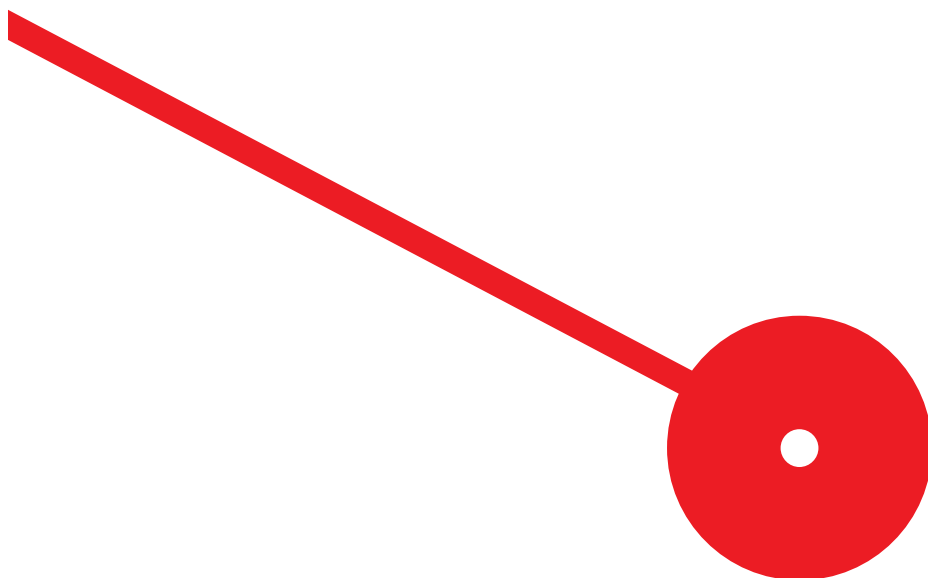




Corporate Culture and the Integration of Cultures: The Nhow Case

Patrícia Neves

2024/2025

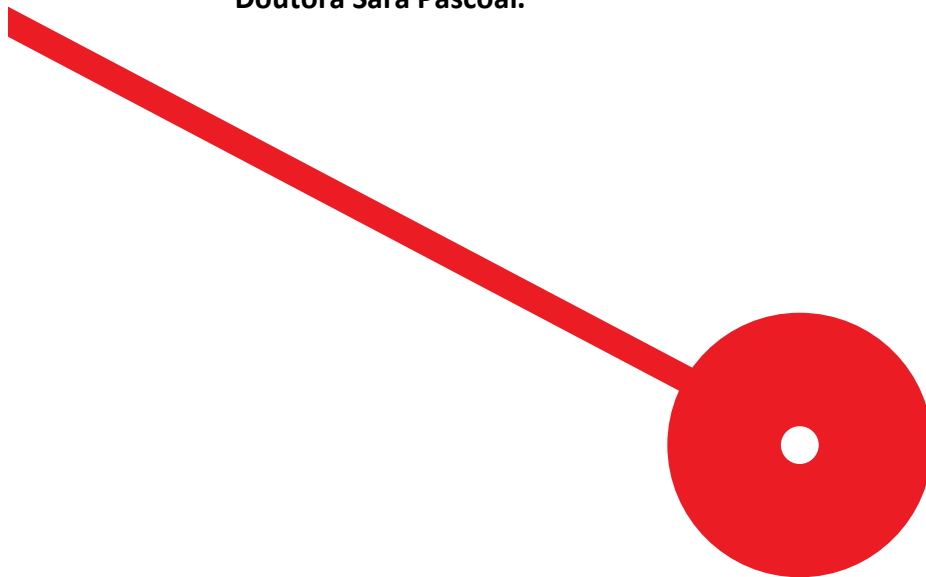




Corporate Culture and the Integration of Cultures: The Nhow Case

Patrícia Neves

Dissertação de Mestrado apresentado ao Instituto Superior de Contabilidade e Administração do Porto para a obtenção do grau de Mestre em Intercultural Studies for Business sob orientação da Prof. Doutora Sara Pascoal.



Al mio nonno, che mi ha mostrato il vero significato della gentilezza, della lealtà, della
perseveranza e della fede. CH

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From my soul to yours, thank you!

Resumo

Num mundo cada vez mais globalizado, o multiculturalismo tornou-se inevitável em todas as esferas da sociedade. Desde os estilos de vida até às culturas organizacionais das empresas. Neste contexto, é essencial que as organizações se alinhem com esta diversidade, promovendo ambientes inclusivos e representativos.

Os colaboradores constituem a principal força motriz para o crescimento e sucesso de uma empresa. Por isso, o seu nível de integração e bem-estar deve ser uma prioridade para os líderes organizacionais.

O presente estudo tem como objetivo compreender de que forma o hotel multicultural *nhow Amsterdam RAI* (Nhow) implementa a sua cultura organizacional e como esta se relaciona com a diversidade e inclusão dos seus colaboradores.

A investigação baseia-se numa metodologia qualitativa, recorrendo à realização de entrevistas com funcionários do nhow, complementadas com a análise de documentos internos. Os resultados revelam que, mesmo num ambiente altamente multicultural, persistem barreiras à inclusão. Isto ocorre apesar dos esforços genuínos da empresa em promover uma cultura organizacional assente em valores de diversidade, inclusão e compreensão.

Contudo, estas barreiras não indicam necessariamente uma implementação inadequada da cultura organizacional. Pelo contrário, a presença de valores autênticos de inclusão e diversidade permite à organização desenvolver uma cultura que vai além da superficialidade, alcançando níveis profundos de integração e respeito mútuo.

Palavras –chave: diversidade, cultural organizacional, inclusão, multicultural

Abstract

In an increasingly globalized world, multiculturalism has become an inevitable reality across all spheres of society. From lifestyles to organizational cultures. In this context, it is essential for companies to align themselves with this diversity by fostering inclusive and representative environments.

Employees are the driving force behind a company's growth and success. Therefore, their level of integration and well-being should be a central concern for organizational leaders.

This study aims to understand how *Nhow Amsterdam RAI* (nhow), a multicultural hotel, implements its organizational culture and how this culture relates to the diversity and inclusion of its employees.

The research adopts a qualitative methodology, involving interviews with Nhow staff, complemented by the analysis of internal documents. The findings reveal that, even within a highly multicultural environment, barriers to inclusion persist. This occurs despite the company's genuine efforts to promote an organizational culture grounded in values of diversity, inclusion, and mutual understanding.

However, these barriers do not necessarily indicate a flawed implementation of organizational culture. On the contrary, the presence of authentic values of inclusion and diversity enables the organization to develop a culture that goes beyond superficial representation, achieving deeper levels of integration and mutual respect.

Key words: corporate culture, diversity, inclusion, multicultural

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List of abbreviations

- Behaviours for Success – BFS
- Equal employment opportunity – EEO
- General Manager – GEM
- Individual development Plan – IDP
- Minor International – MINT
- Nhow Amsterdam Rai – Nhow
- World Travel & Tourism Council – WTTC

INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly globalized world, organizations must maintain a high level of competitiveness. To do so, they need to assess how they act, think and work internally. A multicultural environment emerges with the world constant changes and companies became culturally diverse as times evolve (Hofstede, 2001).

Managing this diversity means that is important to verify the levels of inclusivity of the employees. As for companies to exponential increase their outcomes is important that employees have a sense of belonging in the organization (Ali & Anwar, 2022).

For this, the corporate culture is extremely relevant as it helps to make these feelings emerge (Paz et al. 2020), since it represents the beliefs, underlying assumptions and set of values of the organization (Schein, 2004).

According to Cameron & Quinn (2011) there is 4 dimensions that an organization can choose to have in its culture, and each one represents a different form of values. Having a clan culture, means that the company values understanding and a family base structured, adhocracy culture is correlated with innovation, market culture with competitiveness and hierarchy culture in an organization represents stability.

Companies can reach success, but it goes further than just having a great market analysis, it stems from the corporate culture being strong and diverse, valuing their employees and created an environment for them to thrive and bond (Cameron & Quinn, 2006).

The implementation of corporate culture, diversity and inclusion in an organization, the created and imposed by the human resources department. It begins from the moment of the recruitment process to how they are managed and have space to develop their skills within the company (Armstrong, 2021).

Nonetheless, everyone within the organization has a role when it comes to create a diverse and inclusive environment, such as managers of each department and the rest of the employees, as they interact of a daily basis with each other (Ali & Anwar, 2021).

A considerable number of research explores the issues of diversity and inclusion. However, not many focus on understanding how it can be implemented in a multicultural work environment, as the cultural dynamics can be different and can be challenging to find common values that will shape the corporate culture.

Therefore, based on the literature review about corporate culture, diversity and inclusion the following objective was defined i) identify the key initiatives within the corporate culture of the organization that help to have inclusion and diversity in a multicultural work environment. With this main objective, specific ones were developed:

- Identify and understand the corporate culture of Nhow
- Understand if the corporate culture is suitable for the cross-cultural environment of the company
- Comprehend which initiatives of diversity and inclusion are implemented
- Analyse how the initiatives implemented by Nhow affects the employees
- Understand if the employees of Nhow feel integrated in the company

The following study is divided into 4 chapters. The first chapter is related to the notion of corporate culture, where the Schein model and the Competing Values Framework (CVF) by Cameron & Quinn are explained and the complementarity between both is analysed. Additionally, diverse approaches to diversity and inclusion are examined, emphasizing the dynamic tension between them and exploring how organizations can implement both without reducing them to a mere political requirement.

In the second chapter, the case study is discussed. This section presents information about the organization, including its structure, number of employees, and their nationalities. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews with employees and a Human Resources manager, complemented by secondary sources such as internal company reports.

The third chapter describes the research methodology, outlining the study's objectives and main research questions. The interview data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis, a flexible method for identifying themes based on theoretical frameworks and participants experiences and perceptions. The interview questions were designed to align with the structure of the research and were therefore divided into 3 sections: culture, diversity & inclusion (D&I), and evaluation.

Finally, the fourth chapter presents the study's conclusions, discusses its limitations, and offers recommendations for future research.

1 CHAPTER I – THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 Corporate Culture

Culture has been studied over the years, and despite having different interpretations, most authors agree that an individual's culture shapes who they are. A person's behaviour, thoughts, and worldview are significantly influenced by the shared values, traditions, and histories that define their culture (Rovira, 2008).

These aspects are shared, interpreted, and transmitted over time, and among several generations (Bik, 2010). Therefore, when analysing a cultural environment, one observes that it, clearly, influences individuals, both at a national and at organization levels (Hall, 1976).

Corporate culture doesn't have a clear and precise definition. Due to its complexity, it can be challenging to conclude its true meaning and what is the force that drives it (Golles, 2022). Nonetheless, most have intertwined the various dimensions of organizational values and practices with the culture where the company is located (Hofstede, 1990). The corporate culture is one of the main aspects that need to be correlated with the company growth and the decision making within the company (Schwartz, 2012).

One can see that it is a mix of values and ideas of the organization that are followed and respected by the members of the company (Lee, 2018). In other words, it serves as the basis for how collectively employees act, behave and think within their workplace (Iskamto, 2023).

According to Iskamto (2023) the company is the one that implements the culture, which will influence the employees, how they will deal with external and internal issues, how they will carry out tasks and will achieve the company's goals. In other words, decision-making, communications habits and in general the work environment is created and evolved according to the corporate culture.

It has a tremendous impact on the employees drive, performance and satisfaction, where if it is set incorrectly, it can be detrimental for the members and the company (Tian, 2018). As a result, organizational culture must be formed and taught to members so that it can serve as a guideline for their actions when dealing with challenges.

Iskamto (2023) stated that its function is to have a defining role, namely, to create show the disparities between companies and highlight the uniqueness of each one. The company's culture encourages people to commit to something bigger than their individual self-interest. In a way, it is the social glue that holds organizations together by setting suitable norms for how employees behave.

Mengijao (2023) stated that if a company wants to have any sort of advantage over their competitors, they need to build an organizational culture that supports and motivates employees. Several researchers demonstrate that companies with a low employee performance result from hiring people who don't fit or cannot relate with the company's culture.

Nonetheless, if this is done correctly, it is possible to see a positive outcome. The corporate culture is assessed using a variety of metrics that include innovation, employee attentiveness, team orientation and employee stability (Mengijao, 2023).

1.2 Models of Corporate Culture

1.2.1 Schein Model

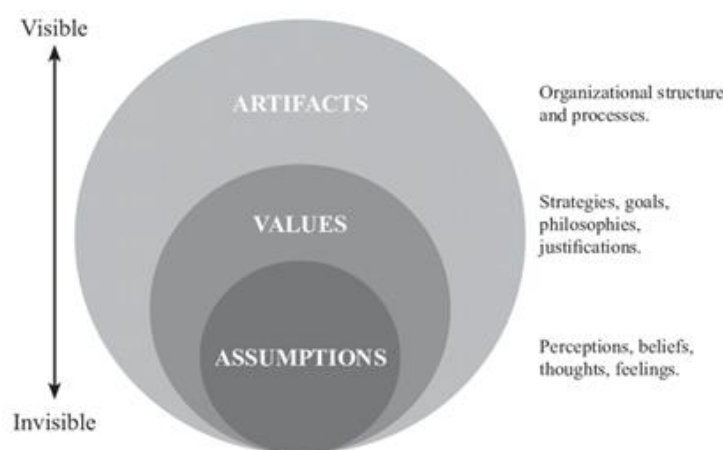
Schein is considered the founder of corporate culture (Huber, 2014). He defines corporate culture as a pattern of shared assumptions that employees learn, to handle issues that will arise during their time at an organization, such as adaptation and integration. According to Schein (2004): "the meaning of culture has been oversimplified with the temptation to conclude that culture is just, the way we do things around us, the company climate, the reward systems, our basic values".

And if these patterns combined lead to a good performance of the company and its employees, they should be taught to new members, to show them the correct way to think, feel and react when those problems arise (Schein, 2004).

Schein stated (2009): “a better way to think about culture is to realise that it exists at several levels and that we must understand and manage the deeper levels”. Schein (2009) divides culture into three levels and uses definitions to illustrate his perception of the levels of the corporate culture.

In the following figure, it would be possible to state the three levels and the specifications of each one.

Figure 1 – Schein’s Three Levels of Culture



According to Schein (2004), culture is divided into three levels: artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and underlying assumptions. With artifacts, Schein (2009) is combining everything that can be heard, seen or felt. Making it clearer, it means the way a person observes, feels and hears a situation. This level can be shown through the organizational climate, people behaviour, clothing and observable rituals within a company.

For Schein, having an extensive understanding of the corporate culture is extremely beneficial for the company as it can use this knowledge to communicate and make

decisions in a more effective way. The level of artifacts is very easily observed, however it can be often unclear why the employees act in certain ways. Leaders must focus primarily on artifacts as is the level that they can see and grasp quickly (Gölles, 2022). Nonetheless it can be challenging for them to understand why the employees act a certain way (Schein, 2009).

To decipher the artifacts meanings and understand the groups behaviour, a deeper cultural analysis of the other two levels espoused values, and assumptions is necessary, since they actually try to understand how and why the corporate culture behaves in a specific way and where its origin comes from (Schein, 2004).

The next level is designated values and Schein (2009) states that espoused values create a certain image of the company, where they can be comprehended by talking with the employees, and can be observed by the rules and the way a company operates. Those values emerge from the company goals and strategies throughout time and reflect the founder or leader values and how they believe a company should work.

In general, this second level, shows how leaders work, and interact with their employees (Gölles, 2022). When values and beliefs are consistently applied to solve challenges, it can create behavioural guidance to the employees and can be taught to new members.

By expressing those values as the core philosophy of the company, it will lead to a sense of togetherness, belonging and identity (Schein, 2017). According to Aranki et al., (2019) espoused values should explain the artifacts, however inconsistencies can appear, requiring a deeper understanding.

For an in-depth understanding of corporate culture, the third level, underlying assumptions, needs to be analysed. Here, the essence of culture lies and is unchallenged. Therefore, if one wants to comprehend the culture of a company, it is important to

understand the assumptions. This level is inherent in each employee's actions, thoughts, feelings and interactions, and by trying to modify this, can be challenging (Schein, 2004).

Assumptions can be seen as a mental map of a person, and when a group shares the same underlying assumptions, this leads to mutual comfort and stability, while the opposite leads to discomfort, misunderstandings and anxiety (Schein, 2004).

Leaders shape assumptions, since their beliefs and values set the tone for the entire organization. At an organizational level, if employees observe that those beliefs and values are leading to the success of the company, they will start to adopt them. Consequently, it will come to a point, which is deeply ingrained in the company and those assumptions are no longer questioned (Schein, 2009).

This is supported by Cooke (2000) who also defines corporate culture as common assumptions, values and beliefs by its employees that influences how individuals think and act in an organizational environment.

In an overall, to truly comprehend culture, one must follow a methodical observation and interviewing to clarify presumptions. Schein (2004) believes if a company expands, its core values become ingrained in the organizational structure. Leaders must have cultural awareness to effectively manage their organisations, otherwise cultures will guide the company (Schein, 2010).

1.2.2 Cameron and Quinn Model

The Competing Values Framework Model (CVF) is one of the most used models in empirical research on organizational culture (Naranjo-Valencia & Sanz-Valle, 2011). Originally, the model only analysed the effectiveness in the value, however it was expanded, to analyse the corporate culture (Denison & Spreitzer, 1991). Rose et al.,

(2008) has stated that the model's focus is on bonding systems, employee environment, prioritisation of goals and leadership styles.

Companies tend to not focus on a specific culture, instead they have different types and use them, according to the situation in the company (Quinn et al, 2003). Using the CVM model, two different types of organizational dimensions are described.

The first dimension is related to organizational focus, that englobes internal dynamics, which includes the development of talent and employees in the company. This dimension also englobes an external focus, which is concerned with the environment and development of the organization itself (Yu & Wu, 2009). The second dimension characterises to which extent an organisation attaches value to flexibility and control in the organisational structure.

These two dimensions are adapted according to each company preference, meaning that some organizations prefer to demonstrate an adaptable and flexible work environment to their employees, while other organizations thrive when adopting a more stable and controlled environment (Cameron & Quinn, 2006).

The competing value framework is then divided into four corporate culture types, which are the following: clan culture, adhocracy culture, hierarchical culture, and market culture (Ettington, 1988). Quinn (2006) states that most of the organisations are characterized by mainly one type of culture, however all four types can be seen in one organisation.

In the figure 2, the model is represented and showcases the two dimensions which categorise culture into four types, which will be explained in more detail.

Figure 2: The Competing Value Framework by Quinn & Cameron



There is hierarchy culture, which focuses on internal efficiency, orientation to results and rules. This is the classic approach to power demonstrations, where it creates bureaucratic and hierarchy organizations. It will lead to efficiency and stability within the workplace. In this culture, managers are the leaders and employees work can be controlled (Brown, 2021).

Following, the market culture gives emphasis on competitiveness, goal accomplishment, environmental interaction, and customer orientation (Ettington, 1988). Basically, it tries to focus on the relationship with stakeholders and suppliers to achieve success (Wu, 2009). Meaning, that it concentrated in the external environment of a company (Quinn et al., 2003).

This type of culture can be seen in companies who have unstable and unpredictable environments, and flexibility is needed (Maher, 2000). Also, it has the basic assumption that consumers are interested in the value they receive from a service or product, therefore the companies using this culture, try to focus on the competitive level and try to encourage their workers to continue to be productive and gain profits (Ahmadi, 2012).

The third type of culture is designated as clan culture, which is mainly seen in organizations with a family-based structure environment. Meaning, that in this type of culture, leaders believe that to succeed, it is necessary to have a collaborative team, employee empowerment, and development (Quinn, 2003). Companies who use this type of culture tend to be flexible, and their main values are based on loyalty and feedback, where leaders are seen as mentors and in a sort of way, the parents (Tharp, 2009).

Lastly, adhocracy culture is characterised as being dynamic and having an entrepreneurial environment (Hofstede, 1990). Compared to more traditional culture within a company, it is possible to observe that this one, focuses more on innovation (Tharp, 2009).

The leader is a visionary or an entrepreneur, and, in this culture, the main goal is to thrive for innovation, since it views this as the key point for success (O'Neill et al., 2021). In adhocracy culture, no specific type of power and authority relationships exist. The dynamic observed here consists of delegation, meaning that depending on the problem or situation, the team more adequate to handle it, would be the power runner (Mangundjaya, 2013).

By analysing these cultures, it is important to mention that one is not better than the other, and each company has operated within all these types in one way or another, depending on the situation and issues faced. An organization may use one main culture, but doesn't mean that after some time, it doesn't change to another culture, if it seems best fitted (Maher, 2000).

1.2.3 Complementarity between Schein and CVF model

When mentioning Schein and CVF model, one can see that a complementation can occur. Trying to analyse both is also an important segment, which can connect visible and invisible aspects of culture (Hatch, 2013).

With both, it's possible to have an in-depth understanding of the behaviours, beliefs and mindsets that shape culture by using Schein model and will also help to conceptualize each espoused value, artifact and underlying assumptions by using CVF model. By understanding each, is possible for organizations to assess which values from the CVF model are more aligned with their culture and then implement them accordingly (AlSaied & Mclaughlin, 2024).

1.3 The Role of Corporate Culture in Shaping Employee Behaviour

Deal and Kennedy (1982) stated that corporate culture is crucial for the commitment of employees. A company with a strong corporate culture, helps their employees to understand and relate with the goals of the organization, which will lead to an increase in their performance. The culture of an organization is an important element to unify several company cultures in the corporate group structure (Kenny, 2012).

By having the same values and norms as the organization they work in, employees can start to relate with each other, since they would be like-minded, have similar interests and beliefs, and consequently, would have a sense of identity (Praveena & Fonceca, 2023). This will not only improve their performance, but their sense of belonging (Shim, 2010).

It is crucial for a successful corporate culture, that the employees fit within the company (Yu, 2004). Otherwise, this can lead to a poor performance and the downfall of a company (Silverthorne, 2004). Ezirim (2012) argues that for this to be done effectively, companies need to be detail oriented within their culture and provide strong communication, to manage unpredictability and achieve their goals.

Besides this, companies need to be flexible and find ways of making their employees motivated. This way, they will feel seen, and they will feel like they have a significant role in the company success (Silverthorne, 2004).

In addition, the culture must be widely disseminated and have unique characteristics, in such a way that other competitors cannot replicate it. According to Azhar (2003), and as it was stated before, the corporate culture will determine the success of an organisation, therefore, a company must have a strong and effective culture.

The corporate culture components may motivate, drive and affect an individual's behaviour inside a company, as well as their commitment to engage within the company. One may argue that the interactions that exist inside these contexts are the source of the culture that exists in an organization, as the workers who engage in this process have as much a big role in transmitting and receiving the culture (Gomes, 2018).

These employees are responsible for the moral conduct and values of a company. Therefore, the corporate culture allows individuals to have solid and significant relationships with their company. They are immersed in it, and the corporate culture is being shaped by those interactions, as well as shaping and restricting employees' performances (Schein, 2017).

1.4 Diversity and Inclusion in Intercultural Work Environments

Diversity and inclusion (D&I) are important concepts in the workplace. However, the two terms have distinct meanings, even though they are often used as synonyms.

The fact is that organizations cannot take their focus of D&I, as it increases levels of participation, and growth within the company. Besides this, according to several studies it has become a term that not only is socially and politically compliant but also a responsibility for businesses to follow (Pepple, 2017).

Nonetheless, the issues don't lie in companies acknowledging the true importance of it but implementing both concepts. First, is necessary to understand the different between

both and after, understand that just being diverse, doesn't necessarily mean to be inclusive and vice-versa (Celik, 2021).

1.4.1 Diversity

The concept of diversity emerged in 1964, after the USA movement rights, where it was stated that organisations discriminating employees according to their race, religion and sex, would be doing illegal matters (Nwoga, 2021). After the 70s, businesses started to be more diverse, and it was clear that there was still a closed-minded environment.

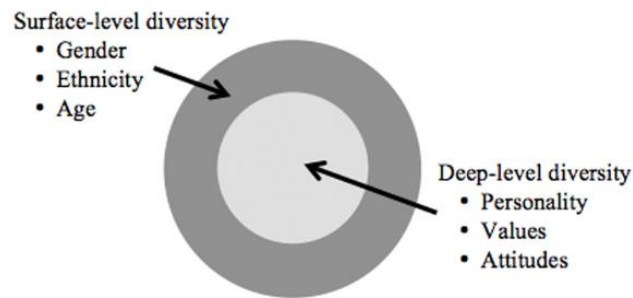
The next step for organizations was to start implementing diversity programs. The goal was to change people's prejudices and discriminations, in order to make employees feel integrated and included (Kochan, et al., 2003). Then, the concept of diversity became more popular in the 1980s, where it also included geographic background, language and value system. (Hays-Thomas, 2017).

Currently, diversity in the workplace has become a topic that is deal with extreme care and consideration, since every day, companies acquire employees with extremely diverse characteristics. According to diverse scholars, having a diverse workplace is a very decisive factor in the success of any business (Bakhri et al., 2018).

1.4.1.1 Organizational Diversity

Organizational diversity can be inserted in different types. It can be based on ethnicity, race, gender and cultural differences, as is believe these are factors that impact the most inclusion and discrimination (Dalben & Nabuco, 2021). Or, it can have a broader definition that encompasses all the aspects in which members of working groups may differ from one another (Ohunakin et al., 2019). According to Williams and O'Reilly (1998) we can characterize diversity by being at a surface level and deep level, as it can be stated in the figure 3 below

Figure 3 – Diversity types



In a surface level is related to gender, ethnicity, colour of hair or age, which are based on how someone would characterize another individual (Garlb, 2013). An example of this, is when a person sees another and assumes they belong to a certain gender or are from a specific culture, which can lead to stereotypes (Casper, 2013).

In contrast, the deep level diversity is correlated with the values, attitudes, education or in general personality, which aren't visible but become apparent when interacting with others. In this case, they can shape dynamics within the company. An example is when two individuals have the same age and gender but one prefers to work independently and another in a team (Williams and O'Reilly, 1998).

Another framework to be considered is the model of primary and secondary dimensions (Gardenswartz and Rowe, 1994). The first dimension is related with demographics such as age, gender and nationality, which can be visible and can influence how people see each other, consequently leading to inclusion or exclusion (Peroni et al., 2016). In comparison there is the secondary dimension which is related with cultural characteristics such as geographic location, religion, income, background and work experience. This will change throughout an individual's life, but they will shape personal perspectives and workplace interactions (Yadav and Lenka, 2020).

As there are several dimensions of diversity, the following table 1 highlights the main ones discussed in literature, which can also be related with both surface and deep levels of diversity,

Table 1 – Diversity Dimensions

| Dimensions | Type of Diversity | Authors | Main findings |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Age | Surface-level | Kulik et al (2014) | An age gap between individuals can increase adaptability and inclusion |
| Gender | Surface-level | (Gonzalez and DeNisi (2009) | Different genders combine can lead to a diverse decision making |
| Disability | Surface-level | Harnett et al (2011) | Having employees with disabilities can promote inclusion |
| Race/Ethnicity | Surface -level | Podsiadlowski et al (2013) | Multicultural integration and inclusive management policies can develop team cohesion |
| Education | Deep level | Kearney and Gebert (2009) | Influences team knowledge, problem solving and group outcomes |
| Functional Background | Deep level | Homan et al (2007) | Increases team performance since there are different perspectives and knowledge |
| Religious | Deep level | (Reetesh and Babbar (2020) | Religion can influence the organizational environment |
| Cultural Diversity | Deep level | Masrek at al (2021) | Difference in beliefs and traditions can lead to creativity and innovation |

Plees and Maak (2004) argue that is nothing more than a cultural matter, meaning that it is a matter of norms, values, beliefs and expectations. With this, the concept of cultural

diversity comes to highlight, where according to the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity is stated that:

Culture takes diverse forms across time and space. This diversity is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities of the groups and societies making up humankind. As a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. In this sense, it is the common heritage of humanity and should be recognized and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations (UNESCO, 2001)

According to Cox (1993) “cultural diversity means the representation, in one social system of people with distinctly different group affiliations of cultural significance.” The identity of a group is basically a bond shared between people about a specific topic. This is extremely important in how cultural diversity impacts organizations behaviours (Cox, 1993).

The topic of diversity and how to manage it became a situation that every company needs to deal with. To achieve competitive advantage, organizations must implement a corporate culture that increases personal development and integrates all its employees.

1.4.2 Inclusion

Inclusion can be determined in different ways, either by the uniqueness of each employee or how each is recognized. Nonetheless, are often the interactions of each employee and the environment in the company that highlights how someone is included (HRMID, 2018).

Studies reveal that it is how an employee feels accepted and appreciated in the workplace that determines their inclusion. The level of inclusion is used as an encouragement for individuals to participate and involve themselves within the company (Nair and Vohra, 2015).

In this case, when an employee feels that sense of inclusion, regardless how he might define it, it comes with a positive psychological impact, such as job satisfaction and engagement (Chen and Tang, 2018).

Companies need to find a way to hire diverse and talented individuals but also find strategies to make them participate and engage in the brand. Inclusion is in a way a “bridge between interpersonal differences and a person’s ability to contribute effectively to the organization” (Mor Barak, Cherin, 1998).

Due to this, many companies try to use a corporate culture that uses policies and practices that promote inclusion, making a path for different types of people to feel integrated in the team, and consequently, making them work more effectively and bringing positive outcomes from the employees and the company (Leuhery et al.,2024).

Overall, when inclusion is put into practice, inclusive teams are created, making better and creative decisions as more viewpoints are offered and accepted. This can also lead to less turnover, which can impact the company budget to create recruitments and training (Adaga et al.,2024). Companies who use an inclusive approach tend to have positive reputations, not only for other employees totally, but in terms of positive reputations for investors, customers and the public ((Chen and Tang, 2018).

Even though inclusion has become a key point in the organization's success, this can be something challenging to implement due to several factors. Such as, different communication styles which can create barriers between the employee and the company. Unconscious biases, as stereotypes can affect people's behaviours and way of thinking. Also, if the managers don’t show a commitment to practices of inclusion, it can come across as not crucial, and employees feel their needs are not being important for the company, leading to disengaged and lack of motivation (Ezeafulukwe et al.,2024)

1.4.2.1 Factors of exclusion

In general, individuals tend to have the necessity to belong but also to be unique within their personal and professional lives. By feeling too similar in a group setting, people tend to want to set themselves apart. On the other hand, when feeling too different, they try to fit in and assimilate with the people who are in the group, as they don't want to feel like they don't belong.

When both needs can be met, inclusion will happen. Nonetheless there is not a specific metric to achieve this, as everyone has their own definition of needs. Nonetheless, it happens when individuals are treated as part of the group but are also valued for the characteristics that set them apart (Shore et al., 2011).

What happens when these needs aren't met is exclusion, where people don't face high uniqueness or belongingness. This can occur when there is a state of differentiation among others, meaning that an employee can feel valued for their unique skills. However, there isn't the feeling of belonging to the group.

On the other end, there can be a sense of being part of something and feeling like an insider, but they do not experience the appreciation for who they are by themselves. Which makes employees downplay their skills and consequently leads to a state of assimilation. For a better understanding, (Shore et al., 2011) created an inclusion framework, which can be found in the figure (4) below.

Figure 4: Inclusion Framework (Shore et al., 2011).

| | | | |
|---------------------|------|--|---|
| Need for Uniqueness | High | Differentiation Outsider OK to be different BUT Minority feels alienated/stereotyped | Inclusion Insider and OK to be different |
| | Low | Exclusion Outsider and Need to fit in | Assimilation/ Blending Minority feels need to conform, only accepted if you look/talk/think like me |
| | | Low | High |
| | | Need for Belongingness | |

Based on this framework, it is essential for a company to ensure that employees feel seen, connected, and valued for their uniqueness but also the way they blend within the organization and the team. Only then does the state of inclusion occur, and companies can achieve full success (Shore et al.,2011).

According to the Social Economic Council (SER, 2019), companies need to meet different criteria to accomplish a successful diversity policy. Foremost, it is important to guarantee that managers become knowledgeable about their own organizational culture and inclusive leadership. Secondly, they also need to implement this in their protocols, guidelines, strategies and recruitment processes. An organization may have amazing policies and protocols; however, if there is unconscious bias among the hiring team, this will completely prevent those exact policies and protocols from being followed (Woods & Tharakan, 2021).

1.4.2.2 Tensions between D&I in corporate environments

According to Shore et al (2011) organizations can create an environment that is diverse but where individuals don't fully feel included. Ferdman (2017) stated that “Working toward inclusion in diverse organizations and societies can often be experienced as polarizing and presents many challenges and tensions,” meaning that companies want to include individuals from different cultural backgrounds. However, in a way they still want them to be integrated in the organizational norms that they designed, which may not be in alignment with some cultures.

The key for multiculturalism is to be included and at the same time still be valued for their uniqueness, which makes every individual different and allows them to be their own self. Therefore, when trying to integrate an employee to the corporate culture, which requires them to give up or subsume aspects of themselves to fit in, it can lead to a feeling of belonging but not of being truly inclusive.

This leads to a crucial tension that has been raised to awareness. Companies tend to have diversity and inclusion policies as a political obligation. It's important that policies implemented are for the sole purpose of being genuine and benefiting their employees and the organization environment. As this can lead to the discontent of employees (Resse, 2022). For a concrete and true impact, it is necessary that the policies be implemented into the corporate culture. As several companies tend to not fully integrate the policies communicated to the public, meaning that the lived experience of employees can be completely different (Iradukunda & Werner, 2023).

Many organizations tend to see the level of diversity by creating reports, as it's a simplified way to verify if it was achieved. This is considered a way to escape what needs to be done. Which is to implement an active change and participation in communication patterns, leadership, and day to day practices, so employees experience not only diversity but also inclusiveness in their work environment (Dobbin & Kalev, 2018).

1.4.3 HR's Role in Fostering a Diverse and Inclusive Culture

To create an inclusive work environment, companies rely on the Human Resources (HR) practices that need to be innovative and untraditional. One of the key practices is designated unconscious bias training (Sander et al., 2020).

Unconscious bias training stems from the fact that many individuals have in them certain biases that lead to stereotypes, which influence how they react to, treat, and communicate with others due to their stereotypes.

Therefore, it is the role of HR to try to eliminate these stereotypes and make employees aware of those biases by giving them strategies to eliminate or at least decrease them.

The approach for this training comes with explaining the concept and how it is seen in the workplace, as individuals start to recognize their bias and comprehend its impacts on the interaction with their colleagues.

After this recognition, it is easier to try to teach employees to note how their stereotypes impact the work environment and how to change their mindset or approach towards others.

For this, the training provides strategies such as diversity awareness campaigns, structured interviews, and blind recruitment, as this unconscious bias can also have an impact on hiring decisions or performance evaluation. (Bradford et al., 2022)

Working with a flexible schedule or having remote work is another factor that helps employees to balance their professional and personal lives, which creates an inclusive workplace culture.

Besides this, having the policy to working from home really creates an environment of comprehension and inclusion, as people who have children/ disabilities or have a long commute can have a more flexible work schedule, promoting a positive work life (Beauregard et al.,2020)

With that, having a part time or a freer schedule allows employees to work reduced hours or even the normal hours, but it gives them freedom to accommodate their needs and preferences. Companies that use these policies use platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google meetings to have virtual meetings and have clear communication with all the employees (Hu et al., 2020). In such cases, virtual team-building activities and social events are essential to keep inclusion and connections alive.

However, to have all these key factors, leaders need to educate themselves and receive the proper training about cultural differences, communication, and feedback skills. As

they need to have an innovative mindset to create inclusive environments. These trainings try to provide the leaders with the ability to create strategies to build a corporate culture that is accountable for making inclusive workplaces and encouraging diverse backgrounds without any bias (Zheng et al.,2020).

In fact, leaders who go to the extent of being trained know how to create a balance within the corporate culture when it comes to inclusiveness. By trying to create a culture that values each identify, uniqueness and diversity of each of their employees, leaders must not only focus on all the uniqueness, but it can also create stereotypes. But, focusing on trying to make everyone blend can lead to employees feeling forced to share views and ideas that may not resonate with them.

Therefore, leaders need to find the common ground between uniqueness and sense of belonging for employees to feel seen but also feel part of a group (Van Bommel et al., 2021).

Another key practice is a diverse recruitment process, which, for it to work, needs to be 'blind,' meaning that in the process of recruitment, there is a complete anonymity of the applicant, such as name, race, and gender. This way, the employers cannot fall into their biases in the selection process, and a decision will only be based on the individual's qualifications.

This is crucial, as there are two types of gender bias, where the first type called first generation bias is based on discrimination against women's visibility and intentionality in the workplace and society. The second type, designated as second-generation gender bias, is usually unseen and underlies the values and beliefs that are male-oriented (Grover, 2015).

An important aspect of diverse recruitment is affirmative action, which implements procedures and policies that prevent discrimination within organizations; this way it

ensures that minority groups and women have a higher chance of employment (Standfort University, 2018). There is also equal employment opportunity (EEO), which is the complete prohibition of all types of discrimination in the workplace; however, affirmative action procedures are about levelling the opportunity, especially for minority groups (Reskin,1998).

For diversity recruitment to be successful, several conditions must be aligned. Therefore, the first action is to make sure that the selection procedures are transparent. As companies need to avoid a vague hiring practice, as it can create cultural bias, as recruiters can favour applicants who are more like themselves.

Therefore, the recruitment and selection should be open for everyone. This can make the organizations more self-aware of their hiring procedures, as anyone can hold them accountable. The issue of transparency is that it becomes a challenge to remain also private, as companies cannot share the candidate's information and how the final decisions are reached. Therefore, a base of transparency and confidentiality must be balanced (Van den Brink et al., 2010).

The second action is to have a diversity audit. This way a review of the organization policies and cultures can be analysed to ensure that they support diversity and inclusion. Also, it will give the companies strategies to improve their diversity recruitment (Mckay and Avery, 2005).

Besides training leaders, it is important to also train all the employees, and that is when the third action comes into place. As everyone has bias, and the daily interaction among colleagues is extremely relevant, as happiness at work is crucial and is correlated to having a diverse and inclusive environment. Recruiters also need to raise awareness of

all employees' unconscious bias that led to discrimination and stereotypes (Mckay and Avery, 2005).

Finally, when it comes to the job advertisements, they should display racial diversity and race and gender-neutral criteria competences and should resemble their organizational culture. Furthermore, changing their screening method and their hiring standards and will help to find more qualified minority candidates (Holzer and Neumak, 2004).

But when it comes to this is, is fundamental to not hiring someone because they belong to a minority and not because of their qualifications, as it can also lead to illegitimate discrimination (Holzer and Neumak, 2004).

1.5 Relevance of this study

With the globalization of the world, not only do people face the struggle of interacting and understanding each other, but also organizations. As it's a challenged to make individuals feel like they are part of their company, especially if they are in a different country that is it's not their own. Therefore, it is important that companies implement a corporate culture that goes beyond the culture of the country that it is allocated to. As corporate culture is crucial for employees to thrive in their work environment, and it shapes the values and behaviours that mold an organization (Schein, 2010).

Understanding that dynamic and how it can lead to a corporate culture that is more inclusive and diverse is extremely important, as it will create internal and external benefits (Shore et al, 2018).

The studies that combine corporate culture with diversity and inclusion within a multicultural environment are limited. Therefore, the following case study will use the model of Schein and the CVF model to analyse how an organization can help to create practices that will create a more inclusive, diverse, and collaborative team bond in a

multicultural environment and can eliminate the challenges of cultural misunderstandings, communication barriers, or stereotypes.

2 CHAPTER II – CASE STUDY

2.1 Hospitality Sector

Globalization is increasing every day, the hospitality sector is a significant driver of the global economy, as it employs more than 330 million people worldwide (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2024), meaning that an important reflection on cultural diversification within the hospitality industry needs to be analysed.

Hospitality is a people sector, and the people who want to work in it are usually described as individuals who have the pleasure of providing a memorable satisfactory experience to others (Pizam, 2020).

According to different authors, the hospitality culture can be defined in three dimensions, such as guest interaction, organizational leadership, and workplace climate (Pizam, 2020; Dawson et al. 2011; Bavik, 2016). For better comprehension, table 2 below is used for clarification.

Table 2 – Dimensions of Hospitality culture (made by author)

| | | |
|----------------------------------|--|--|
| Guest Interaction | Guest interactions are central to hospitality, giving positive emotions. Having compassion, kindness, tolerance are essential key traits for the employees | Pizam (2020) |
| Organizational Leadership | Leaders need to be employee-centred, as it will shape the employees attitudes and will consequently affect the guest satisfaction | Dawson et al (2011) and Bavik (2016) |
| Workplace Climate | A friendly, inclusive, family-like environment is necessary for employees | Dawson et al., (2011) and Bavik (2016) |

The first dimension is based on the interactions with the customers and how employees work to develop their relationship with them, which is the most studied and researched.

The dimension of organizational leadership and workplace climate focus on the employees, their satisfaction and work environment on a day to day among each other, which tends to be more neglected but is extremely important (Bavik, 2016).

The sector faces multicultural challenges and struggles to implement diversity and inclusive strategies, as managers are trying to recognize it, however, most of the sector doesn't fully implement it (Liu et al., 2025).

Nonetheless, according to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC, 2024), youth employment is a significant contributor in reducing the discrepancies between young people and other employees. But since 2019 it has had a setback, and it's still trying to climb back towards its peak.

Regarding women's employment in the sector, it is stated by the WTTC (2024) that it has been affected since 2019 and continues to remain below 2019 levels. However, it's necessary to continue to implement it to achieve gender equality in the workplace.

The problem of the implementation of D&I in the hospitality industry is that it is predominantly focused on ethnicity, age, and gender, and it ignores other dimensions that also should be included, such as disabled employees (Madera, 2023).

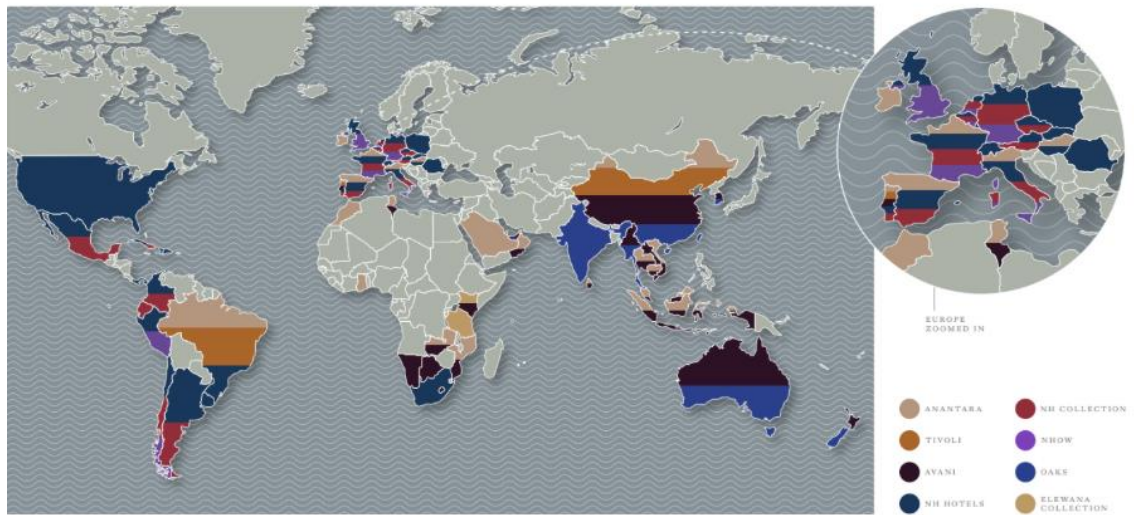
As the hospitality industry is a multicultural hub encompassing not only its customers but also its employees, it is crucial for managers to address and manage the challenges that arise from working in such diverse environments. To build a meaningful and profitable business, it is necessary to develop a diverse and inclusive culture that embraces all dimensions (Madera, 2024).

2.2 Minor Hotels

Minor Hotels is part of Minor International (MINT), which is one of the largest hospitality companies in the Asia Pacific. Besides the hospitality sector, it also focuses in sectors such as retail and lifestyle brands (Minor, 2024). Minor Hotels was created by William Heinecke in 1978, who called the hotel group Minor since he was only 17 years old when it was created.

The hotel group has more than 540 hotels, with over 79,000 rooms across 56 countries (Figure 5), and the purpose is to create innovative hospitality experiences that focus on people development, customer focus, innovation, and partnership (Minor, 2025).

Figure 5: Minor hotels by region



The corporate policies at Minor Hotels are extensive, and some depend on each country where the hotels are located. However, as Minor Hotels is such a large chain, the board diversity policy is implemented equally in all countries. With that said, the company recognised the importance for having a diverse composition of directors who incentive the integration of all backgrounds, gender, education, age, marital status, political opinion and religion (Minor, 2023). Besides this policy, within the Human Rights policy is mentioned the importance of diversity and inclusion for the employees. Where is stated that:

We are dedicated to providing equal opportunities to all employees. The processes of recruitment, hiring, development, compensation and promotion shall be done with transparency, integrity and fairness on qualifications, performance and experience. The company respects employees to explicitly express their opinions as well as share different thoughts. (Minor, 2022a)

People potential is something that Minor relies on. In this case, employment development is an asset for the company, in which is conducted an analysis on the future gaps in the market and afterwards, development programs are created for the employees, which as online and onsite trainings, leadership programs and partnership with universities.

Besides this, each employee has a development program tailored to them, which is called the Individual development Plan (IDP) and Behaviours for Success (BFS). This is conducted once a year and within this, the employee will also discuss their career goals (Minor, 2025).

Another key within the people potential, is labour practices, which are related with every hotel having an inclusive, and ethical workplace. And in correlation, it also promotes for the employees' health, safety by having several initiatives to raise concerns and recommendations for the well-being of the employees (Minor, 2025).

Lastly, Minor wants to create and build a relationship between the employees and the cultures where they work, therefore community empowerment is another key point. In here, the employees try to collect feedback from the locals governments agencies and residents to implement sustainable initiatives.

Such initiatives are “Education Initiatives”, where Minor contributes for the development of school infrastructures, learning resources and scholarships based on merit and financial needs. Having partnerships with universities it provides students with practical skills but at the same time gives Minor access to a potential pool of talent and qualified employees (Minor, 2025b)

Economic Empowerment is another initiative where Minor creates a more inclusive economic environment by helping marginalized groups, like women and disabled people.

In this way, it helps to create local advantages but also shows the brands social responsibility as a member of the community (Minor, 2025).

2.3 NH and Nhow Brand

NH Hotel Group, part of MINOR Hotels since 2018, is a leader in the urban segment in Europe and Latin America with a diversified portfolio in the upscale segment. The group is a multinational operator, since 2022 the group has had hotels within 30 countries and 3 continents (Europe, America and Africa). The portfolio and expansion of the group have continued to grow and within their portfolio the Nhow Brand was created (Minor, 2022b).

Nhow has challenged the traditional hospitality ideals and the concept of travelling. The NH Hotel Group is a catalyst for creating memorable guest experiences. It comes with creating concepts featuring elements inspired by each location where the hotel is created (Minor, 2022b).

The mission of the Nhow Brand is to design stimulating spaces with a different interpretation of each destination as a stage for mind-opening moments that elevate and transform the purpose of a hotel stay. And its vision is that one day travellers do not consider hotels as a need for accommodation but as an opportunity to elevate and expand the meaning of travelling (Nhow, personal communication, 2025).

Nhow hotels are located in Belgium, Chile, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Peru and the United Kingdom. Where in each location, the brand pillars are described in the following table below:

Table 3 – Brand pillars for Nhow

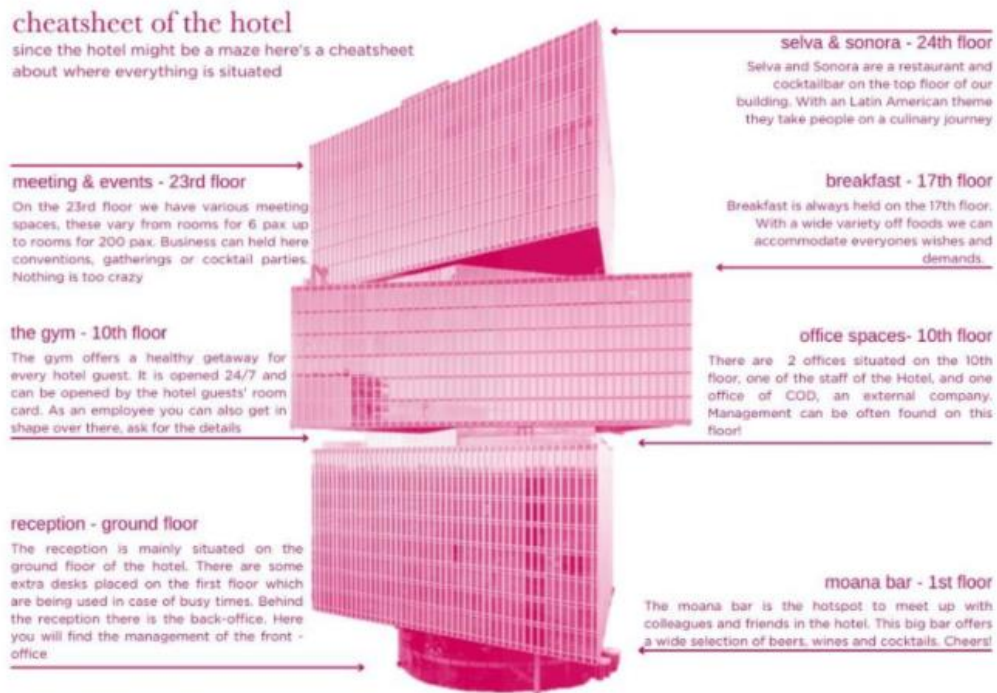
| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Iconic | Each nhow hotel is a landmark in the city located in key urban districts under transformation |
| Sense of arrival | Walking into an NHOW hotel means entering a different world. |
| Awakening | All physical senses (smell, sight, taste, touch, and hearing) are always being stimulated |
| Inclusive | Everyone is welcome and unique experienced are lived and shared |
| Colourful | Unique environments, which are bold and intense |
| Spotlight on M&E | Out of the boxes spaces for all types of innovative meeting and events |

2.4 Nhow Amsterdam Rai

Nhow Amsterdam Rai is located next to Amsterdam Zuid, which is considered the business area of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. The idea behind was to become a social unifier and catalyst of the surrounding areas, providing a new urban presence (Being Development, 2025).

Next to the hotel, there is the convention centre called “RAI”. The building was strategically made to be next to the convention centre, this way both companies would create a partnership. The hotel is created in a diverse and different shape to bring the attention, with 650 rooms and 24 floors. In the below figure it's possible to have an idea of the design of the hotel.

Figure 6 – nhow structure design



Nhow is a multicultural hub, with 207 employees and a total of 39 nationalities from all over the world (Table 4).

Table 4 – Nhow employee's nationalities

| Nationality | Number of people per nationality |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Dutch (Netherlands) | 56 |
| Spanish (Spain) | 27 |
| Italian (Italy) | 26 |
| Ukrainian (Ukraine) | 8 |
| French (France) | 8 |
| Hungarian (Hungary) | 7 |
| Brazilian (Brazil) | 6 |
| Filipino (Philippines) | 6 |
| Greek (Greece) | 5 |
| Polish (Poland) | 5 |
| German (Germany) | 4 |
| Ghanaian (Ghana) | 4 |
| Portuguese (Portugal) | 4 |
| Slovak (Slovakia) | 3 |
| Latvian (Latvia) | 3 |
| Bulgarian (Bulgaria) | 3 |

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| Lithuanian (Lithuania) | 3 |
| Austrian (Austria) | 2 |
| Romanian (Romania) | 2 |
| Irish (Ireland) | 2 |
| Chilean (Chile) | 2 |
| Uruguayan (Uruguay) | 2 |
| Argentinian (Argentina) | 2 |
| Czech (Czech Republic) | 2 |
| Peruvian (Peru) | 1 |
| Panamanian (Panama) | 1 |
| Colombian (Colombia) | 1 |
| Venezuelan (Venezuela) | 1 |
| Nigerian (Nigeria) | 1 |
| Syrian (Syria) | 1 |
| Ugandan (Uganda) | 1 |
| Eritrean (Eritrea) | 1 |
| Togolese (Togo) | 1 |
| Sierra Leonean (Sierra Leone) | 1 |
| Finnish (Finland) | 1 |
| Lebanese (Lebanon) | 1 |
| Slovenian (Slovenia) | 1 |
| 39 nationalities | 207 employees |

In table 4, it can be stated that the predominate nationality is Dutch, followed by Spanish and Italian.

2.4.1 Practices for Diversity and Inclusion at Nhow

The practices and the initiatives at Nhow to create a diverse and inclusive atmosphere are diverse. For the beginning, the integration starts with the orientation and mandatory training, where a group of new employees who started recently is gathered by the human resources manager. It's a 2-day orientation, with diverse points during the days, from a presentation of the hotel to games among each other to create an openness and safe environment to the realization of the trainings, which are mandatory by minor hotels. The trainings are a mixture of information about the hotel culture and environment followed by questions with scores. Annually, there is an event for team bonding, where games are played among the employees, this is called the “summer barbecues”.

Another annual practice is having the Christmas/new year party which takes place in another hotel from the main company. Besides this, an employee meeting occurs for all employees to join, this is when the general manager discusses all the nhow achievements through the year and any measures for improvement.

The company wants employees to bond, not only on the special occasions annually but also on a more date to date, therefore through the year, Nhow also creates the space for the employees to join their volunteer initiatives around the Amsterdam area.

Additionally, a workout program takes place every Monday at 17PM that could range between Pilates, yoga, core focus.

2.4.2 Benefits at nhow

By being an employee of nhow and minor hotels, each employee has a range of benefits.

The ones focused on D&I are the following:

- Training & Development – different international courses that employees can join, both online and face to face;
- GoodHabitiz – online courses related to self-management, leadership and communication skills;
- GoFluent – language learning platform, which offers 12 different languages;
- Active at Minor – diverse activities to support the balance between work and relaxation, such as Minor Games or corporate volunteering;
- Relocation package - for 3 months an employee can swap with another one to another hotel that belongs to minor. The only requirement is that one employee is willing to change with you within the same department and they speak the same language as the home country of each hotel;

- Team Member and Family rates – special rates in every hotel that is part of minor.

By analysing the practices, initiatives and benefits of Nhow is possible to observe a mixture of both the CVF and Schein model.

The clan culture can relate to the Nhow corporate culture, as it is focused on team bonding, employee empowerment/development, and creating a family-based structure environment. Therefore, the practices analysed at nhow show a corporate culture that promotes integration between employees from different cultures, having diversity and inclusion measured as part of the corporate culture identity.

By implementing training programs, international relocation, and company events that help employees to create balance between work and life, the artifact level of the Schein model is seen. Having those benefits and initiatives helps individuals to feel integrated and leads to a feeling of being an asset within the work environment.

3 CHAPTER III – METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

3.1 Research Objective

Corporate culture is embedded within every organization and serves as a key factor in distinguishing one entity from another. However, how effective is Nhow's corporate culture in integrating employees from diverse cultural backgrounds? And how do the company's initiatives influence employees' experiences in a cross-cultural environment?

These questions shaped the main objective of this study: to identify the key initiatives within the company's corporate culture that promote inclusion and diversity in a multicultural work environment.

This research aims to conduct a case study within the hospitality sector at Nhow Amsterdam RAI, where a multicultural workforce is observed among the employees.

With this, it is possible to analyse in depth how corporate culture influences the integration of employees and gives a more detailed understanding of the experiences, perceptions and interactions of employees in multicultural environments and how it can help identify the practices that promote inclusion within a company.

From the main objective, more in-depth objectives were defined:

- Identify and understand the corporate culture of Nhow
- Understand if the corporate culture is suitable for the cross-cultural environment of the company
- Comprehend which initiatives of diversity and inclusion are implemented
- Analyse how the initiatives implemented by Nhow affects the employees
- Understand if the employees of Nhow feel integrated in the company

3.2 Research Design

As this research aims to understand which corporate culture Nhow has and how the company initiatives influence the diversity and inclusion of the employees, it was decided to use exploratory and qualitative research based on a unique case study (Nhow Amsterdam RAI).

Secondary data research was conducted by analysing the company's annual report, which provides an organizational structure, workforce turnover, and strategic initiatives within Nhow. Using this annual report, it helped to identify turnover rates and understand the company size, departments and policies implemented, number of employees, and their multicultural backgrounds.

Besides this analysis, primary data was collected using semi-structured interviews. The interview was conducted with the human resources Manager of nhow, who is the first contact with employees and the main person who helps to implement strategies of diversity and inclusion.

To understand how actual employees feel within the company, another interview was conducted with different employees. They have a different background, work in a different department, and their duration of employment varies.

This way, it is possible to identify patterns and differences in the employees' experiences, which will provide a more comprehensive understanding of how individual characteristics influence the perception, attitudes, and behaviours.

Having an interview to a manager and comparing it with the employees' vision will give a better understanding and precision of how the organizational perspective is and how a lived experience can be for the employees. This will highlight gaps between the policy and the practice of Nhow.

Therefore, the interview with the HR Manager is focused on his perception of the corporate culture implemented and how it's correlated to the diversity and inclusion of employees, which practices and strategies are used for a better integration and openness, and which will directly give a compass to which corporate culture is actually implemented, and not only the perception of the manager.

The interview of employees is also focused on their integration and the impact the corporate culture has on their work life. This was conducted since it was observed that only interviewing the Human resources manager wouldn't be sufficient for a viable and concrete study.

3.3 Data Analysis

The main goal of this research is to understand the corporate culture at nhow and how its helping with the diversity and inclusion of its employees in such a multicultural setting. Therefore, the interviews with the employees and the human resources manager were trying to understand the different perceptions and if there was a common idea.

For this, the analysis chosen was the thematic analysis by Braun & Clark (2021). It consists of identifying, organizing and offering insight into themes across the dataset by focusing on these to reach a conclusion (Braun & Clark, 2021).

This analysis combined well with the research, as it allows for a detailed exploration of the participants perceptions while being flexible with the theoretical framework, which consists of Schein's mode, CVF framework and D&I principles. Which allows for new insights to emerge by listening to and analysing the participants' perspectives. This means that the researcher is the one who is interpreting all the data, and the subjectivity of the researcher is considered as valuable to understand and interpret it (Braun & Clark, 2021).

For the data analysis, the six steps determined by Braun & Clarke (2006) were followed and related to the research. In the table below, the process is highlighted.

Table 5– adapted from Campbell et al (2021)

| Steps | Process related to the research |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Familiarising with the data | Interviews transcribed and analysed |
| Generating initial codes | Find initial codes by trying to understand each interview perception and connect to Schein Model and CVD framework |
| Searching for themes | Focused on finding similar themes/ ideas |
| Reviewing potential themes | Understand if the themes are correlated with the data |
| Defining and naming themes | Connect the themes to the Schein Model and CVF framework |
| Producing the report | Interpret final themes and results through theoretical frameworks and research question |

For the interviews processes, it was requested for the interviews to be recorded, and it was informed in the beginning of the interview that their identification would be confidential and anonymous.

From the start, participants were informed about the research topic, the goal and why their life experience at nhow would be relevant. Each interview has a duration of around 30 minutes and was done in person.

As the interviews were recorded, the transcript was done by listening to it the days that followed, this way allowed for the researcher to focus at the moment of the interview and give space for a more conversational interaction and leaving openness and comfort to the interviewee.

Afterwards it was also possible for them to review the interview and understand if there was something they wanted to eliminate or explain in a different way. Allowing it to be more accurate and confirm the interpretations given.

Following these steps, it was possible for the research to triangulate the analysis with secondary data, which included internal company reports to have a better understanding of the corporate culture and work environment.

Since the research focuses on 3 topics, such as culture, diversity & integration, the interview has 4 dimensions: the 3 main topics and lastly, the evaluation.

3.4 Results Analysis

3.4.1 Corporate Culture

According to Cameron & Quinn (2006) the clan culture is related to a company which values teamwork and where employees feel connected, no matter the place they have in the hierarchical structure. This can be mentioned by P3 which states:

" I don't think there's hierarchy, but I feel like the hierarchy it's there and you respect the managers, but they don't treat you like they're superior to you. So, I would say it's more like a closer environment and within teams, I mean I don't know other teams, but I worked in events, and I worked in banqueting. And both, it's super friendly and like you respect your manager, but you don't feel the sense of being superior to you. " (see Annex 3).

Also, it was clear that within the culture managers don't refer themselves as managers, which highlights the informal culture and not the hierarchical structure that exists, as P2 stated *"They don't call themselves "managers", they refer to everyone as colleagues. It's structured but not super formal. "* (see Annex 2).

What now thrives for its creativity, work balance, feedback according to P1: *" What we stand for and what the general manager is initiating is a culture of feedback, empathy, balance between work and life, taking ownership and responsibility, entrepreneurship, and all those elements" (see Annex 1).*

This can go in hand with the clan culture from the CVF Model, which organizations tend to be seen as a family-based environment, as P2 highlighted:

"I personally, wouldn't call it a family, because that can sound toxic in my opinion, but I do think that's the kind of culture nhow wants to be. They want to be approachable, friendly, and collaborative. It feels like a mixture of both structure and being close. But I think that feeling like a family, really depends on the department and the manager"
(see Annex 2).

According to Schein (2010) leaders, in this case, the managers need to have a cultural awareness to manage their organizations. For nhow, the corporate culture is correlated with each manager of each department, as P1 collaborated with the same opinion: *"Leadership plays an essential role. At nhow Amsterdam, managers are what we call "culture carriers. They are the ones who translate the company's values into everyday behaviour. We communicate the culture to them, but they are the ones who make it real in their teams"* (Annex1).

As P3 highlights that having worked in different departments, there is a difference between the work balance which can represent the corporate culture of nhow

"For the work balance, now that i don't work in operations, there is more of a balance as my manager is always telling me if I do extra hours, then I can leave earlier another time. But i think it depends on which department you work and your manager for sure"
(see annex 3).

The principles of openness and trust are part of the nhow culture and helps when a problem can arise. This can be observed when P2 affirms that *"There is room for mistakes within my department, and the team is supportive"* (annex 2). Collaborating this, P3 mentioned *"she's very nice and she also cares about me. I feel like she seems genuinely interested in my life. And anytime I have a problem, she does listen to me, and she tries*

to find the time to help me. Sometimes she's so busy that it's the next day, she always makes time even though she's busy".

The leaders are the ones who make the changes, that help to adopt new ways of communication and decide how corporate culture is implemented, as P1 states

"Leaders need to be present and connected with their teams, giving feedback, having conversations, and creating space for dialogue. We focus a lot on one-on-one meetings, which are really the foundation of everything. Those conversations help build understanding, trust, and a sense of belonging"

It is possible to observe, by the discourse of P2, that the feedback given within the team is usually very informal and it's given in a way that only highlights the positive outcomes of the employees.

"Also, my manager gives feedback mostly during team meetings. But sometimes I have to ask for individual feedback because I like constructive criticism and want to improve. She's very nice and usually always tells me I did well but I wish for more feedback about what could be better. I don't like to just know what I did good, for me there is always space for improvement" (see Annex 2).

P3 has the same feeling when it comes to feedback within nhow:

" I have not received much feedback, I have to say. When I was in banqueting my feedback was positive, and I feel like maybe I could have received more like negative. Even if it's just like a tiny thing, because like no one is perfect, like I'm not perfect, I think it's impossible that I did everything perfect" (see Annex 3).

Therefore, P1 confirmed that this is something nhow is aiming to improve:

"Sometimes you feel overwhelmed with the day-to-day job, and you forget or simply don't take the time to focus on things like feedback or culture initiatives. So, if we value

a culture of feedback but we're very busy with operations, it might mean we don't take enough time with our team members to give them proper feedback or have a conversation. There's what we strive for, and there's what gets translated into daily work and that's probably our biggest challenge right now".

3.4.2 Diversity & Inclusion

According to Shore et al (2011), organizations can create an environment that is diverse but where individuals don't fully feel included. However, by reading the statement of P2 one can see that is not the case at nhow:

"I feel like everyone that is hired at nhow used to working in an international environment, so when we interact with each other is always in English. There's a lot of respect and openness. Even Dutch colleagues speak English and sometimes only later they realised that they are both Dutch. I've never noticed any cultural issues" (see annex 2).

This is what Minor (2003) tries to implement by recognising the importance for having a diverse composition of directors who incentive the integration of all backgrounds, gender, education, age, marital status, political opinion and religion.

Even if there is a barrier at nhow that needs to be broken in terms of integrating departments, everyone interacts and is friendly with one another. Which highlights how someone is included in a company (HRMID, 2018). P3 mentions:

"I think that the interaction is very good, everyone is super friendly, but every department has their own thing going on. You have the housekeeping department, restaurant, front office, then you have the office, and everyone is in a small group hanging out. You see them speaking their own language but at the same time everyone speaks English, so I would say that the interaction is nice" (see Annex 3).

P1 also highlights that having such an informal environment helps with the inclusion at nhow but the challenge of not having such a segregated environment within departments is still prevalent:

" I think the informal environment helps a lot with integration. Because we are open, creative, and flexible, people from different backgrounds can connect easily. It's not a stiff hierarchy, everyone can approach each other. The challenge is that, since each department translates the culture in its own way, it can be experienced differently. Some managers live it more than others. But in general, our culture supports diversity and integration very well " (see Annex 2).

Promoting diversity and inclusion creates a way for employee to feel integrated in the team and leads to positive outcomes (Ratz-Costa et al.,2012). Nhow tries to implement diverse activities which lead to bonding moments and tries to spread the idea of inclusion among everyone, as stated by P1:

" Internal rituals and events are very important because they create connection and a sense of belonging. Whenever something different happens, a team meeting, a celebration, a shared project, people get more involved and feel part of something bigger. At nhow, we try to bring innovation and fun into those moments" (see Annex 1).

P2 also agrees with the internal rituals and events done at nhow to connect everyone as it mentioned: *"I think that the Monday workout is great for connection because everyone struggles together, and it's fun. The NH Games are also good for meeting other departments, but they only happen once a year, so I think we should do more regular activities"* (see annex 2). This is in sync with the internal report which mentions the importance for the nhow employees to bond through the year, with several activities.

The level of inclusion is used as an encouragement for individuals to participate and involve themselves within the company (Nair and Vohra, 2015). Nhow implements cross-department training and gives a high importance to the onboarding days, as the internal document about integration mentions that from the beginning. The integration starts with the orientation and mandatory training, where a group of new employees who recently is gathered for a period of 2-days orientation, with diverse points during the days, from a presentation of the hotel to games among each other to create an openness and safe environment to the realization of the trainings, which are mandatory by minor hotels. As P1 highlights: *"When someone new joins, we really try to make them feel part of the team immediately. Also, we implement cross-training between departments, which helps to forge a better understanding of each department and the people within"* (see Annex 1).

P2 supports this by mentioning:

"The orientation/onboarding days really helped. Mine was super small but it really made it better to connect with people from other departments. I also did cross-training in the banqueting department, which was nice. Another think is that on my first day my manager showed me all the departments and introduced me to everyone" (see Annex 2).

The lack of having the onboarding days can be seen as a downside, as P3 stated:

"For me the problem was that when I started, I didn't really have an onboarding. I had it after two or three months after I started. Which was super late for me. So, when I had that, I already knew how like, a lot of the stuff here worked, but I think if I had the onboarding when I started it would have been much better for me" (see Annex 3).

To eliminate the different communication styles that can create barriers, P1 mentioned that no formal measures are done, but there is an awareness to make sure the communication is clear, as it stated *"Not formal programs yet, but we're working on it"*

through communication and awareness. We have regular one-on-one meetings where we discuss communication, feedback, and inclusion. It's like repeating the same message until it becomes part of our culture" (see Annex 1).

When it comes to eliminate the challenges and barriers of inclusion, P1 mentioned that:

"I think there is too little innovation and focus on improvement. We should bring in more energy, new ideas, and a stronger focus on people. At nhow Amsterdam, we are quite proactive, we try new things, like testing virtual reality training or introducing 3D printers, and these kinds of projects really engage people. When employees see that we're trying new things, they get excited and feel proud to be part of it. It creates a stronger sense of belonging and motivation. I think we need more of that company-wide, more action, more curiosity, and more innovation focused on people and culture"(see annex 1).

P2 collaborated by stating: *"To create more inclusion, I think that having more team bonding and more cross trainings would be helpful" (see annex 2).*

For P3, to feel included and to have an alignment with the culture of nhow, everyone should be celebrated for the individualist ways and not try to blend everyone together:

" I don't like the uniform, and I know they try to make it more alternative with the patterns. But it's not comfortable as I don't identify with it. Nhow is supposed to be more lifestyle, so technically, it does not make sense that you would wear, like, a blazer or something like that. Besides, managers don't wear it, so I don't understand what the point of that is. So, I would say that if they removed the uniforms, it would make people feel more included because they would feel more comfortable in their own skin" (see annex 3).

3.4.3 Interpretation of Results

This section interprets the findings of the participants interviews and helps to integrate and relate the findings with the theoretical framework and objectives of the research.

The findings seem to show that the corporate culture at nhow is a clan culture from the CVF from Cameron & Quinn (2003), which values belonging, trust, and participation. This has been mentioned by the participants, that stated they often feel comfortable around everyone, and they feel listen and supported by people around them. Nonetheless, even though managers are friendly and treat everyone on the same level, the layers of hierarchy within the company and departments are clear, as P2 mentioned " *I think it's quite structured because there are many layers of hierarchy. For example, there is F&B director, assistant director, assistant, organizers. The structure is very clear, but at the same time, I feel like managers are very approachable*" (see annex 2).

Additionally, there is the also the uniforms, which are only implemented to the employees and not the managers, which also highlight a clear structure and distention. This relates to the hierarchy culture of the model CVF, as the hierarchical culture often emphasizes standardization and predictability (Brown, et al., 2021).

Furthermore, we can observe a a clear contradiction at the nhow culture, as it tries to give a sense of informality, creativity and inclusiveness, however wearing uniforms it's the total opposite of that. This means that by using the Schein model, it there is a discrepancy, as the uniforms are the artifacts, and the creativity and freedom nhow tried to spread are the espoused values; however, the two in this case are opposites, as uniforms are viewed as a way of control and standardization.

Nhow promotes inclusion and diversity mainly with the social interaction and cross department trainings. It tries to implement weekly rituals, such as the Monday workout,

birthday celebrations and annually social events. Besides this, having English as a main language within the work environment really sustains the feeling of belonging and not feeling excluded. This environment helps employees to connect easily as its stated by P2: *"It's really good. I feel like everyone that is hired at nhow used to working in an international environment, so when we interact with each other is always in English. There's a lot of respect and openness"* (see annex 2).

However, some challenges that need to be overcome exist, as employees can feel disconnected from other departments, uniforms are seen as an imposition and work-life balance for the operational teams are difficult, as stated by P2: *"Also, another thing for improvement is that I think that they should hire more people, so everyone has a better work balance, because within the office is okay but the operational teams struggle as they do extra hours"* (see annex 2) and P3: *"For the work balance, now that i don't work in operations there is more of a balance as my manager is always telling me if I do extra hours, then I can leave earlier another time"* (see annex 3).

It can be stated that, in an overall sense, employees feel welcomed, seen and appreciated within their company, and the corporate culture implemented is a good fit, which is extremely important in such a multicultural environment that has 39 nationalities.

Nonetheless, departments don't usually mix if they don't work together daily, which lead to the sense of belonging being slightly confusing, as you feel like you belong in your department but not with the rest. P2 confirms this when stating: *"I think that the main issue is that departments are divided, I don't feel connected with the operational departments"* (see annex 2).

Nhow is actively working to implement its corporate culture in alignment with the principles of diversity and inclusion among its employees. However, there remains a tendency to emphasize

individuality, innovation, and creativity over full cultural blending. This suggests that while there is room for improvement, it does not necessarily imply that the corporate culture being implemented is unsuitable for such a multicultural work environment. On the contrary, the emphasis on uniqueness may contribute positively to the richness and dynamism of the organizational culture.

4 CONCLUSION

The corporate culture continues to be a prevalent topic in the workplace and how it can implement a culture and combine it with diversity and inclusivity. This case study focused on the corporate culture at nhow and how the employees feel included in such a diverse and multicultural environment. With that, the following research questions are aimed to be answered: *How effective is nhow Amsterdam RAI's corporate culture in integrating employees from diverse cultural backgrounds? Furthermore, how do the company's initiatives influence employees' experiences within a cross-cultural work environment?*

Through the literature review on corporate culture, using both Schein's model and the Competing Values Framework (CVF), it was possible to identify the type of organizational culture implemented at nhow Amsterdam RAI. Additionally, the review of literature on diversity and inclusion, particularly the discussion on its potential implementation as a mere political or symbolic obligation, provided the necessary tools to assess whether employees genuinely feel integrated, or whether diversity and inclusion are simply communicated by the human resources department without being effectively put into practice. In what concerns the company, with the help of the interviews to the human resources manager and employees, it was possible to reach several conclusions.

The first one is that nhow has a clan corporate culture designated by the CVF model, however it can have some traces of the hierarchical culture designated also with the CVF model. It was revealed that employees feel integrated and have a sense of inclusion, where there is a space for openness, mutual understanding. However, it was possible to determinate that there is also a sense of division among departments. Meaning that, within the department, employees feel what culture nhow is trying to implement, however when it comes outside of that bubble, there is a sense of division, which is considered an underlying barrier that stops inclusion to be fully experienced. Here the first question can be answered, as indeed nhow is effective in the implementation of their corporate culture,

however, needs improvement. By using the Schein model, it is possible to state that the corporate culture on the surface is implemented, but the deep level still faces challenges.

The second conclusion is that nhow initiatives show the commitment that the company has in creating a genuine diverse and inclusive environment. The initiatives of cross training within departments, the Monday workouts, the annual gatherings create a positive atmosphere for the employees and a sense of belonging. In their best way, they try to incentive the culture integration among employees. However, is possible to see that more impactful measures should be implemented, as the actual experience of the employees on a date to date seems dependent on each manager and can led to a discrepancy among different departments.

P1 noted this fact, and it mentioned that nhow is taking this into consideration to educate their managers: " we are using our partnership with the university as a strategic partner to help us develop leaders. We want them not only to learn by doing but also to have some theoretical framework behind their experience".

In conclusion, the corporate culture at nhow Amsterdam RAI is generally effective in supporting a multicultural environment. However, it presents certain limitations that need to be addressed in order to enhance employee integration, performance, and collaboration. If these limitations are not tackled, they may lead to a superficial sense of belonging and diversity, potentially resulting in the formation of subcultures within the organization.

Ultimately, the company's vision and intention appear to be oriented toward establishing a clan culture, one that is flexible, family-oriented, and celebrates each individual employee. Nevertheless, it is essential that nhow implements this vision consistently across all organizational dimensions. Otherwise, the culture may never reach a profound level of diversity and inclusion, and its full potential may remain unrealized.

4.1 Limitations of the study

In this study some limitations have occurred. The first limitation is the sample size of the study. Having the only perception from a human resources manager point a view, followed by a small sample of employees interview. This allows of an in-depth perspective but doesn't allow the study to fully comprehended if the organization completely applies their integration and diversity policies. Nonetheless, the findings are sustainable as the small number of participants, led to an in-depth analysis of the themes, which showed a discrepancy within the corporate culture.

Additionally, the interviews focused on the HR perception related to the implementation of D&I policies and employees lived experiences in the organization, but the answers can be very generalized or even have a certain bias.

Lastly, the research available explores several concepts of corporate culture and D&I separately. However, not many explore those frameworks and combine them with the Schein model and the Competing Values Framework.

4.2 Future Recommendations

For future studies, it is recommended to acquire a bigger sample of participants, creating an even better understanding of each perception for analysis. Having an interview with each department's manager, and not only the Human resources. As the corporate culture is also related to each manager and how they decide to communicate it. Having more employees participating and sharing their lived experiences at the organization would give a better grasp for the research.

Additionally, having into account the age, ethnicity, and gender for a stronger compression of the diversity within the organization and how it shapes the corporate culture.

Further, it is recommended to have extended research, as it would help to understand the changes within the policies and how the corporate culture evolves according to the employees who are in the company.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1 - Interview to the Human Resources Manager from Nhow Amsterdam RAI

Date: 09 October 2025

Location: Nhow Amsterdam Rai

Participant: Human Resources Manager who works for 3 years

Researcher: Patricia Neves

Duration: 30 minutes

Researcher (R): Could you describe how nhow Amsterdam RAI's corporate culture is experienced daily by staff? Is it more family-based or structured?

Participant1 (P1): We are definitely an informal working environment. We really value input, creativity, and collaboration. One thing is what we are striving for, and another thing is the reality in the workflow. What we stand for and what the general manager (GM) is initiating is a culture of feedback, empathy, balance between work and life, taking ownership and responsibility, entrepreneurship, and all those elements.

We try to filter these values through the managers and hope that they, in turn, filter them down to the teams. That's not always the case, because not every manager associates with those values or is able to transfer them effectively at work. Sometimes you feel overwhelmed with the day-to-day job, and you forget or simply don't take the time to focus on things like feedback or culture initiatives. So, if we value a culture of feedback but we're very busy with operations, it might mean we don't take enough time with our team members to give them proper feedback or have a conversation. There's what we strive for, and there's what gets translated into daily work and that's probably our biggest challenge right now.

R: How do you see this culture supporting or challenging integration among employees from different cultural backgrounds?

P1: I think the informal environment helps a lot with integration. Because we are open, creative, and flexible, people from different backgrounds can connect easily. It's not a stiff hierarchy. Everyone can approach each other. The challenge is that, since each department translates the culture in its own way, it can be experienced differently. Some managers live it more than others. But in general, our culture supports diversity and integration very well.

R. Having nhow based in Amsterdam, how do you feel that Minor adapts its corporate culture?

P1: To be honest, I'm not entirely sure what the corporate culture of Minor is. From my experience, the culture in each property is very much determined by the General Manager (GM). If you change the GM, you change the culture. The GM decides what the language of communication will be English, Dutch, or German and how people feel included or

excluded. It's not that the GM has a direct impact on everything, but they're the key person influencing the leaders, and the leaders then influence their teams. So, change the leader and you change the culture. Of course, there are elements like the brand's values, the informality, or even uniforms, but GMs amplify those and turn them into behaviours.

When it comes to Minor, I don't think there's a clearly communicated culture yet. Maybe it exists, but it hasn't reached us. Minor has grown by acquiring brands rather than developing them from within, so each brand has its own identity and personality. I think Minor is still in the process of defining what connects all of us.

R. What initiatives or programs does nhow have to promote diversity and inclusion among employees?

P1: We're very international here, and diversity comes quite naturally. Inclusion is promoted through open communication, equal opportunities, and really putting people also interns into action. We don't just put them aside. We involve them fully. When we promote someone internally, we work with them from the beginning, so they grow with us and understand how we work. That helps a lot in building inclusion.

R. How are these initiatives communicated to staff, and how do you, as HR, encourage participation?

P1: We have a calendar for everything events, training, initiatives so everyone knows what's happening. We also talk directly with managers and encourage them to share and involve their teams. Participation can be challenging sometimes because operations can be busy, but we try to keep communication open and remind everyone of the importance of being part of these activities.

R. Are there any training programs or communication strategies that focus on intercultural understanding or inclusive behaviours?

P1: Not formal programs yet, but we're working on it through communication and awareness. We have regular one-on-one meetings where we discuss communication, feedback, and inclusion. It's like repeating the same message until it becomes part of our culture.

R. What role do internal rituals or events play in cultural integration?

P1: Internal rituals and events are very important because they create connection and a sense of belonging. Whenever something different happens, a team meeting, a celebration, a shared project, people get more involved and feel part of something bigger. At nhow, we try to bring innovation and fun into those moments. For example, when we introduce something new like 3D printers or virtual reality training, it involves everyone and gets people excited. The same goes for activities from our internal calendar such events, workshops, or team gatherings, which help strengthen bonds and promote interaction between cultures.

These rituals make employees feel proud and engaged. They think, "This is a cool place, we do interesting things, and I'm part of it." That shared experience helps to build cultural integration and team spirit across our very diverse workforce.

R. What challenges have you seen employees face in such a multicultural workplace?

P1: Sometimes it's the communication style. Different cultures express feedback differently, or they have different expectations. Also, because we are very busy operationally, sometimes there's not enough time for feedback or deep conversations. But generally, people adapt fast, and the atmosphere helps with that.

R: How does HR understand and assess how employees feel in terms of belonging or inclusion?

P1: We use our *Pulse* survey to see how employees feel how engaged they are, how they rate communication, teamwork, and leadership. Then we talk about the results with managers and departments. We also have a lot of one-on-one talks with managers, where we go through how things are going with their teams. So, we get both formal feedback from the survey and informal feedback from conversations.

R. Have you seen any noticeable changes in employee engagement, turnover, or satisfaction linked to these initiatives?

P1: We are still working on it. The *Pulse* survey results help us see where we are improving and where we need to do more. We haven't yet analysed turnover data in detail, but it's something we want to look at because it shows if our initiatives are really working.

R. How does leadership contribute to maintaining an inclusive culture?

P1: Leadership plays an essential role. At nhow Amsterdam, managers are what we call "culture carriers." They are the ones who translate the company's values into everyday behaviour. We communicate the culture to them, but they are the ones who make it real in their teams. If a manager doesn't truly believe in those values or doesn't live them out, then the culture simply doesn't happen. That's why leadership is key in maintaining inclusion and open communication.

Leaders need to be present and connected with their teams, giving feedback, having conversations, and creating space for dialogue. We focus a lot on one-on-one meetings, which are really the foundation of everything. Those conversations help build understanding, trust, and a sense of belonging.

Inclusive leadership here is less about rules and more about behaviour, empathy, and setting the right example. When a manager listens, values differences, and keeps an open attitude, it sets the tone for the whole team.

R. Looking ahead, what are HR's goals or priorities to further strengthen inclusion and cross-cultural collaboration?

P1: Several things. First, we are continuing the work with the *Pulse* results, having conversations in every department about what goes well and what could go better. That's a long-term project. Second, we are using our partnership with the university as a strategic partner to help us develop leaders. We want them not only to learn by doing but also to have some theoretical framework behind their experience. And third, we focus a lot on one-on-one meetings. They are the pillar of everything. Through them, we can build communication, feedback, and trust. It's like brainwashing in a good way until it becomes natural and part of daily work.

R. In your opinion, what makes nhow Amsterdam unique in terms of its multicultural environment?

P1: What makes nhow Amsterdam unique is the diversity itself and the informality. People from so many different backgrounds work together, and everyone feels they can contribute and be creative. The atmosphere is open and flexible. It's a place where people can really be themselves.

R: In your view, if there was one thing you could change in how things are currently structured in terms of inclusion and culture, what would it be?

P1: If I zoom out, I think on a comfort level we are too static. One thing I would change is the structure of HR. Some time ago, a decision was made to remove HR from the hotels and centralize it, which works financially because contracts and administrative work can be handled in one place for all properties.

But by doing that, we also removed the sparring partner for managers. When a manager struggles with something or needs advice, there's often no one nearby to discuss it with. If the manager doesn't have time or isn't open to feedback, they are left alone. I believe HR should be closer to the business, helping leaders grow, giving them feedback, and supporting them in managing people.

The second thing I would change is that I think there is too little innovation and focus on improvement. We should bring in more energy, new ideas, and a stronger focus on people. At nhow Amsterdam, we are quite proactive, we try new things, like testing virtual reality training or introducing 3D printers, and these kinds of projects really engage people.

When employees see that we are trying new things, they get excited and feel proud to be part of it. It creates a stronger sense of belonging and motivation. I think we need more of that company-wide, more action, more curiosity, and more innovation focused on people and culture.

Annex 2 - Interview to an Employee from Nhow Amsterdam RAI

Date: 19 October 2025

Location: Nhow Amsterdam Rai

Participant: Employee who works for 1 years

Researcher: Patricia Neves

Duration: 35 minutes

Researcher (R): How would you describe what it's like to work at nhow Amsterdam RAI? Would you say the environment feels more like a family or more structured and formal?

Participant 2 (P2): I think it's quite structured because there are many layers of hierarchy. For example, there is F&B director, assistant director, assistant, organizers. The structure is very clear, but at the same time, I feel like managers are very approachable. They don't call themselves "managers", they refer to everyone as colleagues. It's structured but not super formal. I personally, wouldn't call it a family, because that can sound toxic in my opinion, but I do think that's the kind of culture nhow wants to be. They want to be approachable, friendly, and collaborative. It feels like a mixture of both structure and being close. But I think that feeling like a family, really depends on the department and the manager.

R: The company values creativity, feedback, empathy, and balance. How do you see or feel those values in your everyday work?

P2: The Monday workouts show they value health and well-being. The general manager reminds us to have a break and move around if we need, and we have standing desks, even if we don't always use them, I think the idea is there. And in general, they always want us to leave work on time and send you home if you're sick, which for me shows that they care about me.

For feedback, my manager gives it mostly during team meetings. But sometimes I have to ask for individual feedback because I like constructive criticism and want to improve. She's very nice and usually always tells me I did well but I wish for more feedback about what could be better. I don't like to just know what I did good, for me there is always space for improvement.

And for example, there is room for mistakes within my department, and the team is supportive. But outside my department, other departments have higher expectations, and people are more critical. I see for my experience that any error can become like a big mistake for other departments.

R: nhow Amsterdam brings together people from many different cultures. How would you describe the interaction between colleagues from different backgrounds?

P2: It's really good. I feel like everyone that is hired at nhow used to working in an international environment, so when we interact with each other is always in English. There's a lot of respect and openness, even Dutch colleagues speak English and sometimes only later they realised that they are both Dutch. I've never noticed any cultural issues.

R: How do internal rituals or events (for example, team meetings, celebrations, or group activities) help you connect with colleagues?

P2: Mostly within the office, yes. I don't think we at the office interact with reception or F&B unless it's for work. I think that the Monday workout is great for connection because everyone struggles together, and it's fun. The NH Games are also good for meeting other departments, but they only happen once a year, so I think we should do more regular activities.

R: When you first joined nhow, what helped you feel welcome and part of the team?

P2: The orientation training really helped. Mine was super small but it really made it better to connect with people from other departments. I also did cross-training in the banqueting department, which was nice. Another thing is that on my first day my manager showed me all the departments and introduced me to everyone.

R: How would you describe your relationship with your manager?

P2: It's good but sometimes difficult to navigate. Personally, I prefer to keep a bit of distance because I don't think you can be super close friends with your manager. She is very friendly, but I don't like to share many personal things, but is more on my side, I think she leaves room for me to share, I just prefer not to.

R: In your opinion, what aspects of nhow's culture or structure could be improved to make the environment more inclusive and supportive for everyone?

P2: I think that the main issue is that departments are divided, I don't feel connected with the operational departments, so I think that is the challenge. For improvement I think that they should hire more people, so everyone has a better work balance, because within the office is okay but the operational teams struggle as they do extra hours.

Anexx 3 - Interview to an Employee from Nhow Amsterdam RAI

Date: 21 October 2025

Location: Nhow Amsterdam Rai

Participant: Employee who works for 2 years

Researcher: Patricia Neves

Duration: 25 minutes

Researcher (R): How would you describe what it's like to work at nhow Amsterdam RAI? Would you say the environment feels more like a family or more structured and formal?

Participant 3 (P3): I don't think there's hierarchy, but I feel like the hierarchy it's there and you respect the managers, but they don't treat you like they're superior to you. So, I would say it's more like a closer environment and within teams, I mean I don't know other teams, but I worked in events, and I worked in banqueting. And both, it's super friendly and like you respect your manager, but you don't feel the sense of being superior to you. They treat you like a colleague instead of like the employee and the manager. I think they care about you, they ask about like your day, like how are you, like they care for you.

R: The company values creativity, feedback, empathy, and balance. How do you see or feel those values in your everyday work?

P3: I have not received much feedback, I have to say. When I was in banqueting my feedback was positive, and I feel like maybe I could have received more like negative. Even if it's just like a tiny thing, because like no one is perfect, like I'm not perfect, I think it's impossible that I did everything perfect. For the work balance, now that I don't work in operations there is more of a balance as my manager is always telling me if I do extra hours, then I can leave earlier another time. But I think it depends on which department you work and your manager for sure.

R: nhow Amsterdam brings together people from many different cultures. How would you describe the interaction between colleagues from different backgrounds?

P3: I think that the interaction is very nice, but every department has their own thing going on. You have the housekeeping department, restaurant, front office, then you have the office, and everyone is in a small group hanging out. You see them speaking their own language but at the same time everyone speaks English, so I would say that the interaction is nice but could be better.

R: How would you describe your relationship with your manager?

P3: With my previous manager in the banqueting department, we were not the closest, because I feel like with managers you cannot be that close because they're constantly in meetings and are busy. But he always treated me super nicely and super kind. And with my new manager now, it's the same, because she's super busy. But she's very nice and she also cares about me. I feel like she seems genuinely interested in my life. And anytime I have a problem, she does listen to me, and she tries to find the time to help me. Sometimes she's so busy that it's the next day, she always makes time even though she's busy

R: When you first joined nhow, what helped you feel welcome and part of the team?

P3: I would say like, everyone was super nice to me. And was showing me everything, how it works. Like, they didn't expect me to know everything like at once. They have more patience and were just super kind, honestly. In general, around the hotel, everyone says hi. Everyone asks about your day, how you're doing. I feel like they care about you.

But for me the problem was that when I started, I didn't really have an onboarding. I had it after two or three months after I started. Which was super late for me. So, when I had that, I already knew how like, a lot of the stuff here worked, but I think if I had the onboarding when I started it would have been much better for me.

R: How do internal rituals or events (for example, team meetings, celebrations, or group activities) help you connect with colleagues?

P3: For example, the New Year's party or minor games it's a huge event. But its only once or twice a year. So, it could be that you're talking to someone that day, but you never see them after. So, they should do it more often. I think it should be like, smaller events, I think that's more helpful for people to bond. Because maybe you're just shy and you can talk a bit, but then you never talk back. So, if you have smaller events, every a few weeks, then I do think that you're bonding more frequently and connecting more and it doesn't even have to be a big thing or super cool. If you say that there are snacks or things like that, people will already join.

R: In your opinion, what aspects of nhow's culture or structure could be improved to make the environment more inclusive and supportive for everyone?

P3: I don't like the uniform, and I know they try to make it more alternative with the patterns. But it's not comfortable as I don't identify with it. Nhow is supposed to be more lifestyle, so technically, it does not make sense that you would wear, like, a blazer or something like that. Besides, managers don't wear it, so I don't understand why we as employees have to. So, I would say that if they removed the uniforms, it would make people feel more included because they would feel more comfortable in their own skin.