the variable indicating whether the organization implements diversity management practices. Participants who responded "don't know" had a statistically significantly higher mean score (3.51 ± 1.006) compared to those who answered "no" (2.84 ± 1.38) ($p = 0.001$). Those who answered "yes" exhibited a statistically significantly higher mean score (3.88 ± 1.01) compared both to those who responded "don't know" (3.51 ± 1) ($p = 0.035$) and to those who answered "no" (2.84 ± 1.38) ($p < 0.001$). These findings confirm the connection between the strategic implementation of diversity management and perceived organizational justice.

Discussion of results

Research Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3

Regarding whether the degree of adoption and implementation of diversity management practices is associated with hotel ownership structure, category, and size, the inferential statistical analysis reveals that this degree is significantly related to ownership structure and hotel category, but not to size. Specifically, independent hotels and local hotel chains are more likely not to implement any diversity management practice, with respective percentages of 44.9% and 43%. For national and international hotel chains, the majority of employees reported being unaware of whether such practices are applied (50% and 40%, respectively). Concerning 4-star hotels, a larger proportion (49.1%) reported no implementation of diversity management practices, whereas among 5-star hotels, the majority of employees (41.6%) were unsure if any such practices were in place. The high percentage of employees in national or international chains and 5-star hotels reporting unawareness may be due either to the adoption of such practices not being perceptible to all employees or to ineffective implementation within some organizations. The findings suggest that the decision to invest in diversity management practices depends not on the size of the hotel but rather on its category and ownership structure. These results partially align with Wilborn and Weaver's (2002) study, which found that diversity training initiatives tend to be concentrated in larger hotel units, primarily multinational companies, despite the hospitality industry operating in a diverse environment. Concerning hotel size, our findings contradict views held by some managers who believe that diversity management is only necessary in large hotel units.

These findings align with the Institutional Theory perspective (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 2008), which posits that external legitimacy pressures and institutional norms influence the adoption of organizational practices. Larger and more prestigious hotels, particularly those in higher star categories or belonging

to national and international chains, may be more exposed to global operational standards and corporate policies that mandate diversity practices (Kalargyrou & Costen, 2017). At the same time, the absence of a significant relationship with hotel size contrasts with earlier research by Wilborn and Weaver (2002), which suggested that diversity management practices are more common in larger organizations, and supports the RBV notion (Barney, 1991) that competitive advantage from diversity depends on the strategic value attributed to human capital, rather than simply organizational scale.

Research Hypothesis 4

Is the degree of implementation of diversity management practices related to employees' perceptions of whether equal opportunities are offered to all job candidates during recruitment and staffing?

The inferential analysis shows a statistically significant relationship between whether a hotel applies diversity management practices and whether employees believe that equal opportunities are provided to all candidates during recruitment and staffing. Specifically, among organizations not implementing diversity management practices, the majority of employees (58.6%) perceive that equal opportunities are not granted. Conversely, in organizations that do implement such practices, most employees (59.7%) believe equal opportunities are offered. These findings are highly significant, as they confirm the crucial role of adopting and applying diversity management practices in promoting equal treatment and opportunities in employment. As Kossek and Pichler (2007) argue, developing and implementing human resource policies and practices that emphasize equal employment opportunities and workforce diversity not only fosters a diverse workforce but also cultivates a supportive culture that enables individuals from varied cultural backgrounds to collaborate productively toward organizational goals. Ensuring equal employment opportunities and fostering a workplace that leverages workforce diversity are increasingly critical for organizational effectiveness.

This outcome reinforces previous findings that diversity policies positively influence perceptions of fairness and equal opportunity (Shen et al., 2009; Sabharwal, 2014). From a Resource-Based View perspective (Barney, 1991), fostering such perceptions can enhance employee engagement and service quality, both of which are valuable and difficult-to-imitate organizational resources. Furthermore, the strong link between practice implementation and perceived equity supports the Institutional Theory argument that organizations respond to societal and normative expectations for fairness, thereby strengthening their legitimacy in the market (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Research Hypothesis 5

Is the degree of implementation of diversity management practices associated with the degree of impartiality and fair treatment within a hotel?

To address this question, descriptive statistics were initially examined to assess how participants rate the application of impartiality and fair treatment in their hotels, relative to different levels of diversity management practice implementation. Subsequently, the Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric test indicated a statistically significant relationship between the implementation of diversity management practices and participants' ratings of impartiality and fair treatment in their workplace. These findings align with those of the previous hypothesis and are equally important, highlighting the contribution of diversity management practices to promoting impartiality and fairness within hotel organizations.

These results are consistent with earlier studies highlighting the link between diversity management and organizational justice perceptions (Madera, 2013; Guillaume et al., 2014). By embedding diversity into everyday operations, hotels can create a workplace climate that supports impartiality and inclusiveness—both critical components of sustainable competitive advantage under the RBV framework (Barney, 1991). Simultaneously, by visibly committing to equitable treatment, organizations meet institutional and societal expectations, in line with the principles of Institutional Theory (Scott, 2008).

Conclusion

This study examined the extent to which diversity management practices are implemented in the Greek hotel sector and how these practices relate to organizational characteristics and employees' perceptions of fairness and equal opportunity. The findings reveal that diversity management adoption is significantly associated with hotel ownership structure and star category, but not with size. Moreover, hotels that implement diversity management practices are more likely to be perceived by employees as providing equal recruitment opportunities and ensuring impartial treatment in the workplace.

From a **theoretical perspective**, these results reinforce the **Resource-Based View (RBV)** by illustrating that diversity management can function as a strategic resource capable of enhancing organizational culture and performance. The evidence also supports the **Institutional Theory** proposition that organizational structures and market positioning—shaped by external legitimacy pressures—affect the adoption of socially responsible practices. In the context of Southern Europe, where empirical evidence remains scarce, this study contributes to bridging a significant gap in the hospitality management literature by providing large-scale, context-specific data.

From a **practical standpoint**, the findings emphasize the importance of embedding diversity management into the core business strategy of hotels. Managers should prioritize structured diversity management practices, effective internal communication of policies, and leadership engagement to foster an inclusive workplace. Policymakers and industry associations can use these insights to develop targeted programs and guidelines that encourage diversity as both a competitive and a socially responsible imperative.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although the study addresses notable gaps in the literature, several avenues remain for further exploration:

1. **Disaggregating diversity dimensions** – Future studies could examine how specific aspects of diversity (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity, religion) interact with organizational strategies and affect employee experiences.
2. **Longitudinal studies** – Tracking diversity practices and their outcomes over time would offer deeper insights into their sustained impact on performance and employee well-being.
3. **Comparative research** – Cross-country comparisons within Southern Europe or across different cultural contexts could reveal how institutional environments influence diversity adoption.
4. **Qualitative deep dives** – Case studies of best practices could provide richer understanding of the mechanisms and leadership approaches that drive successful diversity integration.
5. **Management vs. employee perspectives** – Investigating differences between managerial and employee views could highlight gaps in policy implementation and perception.

By addressing these areas, future research can build on the present findings to advance both theory and practice, promoting a hospitality sector that is not only more competitive but also more equitable and inclusive.

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