



MASTER **TOURISM**

« Tourism, Hospitality and Food Studies »

2ND YEAR DISSERTATION

Intercultural Management in the Hospitality Industry: Focus on the Staff Orientation Program

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Academic Year: **2024 – 2025**

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**INTERCULTURAL MANAGEMENT IN THE
HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY: FOCUS ON THE
STAFF ORIENTATION PROGRAM**

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“Culture hides much more than it reveals, and strangely enough, what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participant.”
- Edward T. Hall

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First of all, I would like to sincerely thank my supervisor, Mr. Joaquim Dias Soeiro for guiding me through another year of my academic journey. Your continuous support and thoughtful advice truly helped me to improve my work. I am beyond grateful for your time and constant availability despite the jet lag between Mauritius and Malaysia.

Then, I would like to sincerely thank my internship supervisor, Mr. Ziyaad Atchia, for his guidance and encouragement throughout my internship. I am also grateful to the Cluster General Manager of Zilwa Attitude and Paradise Cove Boutique Hotel, Mr. Guillaume Tyack, for giving me the opportunity to live such an incredible experience within the Attitude Group. I would like to extend my thanks to the Hotel Managers of both Zilwa Attitude and Paradise Cove Boutique Hotel, Mr. Amrish Jhugroo and Mr. Christian Bräu for making my time at the hotels so enriching. Finally, I am deeply thankful to all the Family Members of both hotels for their kindness and for welcoming me so fully into the team.

A heartfelt thank you to my family and my boyfriend for always reminding me to keep going, even on the difficult days. Your love made this journey so much easier.

Last but not least, I will forever be grateful to my amazing friends (and therapists), Léa, Nune, and Victorine. It is safe to say that I could not have made it till the end without our late-night conversations and all the laughs and tears we shared. I cannot wait to begin this next chapter of life with you.

To all my fellow Master's classmates, thank you for making these last two years of university unforgettable.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The tourism and hospitality sectors are increasingly attracting customers from all around the world as travel becomes more widely available and affordable. Every tourist and guest shape the destination as they carry their unique cultural background, customs and expectations. Therefore, in order to deliver exceptional services, promote memorable visitor experience, and ensure their survival in the face of all this variety, the ability to effectively negotiate and manage cross-cultural relationships has become essential in these dynamic sectors.

The hospitality sector, as one of the world's oldest industries, has been a reflection of cultural traditions and values for a long time now.

From small hotels to campings and luxury establishments, hospitality services have always been shaped by local traditions as well as global influences. Indeed, this sector is a unique and appropriate place to foster cultural expression and exchanges through many different areas, whether it be cuisine, architecture, or customer service and management of teams. Although the industry has understood that making clients feel valued by being flexible to adapt to their needs and requests is vital, there are still some issues in understanding that employees need the same attention.

In fact, one of the characteristics of the hospitality sector is that it attracts a diverse workforce, with employees also coming from various cultural and national backgrounds. This diversity enables these establishments to better relate and communicate with their international customers. However, this nest of cultural differences can also lead to misunderstandings, miscommunication, and potential conflicts. Therefore, managing cultural heterogeneity is not only necessary to address guests but also team members.

Nowadays, no matter the brand of the chain, all of these structures are facing the need to implement some intercultural managerial practices in order to stay competitive and attractive on the market. Consequently, developing a strong awareness of these challenges is essential for the next generation of hospitality professionals. By improving intercultural management skills, managers will be able to implement more inclusive workplaces where employees will feel

listened to and valued. Overall, this amelioration will result in effective collaboration impacting both team performance and customer experience.

On that account, the aim of this study is to explore the hospitality sector under the scope of the role of intercultural managerial practices in staff orientation programs. To do so, this thesis focuses on a case study conducted at Zilwa Attitude which is one of the most renowned hotels of the Attitude Group. The latter is a Mauritian hospitality company famous for promoting sustainable tourism and a strong sense of local identity. As the group manages 9 hotels on the island, they employ a diverse workforce composed both of local and foreign people. Therefore, through this case study, the research seeks to understand how intercultural elements are integrated into staff orientation programs, and how these practices influence cohesion, integration and communication between local managers and foreign employees.

Thus, the main research question driving this dissertation is:

How do intercultural management practices in staff orientation programs at the Attitude Group in Mauritius facilitate the relationship between managers and employees from different cultural backgrounds?

To dive into this question, this thesis will be divided into three different parts.

The first part will dwell onto the key definitions, theories, and models shaping the concept of intercultural management with the purpose of providing a theoretical framework to better understand the importance of acknowledging workplace diversity. This idea will be developed through the evolution of the notion of culture, the explanation of hotel management, and the comprehension of cultural contexts and dimensions. The latter will be explored in order to showcase the similarities and differences between France and Mauritius. Additionally, this part will highlight the importance of implementing a staff orientation program to encourage the well-being of employees who are responsible for the smooth operation of the business.

Then, the second part of this thesis will be dedicated to the specific study case of the Attitude Group and the methodological approach. On the one hand, the first chapter of this part will be composed of a detailed description of the Attitude Group and more specifically of one of the hotels I did my internship in: the Zilwa Attitude. On the other hand, the second chapter will focus on the methodological approach. There will be a discussion about the evolution of the topic, research question, and assumptions between the Master 1 and Master 2 theses. Moreover, this chapter will explain how the study explores the way intercultural practices address cultural

differences and influence communication between managers and employees. It will also detail how the research aims to evaluate the content, delivery, and perceived effectiveness of the orientation program from both managerial and employee perspectives.

Finally, the last part of this dissertation will gather the analysis and interpretation of the findings from the research method. They will be discussed and compared to the three assumptions and the theoretical framework established in the first part. To end this final section, the last chapter will be dedicated to the recommendations and limitations of this dissertation as well as the topic of intercultural management in the hospitality industry in general.

**PART 1: CULTURAL DYNAMICS AND MANAGEMENT IN THE
HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY: INTEGRATION, ADAPTATION, AND
COMPARATIVE INSIGHTS**

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, the continuous globalisation process has accelerated the interconnectedness and cultural exchange between people. Thanks to the progress of technology and the increasing travel opportunities, people now have the chance to access and discover cultures from different parts of the world. These ones can also have more influence beyond their original countries and borders. This unmatched cultural spreading has reached almost every aspect of people's lives, from media to restaurant or tourism. Nevertheless, there are certain industries that are more impacted than others. This is the case of the hospitality sector which must ceaselessly adapt their services and management styles to fit into the expectations of the clientele.

This affirmation can also be applied to the recruitment of employees. Indeed, in a world where the hospitality sector is facing a lack of workforce due to the difficult work conditions and demanding skills, the industry needs to foster employee satisfaction and retention to ensure the longevity of its business. In order to stay competitive and appealing, hospitality establishments need to create and underline an adaptive and open-minded work environment where cultural differences are respected and valued.

Consequently, the first part of this thesis will lay the theoretical foundation to understand how cultural dimensions, managerial practices, and staff orientation programs impact hospitality organisations in a cross-cultural context.

To begin, the first chapter will provide key definitions and theories about the notions of culture and intercultural management, as well as their evolutions and perceptions over time. It will also offer a comprehensive overview of the hospitality industry and particularly of hotels. The aim of this chapter is to explain in more details the role of culture and the importance of intercultural managerial practices in hotels.

Afterwards, the second chapter will explore staff orientation programs and their role in employee engagement and retention. Indeed, they are a key component of organisational structures in hotels and essential for new recruits as the Service Profit Chain Model unveils. Therefore, the purpose of this part is also to underline how these programs can be adapted to match each employee's cultural background and pave the way for a culturally-friendly workplace.

Ultimately, the third chapter will delve into the different theories shaping cultural differences and contexts. Among them, there will be Neuliep's Contextual Approach of Intercultural Communication and Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Model. Overall, these researches will help discuss how culture influences workplace behaviour and leadership styles by briefly comparing France and Mauritius. This comparison will help determine and understand the intercultural decisions and implementations of the Attitude Group in the following part of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 1: CULTURE AND MANAGEMENT IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY: EVOLUTION, STRUCTURE, AND INTEGRATION

1. The evolution of culture: origins, meanings, and transformations

1.1 The notion of culture across time

In today's interconnected world, people are exposed to different cultures in their daily lives without even realising it. Indeed, thanks to the phenomenon of globalisation, people are more aware of the existence and composition of the different cultures shaping the world. As some scholars have analysed it, societies become increasingly interconnected which foster more diverse forms of communication, cross-cultural engagement, and a growing openness to meet other people and discover other identities (Cohen & Bailey, 1997). Moreover, *"it contributes to the expansion of cultural ties between the people and human migration"* (Raikhan et al., 2014, p. 8). Therefore, the different nations are keener in letting new cultures get mixed with their own, whether it be in terms of certain traditions or culinary specialties. As a matter of fact, customs and cuisine are usually the terms people use when trying to define the term "culture".

One of the common definitions used is the customs, beliefs, art, way of life, and social organisation shared by a particular country or group¹. The word culture embraces a lot of aspects such as nationality, age, beliefs, behaviours, genders, traditions...

Another intuitive manner of describing the notion of culture is to decompose it into several layers, like an onion. This is the idea developed by Geert Hofstede: before reaching the values of one culture, the latter is expressed through symbols (food or monuments), heroes (public figures reflecting the national spirit), and rituals (recurring events that are done almost unconsciously such as celebrations)². Although these definitions are quite clear, this raises the question: what was the original meaning of culture, and how has it evolved over time?

As explained in the article "How does interculturalism shake up cultures" (Verbunt, 2012), the origin of the word culture lies in an amputation by Cicero two thousand years ago. Before him, only the word agriculture existed. Cicero cut the word in two and spoke of *cultura*

¹ Oxford Learners Dictionaries, Definition of Culture, https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/culture_1, [Accessed February 24, 2025]

² The Culture Factor Group, "What do we mean by "culture"", <https://news.theculturefactor.com/news/what-do-we-mean-by-culture>, [Accessed February 24, 2025]

animi, putting the spirit, the soul, in the place of the fields. Thus, he established a comparison between the growth of plants and the creation of a culture among people. In the end, what counts in the act of cultivating is not the result, but the process, the deployment of human faculties to obtain a result that improves the lot of mankind and enables us to live together in peace.

Only in the nineteenth century did the concept of culture begin to take on a little more modern definition. In fact, Sir Edward B. Tylor's (1873, p. 18) formulation, which follows, marked a turning point in cultural sociology. He saw culture as *"the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and many other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society"*. At that time, there was not a concrete and commonly used definition of the term "culture" as it can be found today. This is the idea underscored by the phrase "complex whole".

Moving on across time, we can mention the definition of Welsch and Vivanco (2014, p. 35) that underlines the idea that people must understand their surroundings thanks to their cultural knowledge: *"culture consists of the collective processes that make the artificial seem natural and help people to understand and respond to a constantly changing world"*. Once more, this interpretation of culture emphasises how the vision of culture has changed throughout time and how these cultures are adapting to the outside world.

Last but not least, there is one more definition that is known to every scholar studying a topic involving culture and that is Geert Hofstede's one (2011, p. 3). To use his words: *"Culture is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others"*.

All in all, the aforementioned definitions provided a broad overview of the concept of culture. The latter has evolved from a limited association with traditions and customs to a more general one including new elements such as social behaviours, values, and even some forms of art. Consequently, the issue lies now in determining which aspect of culture to study and how to apply it to management in the hospitality industry.

1.2. Derivation of culture

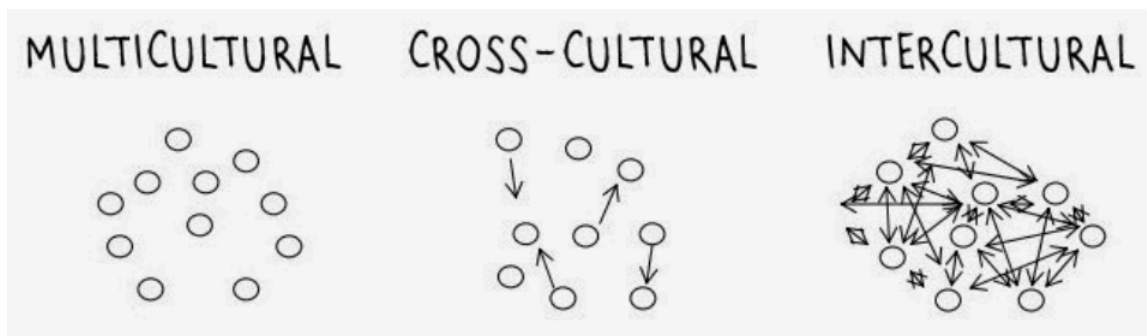
Interculturalism, multiculturalism, cross-culturalism...

These are terms that everyone has read at least once in articles and advertisements, or heard at work during a meeting or a conversation. Yet, when it comes to describing what they

mean and what are their similarities and differences, it becomes quite hazy and unclear. Thus, it sometimes ends up as being perceived as the concept of different individuals and cultures getting mixed, although sometimes we seem to have the answer at the end of our tongue. Ultimately, we fail to discern the little yet significant distinction that makes them so different. As these words are becoming more and more used in sociology articles and in the workplace, workers in the hospitality industry particularly need to know more about their variation.

Since it is essential to understand these nuances, here are some definitions and comparisons, as well as a simplified figure that makes it more visual and therefore easier to recognise them.

Figure 1: From multicultural to intercultural³



Multiculturalism

On the one hand, the notion of multiculturality implies that different cultures can coexist, and exist side-by-side. However, the interactions between one another are quite minimal. In other words, a multicultural environment does celebrate diversity but does not necessarily suggest the creation of a melting pot.⁴ To better explain this phenomenon, the Spring Institute provides a concrete example: *“In a multicultural neighbourhood people may frequent ethnic grocery stores and restaurants without really interacting with their neighbours from other countries”* (Paula Schriefer, 2016).⁵

³ Figure 1, Museum 2.0, “From multicultural to intercultural: Evolution or spectrum of engagement”, <https://museumtwo.blogspot.com/2014/10/from-multicultural-to-intercultural.html>, October 2014, [Accessed February 28, 2025]

⁴ LinkedIn, London Intercultural Center, “The differences between multicultural, cross-cultural, and intercultural”, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/differences-between-multicultural-cross-cultural-kdite/>, January 2024, [Accessed February 24, 2025]

⁵ Spring Institute, “What’s the difference between multicultural, intercultural, and cross-cultural communication?”, <https://springinstitute.org/whats-difference-multicultural-intercultural-cross-cultural-communication/>, April 2016, [Accessed February 24, 2025]

Cross-culturalism

On the other hand, there is the concept of cross-culturalism. Most of the time, this term is related to the topic of communication and interaction between cultures. In this globalised world, and specially in business, companies pay more and more attention to educating employees on how to communicate effectively. This training involves a comparison about the cultural norms, recognising ethnic differences at different levels such as national or regional. Cross-culturalism seeks to understand the “what” and “how” of other cultures in order to reduce gaps and enhance mutual comprehension (Kopp, 2023). Here is a simple example that could be encountered in the workplace. When someone integrates a business while coming from a foreign country, a cross-cultural mistake would be to not try to adapt to his/her etiquette. Indeed, some people might think that the newcomer needs to learn the country’s etiquette because he/she now works there. Yet, although foreigners need to adjust to the rules of the nation they are now employed and living in, it would be very rude of his/her colleagues not to try to memorise some basic habits and language skills, or show a respectful interest in the foreigner’s culture.

Interculturalism

Finally, there is the concept of interculturality. This one revolves around dialogue and discussion. At some point, everyone has experienced an intercultural exchange in their lives. In order to properly define it, the Council of Europe provides a comprehensive explanation that highlights its importance in fostering communication and understanding between various cultures. *“Intercultural dialogue is an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups belonging to different cultures that leads to a deeper understanding of the other’s global perception”*. In this definition, “open and respectful” means “based on the equal value of the partners”. Then, “exchange of views” stands for every type of interaction that reveals cultural characteristics. Finally, “groups” includes every type of collective that can act through its representatives (family, community, associations, peoples) and “global perception” symbolises the different values and ways of thinking.⁶

Overall, gaining an understanding of the diversity and evolution of cultural concepts lays the groundwork for investigating how they affect different sectors, and more particularly hospitality and hotel management. As Battaglia (2024) mentions in his article: *“As the most global of industries, hospitality is powered by diversity - with large hotels typically having*

⁶ Council of Europe, Definition of Intercultural Dialogue, https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/concept_EN.asp, 2008, [Accessed February 25, 2025]

multiple nations represented among both guests and staff".⁷ This connection between cultural diversity and hospitality management emphasises how important it is for professionals to successfully negotiate cross-cultural situations. Building on this, it is crucial to explain in greater details the notions of management in hospitality, the organisational structure of hotels, and the role of corporate culture in shaping employee engagement.

2. Hotel organisation and management: definitions, functions and key roles

2.1. Definition of management

The concept behind the term "management" is common to several domains and workplaces. From economic fields such as finance and sales to the hospitality industry with food and beverage as well as front office, the definition stays the same. According to Harold Koontz (1980, p. 180): *"Management is an art of getting things done through and with people in formally organised groups, the art of creating an environment in such an organised group where people can perform as individuals and yet cooperate toward attainment of group goals, the art of removing blocks to such performance, the art of optimising efficiency in effectively reaching goals."* The key points in this explanation are the emphasis on the necessity of cohesion between people and effectiveness.

This last argument can also be found in the interpretations of other famous scholars. For instance, according to F.W. Taylor (1911), scientific management can be understood as the skill of determining the right actions to take, choosing the appropriate moment to execute them, and ensuring they are carried out with maximum efficiency and minimal cost. This point of view is more productivity-oriented and places people at the level of simple product makers and profitability generators.

However, Mary Parker Follet brought a new light to this theory by introducing a more human-centered approach that underlined the importance of emotions, relationships, and collaboration in the workplace, thus echoing Koontz key points. Unlike scholars like Taylor, she delves into topics such as motivation, conflict resolution, and participative decision making (Mousli, 2005). Her ideas paved the way for more modern visions of management that now include leadership and prioritise engagement and personal development for employees.

⁷ The Insider - The magazine of Glion Institute of Higher Education, "Diversity in hospitality: how cultural inclusivity defines the industry", <https://www.glion.edu/magazine/diversity-in-hospitality-how-cultural-inclusivity-defines-the-industry/>, November 2024, [Accessed February 26, 2025]

Nowadays, enterprises implementing a modern management style could be interpreted as *“businesses that no longer think of their employees as just lazy and nonchalant wage earners. For them, employees have now turned into family. The most important capital of any business is its employees, and it has been proven over time that a dedicated employee can keep the business from shrinking”* (Youssef, 2023)⁸. This is also the idea shared by El Rabih in her article about the mission and vision of the modern management style. *“The modern manager takes on the role of inspirational leader who sets the course and vision, guides and supports his teams by creating the conditions for success: helping them to overcome obstacles, challenging them on their development, and helping them to grow through feedback (regular, constructive, and motivating). This is a leader who listens and encourages the free expression of each individual.”*⁹. Overall, these statements reflect a shift from traditional, task-focused management toward a more human-centred approach that values employees as key assets. Indeed, modern management emphasises inspiration, support, and most of all individual growth. These criterias help to mingle leadership with empathy and communication. Understanding this evolution is crucial in intercultural management as the respect of diverse values and the encouragement of inclusive leadership help to create cohesive and motivated teams. Managers must adapt not only strategies but also mindsets to effectively lead in multicultural environments.

Despite the fact that the concept of management encompasses a variety of aspects and notions that are applicable to a wide range of domains and areas of work, the next section will focus on the particularities of hospitality and hotel management.

2.2. The functions of management

Management plays a crucial role in the organisation and efficiency of any business, and the hospitality industry is no exception. The core functions of management can be remembered thanks to Luther Gullick’s (1937) famous keyword: “POSDCORB” that stands for Planning, Organising, Staffing, Directing, Co-Ordinating, Reporting and Budgeting. Yet, among these seven characteristics, there are only five main ones that are remembered. As it can be seen on the Appendix A p. 149, these are Planning, Organising, Staffing, Controlling (or Co-Ordinating), and Directing. There is a close relationship between these managerial functions.

⁸ LinkedIn, “Modern Management”, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/modern-management-ahmed-youssef/>, August 2023, [Accessed February 27, 2025]

⁹ LinkedIn, “Vision et Mission du Management Moderne”, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/vision-et-mission-du-management-moderne-diana-elrabih/>, June 2021, [Accessed February 27, 2025]

Indeed, if one of these roles is missing or ignored, an organisation cannot operate properly or run smoothly. Therefore, the following section will briefly explain what these five aspects consist in.

First of all, planning is the process of organising, scheduling, and tracking the activities required to successfully complete a project. It involves defining tasks, estimating the time needed to complete them, allocating resources, and managing associated risks. The primary goal of planning is to ensure that the project is completed within the planned timeframe and budget while meeting the defined quality standards¹⁰.

Then, the function of organising relies on coordinating different teams, bringing people together, and empowering them with respective roles. Typically, managers organise these tasks to create the desired end results or objectives for the firm¹¹. A smooth organising process also lies in the clear definition of the hierarchy within the enterprise.

Another essential characteristic of management is staffing. In fact, this function refers to the recruitment of various people in a team based on their knowledge, experience, talent, and areas of expertise. The purpose is to fill the various positions available within the company with suitable candidates¹². In other words, this is the stage where staff orientation occurs. This step is crucial for both the employer and the employee. If new hires are not assigned to strategic positions that align with their professional experience and expectations, it can lead to conflicts, inefficiencies, and financial losses for the company, as it will be discussed later. It is also a key moment for managers to take into account the cultural backgrounds of their new recruits.

Furthermore, the principle of directing in management consists of guiding and motivating employees through effective communication, leadership, and supervision to achieve organisational goals. It ensures alignment of objectives, facilitates change while maintaining stability, and enhances efficiency by fostering a cohesive and motivated workforce¹³.

Finally, the last aspect out of the five is controlling. According to Brech (1965), controlling refers to the process of evaluating how current activities align with the original goals or standards set out in the planning phase. The aim is to ensure that everything is progressing as intended and performing well. It also involves recording the lessons learned during implementation to help inform and improve future strategies and operations.

¹⁰ PlanningPME, “Stratégies et Outils pour un Management Proactif du Planning”, <https://www.planningpme.fr/gestion-de-planning.htm#:~:text=D%C3%A9finition,la%20gestion%20des%20risques%20associ%C3%A9s>, February 2025, [Accessed February 28, 2025]

¹¹ Management Weekly, “What is organising in management?”, <https://managementweekly.org/what-is-organizing-in-management/>, February 2021, [Accessed February, 2025]

¹² Darwinbox, “Staffing”, <https://explore.darwinbox.com/hr-glossary/staffing>, [Accessed February 28, 2025]

¹³ Vijayanagara Sri Krishnadevaraya University, “Module 5: Principles of Management”, <https://vskub.ac.in/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Notes-on-Directing-L.pdf>, [Accessed February 28, 2025]

This is to say, making sure that employee performance is evaluated by taking into account the standards and objectives of the company. If it falls short, controlling involves putting in place necessary actions to correct the issue.

To summarise, a business may maximise performance, encourage innovation, and promote sustainable growth across all departments by understanding and effectively executing these functions. Moreover, cultural diversity should not be disregarded in any of them as it greatly influences and adds to the smooth operations and communication between the managers and the staff.

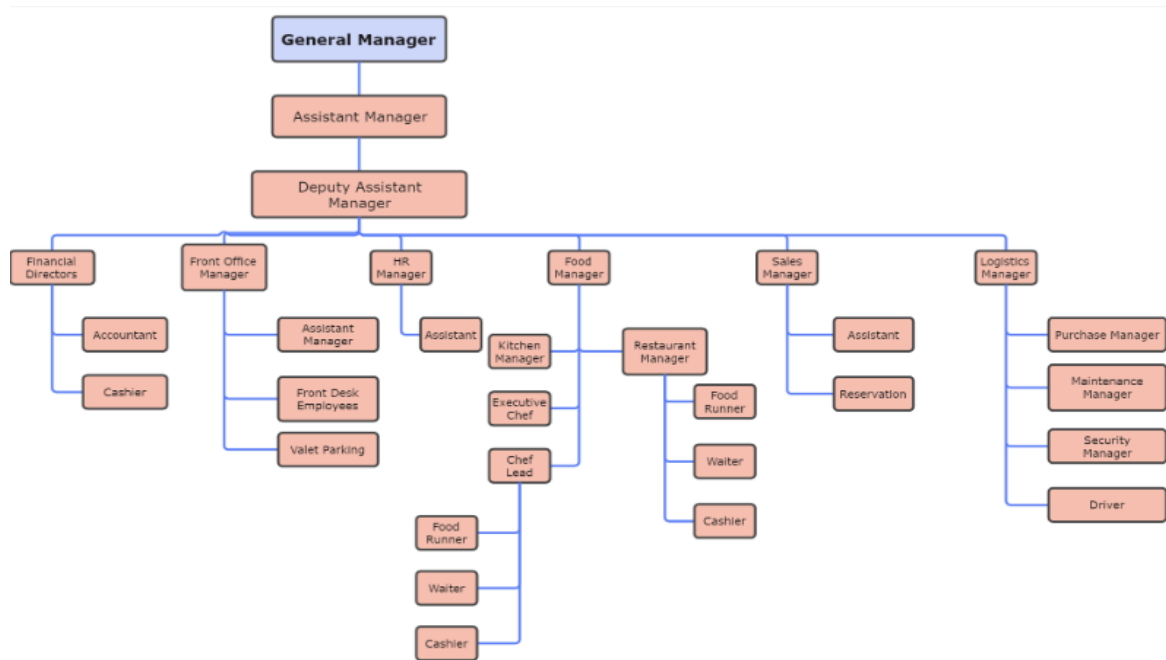
2.3. Hotel management and the roles of managers

Before digging into hotel management, it is important to distinguish it from hospitality management. Hospitality management encompasses a broad range of sectors within the industry, including tourism, sports, luxury branding, restaurant operations and many more. However, hotel management is a more specialised field focused solely on managing hotel operations and services¹⁴.

The primary function of a hotel is to provide shelter and comfort, but the industry has expanded its offerings to include food and beverage services, wellness facilities and recreational amenities. Nowadays, managing a hotel involves overseeing daily operations, ensuring high service standards, managing staff, delivering memorable guest experiences and much more. To achieve these objectives, hotels are divided into several departments with managers, supervisors and employees as can be seen on Figure 2 below. Indeed, organisational charts are essential to every hotel as it helps to give an overview of the inside cog of the hotel, to clearly determine who is in charge of each department, and for employees to know to whom they should report.

¹⁴ Les Roches, "Difference between hotel management and hospitality management, <https://lesroches.edu/blog/difference-between-hotel-management-and-hospitality-management/>, July 2022, [Accessed March 2, 2025]

Figure 2: Example of an Organisational Chart¹⁵



The Front Office and Human Resources departments are key to staff orientation and intercultural communication. On the one hand, the Front Office is where the first impressions are crafted. According to Mondal (2023): “75% of a guest’s total satisfaction with a hotel is determined during all the front-office process”¹⁶. Staff working in this department are in charge of shaping guest experiences. Therefore, it is crucial to implement cultural awareness to deliver effective services. This point is supported by Manachai Inkaew (2016, p. 189) that states: “Nowadays, hotel front office workers are considered to be intercultural interactants, and they are required to have intercultural communicative competence in order to achieve appropriate and effective outcomes in their interactions”.

On the other hand, Human Resources oversees recruitment, training, and employee well-being, ensuring a motivated and productive workforce. Beyond hiring, HR does not only fosters inclusivity and manages policies, but also supports employee growth with the final purpose of creating a strong foundation for leadership development.¹⁷

¹⁵ Figure 2: Medium Hotel Organisational Chart, <https://www.edrawmax.com/article/hotel-organizational-chart.html>. [Accessed March 2, 2025]

¹⁶ Hotel Management Tips, Hotel Front Office Department: Importance, Functions, Duties, <https://www.hotelmanagementtips.com/hotel-front-office-department/>, September 2024, [Accessed March 2, 2025]

¹⁷ LinkedIn, “Importance of Human Resources in today’s Hotel Industry”, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/importance-human-resources-todays-hotel-industry-kshitij-jawa/>, October 2021, [Accessed, March 2, 2025]

All in all, effective understanding of the key departments and how to effectively lead them is key to hotel operations, making it essential to explore the roles and types of managers.

In the hotel business, managers are in charge of managing all facets of operations, from front-of-house services to back office logistics, with the ultimate objective of providing guests with outstanding experiences while efficiently allocating resources. However, it is necessary to differentiate the different positions a manager can have before explaining the various roles they have to endorse.

Firstly, hotel management operates at three levels: top, middle, and low (cf. Appendix B, p. 149). Top management consists of executives responsible for strategic direction and overall success in all departments. These tasks are carried out by the General Manager, the Director of Operations and the various Department Directors (finance, sales, rooms...) ¹⁸. Next, middle management oversees specific departments and reports to top executives. Department Managers bridge the gap between top management's strategic vision and the daily execution of tasks ¹⁹. Finally, low management refers to supervisors who work closely with front-line staff to ensure seamless service delivery? Although they operate at the lowest tier, their role is essential in addressing operational challenges quickly.

Together, these three levels form a structured hierarchy that ensures effective management within the hotel industry.

As the figure of leadership, managers daily perform various roles as outlined by Mintzberg (1984): *"A role is an organised set of behaviours associated with an identifiable job or position. Thus, managers are the interpreters of predetermined roles, but individually, they embody them in different ways."* ²⁰. According to his theory, the roles are organised in three different categories.

Interpersonal roles

In these roles, managers interact with internal and external stakeholders to provide guidance and representation. As figureheads, they serve as the face of the hotel in social and legal matters. As leaders, they motivate staff, oversee performance, and ensure team efficiency.

¹⁸ Reactive Executive, "Les 4 fonctions du management : Définition et explication | Guide pratique", <https://www.reactive-executive.com/quelles-sont-les-4-fonctions-du-management/>, May 2023, [Accessed March 2, 2025]

¹⁹ Talent Program, "Pourquoi être middle manager est plus difficile que jamais", <https://www.talentprogram.fr/middle-manager-definition/>, [Accessed, March 2, 2025]

²⁰ Centre de Gestion de la Fonction Publique Territoriale, "Les dix rôles du Cadre d'Henry Mintzberg", https://www.cdg35.fr/beacdf17e90166e1ba64332030865eexy/iedit/11/16672_20172_2014_08_05_Management_organisation_Encadrer_le_personnel_Fiche_les_10_roles_du_cadre_dHenry_Mintzberg.pdf, August 2014, [Accessed March 2, 2025]

As liaisons, they maintain relationships with external stakeholders to navigate business interactions²¹.

Informational roles

For this category, managers gather, process, and distribute information across the organisation. They act as monitors when they track internal and external developments to anticipate changes in the industry. For the disseminator type, it consists of communicating relevant information to the teams. At last, the spokespersons role refers to the representation of the hotel to external parties such as media, agencies and clients in order to help shaping the public image of the hotel²².

Decisional role

This last variety of roles is embodied by managers when taking key organisational decisions that drive success. As entrepreneurs, they initiate change and foster innovation. Then, when managers act as disturbance handlers, they navigate crises and resolve conflicts within the team or company. Moreover, supervisors can also effectively distribute financial, human, and material resources. These actions happen when they endorse the role of resource allocators. Last but not least, managers act as negotiators when they engage discussions to secure favorable agreements and maintain strong relationships with essential stakeholders²³.

To conclude on this part, is it important to mention that managers do not perform all roles equally. Indeed, the various responsibilities shift based on job scope and the needs of the organisation. Some roles are more appropriate depending on the situation and some of them can be extended beyond managerial practices. Moreover, employees can also relate to these certain roles when engaging and assisting guests.

These managerial functions shape workplace dynamics and directly influence corporate culture and intercultural management in hotels, which are essential for fostering collaboration and excellence.

²¹ Manager GO!, “Identifiez les compétences à développer avec les 10 rôles du cadre selon Mintzberg”, <https://www.manager-go.com/management/roles-du-manager.htm>, June 2023, [Accessed March 2, 2025]

²² MindTools, Mintzberg’s Management Roles, <https://www.mindtools.com/a/fb1ev/mintzbergs-management-roles>, [Accessed March 2, 2025]

²³ Study.com, “Henry Mintzberg’s Managerial Roles”, <https://study.com/academy/lesson/henry-mintzbergs-managerial-roles.html>, November 2021, [Accessed March 2, 2025]

3. Corporate culture and intercultural management in hotels

3.1. Defining values and vision of corporate culture

After defining the term “culture” and discussing the structure and organisation of hotels, the purpose of this part is to understand how these two notions can be mingled. One way to approach the topic is to start wondering what is a corporate culture. The term in itself began to appear in the late 1960s but became frequently used in the 1990s. It referred to a mix of management strategies, attitude, work environment, and company-wide value systems (Tarver, 2023). As this definition from Gorton et al. (2022, p. 535) showcases: *“Corporate culture is an omnibus term that includes many elements that are relevant to a firm, like norms, values, knowledge, and customs. Nevertheless, it can be measured through different aspects such as knowledge, shared beliefs or cultural elements.”* Now that the terms are clearer, the aim is to debate the importance of implementing a corporate culture within an enterprise.

The study provided by Deloitte Development LLC is a concrete and interesting example to begin with. This company is among the world’s largest international accounting and professional services firms. It consists of thousands of professionals from independent companies worldwide, working together to offer consulting, financial, and management advisory services²⁴. A survey conducted among executives and employees across various industries in the United-States found that 94% of executives and 88% of employees consider a strong corporate culture essential to business success. Two key factors driving a company’s favourable outcome are “a well-defined business strategy” and “clearly articulated core values and beliefs” (Deloitte, 2012).

As a result, this study highlights the crucial role of workplace culture in a company’s success, leading to a deeper exploration of the different types of corporate cultures. There are usually four leading sorts of corporate culture. By comprehending the similarities and contrasts between each of them, managers can decide which one they want to implement and follow within their business, including hotels.

The first category is clan culture. This one prioritises a friendly and collaborative work environment that looks like a close-knit family where leaders act as mentors. It enhances human resource development, and loyalty by empowering, valuing people, and meeting client needs.

²⁴ Deloitte Corporate Finance LLC, <https://www2.deloitte.com/xa/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/about-deloitte.html>, [Accessed March 1, 2025]

The benefits of clan culture are participation, consensus, and teamwork (Li et al., 2024).

Then, there is adhocracy culture. According to the definition provided by Njagi et al. (2020), this management style fosters a dynamic, creative environment where leaders and employees embrace innovation and risk-taking. Key values include change, agility, and the pursuit of success through unique products and services. Organisations with an adhocracy culture encourage individual freedom and initiative.

On another note, market culture is driven by competition, goal achievement, and results. It thrives in performance-focused environments that put forward market presence, profits, and stock value. While this approach can be a source of stress for employees, it can also foster enthusiasm and motivation when tasks are correctly completed (Koustelios & Belias, 2014).

Finally, the last type of corporate culture is hierarchy culture. As Tseng (2010) depicts it in her paper “The effects of hierarchical culture in knowledge management processes”, this culture is more conservative and structured. It follows a clear hierarchy where executives oversee employees. While it may seem rigid, it ensures and enhances clarity in roles, minimises costs and errors, and helps achieve specific goals. Here, success is driven by careful planning, efficient execution, and reliable delivery.

Overall, although there exists a huge variety of corporate cultures, they all share the same purpose to achieve set goals through a clear vision. As with every aspect of life, the future of corporate culture will continue to follow trends influenced by technology, demographic changes, and evolving social expectations. One example of how the professional landscape is evolving this decade is the rise of hybrid and remote teams, along with the increasing use of virtual environments and alternatives to traditional office spaces²⁵.

Nonetheless, there are still some main characteristics that define a “great corporate culture”. These ones can be briefly summarised thanks to the article of Coleman published in the Harvard Business Review in 2013. Indeed, a strong corporate culture begins with a clear vision or mission statement that guides values and motivates employees. These values shape behaviours and mindsets, ensuring alignment with the company’s goals. To be meaningful, values must be translated into concrete practices, with investments reflecting core principles. Moreover, a cohesive culture also relies on people who share or embrace these values, making recruitment a

²⁵ Spacecreator, “Shaping the Future: The Journey to a Modern Corporate Culture”, <https://www.spacecreator.io/newsroom/shaping-the-future-the-journey-to-a-modern-corporate-culture>, [Accessed March 1, 2025]

key factor. Lastly, a company's narrative, also called storytelling, plays a vital role in shaping its identity.

As a consequence, by taking into account these tips and favourising the four C's, Cooperation, Collaboration, Contribution, and Community, it will lead to a *"management style that will create a win-win situation where the organisation and its employees thrive together"* (Baron, 2023)²⁶. Corporate culture is essential as it not only attracts and retains talent but also fosters a sense of belonging within the business. However, in an increasingly globalised world, this organisational culture must also adapt to intercultural management, ensuring cohesion and understanding among diverse teams.

3.2. An overview of intercultural management

As Liu et al. (2022) mentions in their article about interculturalism: *"Developing intercultural understanding can help hotels and the wider tourism industry to operate effectively and efficiently"*. This intercultural dimension is essential in the hospitality industry but can face several challenges and limitations to its smooth implementation. In fact, these scholars also state that communication barriers, cultural misunderstandings and the lack of awareness about other cultures are common difficulties that can be found in the industry. Moreover, the complexity of the topic requires specific training for managers and employees. Cross-cultural mentors can be hard to find and it might take some time to properly implement it within team members. In fact, staff need to overcome stereotyping, unconscious biases, and the resistance to change.²⁷ Yet, despite these elements that can be considered as challenges, integrating intercultural practices and mindset has more positive outcomes than constraints.

As a matter of fact, intercultural management happens everyday in hotels. Whether it is among people from different cultures but also sex, ages, and backgrounds of all sorts. As this quote from Yurur et al. (2018, p. 1) showcases: *"The hospitality industry is often referred to as people business because hospitality activities involve high levels of frequent social contact and exchange or interaction with customers"*. Intercultural management is the combination of

²⁶ LinkedIn, Actualised Leadership, "Mastering the Art of Corporate Culture of Belonging: The Four C's Framework", <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/mastering-art-corporate-cultural-belonging-four-cs-framework-baron/>, August 2023, [Accessed March 1, 2025]

²⁷ LinkedIn, "Intercultural Competence in Tourism and Hospitality: The Impact of Globalization on Cross-Cultural Teamwork", <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/intercultural-competence-tourism-hospitality-impact-teamwork-tumamak-b5lcc/?trackingId=9tZ5Dmw2SQuGamT109GCxg%3D%3D>, January 2025, [Accessed February 25, 2025]

knowledge, insights, and skills which are necessary for adequately dealing with national and regional cultures and differences between cultures, at several management levels within and between organisations (Knap-Stefaniuk & Sorribes, 2021).

Trying to truly understand one another is the key to a productive company. *“Everyone benefits from improving intercultural communication skills. Beyond customer satisfaction, I have repeatedly seen how increasing communication skills also increases employee satisfaction, motivation, and team spirit.”* (Fleming, 2013). In this quote, the term “understanding” reflects the idea of putting oneself in the shoes of his/her colleague and actively trying to acknowledge why and how this person can feel and react differently to the same work conditions. There is no right or wrong way to apprehend a situation. The real issue is to not instinctively judge or label someone as “different” because he/she does not adopt the same vision as the one you personally have. Everyone should try to recognise one’s ideas and clearly explain why one way or another is best for the type of situation facing. The whole purpose of intercultural management is to bind people by mingling and integrating all of their methods and mindset and get the best out of it (Jensenius, 2012)²⁸.

As a conclusion, when researching intercultural interactions, there are a lot of studies about communication between employees and customers. Indeed, most departments, from food and beverage, to housekeeping and front office, engage in daily discussions with clients from all around the world. Yet, these intercultural dialogues also take place among employees. More particularly, this dissertation will study in further detail the ones happening between managers and employees during staff orientation programs. This is the reason why the next chapter will discuss the objective, benefits, and necessity of staff orientation programs as well as the implementation of an intercultural approach among them.

²⁸ ARJ, “Disciplinarity: intra, cross, multi, inter, trans”, <https://arj.no/2012/03/12/disciplinarity-2/>, December 2022, [Accessed February 26, 2025]

CHAPTER 2: ENHANCING EMPLOYEE INTEGRATION IN HOTELS: ORIENTATION PROGRAMS, THE SERVICE PROFIT CHAIN MODEL, AND CULTURAL ADAPTATION

In the modern hospitality industry, employee training and development play a crucial role in ensuring service excellence and business success.

As a matter of fact, staff orientation programs serve as the foundation for equipping new employees with the skills, knowledge, and company values needed to perform effectively. Beyond operational training, these programs influence employee satisfaction, motivation, and long-term retention. A theory that actively discusses and proves this point is the Service Profit Chain Model. Indeed, it underlines the connection between employee well-being and customer satisfaction, demonstrating the benefits of investing in staff development. Eventually, in today's globally diverse industry, integrating cultural differences into orientation programs is essential for fostering inclusive workplaces. An organised and structured approach to staff orientation does not only strengthen internal cohesion but also contribute to the overall outcome of the hotel.

Therefore, this chapter will examine how the implementation of effective orientation practices suits the principles of the Service Profit Chain Model.

1. Staff orientation programs

1.1. Definition and key concepts

In the hospitality industry, every guest interaction is a scene where employees are the lead actors. An effective orientation program equips them with the skills to master their roles, adapt to the unexpected, and deliver a flawless performance every time. Just like in a show, coordination, preparation, and understanding the audience's expectations turn a simple service into a memorable experience.

First of all, understanding that workers are not only assets but also essential contributors to the profitability and general performance of the company is a fundamental component of the staff orientation philosophy. Employee engagement is important in all industries but more

particularly in the hospitality one. As Jessica Kurtzman (2017) explains in her article, the hotel sector is focused on providing excellent customer service. In other words, employees serve as brand ambassadors. A single mistake might be the difference between a satisfied and an upset customer. Consequently, keeping seasoned and well-trained staff members engaged is the key to retaining them and ensuring they are happy at work. This, in turn, makes them more motivated to deliver the greatest guest experience possible.

Usually, new recruits are introduced to the company and colleagues on their first day at work by the manager of the department they will work in or a supervisor. Depending on the company and on the management style, this orientation time can vary from one day to one week or even one month. If employees receive special attention like orientation and placement and are encouraged to participate, they see their work as important and they are motivated to be more productive, resulting in high-quality work. According to Isaiah et al. (2019), the term “placement” is said to be the process of fitting the selected person to the right job or place. Indeed, once the candidates are selected for the required job, they must be placed according to their qualifications and competencies

Before defining in more detail the concept of staff orientation program, it is necessary to explain the difference between employee onboarding and employee orientation. Although they are closely related there is a distinction between the two of them. On the one hand, orientation is the initial stage of onboarding. It entails acquainting the new employee with the building, the policies, the responsibilities of the position and the coworkers. On the other hand, the onboarding process does not finish on the first day. In fact, it goes on until the new recruit has completely adapted to the job and team. This way, new staff are aware of how things operate in the company and they feel valued and welcome²⁹.

Most of the time, the Human Resources teams are involved in the creation of such programs but it is the responsibility of managers and senior leaders to execute orientation activities. As the University of Kansas points out in its class, a staff orientation program goes beyond simply sharing basic facts about the organisation. It is a structured and intentional process that introduces new employees to the company’s operations, values, and culture. Through a mix of information and experiences, the program aims to help new team members

²⁹ Resources for Employers, “What is employee onboarding and how to get it right”, <https://resources.workable.com/tutorial/what-is-onboarding>, July 2024, [Accessed March 4, 2025]

understand their roles and integrate smoothly into both the work environment and their fellow workers³⁰.

However, how many times has it happened where new staff were left on their own after a brief presentation of the position and a quick tour of the workplace and colleagues? Too many times, without a doubt. Therefore, the following section will dwell on the key factors for an effective orientation program and their benefits.

1.2. Essential components and benefits of effective orientation programs

As previously mentioned, a well-structured program is essential to integrating new employees, setting them up for success, and for them to deliver appropriate guest satisfaction. Here are some recommendations and advice provided by Rowell³¹ who is a Management Consultant.

First of all, it is necessary to have a clear schedule prepared in advance in order to remember to cover all key topics and provide new hires with direction from day one. In addition to that, having a welcome kit prepared with necessary resources and access to useful tools such as email access, reservation systems or software passwords will help them feel valued and will eliminate early frustrations. Then, personal introductions to team members and key stakeholders will foster a sense of belonging, while role-specific training ensures they receive relevant, job-focused information. This advice could be put into action by providing new recruits with all the updated Standard Operating Procedures of the department they will work in so that they can familiarise themselves. For instance, pairing new hires with mentors offers guidance and support, making the transition smoother. Furthermore, regular check-ins allow for ongoing support, and a structured feedback mechanism helps refine the program based on employee input. Another point relies on having cultural immersion through storytelling and discussions. This point is particularly important in multicultural hospitality settings but this idea of staff orientation and cultural differences will be explored in the third section of this chapter. Finally, continuous elevation and improvement keep the orientation process effective and aligned with evolving organisational needs.

³⁰ The University of Kansas, Community Tool Box, “Chapter 10, Section 6: Developing staff orientation programs”, <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/structure/hiring-and-training/staff-orientation/main>, [Accessed March 4, 2025]

³¹ LinkedIn, “Improving Hospital New Hire Best Practices”, https://www.linkedin.com/posts/stevenrowell_steven-rowell-activity-7240040159365271555-K5Tb/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAAEdMKZcBbHfnYKlbS4whY-hZUoTcOCmHa7I, October 2024, [Accessed March 4, 2025]

All in all, these elements help new hires feel confident, engaged, and motivated from day one. As mentioned in the definition of staff orientation programs, the first meeting between the manager and the new employee is particularly crucial. Indeed, it can strongly influence the employee's decision to fully commit to the company. As a consequence, if this introduction is rushed or poorly executed, the outcome can be significant. A potential hire who senses a lack of interest or preparation from the recruiter may decline the job offer, forcing the manager to restart the hiring process. Alternatively, an employee who accepts the position without fully understanding it or connecting with the company's values may struggle with engagement and performance. From the customer point of view, it can lead to a poor experience that will definitely impact the company's profitability as it will be explained in the next part about the Service Profit Chain Model. From the employee's side, he/she will feel embarrassed and unprepared and will potentially end up leaving the hotel which will increase turnover and training costs. As a result, to build a stable and committed workforce, managers must invest time in understanding and supporting employees from the very beginning of the hiring process.

"The human element is the most influential resource and the one that has the greatest responsibility in the organisation's effectiveness and efficiency. Therefore, the development of human resources and their training is fundamental to achieve organisational goals." (Roque & Ramos, 2019, p. 58). This quote pinpoints the importance of not neglecting staff orientation programs. Equipping employees with knowledge, skills, and company values from the beginning is necessary for success and smooth operation. An effective orientation process through clear goals and expectations will result in employee engagement, increased productivity, job satisfaction, and commitment to the organisational goal of the hotel (Ghani et al., 2022).

Now that the concept, stakes, and benefits of staff orientation programs have been defined, the following part will explore the Service Profit Chain Model which is closely intertwined with the orientation and satisfaction of employees as well as their assets.

2. The Service Profit Chain Model and its benefits

2.1. Definition of the Model

As proven in the previous part, the implementation of staff orientation programs is undeniably favourable to attract and retain employees from the beginning. But why is employee satisfaction and retention so important in all companies? This is the question that has been tackled and studied through a lot of different theories and models. We can mention three of them as examples.

Firstly, the Two-Factor Theory by Frederick Herzberg distinguishes job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. It views them as separate concepts influenced by different factors. Motivation factors enhance satisfaction while hygiene factors prevent dissatisfaction³².

Secondly, there is the Employee Share Purchase Plans (ESPP). The purpose of this model is to offer free or heavily discounted stock to employees who acquire shares. The idea behind these programmes is that a larger ownership will increase employee loyalty, retention, and productivity (Bryson & Freeman, 2018).

Although these two theories analyse how to get to employee satisfaction, they are not best suited for this dissertation since they do not provide deep insights on the importance and roles of employees. However, the third theory entitled the Service Profit Chain Model best matches the purpose of this study. Indeed, it sheds light on the interconnectedness of employee satisfaction, customer loyalty, and financial performance. These components are mandatory in today's competitive business environment as all companies from all industries are endlessly seeking manners to drive profitability and sustainable growth. The hospitality industry and hotel companies are not exceptions as they are highly service-oriented and depend directly on employee performance to ensure guest satisfaction, strong reputation, and thriving profitability. Obviously, these elements are essential for long-term success in such a people-driven field. This is the reason why the Service Profit Chain Model has emerged as a powerful tool.

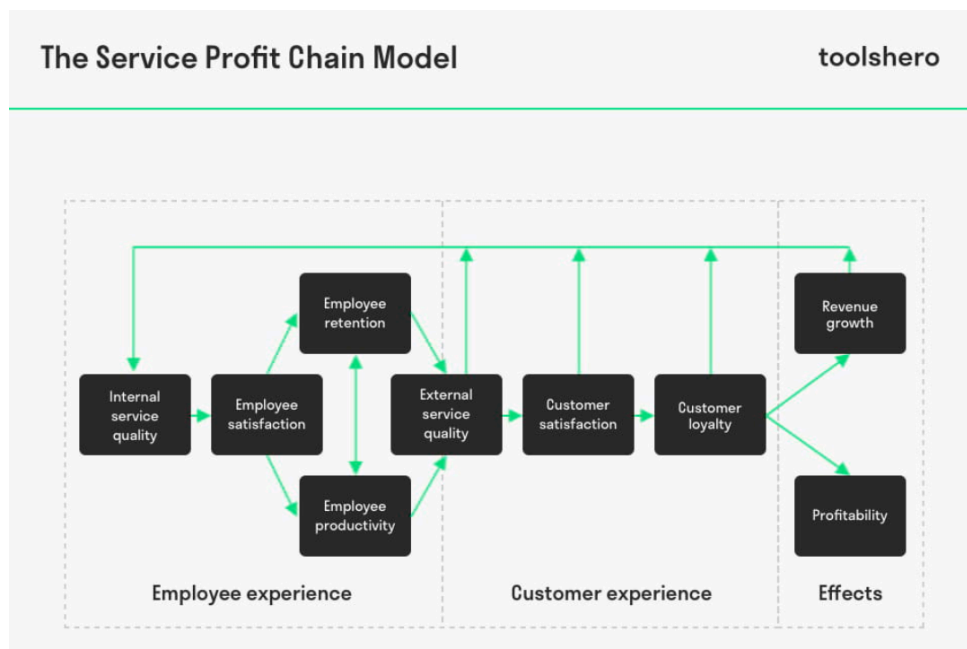
The structure of this study was developed by Leonard Schlesinger, W. Earl Sasser, and James Heskett in 1994. In order to better understand the purpose of this model, here is the definition provided by the three scholars:

³² Simply Psychology, "Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation-hygiene", <https://www.simplypsychology.org/herzbergs-two-factor-theory.html>, September 2023, [Accessed March 5, 2025]

“The Service Profit Chain Model (SPCM) establishes relationships between profitability, customer loyalty, and employee satisfaction, loyalty, and productivity. The links in the chain are as follows: profit and growth are stimulated primarily by customer loyalty. Loyalty is a direct result of customer satisfaction. Satisfaction is largely influenced by the value of services provided to customers. Value is created by satisfied, loyal, and productive employees. Employee satisfaction, in turn, results primarily from high-quality support services and policies that enable employees to deliver results to customers.” (Schlesinger et al., 1994).

The Figure 3 below is an explanatory diagram to better analyse the different connections.

Figure 3: The Service Profit Chain Model³³



As Patty Mulder (2024) explains in brief details, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are measurable variables that assess the success and performance of a company, a brand, or a product. Each of these indicators functions like a step that contributes to business growth and can be adjusted up or down as needed. Therefore, a well-balanced combination of these KPIs ensures optimal performance which will lead to profitability and long-term success. There are two approaches to studying this model: the customer experience and the employee experience.

³³ Figure 3: Service Profit Chain Model (Sasser and Schlesinger, 1997), Toolshero, <https://www.toolshero.com/strategy/service-profit-chain/>, February 2024, [Accessed March 5, 2025]

2.2. Customer experience - external focus

Before examining the heart of the employee experience, which is the part that is best suited for this dissertation, it is important to acknowledge the whole process of this chain. From making profit and having a thriving company down to the welcoming of every staff member, each step of the chain plays a crucial part. The following part will tackle the external part of the process: customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Every company ultimately aims to generate profit. Achieving this goal depends on maintaining customer satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, businesses must prioritise delivering quality experiences to foster strong customer relationships and ensure constant success. *“Customer satisfaction is a measurement of customer attitude regarding products, services, and brands while. Customer loyalty consists of loyalty behaviour which is the act of customers making repeat purchases of current brands, rather than choosing competitor brands”* (DeFranzo, 2012)³⁴. Loyal customers also act as ambassadors of the brand by praising it to other people. Researchers have shown that a 5% increase in customer loyalty can produce a profit increase of 25% to 85% (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000).

In the hospitality industry, guest loyalty goes beyond rewards and discounts. It is an emotional connection between guests and a hotel brand, built through consistent positive experiences. In today’s competitive market, fostering this loyalty is essential for long-term success. A seamless and memorable guest journey strengthens trust and encourages repeated visits which will definitely drive profitability. Loyalty can be measured through key metrics such as booking frequency or guest retention rate. Well-designed loyalty programs serve as an extension of the brand that reinforces this connection through meaningful interactions that create lasting impressions and make customers want to come back³⁵. As an example: *“89% of United-States consumers are enrolled in at least one customer loyalty program in 2020”* (Lin & Bowman, 2024, p. 1).

Customer loyalty is primarily driven by the quality of service a hotel provides, directly linking it to customer satisfaction. When a guest’s experience surpasses their expectations, they are most likely to return, fostering a sense of loyalty.

³⁴ SnapSurveys Blog, “Customer satisfaction vs. Customer loyalty”, <https://www.snapsurveys.com/blog/customer-satisfaction-customer-loyalty/>, 2012, [Accessed March 7, 2025]

³⁵ Amadeus Hospitality, “The ultimate guide to guest loyalty in 2025”, <https://www.amadeus-hospitality.com/guest-loyalty/>, July 2024, [Accessed March 7, 2025]

A consistently positive stay encourages repeat visits, turning satisfied customers into long-term patrons of the hotel (Sharma & Srivastava, 2018). Referring back to the Service Profit Chain Model, customer satisfaction directly depends on “external service quality”. The latter corresponds to many factors including smooth check-ins/check-outs, cleanliness, comfortability of the rooms... All of these characteristics are part of the service quality concept also called SERVQUAL. According to Bayad et al. (2021, p. 16): *“There are five aspects of service quality: empathy, assurance, reliability, responsiveness and tangible. These five dimensions play their role in guest’s observations of service quality. Guests’ satisfaction will increase considerably when the guests positively assess their perceived quality regarding stay in.”*

“Besides being influenced by the quality of services or services, customer satisfaction is also determined by the influence of individual employee performance” (Suryani et al., 2023, p. 119). As this quote insinuates, service quality is strongly intertwined with employee satisfaction. When employees are given the tools, support, and motivation to deliver special service, it not only improves guest satisfaction but also boosts their own job fulfillment. Feeling valued and well-prepared encourages employees to take pride in their work. All of this will lead to a greater sense of achievement and engagement and this is what will be discussed in the following part.

2.3. Employee engagement - internal focus

In the hospitality industry, where the demands can be relentless, service quality clearly depends on the dedication and satisfaction of employees. This is the point endeavoured by Laškarin Ažić (2017). Her point of view can be summarised as follows. While elegant architecture and sophisticated decor set the stage, it is the character and interactions of staff that shape the guest experience. Genuine hospitality stems from employees who feel valued and empowered, as their willingness to connect with and understand guests adds true value. To reduce high turnover rates, organisations must foster a strong, respectful culture and implement motivation techniques that build trust between managers and employees. By delegating responsibilities and allowing staff to take ownership of their roles, they gain a sense of purpose and fulfillment. When employees are truly engaged and aligned with the company’s vision, their satisfaction naturally translates into exceptional service that enhances the overall service quality and therefore guest experience.

As a matter of fact, the hospitality industry in general is facing several challenges such as the lack of workforce, the constant evolution of guest expectations, the lack of time and resources for training programs for employees and many more. The hotel sector is not an exception to these issues. Consequently, people working in this industry are faced with a strictly professional environment and heavy and sudden work pressures that can deeply affect their physical and mental states. That can go from managing unrealistic guest expectations and demanding schedules to burnouts³⁶. This is the reason why the work-life balance is extremely important when working in hotels but can be quite difficult to be correctly put in place. In order to have more positive and employee well-being-friendly workplaces, there are some components that can be implemented. For instance, ensuring manageable workloads and providing tailored resources and training will improve job satisfaction and mental health. Companies should also highlight potential career growth through clear pathways to salary progression. Moreover, putting in place incentives as well as wellness support systems for employees could lead to a more happy and productive workforce³⁷.

Finally, the smooth function of the Service Profit Chain Model relies on the first link which is “internal service quality”. By definition, this term refers to the perceived level of satisfaction an employee experiences with services offered by internal service providers (Heskett et al., 1994). As explained by Masadeh et al., (2018, p. 55): *“A hotel hopes to make external customers satisfied with the services, but it must first satisfy the internal customers (employees), because high quality internal services improve an employee’s job satisfaction, which in turn encourages employees to render services with an aggressive and enthusiastic work attitude.”* The purpose of all companies is to increase employee engagement and retention through common objectives, collaboration and support. Gjurašić (2019, p. 228) reflects this point through this statement: *“This is the best way to offer quality to employees, that they will in return transfer to customers. The job performed by a satisfied employee raises the level of productivity of the hotel company, which contributes to the company’s competitiveness. Employees should constantly be encouraged to perform high-quality work. This is possible only if the goals set by the company are clearly stated to the employees if business processes and their role in these processes are clearly defined, and if feedback on the results is enabled.”*

³⁶ HCCareers, “8 common problems hotel employees have (and how they can fix them)”, <https://www.hccareers.com/article/career-advice/8-common-problems-hotel-employees-have-and-how-they-fix-them>, November 2019, [Accessed March 7, 2025]

³⁷ LinkedIn, “10 Best Strategies for Employee Well-being”, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/10-best-strategies-employee-well-being-amit-prasad-acwjic/>, August 2024”, [Accessed March 7, 2025]

In conclusion, it is essential to remember that employees are the driving force behind any organisation. It is crucial to value and respect them as much as customers and it starts by equipping them with the right resources and providing them with complete staff orientation programs. The purpose of this thesis is to explore the extent to which managers' understanding of cultural diversity influences employee engagement and overall satisfaction. Thus, the next section will showcase how staff orientation programs can serve as a foundation for fostering inclusivity and effectively addressing cultural differences within the workforce.

3. Integration of cultural differences into staff orientation programs

Once a staff orientation program is well planned and put in place, it is also important to adopt a tailored approach that recognises the uniqueness of each employee. This step includes their learning preferences, styles, and cultural backgrounds. An effective orientation program should also be designed to properly welcome and accommodate employees from diverse cultures, ensuring they feel included and supported from the beginning. Additionally, incorporating training on cultural differences during staff orientation helps foster mutual understanding among team members, creates a more inclusive work environment, and is useful to better adapt to customers needs.

A multicultural workforce brings significant advantages to an organisation by fostering diverse perspectives, enhancing innovation, and strengthening team dynamics. According to Forbes, nearly 95% of directors acknowledge that diversity enriches decision-making, while 84% believe it improves overall board performance. Recognising and addressing cultural differences during the orientation process ensures that all employees feel valued and empowered to share their own point of views. This inclusivity creates more creativity, innovation and emotional link between team members. When employees feel included and appreciated, they are more satisfied and productive, which benefits both the organisation and the workforce³⁸.

³⁸ Forbes, "The Benefits Of Cultural Diversity In The Workplace", <https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbescoachescouncil/2019/09/13/the-benefits-of-cultural-diversity-in-the-workplace/>, September 2019, [Accessed March 8, 2025]

“As employees working in the hospitality industry, recognising culture and showing respect for a guest’s culture is a way to help overcome feelings of disorientation” (Godfrey, 2024)³⁹. This statement is also true for new recruits coming from a foreign culture. This is the reason why, implementing intercultural management practices since staff orientation programs are crucial. When managers are welcoming new recruits from a different cultural background, they can provide them with multilingual support such as handbooks and key materials translated into several languages. It could also be a great idea to pair the recruits with mentors that more or less share the same cultural background to offer extra guidance and support. Moreover, acknowledging and respecting important cultural holidays for employees and being flexible as much as possible could be another manner to show their willingness to quickly include them.

Furthermore, carrying out training about how different cultures can collaborate within the work environment is becoming urgent. Indeed, the hospitality industry is a domain where cultural exchanges are the most important. To give a more precise example, the Hilton hotel group is composed of more than 181,000 staff members across 118 countries and territories in 2024⁴⁰. These numbers prove that the need for intercultural communication and management is vital for the hotel sector. *“It’s possible to train this out, but in hospitality it’s estimated that only around 30% of companies undertake unconscious bias training and other similar diversity training programs.”* (Battaglia, 2024)⁴¹. Although it can be hard to find the monetary resources and time to make all employees undergo those types of training, implementing them within each orientation program could be a considerable opportunity to make each employee start their journey in the company with the same intercultural knowledge, skills, and diplomacy.

Additionally, if each staff member appropriately welcomes new employees from different cultures, it would help them avoid or reduce potential acculturative stress. The latter can be defined as *“The strain or tension that is associated with the process of socio-cultural and workforce integration into a new host environment.”* (Estrada et al., 2022, p. 1) *“In some ways, acculturative stress can be considered as a psychological strain individuals experience as they transition from one culture to another”* (Vicman et al., 2023, p. 565).

³⁹ EHL Insights, “Guest experiences: Importance of emotional engagement and culture”,

<https://hospitalityinsights.ehl.edu/cultural-experiences>, May 2024, [Accessed February 26, 2025]

⁴⁰ Statista, “Hilton employees 2013-2024”, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/297758/number-of-hilton-worldwide-employees/>, February 2025, [Accessed March 8, 2025]

⁴¹ The Insider, The Magazine of Glion Institute of Higher Education, “Diversity in hospitality: how cultural inclusivity defines the industry”, <https://www.glion.edu/magazine/diversity-in-hospitality-how-cultural-inclusivity-defines-the-industry/>, November 2024, [Accessed March 8, 2025]

Consequently, creating an inclusive workplace environment can go a long way towards facilitating the integration of employees.

In conclusion, a carefully structured staff orientation program is essential for ensuring employee satisfaction, which in turn drives overall customer satisfaction and business profitability, as outlined in the Service Profit Chain Model. There is one last interesting metaphor that can be quoted regarding this matter: *“An inclusive onboarding experience is like adding someone to your game of musical chairs. You can’t add someone new without stopping the music and adding a chair. Creating a meaningful experience means slowing down, making adjustments, and including your new hire.”* (Gittens-Ottley, 2018)⁴². When employees demonstrate workplace commitment and proactive engagement, they become more invested in their roles, leading to higher job fulfillment and improved performance. This positive dynamic not only enhances their personal and professional well-being but also contributes to a more motivated workforce (Yoopetch et al., 2021).

Despite the fact that this chapter explored some intercultural practices that could be implemented in staff orientation programs, the next chapter will discuss some various cultural models that provide deeper insights into key aspects such as intercultural communication, workplace interactions, and cultural expectations.

⁴² Wavelength, “Inclusion starts on day one: 10 ways to build an inclusive onboarding experience”, <https://wavelength.asana.com/inclusive-onboarding-experience/>, March 2018, [Accessed March 8, 2025]

CHAPTER 3: APPLYING CULTURAL MODELS TO HOTELS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF FRANCE AND MAURITIUS

When it comes to managing cultural differences within the hospitality industry, it can quickly become a nightmare. Nevertheless, there are various models that explain how to better navigate cultural distinctions among employees and foster effective relationships between managers and employees. This chapter will therefore mention and discuss major frameworks that tackle the whole issue of intercultural management. For instance, Neuliep's Contextual Model studies how environment influences communication, the Cultural Intelligence Model offers strategies for adaptation, and theories such as Hofstede's 6-Dimension and the GLOBE Model pinpoint cultural differences in the workplace. Moreover, given that communication extends beyond language to include non-verbal cues, this final chapter of the first part will also take a look at potential misunderstandings and ways to cultivate effective collaboration and cohesion.

Yet, as mentioned in the research question and in the title of the chapter, this dissertation will focus on the study case of the Attitude Group in Mauritius as it is where my internship will take place. Consequently, it could be more interesting and appropriate to provide examples of cultural differences between France and Mauritius when presenting the several models previously hinted at. Although the detailed study case of the country and the hotel group will be done in the second part of the dissertation, it could be welcomed to have a brief presentation of the general cultural context of Mauritius.

First of all, it is important to know that the population of Mauritius consists of a blend of Indian, African, Chinese, and European heritage. This mix of cultures is due to the multiple colonisations and trades that the island underwent over the centuries. This diversity is reflected in its languages. In fact, English serves as the official language, French is widely spoken by the majority of the population, and Creole is used as the common linguistic bridge among the different communities. Finally, this melting pot of cultures is also present in the area of religion with Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism coexisting⁴³. With tourism as its main pillar of economy, the hospitality industry is widely developed on the island. While Mauritian society

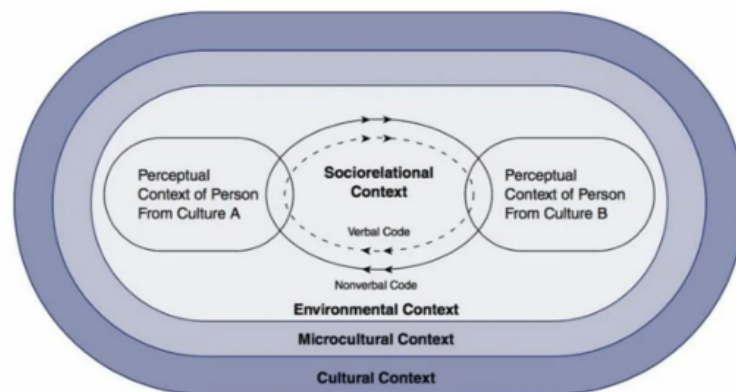
⁴³ Original Travel, "Mauritius culture: language, religion, food", <https://www.originaltravel.co.uk/travel-guide/mauritius/culture#:~:text=68%25%20of%20residents%20are%20of,around%2052%25%20identifying%20as%20Hindu.>, [Accessed March 9, 2025]

values respect, community, and hospitality, workplace hierarchies can be influenced by both Western corporate structures and traditional cultural norms. All of these create a dynamic environment where different communication styles and cultures must coexist⁴⁴.

1. Context and Cultural Intelligence during intercultural communication

“Intercultural situations arise when an individual perceives another person (or group of people) as being culturally different from themselves. Every human is regularly exposed to intercultural situations, with or without direct interactions with others.” (Sveinsdottir, 2017). The first meeting between a manager and an employee usually requires understanding, sensitivity, and adaptation. However, it is even more necessary when they come from different cultural backgrounds. Thus, with Neuliep’s Model, the contextual approach to intercultural communication involves recognising and navigating the cultural and situational factors that shape this interaction. As a matter of fact, there are a lot of other settings that are constantly shifting. These ones can influence a simple exchange and people are not always aware of them.

Figure 4: Contextual Model of Intercultural Communication (Neuliep, 2009)



⁴⁴ Cultural Atlas, “Mauritian Core Concepts”, <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/mauritian-culture/mauritian-culture-core-concepts>, January 2017, [Accessed March 9, 2025]

The Figure 4 above illustrates an intercultural interaction. In the case of this dissertation, it can be applied to a Mauritian manager and a foreign employee. This pattern showcases the various contexts present around the two individuals during the communication. Although they seem very distinct here, in reality they are deeply intertwined and it can become hard to know where one stops and the other begins.

1.1. The several contexts and their application in the hotel industry

First of all, the cultural context defines the values, beliefs, behaviours, and communication styles of a group. These ones are influenced by different elements that can be social, historical, or environmental. While individuals are born into a culture, it is learned rather than innate. Moreover, traits such as race or age are ascribed, whereas attitudes and self-expression are shaped by culture. In fact, culture is omnipresent and daily affects people's thoughts, emotions, and ways of behaving although it is often unnoticed (Neuliep, 2009). Most of the time, people believe that a culture is specific to one geographic part (continents, countries, villages) but two completely opposite countries can share some cultural aspects. As Spacey (2022) states: "*Cultural context is the set of information meanings that exist between any people in any given situation and that will influence their interactions*"⁴⁵. As an example, in a first meeting between a Mauritian manager and a foreign employee, their interaction will be built by the cultural context of Mauritius. As they navigate local workplace norms and expectations, both will try to adapt to find a common ground.

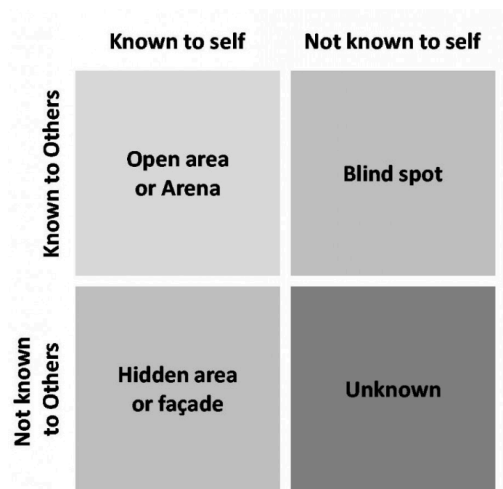
Secondly, the microcultural context can be explained as individuals who feel connected and engage in social interactions or interpersonal relationships (Hirvonen, 2020). To be more precise, microculture consists of shared norms, values, and practices within a smaller group inside a larger culture. It can stem from regional, generational, occupational, or social differences (Poysa-Tarhonen, 2012). In the case of a Mauritian manager and a foreign employee, they will likely belong to different microcultures that can lead to miscommunication. For instance, in addition to their difference of culture, their difference of age or linguistic expressions could become an issue.

⁴⁵ Simplicable, "47 Examples of Cultural Context", <https://simplicable.com/culture/cultural-context>, August 2022, [Accessed March 10, 2025]

Then, there is the environmental context. The latter refers to the “*physical, social, and cultural surroundings that influence individuals and communities, playing a crucial role in shaping human behaviour*”⁴⁶. It is quite complex to give a more precise definition but as an example, the place of the first meeting between the manager and the employee can be part of the environmental context. It may not seem important but discussing in the manager’s office or in the hotel’s lounge can have a decisive impact on the exchange. For the first scenario, the private and severe environment will create a stressful atmosphere for the new recruit whereas the scenario with the open setting will settle a more relaxed and welcoming mood. In fact, cultural norms influence these perceptions, as attitudes toward hierarchy and personal space vary (Godwin-Jones, 2021)⁴⁷.

“*When it comes to our perceptions of the world around us, you might assume that what you see is what you get. However, in truth, the way you perceive the world through all of your senses is heavily influenced (and biased) by your own past experiences, expectations, motivations, beliefs, emotions, and even your culture.*” (Cherry, 2023). This quote perfectly describes the perceptual context. Furthermore, this one has also been translated into an explanatory figure called the Johari Window by Luft and Ingham in 1955.

*Figure 5: The Johari Window Model*⁴⁸



⁴⁶ StudySmarter UK, “Environmental context: Definition & role”, <https://www.studysmarter.co.uk/explanations/english/creative-writing/environmental-context/>, [Accessed March 10, 2025]

⁴⁷ Social Sci LibreTexts, “Chapter 6.1, Environmental Contexts”, [https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Communication/Intercultural_Communication/Language_and_Culture_in_Context_-_A_Primer_on_Intercultural_Communication_\(Godwin-Jones\)/06%3A_Contextualizing_Intercultural_Communication/6.01%3A_Environmental_Contexts](https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Communication/Intercultural_Communication/Language_and_Culture_in_Context_-_A_Primer_on_Intercultural_Communication_(Godwin-Jones)/06%3A_Contextualizing_Intercultural_Communication/6.01%3A_Environmental_Contexts), February 2020, [Accessed March 10, 2025]

⁴⁸ Figure 5, Communication Theory, “The Johari Window Model”, <https://www.communicationtheory.org/the-johari-window-model/>, January 2013, [Accessed March 10, 2025]

In the case of a Mauritian manager (Culture A) and a foreign employee (Culture B), their perception of each other can include stereotypes and other types of expectations. Thus, the purpose of this model is to highlight the fact that this “unknown” part can quickly become a cultural barrier. As Ferry (2016)⁴⁹ explains: “*a stereotype is a mental shortcut we take when trying to make sense of what other people say or do*”. This is what happens in everyone’s mind when meeting someone from a diverse cultural background. However, it is crucial to go beyond them and approach the intercultural exchange with an open spirit. There is a clear difference between what people consider themselves to be and the way they are perceived by foreigners as being.

Finally, the sociorelational context concerns the way different cultures interact. It studies their verbal and non-verbal communication or more generally the dialogue between the two people, as it will be emphasised in the third part of this chapter.

By understanding all of the various contexts, the interaction between people from different cultures can become healthier.

1.2. The Cultural Intelligence Model

“You have probably heard of the psychologists’ concept of intelligence, the ability to reason, and its measure, the intelligence quotient (IQ). More recently has come recognition of emotional intelligence, the concept that it is important how we handle our emotions. A measure of emotional intelligence is the emotional intelligence quotient (EQ). Cultural intelligence (or CQ as its measure might be called) is a relatively new idea that builds on these earlier concepts but that incorporates the capability to interact effectively across cultures” (Thomas & Inkson, 2009, p. 214).

This model was developed by Christopher Earley and Soon Ang (2009). It helps individuals recognise, understand, and adapt to cultural differences. The goal is to enhance relationship-building, communication, and effectiveness in multicultural settings through three key components: cognition, motivation, and behaviour (cf. Appendix C, p. 150). Cognition refers to understanding cultural values, beliefs, and customs, both in a general sense and within specific contexts (Pérez-Arce, 1999). Then, motivation involves notions such as mindfulness, empathy,

⁴⁹ LinkedIn, “A stereotype free discussion about cultural differences? Yes we can!”, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/stereotype-free-discussion-cultural-differences-yes-we-victor-ferry/>, April 2016, [Accessed March 10, 2025]

and adaptability. These emotions help to accurately interpret cultural cues (Pogosyan, 2022)⁵⁰. Finally, the last component of this CQ Model is behaviour. The latter corresponds to the ability to adjust to verbal and non-verbal communication, allowing individuals to effectively engage and communicate across cultures⁵¹.

A high CQ is essential in today's globalised world, particularly for managers navigating diverse workplaces. Cultural training for both managers and employees fosters inclusive environments and improves communication. In a first meeting between a manager and a foreign employee, cultural intelligence and the knowledge of Neuliep's several contexts enable the manager to be more flexible, open, and sensitive to situational and cultural factors. By understanding employees' backgrounds and personalities, managers create a positive setting where workers feel respected and listened to (Mohamad Yusof et al., 2023).

2. Cultural integration in hotels through Hofstede's Model

"Culture eats strategy for breakfast". This powerful sentence comes from the management consultant Peter Drucker (2006). In other words, the implied meaning is that even the best strategic plans fail without a strong, shared company culture⁵². The latter definitely includes the understanding of cultural differences within the workplace and the determination of all managers and employees to accept and respect diversity. Once again, the necessity of undergoing cross-cultural training is becoming urgent when working in the hospitality industry. The following statement coming from Erin Meyer's book *The Cultural Map* (2016, p. 12) also proves this point: *"Today, whether we work in Düsseldorf or Dubai, Brasilia or Beijing, New York or New Delhi, we are all part of a global network (real or virtual, physical or electronic) where success requires navigating through wildly different cultural realities. Unless we know how to decode other cultures and avoid easy-to-fall-into traps, we are easy prey to misunderstanding, needless conflict, and ultimate failure"*.

⁵⁰ Cultural Intelligence Center, "The What, How and Why of Cultural Intelligence", <https://culturalq.com/blog/the-what-how-and-why-of-cultural-intelligence/>, July 2022, [Accessed March 10, 2025]

⁵¹ The Oxford review, "Cultural Intelligence (CQ) - Definition and Explanation", <https://oxford-review.com/the-oxford-review-dei-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-dictionary/cultural-intelligence-cq-definition-and-explanation/>, [Accessed March 10, 2025]

⁵² The Corporate Governance Institute, "What does culture eats strategy for breakfast mean?", <https://www.thecorporategovernanceinstitute.com/insights/lexicon/what-does-culture-eats-strategy-for-breakfast-mean/#:~:text=Peter%20Drucker%2C%20the%20management%20consultant,encourages%20people%20to%20implement%20it.,> [Accessed March 10, 2025]

2.1. The six dimensions and their role in intercultural management

Geert Hofstede, a Dutch social psychologist, revolutionised intercultural management with his cultural dimensions framework. His research, based on IBM employee surveys from the late 1960s and 1970s, explored how cultural values shape behaviour. The goal of this model is to help “comparing” cultures to better apprehend them and improve overall communication and cooperation among people. Hofstede identified six major dimensions, ranking cultures from high to low in each⁵³.

In the first place, there is Power Distance (PDI). This dimension can be defined as “*the degree to which unequal power distribution and leadership by powerful organisations and institutions are accepted by the less powerful members of these organisations or institutions*” (Sent & Kroese, 2020, p. 17). According to the study of Jayatilleke and Gunarwardena (2016, p. 54): “*Only 25% of Mauritians confirmed their agreement on high power distance. This finding may reflect the sociocultural context of Mauritius, a more egalitarian society.*”. As a consequence, if a Mauritian manager recruits a French employee who is used to a higher power distance where hierarchy is clearly defined (68 of PDI), it could cause some misunderstandings. Indeed, this contrast in terms of leadership style could be interpreted as a lack of authority and an informal approach by the French employee. On the contrary, the Mauritian manager could find inappropriate and rude the severeness and rigidity of the French employee.

Secondly, the model examines the difference between individualistic and collectivist cultures (IDV). As specified by Hofstede et al. (2010): “*The dimension identifies the ways in which people of a society relate to each other, in living arrangements, decision making processes, and values. Some societies strongly value the individual while there are other cultures that put much more emphasis on the group.*”⁵⁴. In the case of a French employee working in Mauritius, there is a strong gap between both countries regarding this matter. Indeed, France scores high on the individualist side of the scale which means that each person is responsible for his own decision and directness in communication is preferred. Yet, in Mauritian workplaces, it tends to be the contrary as the country scores high on the collectivist side of the scale. This result means a preference for in-group harmony and indirect communication to avoid issues in group

⁵³ Corporate Finance Institute, “Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory”, <https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/management/hofstedes-cultural-dimensions-theory/>, [Accessed March 11, 2025]

⁵⁴ Center for Global Engagement, James Madison University, “Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions”, <https://www.jmu.edu/global/isss/resources/global-campus-toolkit/files/hofstede-individualism.pdf>, [Accessed March 12, 2025]

dynamics⁵⁵. This distinction could cause problems if the Mauritian manager perceives the French employee as confrontational while the latter perceives him as passive-aggressive in its avoidance of conflict.

This third dimension was originally called “Orientation: Masculine / Feminine (MAS)”. According to the latest research, this dimension is now entitled “Motivation towards Achievement and Success”⁵⁶ to avoid the binary aspect of gender. However, it does not change the goal of this dimension which is to evaluate how gender roles are distributed throughout society. Masculine cultures emphasise power, wealth, and traditional gender roles, with men holding more leadership positions and earning higher wages. In contrast, feminine cultures promote gender equality, work-life balance, and relationships over material wealth (Laigo, 2020). It is quite difficult to find several common findings about this topic for France and Mauritius, but for instance in the workplace, a manager from a masculine culture may use direct communication, expecting compliance, while employees from a feminine culture prioritise empathy and subtlety. This contrast can lead to misunderstanding and ineffective communication (Bedi, 2016).

Then, the following dimension assesses uncertainty avoidance (UAI). *“Inclination and resilience toward ambiguity and change vary from society to society. Therefore, a more certain and predictable social order is agreed upon with rules and structures to shape the behaviour of its members. The levels of predictability and rule orientation reflect the level of ambiguity stress”* (Broeder, 2022, p. 5). In management, Mauritians tend to value structure and rules, like French people. However, due to the various ethnicities present on the island, Mauritian managers are not afraid to adapt and handle diverse cultural expectations. It is important to know each other’s vision about this topic in order to share a common agreement on time-lines and schedules for instance.

Hofstede added this fifth dimension, long-term vs. short-term objectives (LTO), with Michael Bond to distinguish East from West, originally naming it “Confucian Work Dynamism” due to its roots in Eastern Confucian values. One way to define this could be: *“long-term orientation is associated with a cultural tendency to attribute value to virtues oriented toward*

⁵⁵ Rivermate, “Cultural considerations in Business in Mauritius”, <https://www.rivermate.com/guides/mauritius/cultural-considerations>, [Accessed March 12, 2025]

⁵⁶ The Cultural Factor Group, “Motivation towards Achievement and Success”, <https://www.theculturefactor.com/frequently-asked-questions#whydidyouchangethenameofthemasdimensionfrommasculinitytomotivationtowardsachievementandsuccess>, [Accessed May 6, 2025]

future rewards, such as perseverance and thrift. Short-term orientation reflects promoting values related to the past and present, such as respect for tradition and protection of “face”.” (Bukowski & Rudnicki, 2019, p. 132). Concerning this aspect within the management style in a company, Mauritius seems to be leaning toward a high long-term orientation which reflects a commitment to tradition and hard work, with the belief that present efforts will lead to future rewards (Janssen, 2010). On the contrary, short-term-oriented culture focuses on immediate results. This difference can create a gap within the performance of the company if these objectives are not clearly agreed on beforehand.

The last factor is indulgence (IND). It refers to a society’s tendency to allow relatively free gratification of desires related to enjoyment and happiness⁵⁷. *“While people in indulgence-oriented cultures are generally characterised as fun-oriented, people in restraint-oriented cultures are less interested in leisure, fun, and entertainment in any form of it”* (Koc et al., 2017, p. 3). In the case of Mauritius, the country tends to be on the indulgent side of the scale as employees usually receive benefits such as flexible working hours as well as the option of remote working, as long as it does not affect the quality of work⁵⁸. Thus, there could be a misunderstanding between both types of culture if enjoyment of life is mistaken with lack of commitment.

2.2. An effective tool for cross-cultural success and teamwork

The Hofstede Model is a valuable tool for navigating cross-cultural communication, particularly in the hospitality industry, but also in everyone’s daily life. By understanding cultural dimensions, managers can adapt their communication styles to better connect with international employees⁵⁹. This involves bridging gaps in direct vs. indirect communication or high vs. low-context cultures. Although managerial practices remain universal across industries and company sizes, they must be flexible enough to align with both the workforce and the core

⁵⁷ Marc Prager Executive Coaching & Coaching d’équipe, “Modèle de management interculturel, Les dimensions d’Hofstede”, <https://marc-prager.com/comprendre-les-six-dimensions-du-modele-de-management-interculturel-dhofstede/>, June 2019, [Accessed March 12, 2025]

⁵⁸ EssayPandas, “Indulgent Culture at the Nexus between Foreign Portfolio Investment and Financial Market Development Evidence from Mauritius”, <https://www.essaypandas.com/case/The-Nexus-Between-Foreign-Portfolio-Investment-and-Financial-Market-Development-Evidence-from-Mauritius-45670-Hofstede-Cultural-Model>, [Accessed March 12, 2025]

⁵⁹ Mindtools, “Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions in Today’s Global Workplace”, <https://www.mindtools.com/a1ecvyx/hofstedes-cultural-dimensions>, [Accessed March 13, 2025]

values of the organisation's culture (Chahbar, 2024). The key is to approach differences with an open mind and the idea that there is no single way of thinking that is superior to another.

As Pardoe (2023)⁶⁰ states: *"It empowers you to navigate the intricate web of cultural differences with greater finesse and effectiveness. Whether you are communicating in a higher power distance culture or a collectivist society, the key is awareness and adaptability. By mastering the cultural dimensions, you pave the way for more fruitful and easier international interactions."* The Hofstede Model not only enables individuals to comprehend the differences and similarities between various cultures, but also plays a crucial role in promoting teamwork among employees.

As previously mentioned, cultural differences, especially between managers and employees, can hinder workplace efficiency when management approaches fail to align with employees' cultural expectations. Miscommunication and ineffective leadership strategies often result in misaligned objectives which affect overall performance (Barkley & Eggertsson, 2017). Since employees and customers come from diverse cultural backgrounds, managers must adapt to their teams just as businesses tailor services to local markets. As Usmani (2022) highlights: *"Using Hofstede's model makes the unknown less intimidating, helps avoid mistakes, and provides a much-needed confidence boost when working in an unfamiliar country."* However, cultural differences can also potentially lead to "clashes" that can be broken down into distinct points as this third part will emphasise.

3. Intercultural communication competence

According to Richard Brislin (2008, p. 8), the author of *Working with Cultural Differences*: *"Even though the challenges of extensive intercultural contract are formidable, they can be overcome if people understand the sources of cultural differences and understand a range of behavioral responses to deal with them. If they learn to identify and work well with individuals who have good advice to offer, such as cultural informants and professional interpreters, they will increase their chances of success."* Among these "sources", language barriers and interpretations of body language can definitely lead to miscommunication and tension since it is culture that defines preferred interaction and communication styles (Hinner, 2017).

⁶⁰ LinkedIn, "The Hofstede Dimensions: A Key to Cross-Cultural Communication", <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/hofstede-dimensions-key-effective-cross-cultural-julia-pardoe/>, October 2023, [Accessed March 13, 2025]

3.1. Causes of cultural misunderstandings

To begin with, language differences often cause cultural misunderstandings in multinational teams. Limited vocabulary and grammar skills can hinder participation, while subtle differences in tone and speech patterns lead to misinterpretations (Tenzer et al., 2021). With globalisation on the rise, more employees and managers are being forced to interact despite language barriers.

On the one hand, when thinking about this obstacle, people immediately have the image of two people not speaking the same language which, of course, can happen. *“In a business setting language barriers most often occur when one language, in most cases English, is adapted as the lingua franca, hence the language chosen to enable the communication between different non-native speakers and native speakers.”* (Wagner, 2018, p. 1). This scenario can easily lead to stress and frustration. For instance, between a manager and an employee from different cultures, although the common language is spoken by both of them the risk of miscommunication remains high. Errors in translation, pronunciation, or interpretation are frequent and can escalate quickly.

On the other hand, this issue can also take place among two persons speaking the same language. Indeed, people can technically speak the same language and still face misunderstandings and gaps in communication due to dialectal differences (Gratis, 2024)⁶¹. The following sentence can be used as an example. An American manager telling: *“I’ll table this discussion for now.”* to a British employee. In American English “table” means to postpone a discussion, but in British English, “table” means to bring it up for discussion. Thus it could lead to confusion about whether the topic is being delayed or addressed immediately. This is the reason why, for hospitality managers, learning foreign languages is crucial for developing intercultural competence. Today, fluency in one or two foreign languages is just as important as expertise in management (Bilodid & Vorobel, 2022).

In a managerial context, such language barriers can significantly affect how information is conveyed and understood, potentially leading to confusion and inefficiency.

Another cause leading to misinterpretations is non-verbal communication. As a matter of fact, the latter is as important as verbal communication, if not more. As seen many times in communication classes, Albert Mehrabian’s (1967) well-known Model of Personal Communication suggests that communication impact is distributed as follows: 7% from spoken

⁶¹ Nulab, “Overcoming language barriers to communication”, <https://nulab.com/learn/collaboration/overcoming-language-barriers-communication/>, May 2024, [Accessed March 13, 2025]

words, 38% from voice and tone, and 55% from body language. Thus, this theory is also referred to as the “7-38-55 Rule”. The latter proves that the way words are conveyed are most of the time more important than the words themselves. However, nonverbal communication is too many times underestimated and neglected. As Fleming (2013) states: *“Some fluency in English, coupled with an attitude of being polite, is what many establishments believe is enough intercultural communication competence for such situations.”*. To give more precision, the term “non-verbal communication” is a way of communicating with others beyond the use of words. Non-verbal communication encompasses all forms of body language, including gestures, facial expressions, body movement, and physiological reactions. It can be conscious or unconscious, reflecting emotions in response to a specific situation (Armanini, 2024)⁶².

Most of the time, body language is perceived as universal and a trustworthy way of exchanging between people across the world and across cultures. However, there are some signs or movements that hold different meanings depending on the culture and the context. Here are some examples. In Bulgaria, nodding means “no” and shaking your head from left to right means “yes”. Yet, for the majority of the world, it is the contrary to express “yes” and “no”. Then, the “OK” gesture has several interpretations: “okay” in the United-States, “zero” or “worthless” in France, “money” in Japan and “vulgarity” in Germany or Brazil. Therefore, these examples underline the fact that gestures can be ambiguous and the causes of endless misunderstandings (Al Serhan & Abu-Arqoub, 2019).

There are a lot of other proxemics such as eye contacts, proximity, facial expressions... While Western cultures tend to heavily use eye contact to convey emotions, Eastern cultures consider it inappropriate and can sometimes be perceived as confrontational and disrespectful. The same goes for handshakes and personal space. For instance, in Mauritius, bows are preferred and seen as a mark of thoughtfulness when greeting people. On the contrary, in France, handshakes are more conventional and used every time when meeting colleagues or managers⁶³. Overall, there are a large number of non-verbal cues that need to be taken into account when dealing with intercultural communication. For them to not become barriers, and disrupt collaboration, there is a clear need for communication strategies.

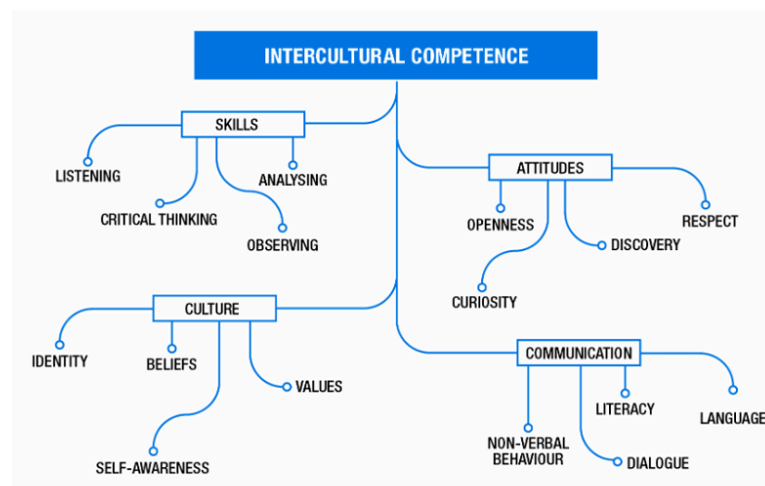
⁶² Hubspot, “Communication non verbale: définition, caractéristiques et exemples”, <https://blog.hubspot.fr/service/communication-non-verbale#:~:text=Qu'est%2Dce%20que%20la,ou%20encore%20des%20manifestations%20physiologiques.>, December 2024, [Accessed March 13, 2025]

⁶³ VeryWell Mind, “How to read body language and facial expressions”, <https://www.verywellmind.com/understand-body-language-and-facial-expressions-4147228>, [Accessed March 13, 2025]

3.2. Intercultural competence in communication

Intercultural teams in hospitality enhance creativity, customer satisfaction, and business growth but also present managerial challenges. To navigate these complexities, leaders must understand cultural differences, communicate proactively, and foster an environment of tolerance and respect. One way of doing it could be by gaining intercultural competence.

Figure 6: Intercultural Competence⁶⁴



Having intercultural competence means to have the ability to function effectively within diverse environments. This concept can be applied to a person or an organisation. It is composed of three main levels. First, the cognitive level involves understanding one's own culture and the ones of others, including differences, similarities, norms, beliefs, and values. Then, there is the emotional level. This one encompasses traits, attitudes, emotions, and feelings. Finally, the third level is called the behavioral level and its purpose is to apply knowledge, skills, attitudes, and cultural experiences in intercultural interactions and collaboration. (Braslauskas, 2021).

To approach Figure 6 in more detail, it can be said that each of the four key areas were discussed in this chapter. Indeed, “attitudes” relate to understanding intercultural communication, supported by the Neuliep and Cultural Intelligence Models. “Culture” involves recognising beliefs, values, and identity which were analysed through Hofstede’s Model.

⁶⁴ Figure 6: McKinnon, “What is Intercultural Competence?”, Glasgow Caledonian University and the UNESCO “Intercultural Competence, Conceptual and Operational Framework” 2013, Monash University, <https://www.monash.edu/arts/monash-intercultural-lab/about-the-monash-intercultural-lab/what-is-intercultural-competence>, [Accessed March 14, 2025]

Then, “communication” addresses cultural clashes, including language barriers and non-verbal cues. Finally, “skills” refers to finding strategies to enhance communication in diverse teams, as this part explores. In today’s globalised world, mastering intercultural competence is crucial to succeed. Once again, as Justinas Braslauskas (2021, p. 200) mentions: *“Insufficient intercultural competence causes problems related to different time planning and management, different temperaments of communicators, different work culture or rules of conduct, and different perceptions of managerial and subordinate relationships.”*

Moreover, effective communication is a cornerstone of hospitality management, with research indicating that managers spend 80% of their time communicating with guests, peers, superiors, and subordinates (Grobelsna, 2015). In order to improve intercultural interaction, managers must first develop Emotional Intelligence (EQ), which is the ability to recognise and regulate our own emotions. *“People with high emotional intelligence are more likely to stay calm under pressure, resolve conflict effectively, and respond to co-workers with empathy”* (Landry, 2019)⁶⁵. This is essential in multicultural settings, where cultural awareness helps influence team dynamics and prevents misunderstandings.

Another key skill is empathy. This is the ability to understand and share others’ emotions through both thought and feeling. Cognitive empathy involves recognising emotions through observation, while affective empathy is an instinctive emotional response. True empathy goes beyond understanding; it requires actively showing compassion and connection (Fuller et al., 2021). In management, empathic leaders acknowledge employees’ challenges and try to adapt their approach to support integration. Furthermore, active listening further strengthens communication by demonstrating genuine interest in what the other person is saying. It allows people to *“mirror back what has been said without adding their own viewpoints”* (Meyerhuber, 2019, p. 91). This reduces ethnocentrism, which can otherwise lead to prejudice and misjudgements, even more in an intercultural setting (Chen, 2010).

By cultivating these skills, managers and employees can foster mutual understanding and create a more cohesive, effective multicultural workplace.

⁶⁵ Harvard Business School Online, “Why Emotional Intelligence is Important in Leadership”, <https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/emotional-intelligence-in-leadership>, April 2019, [Accessed March 14, 2025]

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, cultural evolution has impacted hotel management by redefining the role of managers and emphasising the importance of staff orientation programs in the hospitality industry. As globalisation fosters increasingly diverse workplaces, hotel managers must go beyond traditional responsibilities to become cultural ambassadors. Their roles now include leadership, mentorship, and creating an inclusive environment where employees feel valued and empowered. Well-thought and structured orientation programs are also crucial as they equip staff with the cultural awareness and skills necessary to provide a perfect service and enhance the company's performance.

Nevertheless, in order to clearly navigate cultural challenges, managers must cultivate a deep understanding of cultural differences. The various models such as Neuliep and Hofstede's ones not only underscore the importance of perception and interpretation of cultural diversity but also provide insight into potential cultural clashes. All of these studies help managers clarify employee behaviours within their cultural contexts.

Another key element of intercultural management is communication, both verbal and non-verbal. To mitigate the various differences in terms of language or body language, managers need to develop essential skills such as active listening, emotional intelligence, and empathy. Although these tools cannot eliminate cultural misunderstandings entirely, they enable managers to anticipate potential conflicts and approach foreign employees with greater openness and reduced bias.

Despite the benefits of intercultural training, some companies hesitate to invest in it due to time and cost concerns. However, in today's globalised hospitality industry, cultural awareness is no longer optional; it is essential for business success and long-term sustainability.

With these theoretical frameworks in mind, the next part of this dissertation will focus on a real-world application of intercultural management, examining the case of the Attitude Group in Mauritius. Through a methodological approach, this case study will explore how the company manages cultural diversity within its workforce and implements strategies to enhance intercultural communication and teamwork in a hospitality setting.

PART 2: STUDY CASE: ZILWA ATTITUDE HOTEL

INTRODUCTION

Following the theoretical framework established in the first part of this dissertation, exploring key concepts related to management in the hospitality industry and models of intercultural apprehension between managers and employees, this second part will focus on the practical application of those theories.

More precisely, the first chapter will introduce the case study at the heart of this research: the Attitude Group, with a particular emphasis on one of its famous properties, the Zilwa Attitude hotel. This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the hotel's context, values, and operational structure, which are essential for analysing intercultural management practices in a real-world setting and that also reflects the cultural context of Mauritius.

Then, the second chapter will outline the methodological approach used to examine the assumptions of this study case. Within this part, there will be a detailed view of the research objectives and approach as well as the data collection methods and analytical tools employed to explore intercultural dynamics between managers and employees within the hotel environment.

CHAPTER 1: PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY CASE: ZILWA ATTITUDE

1. Introduction to Mauritius

1.1. Geographical and historical overview

Mauritius is a multicultural island nation of 2,040 square kilometers in the Indian Ocean. It is located off the southeast coast of the African continent, east of Madagascar (see Figure 7). The country also has some outlying territories such as Rodrigues Island, the Cargados Carajos Shoals, and the Agalega Islands.

Figure 7: Map of Mauritius⁶⁶



⁶⁶ Worldometers, Map of Mauritius, <https://www.worldometers.info/maps/mauritius-map/>. [Accessed April 8, 2025]

The main island is of volcanic origin and is almost entirely surrounded by a coral reef that poses maritime hazards⁶⁷ but that is also the main element of attraction for tourists. Indeed, the country is famous for its popular sandy beaches, turquoise lagoons, and inland mountains. All of these landscapes offer a diversity of natural settings that make visitors from all around the world dream of it.

The island is divided into four major parts recognised as the North, the South, the West and the East. The North of the island, where the Zilwa Attitude hotel is located (refer to Figure 8), is known for being the most touristic region with its lively atmosphere, restaurants, and nightlife as well as its popular beaches such as Grand Baie and Pereybère.

Figure 8: Location⁶⁸ and visual overview⁶⁹ of Zilwa Attitude



In contrast, the South is wilder and more untouched with a lot of greenery and impressive cliffs to hike such as Le Morne or Gris-Gris. This region offers a more authentic and natural experience of Mauritius. Furthermore, the west side of the island benefits from a more warm and dry climate that is auspicious for outdoor activities such as dolphin watching in beaches of Flic en Flac or Tamarin. Last but not least, the east coast is quieter and famous for its scenic spots

⁶⁷ Global Business Knowledge, "Mauritius: Introduction", <https://globaleledge.msu.edu/countries/mauritius/>, [Accessed April 4, 2025]

⁶⁸ Figure 8, Paris-tu-Paris, "Une semaine à l'Île Maurice: l'expérience Attitude Hotels", <http://paris-tu-paris.fr/2018/05/une-semaine-a-lile-maurice-ou-dormir/>, Samantha, May 31, 2018, [Accessed July 2, 2025]

⁶⁹ Figure 8, Instagram, Zilwa Attitude Hotel, <https://www.instagram.com/p/DBEtCVIPxN/>, October 13, 2024, [Accessed July 2, 2025]

such as Ile aux Cerfs and Belle Mare although it can be windier and slightly wetter⁷⁰.

All in all, concerning the weather, Mauritius has a tropical maritime climate with warm temperatures year-round. Summer season is considered more hot and humid and takes place between November to April, while winter season is cooler and drier from May to October⁷¹.

Although Mauritius is quite divided in terms of activities, it is certainly not the case for its several cultures. However, in order to know more about this coexistence, it is necessary to look back at the historical past of the country. Despite the complex succession of colonisations, it could be summarised in one sentence: *“Mauritius was visited by the Arabs and the Portuguese before it was inhabited by the Dutch, then colonised by the French, conquered by the English, and finally released into independence in 1968.”*⁷².

Indeed, the island was first visited by the Arabs and the Portuguese during the Middle-Ages. However, this does not mark the beginning of colonialism in Mauritius. As a matter of fact, the Dutch were the first population to settle in Mauritius from 1638 to 1710. The reason behind this colonisation was mostly to prevent the French and British from having supremacy over the island. Nonetheless, the Dutch ended up living in 1710 due to poor living conditions and food resources that led to famine and diseases⁷³.

From 1715 to 1810, Mauritius was under French occupation. During these years, French colonists brought slaves from East Africa and Madagascar to work in sugar plantations. The island name turned into Isle de France and the French language intertwined with African language created Creole language that is now the mother tongue of 70% of Mauritians (Gitanjali, 2016). However, after one of the most important wars of Mauritius, the French surrendered when the British Royal Navy took over the island in 1810. This reign enabled the island to grow in several areas. First, in terms of human rights, slavery was abolished in 1835. Then, the country welcomed new immigrants from India and China to respectively work as indentured servants in sugar cane plantations and as traders. Thus, the cultural background of the population now included even more nationalities. Finally, the economic relations with England benefited Mauritius and allowed them to build more infrastructures and to slightly pave the way towards self-rule⁷⁴.

⁷⁰ Mauritius Now, “Discover what’s happening in Mauritius now”, <https://mauritiusnow.com/>, [Accessed April 13, 2025]

⁷¹ Go2Africa, “When to go to Mauritius”, <https://www.go2africa.com/destinations/mauritius/when-to-go#:~:text=When%20is%20the%20Best%20Time,with%20warm%20weather%20year%2Dround.>, [Accessed April 8, 2025]

⁷² Pro Mauritius, “History of Mauritius”, <https://pro-mauritius.com/home/living/history/>, [Accessed April 13, 2025]

⁷³ Maurinet, “History of Mauritius”, <https://www.maurinet.com/about-mauritius/history>, [Accessed April 13, 2025]

⁷⁴ Republic of Mauritius, “About Mauritius - History”, <https://govmu.org/EN/Pages/exploremauritius.aspx>, [Accessed April 23, 2025]

Despite some conflicts among certain communities, overall, all of these points combined led to a strong solidarity that permitted Mauritius to become independent on March 12, 1968 thanks to the Prime Minister Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam.

1.2. The challenges of cultural diversity in Mauritius

“No culture is unique: it is always given in coalition with other cultures, and this is what allows it to build cumulative series” (Lévi-Strauss, 1952). As this quote implies, all cultures progress and develop thanks to multiple exchanges and mixtures. This idea is perfectly reflected in the case of Mauritius. Indeed, the various colonisations mentioned in the previous part resulted in a rich mosaic of cultures for the country. Here are some numbers and statistics demonstrating this tapestry of culture.

According to Data Commons⁷⁵, the total population of Mauritius was 1,261,041 in 2023. Among this large number of inhabitants for this small island, there are a lot of different ethnic groups, religions, and languages. Indeed, roughly two thirds of the total population are Indo-Mauritians, while the last third is composed of Creoles, Sino-Mauritians, and Franco-Mauritians. Furthermore, Mauritius is a very religious country with approximately 49% of Hindus, 26% of Roman Catholics, 18% of Muslims and 7% of other religions. Finally, this impressive multicultural population communicates mostly through Creole, Bhojpuri, French and English⁷⁶.

Due to all of these differences of cultures, Mauritius is often given the surname of the “Rainbow Island”. This term is quite interesting as it not only refers to the diversity of the population but also to the national flag. Indeed, the historical significance of the flag’s colours is the following; red represents the struggle for freedom through human loss, blue is for the Indian Ocean, yellow symbolises the new light of independence shining on Mauritius, and finally, green refers to lush agriculture and vegetation. Nevertheless, there is a sort of legend about another possibility of the flag’s interpretation based on the colours of the several religious structures. Respectively, red, blue, yellow, and green could represent Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam (Couacaud, 2016).

⁷⁵ Data Commons, “Maurice”, https://datacommons.org/place/country/MUS?utm_medium=explore&mprop=count&popt=Person&hl=fr, 2023, [Accessed April 28, 2025]

⁷⁶ Michigan State University, “Global Business Knowledge, Mauritius: Introduction”, <https://globaledge.msu.edu/countries/mauritius>, [Accessed April 28, 2025]

In the previous paragraph, I used the term “tapestry of cultures” to discuss the diversity of Mauritius. As a matter of fact, this phrase was not trivial but precise. Contrary to what many people could think about this country, all the cultures do not always peacefully coexist. This is the reason why it is necessary to briefly cover the challenges of this cohabitation of cultures.

Despite the fact that all citizens of Mauritius seem to be united behind the term “Mauritian”, there are in fact only a few people identifying as only Mauritian. In other words, people tend to have a bicultural identification. As previously mentioned, there are various ethnic groups and people align more with them, whether Indian, African, Chinese or European, rather than with being Mauritian. This could be due to the fact that this island has not one singular and foundational “mother culture”. Instead, Mauritius’ culture is a mosaic of cultures that makes it at the same time unique and complicated. It is quite difficult to determine what can be considered as typically Mauritian. Yet, the reality is that Mauritian culture has been created by taking a bit of each and every culture. People only realize it when they travel to the ancestral country of their ethnic culture and see that the beliefs, customs, and traditions diverge from the ones in Mauritius. This cultural layering can be sensed in the island’s social cohesion. Indeed, inhabitants feel more rooted to the ethnic culture of their ancestors than to the cultural fusion that created the Mauritian one. Nowadays, people are still relatively reluctant to let interethnic marriage happen and mixed children often end up identifying with the cultural background of one of the parents (Van Der Werf et al., 2019).

Therefore, from a social standpoint, Mauritius can be described as a “fruit salad nation”: all religious festivals are celebrated and the number of public holidays reflect this diversity. Nevertheless, contrary to a melting pot where all cultures blend together without one stronger than the other, Mauritius tends to emphasize the cultural boundaries between each fruit of the salad. It is not unordinary to read in several articles that it is better to “*keep each colour of the rainbow distinct*” (Ng Tseung-Wong & Verkuyten, 2010).

Historically, these cultural and ethnic divisions have erupted into violence. In 1968, the country witnessed an impressive riot between Creoles and Muslims over divergent political ideas on the eve of independence. Moreover, in 1999, widespread riots followed the death of the Creole singer Kaya. While he died in police custody, many assumptions affirmed that he was beaten to death by police officers. This affair implied a severe racial “war” between the marginalised Creoles and the dominant Hindus who were in charge of the Government since 1968 (Vellien, 1999). This exclusion of the Creole community even led to the term “Malaise Creole” in the 1990s. As a consequence, although the Creole language is used as a vernacular

language and is the most spoken in the country, it was also historically stigmatised and associated with lower classes.

This point is deeply intertwined with the idea that, from a linguistic perspective, the different languages spoken in the country are also one of the main factors of inclusion or exclusion. On the one hand, the Mauritian Creole language itself reflects segmentation. Maurer perfectly explains the “Noubann vs Zotbann” phenomenon in her article entitled “Mauritius: Culture Crossings and its Consequences” (2015, p. 55): “*“Nou” meaning “us”, and “bann” meaning “group”. “Zot” is the Mauritian kreol’s way to say “them”. Hence, there is the opposition between “us” and “them”. This is the Mauritian way for each group to include people belonging to the same culture and to exclude those, who do not belong to their culture. This shows the important role of cultures when they cross in a multicultural society.*”.

On the other hand, the English language is the official language used for administration and education, reflecting power and high social status. Then, the French language is widely used for media and discourses in upper-classes. Yet, although the Creole language is used as a lingua franca and is the most spoken in the country, it was also historically stigmatised and associated with lower classes. Nowadays, the Creole language still lacks recognition and is not represented as one of the official languages by the government (Thornton, 2019). Consequently, this type of hierarchy leads to linguistic division among social classes and ethnicities reflecting deeper and rooted inequalities despite the Human Rights Act of 1998 and the Equal Opportunity Act of 2008. As Carroll and Carroll (2008, p. 25) summarise it: “*After Independence, the increased inequalities associated with economic growth created social strains. The failure of the education system to adapt to the new social needs has helped to perpetuate inequalities, and inequality partly coincides with ethnic divisions.*”.

Nevertheless, over the years, the Government of Mauritius has put in place several measures to address and promote inclusion in its multi-ethnic society. For instance, there is the Best Loser System which ensures fair ethnic representation in parliament. Moreover, the Government provides subsidies to support religious institutions based on their number of adherents and created various cultural centers to foster cultural education and unity. On another note, the recruitment in the public sector is managed by commissions to try to avoid concerns about fairness (Suntoo & Chitto, 2012).

Nowadays, even though some remnants of historical division persist, the national identity has increasingly been shaped by shared values, economic progress, and cross-cultural integration, until becoming a strength, particularly in urban and professional environments such as the hospitality industry.

1.3. The hospitality industry in Mauritius

Tourism plays a vital role in the economic and social development of Mauritius, impacting various sectors across the island. As one of the main contributors to the country's GDP, tourism fuels growth in industries such as transportation, agriculture, and obviously, hospitality. As a matter of fact, according to the organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2024), at the end of 2024, the revenues generated by the tourism sector approximately represented 13.5% of the total GDP. In addition to the contribution to the direct economy of the country, tourism also creates employment opportunities, promotes cultural exchange, and encourages environmental awareness for the preservation of the island's natural landscapes and heritage. Unsurprisingly, the Mauritian economy, tourism, and hospitality industry suffered from the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as the Tourism Annual Report on Performance (2024, p. 20) states: *"The recovery rate stands at 97%, with tourists arrivals exceeding 2019 figures in the months of March and May 2024."* This challenge proved that the tourism industry is crucial to Mauritius sustainable development.

Hospitality plays a vital role in Mauritius, not only as a key pillar of the economy but also as a deeply rooted cultural value. On the one hand, hospitality as a business attracts a large amount of foreign investments and international travelers, as previously emphasised. As a matter of fact, the hotel sector is the most concerned. Indeed, among the wide range of accommodations on the island, Mauritius roughly counted 110 hotels in 2023, which represents 77% of the accommodation possibilities. As one of the largest employment generators, approximately 22,330 jobs (Statistics Mauritius, 2023), hotel employees reflect the diversity of the country across skills, cultures, and languages. Nevertheless, they all share one common vision of hospitality. This welcoming process reflects the sincere friendliness, warmth and openness of the Mauritian people. They all take pleasure in sharing their diverse culture, food, and tradition with

others⁷⁷. It promotes their cultural heritage and identity through tourism. Therefore, once the business side is mingled with the human and heartfelt side of the hospitality process, it creates a completely authentic and immersive experience that makes Mauritian hospitality on the top preferences of customers' hearts.

This dynamic not only benefits the guest experience but also creates meaningful opportunities for Mauritians, who play a central role in delivering this unique form of hospitality and interaction through their work in the hotel industry. As a matter of fact, working in hotels offers several assets on different levels for Mauritians. As briefly mentioned in the previous paragraph, the hotel industry is a very diverse field that provides jobs that range from front-of-house entry-level positions to back-of-house managerial ones. Thus, this large variety of opportunities can pave the way for progression paths and grow within the same hotel, group, or the whole hotel industry, nationally or internationally. There are many young Mauritians that look up to the hotel industry for professional development, skills acquisition and income generation. Moreover, working in a hotel also means developing multilingualism and cross-cultural competence both among employees and in guest service (Swanepoel, 2023). In a country like Mauritius, where the acknowledgement of diversity in cultures is essential, hotels often implement policies and training that value and promote respect and tolerance for these differences. Overall, this combination of economic opportunity, personal growth, and cultural pride makes hotel employment particularly beneficial for the local population. Nevertheless, as the Hospitality Industry Report (AXYS, 2023, p. 5) states: *"Hotels are currently facing labour issues and have had to bring foreign workers to bridge the shortage. The large hotel groups are reluctant to do so as it will make them lose the "Mauritian Hospitality touch".*".

On another note, the lack of workforce is not the only challenge the hotel industry is facing. Similarly to many other industries and countries, the need for sustainable and eco-responsible practices is at the center of all discussions. As a small island nation, Mauritius is highly affected by climate change and limitation in resources which means that sustainable development is a key element to protect the economy and the environment. The natural beauty of the island is crucial for the tourism market and needs to be preserved. As Juttun (2021) points out in her article: *"the island has been classified as one of the most vulnerable islands in terms of ecological degradation"*. Thus, the government and all private companies have worked hand in hand to promote and implement sustainable strategies.

⁷⁷ MJ Holiday Resort and Leisure, "Why is Mauritius an exclusive destination in more ways than one?", <https://www.mjholidays.com/blog/why-is-mauritius-an-exclusive-destination-in-more-ways-than-one/>, [Accessed 13 May, 2025]

For instance, she also mentions that: *“The island is among one of the first in the world to have made it mandatory for profit making organisations to devote 2% of their profit to Corporate Social Responsibility activities since 2009 with a view to promote more sustainable development.”*. Consequently, given the significant contribution of the hotel industry to the environmental impact and the rising trend of sustainable tourism, it has become fundamental to diversify the industry from the “sea, sand, sun model” to include more eco-friendly practices⁷⁸.

All in all, considering the size, popularity, cultural integration, and commitment to sustainability across the hospitality industry, the Attitude Group stands out as a leading example; making it an ideal study case. Within this group the Zilwa Attitude hotel is especially remarkable for its emphasis on local culture, eco-conscious initiatives and authentic guest experiences.

2. The Attitude Group

2.1. Company overview

The Attitude Group is a hospitality company that was founded in 2008 by Jean Michel Pitot. Its particularity lies in the Mauritian essence of the group. As the Attitude’s Chief Executive Officer describes it: *“It is a local hotel group that aims to offer its guests a genuine Mauritian experience, reflecting the local sense of hospitality, inviting them to discover the Mauritian culture, music, and art-de-vivre.”*⁷⁹. The portfolio of this group has increasingly grown over the years, starting from two hotels in 2008 to nine hotels in 2020 and one more to open at the end of 2025. Apart from the focus on the Mauritian authenticity, the Attitude Group concentrates on three-star and four-star hotels. All in all, they now own four three-star hotels (Coin de Mire Attitude, Friday Attitude, Tropical Attitude, and Recif Attitude); four four-star hotels (Lagoon Attitude, Ravenala Attitude, Sunrise Attitude, and Zilwa Attitude); and manage one five-star hotel (Paradise Cove Boutique Hotel). These several hotels are dispersed on the North, East, and West coast of Mauritius as the map below showcases.

⁷⁸ Price Waterhouse Coopers, “Hotels Outlook 2019-2023 in Mauritius”, <https://www.pwc.com/mu/en/publications/hotels-outlook-mauritius.html>, [Accessed May 14, 2025]

⁷⁹ Attitude Hospitality Ltd, “Board of Directors”, [https://ahlcorporate.hotels-attitude.com/our-board-committee/#:~:text=In%202008%2C%20Jean%20Michel%20created,while%20remaining%20a%20family%20company.](https://ahlcorporate.hotels-attitude.com/our-board-committee/#:~:text=In%202008%2C%20Jean%20Michel%20created,while%20remaining%20a%20family%20company.,), [Accessed May 19, 2025]

Figure 9: Map of the Attitude hotels in Mauritius⁸⁰



The eight of the nine hotels cater to the same objective: the Otentik Attitude of the Mauritian lifestyle and Creole culture. However, they are categorised under three different sections. First, there are the “Cosy hotels” which are smaller and emphasise a charming atmosphere. Then, there are the “Adult lifestyle hotels” which are for 18 or older only. The latter are usually preferred by couples and newlyweds for their calm and friendly spirit. Finally, there are the “Leisure hotels and resorts”. These ones are large properties with numerous activities and community spaces very famous with families and groups of friends⁸¹. In total, these hotels approximately represent 1,077 rooms ranging from 51 rooms at Friday Attitude to 272 suites at the Ravenala Attitude.

Yet, the Attitude Group could not be this successful without the dedication of its 1,689 employees known as Family Members⁸². As a matter of fact, the company has been voted “Great Place to Work” for the seventh time in a row and “Best Workplace” for the third

⁸⁰ Figure 9, Attitude Hospitality Ltd, “Our hotels”, <https://ahllcorporate.hotels-attitude.com/our-hotels/>, [Accessed May 19, 2025]

⁸¹ Attitude Hotels Mauritius, “Mauritius Hotels Guide”, <https://mauritius-hotels.mu/attitude-hotels-mauritius.html>, [Accessed May 19, 2025]

⁸² LinkedIn, Attitude Hotels, “About us”, <https://www.linkedin.com/company/attitude-hospitality/>, [Accessed May 19, 2025]

consecutive year for hotels with more than 250 employees. As Seenayen (2024) reports: *“Among the employees questioned in view of the “Great Place to Work” certification, 93% said they are proud of Attitude’s accomplishments, 91% highlighted that their work has special meaning, 89% stated that Attitude is a great place to work, and 89% felt they can be themselves at work.”*. This is proof that a people-first management policy is essential to the smooth running and success of a company as demonstrated by the Service Profit Chain Model in the previous chapter. In addition, the declaration made by The Group People Manager of the Attitude Group, Ashvina Busviah (2024) definitely reinforces and confirms this perspective: *“The fact that we have been certified as a ‘Great Place to Work’ for the seventh consecutive year and named ‘Best Workplace’ for the third is, in itself, a recognition of a company culture strategy that works: Human first!”*⁸³.

From a financial perspective, Attitude Property Ltd reported a revenue of MUR 199.3 million and an operating profit of MUR 192.5 million for the fiscal year of 2024. These data underscore the strong position of the Group within the big ones of the Mauritian hospitality setting (Stock Exchange of Mauritius, 2024). As the group continues to expand its Otentik vision of hospitality internationally with the soon opening of the Matemwe Attitude in Zanzibar, it remains loyal to its pillars which are Mauritius and its culture, its Family Members, and its customers. It is in 2020 that the Attitude Group adds a new mission to its vision: being committed to tourism with a Positive Impact.

2.2. Ethical and sustainable commitments

While tourism is a keystone for Mauritius’ economy, so is the hotel industry for the deterioration of the environment, whether through high energy use, water consumption, coral degradation, or plastic pollution⁸⁴. This makes sustainability not just important but essential. At the same time, travellers are increasingly seeking eco-friendly experiences and are willing to pay more for hotels that align with their values (Panchoo Ramsamy & Callychurn, 2024). Therefore, as this statement suggests, companies who adopt green practices not only stand out in this competitive market but also benefit from stronger customer loyalty.

⁸³ Le Mauricien, “Tourisme: Attitude Hotels, “Best Workplace” pour la troisième année consécutive”, October 16, 2024, <https://www.lemauricien.com/actualites/societe/tourisme-attitude-hotels-best-workplace-pour-la-troisieme-annee-consecutive/653643/>, [Accessed May 19, 2024]

⁸⁴ Environmental Protection and Conservation Organisation, “Tourism in Mauritius”, [https://epco.ngo/tourism-in-mauritius/#:~:text=Effects%20of%20tourism%20on%20the%20environment&text=In%20particular%2C%20Mauritius%20is%20seeing.%2C%20most%20gravely%2C%20plastic%20pollution.](https://epco.ngo/tourism-in-mauritius/#:~:text=Effects%20of%20tourism%20on%20the%20environment&text=In%20particular%2C%20Mauritius%20is%20seeing.%2C%20most%20gravely%2C%20plastic%20pollution.,), [Accessed May 20, 2025]

“Hotels have started to review their business practices from a sustainability angle and manage ecological, social, and economical impacts. This includes responsible use of resources, limitation of emissions, offering decent working conditions with no discrimination and fair payments, adequate benefits, fair pricing, green marketing, and caring for local communities. In this context it is important to understand that single hotels but especially hotel chains are positioned in a key position for sustainability.” (Figeac & Bethge, 2016, p. 8). In the light of this, the Attitude Group has positioned itself as a leader in responsible hospitality, embedding ethical and sustainable practices at the core of its operations.

Indeed, it has been awarded several certifications recognising their sustainable implication for the well-being of Mauritius. In 2017, all Attitude hotels were awarded the Travelife Gold certification. This distinction highlights the group’s ongoing efforts to reduce water and energy consumption, minimise waste, and limit the use of harmful chemicals. It also acknowledged its dedication to promoting local culture and economy through responsible sourcing and community engagement⁸⁵. Alongside this first reward, the group received the B Corp Certification in July 2024 for all its establishments. Being certified as such is a remarkable step that reflects far more than just good intentions. It represents a deep, measurable commitment to balancing profit with purpose. For the Attitude group, this means not only operating a successful business, but also making a positive social impact through ethical practices and full transparency across all levels of the organisation. (Boulart, 2025). In other words, B Corp is more than a label; it is a global movement of companies dedicated to building a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable economy.

However, these recognitions are the fruit of daily rigorous actions based on the Attitude Positive Impact Movement. This scheme lies on three pillars: environmental protection, local economic empowerment, and social inclusion. The figure below represents the concrete results of *“a purpose-driven company committed to responsible tourism through concrete actions”*⁸⁶ reflected by the creation of a foundation, an app, and a lot of various partnerships.

⁸⁵ Attitude Hotels, “Sustainability”, <https://hotels-attitude.com/en/sustainability>, [Accessed May 20, 2025]

⁸⁶ Attitude Hotels, “Our commitments”, <https://hotels-attitude.com/en/our-commitments>, [Accessed May 22, 2025]

Figure 10: Logos depicting the core engagements of the Attitude Group



The Attitude Foundation, launched in 2014 is the one behind all sustainable and ethical commitments initiated by the group. One of its main branches is the Green Attitude Foundation. The latter focuses on environmental awareness, the protection of biodiversity and actions for climate mainly through education programs and campaigns in partnership with Non Governmental Organisations such as Mission Verte. One of the major projects put in place is the Marine Discovery Centre which is located at the Lagoon Attitude Hotel. Resulting from the collaboration with Reef Conservation, it is an interactive hub that educates visitors and local students about the importance of preserving coral reefs and marine ecosystems⁸⁷. Another, striking implementation among all the Attitude Hotels is the zero single-use plastic policy. To further reduce its environmental footprint, the group opened the Bulk Shop concept which replaces the traditional in-room minibar. It enables guests to refill their glass jars with snacks according to their desires to also ban all packaging and reduce food waste.

Moreover, on the cultural and social front, the group finances several local music festivals and even created its own local music competition named “Konpoz to Lamizik”.

⁸⁷ Attitude Hotels, “Marine Discovery Centre”, <https://hotels-attitude.com/en/lagoon-attitude/marine-discovery-centre>, [Accessed May 22, 2025]

The purpose is to both discover and support local talents while diversifying guest experiences with live shows in the several hotels⁸⁸. On the same note, the Attitude Group developed an app called “Otentik Discovery” which invites guests to explore Mauritius through off the beaten paths, cultural places, and local restaurants and shops. This initiative helps tourists to spend their money into local communities⁸⁹. As a matter of fact, guests do not even have to go out of the hotel to do that. Indeed, they already consume products labeled “Made in Moris” through locally-sourced food, “POZ” natural products and cultural techniques at the Spa, and souvenirs or clothes hand-made by local artisans at the Otentik Bazar boutique. Overall, this overview of the group’s actions and initiatives does not only reflect their sustainable commitment but also its unique identity in the hospitality market.

2.3. Intercultural experiences as a tool of differentiation

Mauritius being a famous destination for dreamy and relaxing vacations, the hospitality industry of the country is mainly dominated by multinational chains and standardised luxury⁹⁰. Most of the time, these hotels do not emphasise the cross-cultural aspect of the travel that is increasingly sought by international traveller. As a consequence, the Attitude Group distinguishes itself through its combination of quality and authentic travel experience that facilitates meaningful cultural exchanges. This intercultural side of management is reflected on two deeply intertwined levels: the guest experience and the organisational culture.

On the one hand, the “Otentik” concept is a framework designed to immerse guests in the Mauritian culture through genuine, respectful and responsible encounters. For instance, hotels offer Creole cooking classes, sega dance evenings, and live local band shows. Yet, the most appreciated initiative is the “Otentik dinners” where guests are hosted by one of the hotel’s Family Members and their family for the evening⁹¹. During this moment, both guests and locals can share about their respective culture, traditions, and lifestyles creating a sincere intercultural dialogue and emotional connection. Moreover, the architectural and design choices of the Attitude Hotels reinforce the idea of a cultural immersion.

⁸⁸ Konpoz to Lamisik, <https://konpoztoLAMISIK.com/>, [Accessed May 22, 2025]

⁸⁹ Attitude Hotels, “Otentik Discovery”, <https://hotels-attitude.com/en/authentic-experiences/mauritian-discovery-mobile-app>, [Accessed May 22, 2025]

⁹⁰ Mauritius Tourism Authority, “Classification par étoiles”, 2024, <https://www.tourismauthority.mu/fr/classification-par-etoiles/>, [Accessed May 23, 2025]

⁹¹ Attitude Hotels, “Otentik Dinner”, <https://hotels-attitude.com/fr/experiences-authentiques/diner-chez-habitant-ile-maurice>, [Accessed May 23, 2025]

As it will be shown in the following part about the presentation of the Zilwa Attitude Hotel, the roofs are made of thatch to recall ancestral typical Mauritian homes and the decorations are handcrafted by local Creole artisans, also echoing the sustainable commitments of the company. The latter creates a form of hospitality where guests are welcomed and treated as Mauritians. This bet on intercultural values was quite audacious but definitely positioned the Attitude Group on another level.

On the other hand, the company also values intercultural practices within its employees. Indeed, being a 100% Mauritian hospitality company, the group's workforce diversity reflects the island's various ethnicities and languages and most of its employees are recruited from the region in which they will be working⁹². Actually, Family Members are seen as cultural ambassadors responsible for the guests's cultural immersion and are strongly encouraged to share their heritage. However, all these cultures reunited can become quite tricky to manage. Thus, several intercultural implementations were put in place within the group as it will be addressed in depth in the following part. Yet, the company makes a point of honour in viewing cultural differences as an asset. This internal mindset aligns with the external brand promise, creating a genuine organisational identity based on mutual respect.

Therefore, this makes the choice of Zilwa Attitude particularly relevant for deeper investigation. In fact, as one of the flagship properties of the group, the hotel not only embodies the core values of the brand but also serves as an interesting site to observe how intercultural management is practiced on the ground within staff interactions.

3. Zilwa Attitude

3.1. Presentation and concept

To select the most suitable case study for this thesis, it seemed natural to combine the philosophy of the Attitude Group highly detailed in the previous part as well as the current predominant user preferences criterias. Concerning user preferences in Mauritius, Statista defines them as follows: *“Travelers in Mauritius are increasingly looking for unique and immersive experiences during their stay. They are drawn to hotels that offer cultural activities,*

⁹² Responsible Traveller, “Attitude Hotels Mauritius”, July 15 2018, <https://responsibletraveller.co.za/attitude-hotels-mauritius/>, [Accessed May 24, 2025]

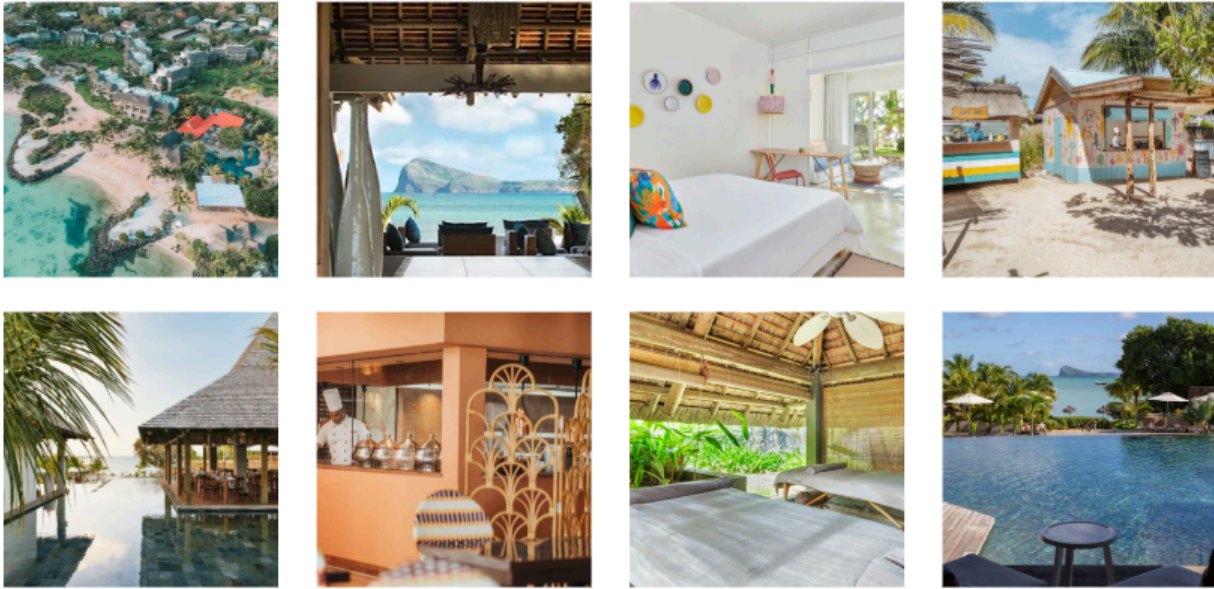
eco-friendly practices, and personalised services. Additionally, there is a growing demand for luxury accommodations and wellness-focused activities in the region.”⁹³. Consequently, the Zilwa Attitude Hotel appears as the perfect fit for many reasons.

First of all, it is one of the most famous properties of the Attitude Group. Then, all the facilities and initiatives of Zilwa match the criterias depicted in current tourism trends, making it extremely attractive to customers. Finally, the whole concept of the hotel revolves around the celebration of Mauritian culture. Indeed, the very name “Zilwa” which means “Islander” in Mauritian Creole reflects the hotel’s philosophy of making guests experience life as a local. This is achieved through decoration and activities but mostly through interactions with employees. Therefore, the hotel appears as a relevant choice for exploring human resources managerial practices in a multicultural context. Yet, before analysing these implementations, here is some information about the hotel.

Zilwa Attitude is a four-star resort located on the Northern coast of Mauritius in the small village of Calodyne. This property features 214 rooms divided into 13 categories ranging from Superior Rooms or Family Apartment to Privilege Suites. This variety of accommodations caters to various target markets such as solo travellers and honeymooners but mostly couples and families. Beyond its housing, the hotel offers a wide span of facilities including five swimming pools, a spa, a fitness and a water sports centre. Zilwa also emphasises diversity through its restaurants with seven different outlets offering Mauritian, Indian, Thai, and European cuisine.

⁹³ Statista, “Hotels Mauritius | Statista Market Forecast”, <https://www.statista.com/outlook/mmo/travel-tourism/hotels/mauritius>, [Accessed May 26, 2025]

Figure 11: Visual overview of Zilwa Attitude⁹⁴



As it can be seen in the pictures above, the architecture of the rooms and public areas is inspired by traditional Mauritian homes with elements such as wood, stone, and thatched roofs. All the handcrafted decorative items create a rustic yet elegant atmosphere. For instance, all rooms have a sort of riddle written on the wall. These are named “Sirandanes” in Creole. The purpose is to hide a word under an image. For the one pictured below, the translation is “*Water in a bowl, a bowl covered in straw*”. In other words, the answer to the riddle is “coconut”. It is an amusing way to recall Mauritian culture into a hotel experience designed for international guests. On another note, there are these beautiful ornaments made of Vacoa leaves which is a plant that grows on the island.

⁹⁴ Figure 11, Zilwa Attitude, “Gallery”, <https://hotels-attitude.com/en/zilwa-attitude>, [Accessed May 27, 2025]

Figure 12: Illustrations of Mauritian cultural integration in Zilwa Attitude design



In addition to all these elements, the hotel obviously features the “Otentik” activities previously mentioned such as sega dances, pirogue boat rides, and dinner hosted by local staff members. Therefore, it is with no surprise that the motto of the hotel is: “*Sincerely, Mauritius*”.

However, the following sections will analyse if this cultural focus also extends to the hotel’s internal practices, shaping both corporate culture and intercultural employee management.

3.2. Corporate culture and employee engagement

“*Hotels that do Good*”. This is the motto of Zilwa Attitude, and by extension, of the whole group. The concept is to have a positive impact not only on the people coming to the hotel but also on the people working at the hotel. Indeed, Family Members are the third pillar of the group. Thus, this part will furtherly delve into the corporate culture driving Zilwa Attitude as well as the several initiatives put in place to value and foster employee recognition and engagement.

Zilwa's corporate culture is definitely rooted in its commitment to sustainability. Besides this aspect, the company strongly insists on core values such as respect, cooperation, open communication, and humility. Zilwa also seeks Family Members that have a service-oriented mindset and are willing to always learn, challenge, and improve themselves⁹⁵. The main missions, visions, and values are clearly stated on the employee booklet (cf. Appendix D, p. 151).

On the other hand, Zilwa's people-first culture aims to create a workplace where every Family Member feels cared for and encouraged. As a matter of fact, this statement has been translated into a lot of different actions thoughtfully established. First, as many companies in Mauritius, the hotel offers free transportation that recover Family Members at different pick-up points on the island during the day, and drop them off safely in front of their houses at night. It relieves stress about traffic and avoids non-negligible expenses. On the same note, the hotel provides complimentary meals (breakfast plus lunch or dinner for each shift), and regular well-being sessions ranging from yoga and tai chi to on-site health checks during the yearly Health Month.

Family Members are constantly acknowledged yearly through long-service awards (financial and pride) and the "*Mari Top*" program. The latter congratulates Family Members for their consistent or wise behaviours and ideas through certificates and gifts once a month in front of all their colleagues. In addition, there are some competitions among the various Attitude hotels that celebrate culinary excellence during "*Barésef*" or sports skills during "Attitude Ena Talan". For instance, "*Barésef*" offers the winners of the competition to have their cocktail or dish on all Attitude menus for the following year. Besides, a cake is offered for each Family Members' birthday.

Furthermore, from a financial perspective, Family Members benefit from profit-sharing, cash bonuses tied to awards, steady pension contributions, monthly voucher lucky draws, and even scholarships that help their children to pursue further education. Indeed, Family Members' kids are also taken into account with Kids Parties and the "*Ti balad dan nou lotel*" discovery days where kids learn about the workplace of their parents and the different jobs⁹⁶.

Last but not least, career growth is heavily cultivated. One of the biggest implementations is the Attitude Academy VET (Vocational Education and Training), freshly launched in 2024. It has been developed in partnerships with the prestigious EHL Hospitality Business School. This institution offers training in culinary arts, food and beverage services and hotel operations.

⁹⁵ CareerHubs - Jobs In Mauritius, "Zilwa Attitude Hotel", <https://www.careerhub.mu/companies/hotels-restaurants/zilwa-attitude-hotel/>, [Accessed May 30, 2025]

⁹⁶ Attitude Hotels, "Who We Are", <https://careers.hotels-attitude.com/who-we-are/>, [Accessed May 30, 2025]

The purpose is to allow Family Members to study while they work and open clear paths towards promotions across the Attitude group⁹⁷. In fact, many managerial positions are occupied by individuals who began their careers in entry-level roles within the company.

3.3. The staff orientation program and its intercultural practices

At Zilwa Attitude, the staff orientation program is referred to as the Induction program. It is a structured two-days program that is delivered by the Human Resources team. The program is designed to introduce new recruits to the Attitude Group's identity, values, and operational environment, while also including fundamental rules for a smooth integration into the multicultural team.

During the first day of the program, new Family Members are presented with the history, objectives, and key commitments of the Attitude Group. This part is then followed by a detailed overview of all the hotel outlets as well as a slide presentation of the Managers and Supervisors from each department. The purpose is to familiarise new employees with the hotel structure and the hierarchy in place. Besides, the Human Resources team introduces the concept of Zilwa Attitude, alongside its mission, vision, and core values to make sure that each new recruit aligns with the hotel's ethos. To end this first day, the team also highlights the various training that employees will benefit in each department, which proves the hotel's commitment to their staff's development and support.

Then, during the second day of the Induction program, the main information is linked to essential internal practices and values that guide daily operations at Zilwa Attitude. New Family Members are introduced to Zilwa's Human Resources procedures and policies such as rights, expectations, salaries, benefits, and responsibilities. In addition, the session also provides concrete examples of current Family Members' success stories in order to motivate new recruits and underline opportunities for their career progression and growth.

Finally, let's tackle the part of the orientation program that is most interesting for this study: the intercultural practices. Indeed, a part of the second day is dedicated to the topic of diversity, inclusion, and belonging. These are values that are fundamental to the Attitude Group as they are committed to foster a respectful and inclusive workplace for all Family Members.

⁹⁷ EHL Group, "Les hôtels Attitude s'associent à EHL, la meilleure école hôtelière au monde, pour ouvrir un centre de formation professionnelle à l'île Maurice", <https://news.ehlgroup.com/fr/attitude-academy-vet-by-ehl>, March 2024, [Accessed May 30, 2025]

As described in their Code of Ethics (Attitude Group, 2019, p. 3)⁹⁸: *“The Company shall not tolerate any form of harassment or discrimination on the basis of gender, religion, race, national or ethnic origin, cultural background, social group, disability, sexual orientation, marital status, age, or political opinion.”*

It is necessary to mention that Zilwa have recently welcomed foreign Family Members under two distinct status: expatriates and trainees. For expatriates, the orientation process is slightly different as personnel from the Attitude Head Office directly come to the hotel to give them a special training about Mauritian workplace norms and culture. The reason behind this separation is because expatriates are enrolled for a two-year contract while trainees have a six-month internship agreement. Therefore, the group decided to dedicate more time and resources to the intercultural training of the expatriates as they will stay longer. Concerning the trainees, it is Zilwa’s Human Resources Family Members that will dispense this training in a shorter way during the induction, as previously mentioned.

Overall, this staff orientation program not only introduces Attitude and Zilwa’s standards but also serves as a first step toward promoting intercultural understanding and inclusion among its Family Members.

⁹⁸ Attitude Hospitality LTD, “Code of Ethics”, https://ahlcorporate.hotels-attitude.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/AHL_Code-of-ethics-1.pdf, 2019, [Accessed July 11, 2025]

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

1. Presentation of the research and its key components

1.1. Research context

This thesis reflects an ongoing academic and professional journey that has progressively shaped my understanding of intercultural management in the hospitality industry.

On the one hand, from an academic point of view, my Master 1 thesis mainly focused on defining and exploring key theoretical concepts in this field such as the Hofstede or Neuliep cultural models and dimensions but also various management frameworks. Although this descriptive approach enabled me to discover in depth these topics, it lacked a practical application. Indeed, last year's research explored Accor's managerial practices and corporate culture through document analysis and literature review. While this provided a solid theoretical foundation, the absence of interviews limited the insight into employee and manager experiences. Thus, this limitation guided my current research approach.

On the other hand, from a professional point of view, my research path has been influenced by my two internships that enabled me to experience two different workplace environments. In the summer following the Master 1 thesis, I worked as a receptionist in a small four-star hotel in Corsica. During these three months I observed how the different supervisors with diverse cultural backgrounds had contrasting ways to lead and manage employees. This internship provided me with an outlook rooted in the daily experiences of staff members, allowing me to observe intercultural management from an employee's perspective. In contrast, this year's six-month internship offered me the opportunity to approach the topic from a managerial viewpoint, complementing my understanding of my subject from both sides. As a matter of fact, the four-star hotel Zilwa Attitude where I am currently updating the Standard Operating Procedures of all the departments and assisting the Human Resources Manager to implement a follow-up for foreign trainees during their internship, naturally became the case study of this thesis due to its fascinating multicultural setting.

Ultimately, this study aims to explore in the first place, how intercultural management is planned and structured, and in the second place, how it is perceived, applied, and experienced within a hotel environment marked by cultural diversity.

1.2. Research questions and objectives

Similarly to the research context, the formulation of the research question ensues from last year's main question which was: *"How does intercultural management impact the relationship between a manager and an employee from different cultural backgrounds during the staff orientation program, and what are the managerial practices applied in Accor's three-star hotels in Toulouse?"*. This study aimed to investigate the cultural awareness level and the managerial intercultural practices while exploring the improvement of an orientation program for new foreign employees working in France (Mercadier, 2024).

Building on that work, this year's research objectives seek to deepen the analysis of intercultural practices during the orientation program while focusing on the case study of the Attitude Group. At the beginning, I considered two possible approaches. Either conducting a case study of the entire Attitude Group by considering that all its hotels share the same intercultural philosophy and then comparing practices between France and Mauritius; or focusing on a single hotel of the group to better analyse how intercultural management practices are implemented during staff orientation. Yet, I chose the second option because it appeared as a better manner to obtain detailed and specific insights. Moreover, as mentioned in the previous chapter, Zilwa Attitude's concept lies in the celebration of Mauritian culture and cultural diversity, which makes it the ideal setting for my case study.

When developing my research, several common objectives and key points that I wished to explore more deeply emerged. First of all, I was interested in identifying the specific intercultural management practices present in the staff orientation program at the Attitude Group, focusing on how these practices address cultural differences. I was particularly interested in understanding how they influence communication, trust, and collaboration between managers and culturally diverse employees. Another point I also wanted to highlight is the content and way to deliver the staff orientation program, as well as its effectiveness from both managerial and employee perspectives. I aimed to explore how well this program supports the integration of new foreign staff into a multicultural team. Finally, the last objective was to try to identify at the same time the recurrent assets and challenges or tensions remaining despite the orientation process.

All in all, this set of various ideas and interrogations led me to my final research question which is:

How do intercultural management practices in staff orientation programs at the Attitude Group in Mauritius facilitate the relationship between managers and employees from different cultural backgrounds?

This research question underscores the central elements previously mentioned: orientation program, intercultural practices, and manager-employee relationships. In addition, it aligns with the aim of this study which goes beyond only identifying the manager-employee relationship in an intercultural setting. The ultimate purpose is to acknowledge how this bond can contribute to greater communication, stronger collaboration, and a more inclusive workplace. Encouraging a smoother relationship can lead to important changes that, at the end of the day, can make the difference. For instance, it can increase employee well-being, reduce turnover, and enhance service quality. These are definitely the three necessary pillars to succeed in the hospitality industry.

As a consequence, the following section will present the several assumptions that I developed in order to structure my research.

1.3. Research assumptions

Before delving into the explanatory side of this section, it is essential to briefly clarify why I chose the term “assumption” instead of “hypothesis”. As a matter of fact, this study is more about exploring than testing. In qualitative research like this one, an assumption is used to suggest one possible way of understanding a situation in order to guide the research process, without trying to prove it. The term “assumption” reflects openness and flexibility (George, 2025). However, a hypothesis is more precise and is used to test relationships between different variables in a structured way (Cherry, 2024). Consequently, since my research aims to discover results rather than confirming one truth, the term “assumption” is more suitable.

The assumptions developed for this research are closely intertwined with the overall objectives of the study. The latter’s purpose is to investigate intercultural management practices within the staff orientation program at the Attitude Group and more particularly at Zilwa Attitude. In order to answer the research question, I have formulated three different assumptions that each correspond to a specific aspect of it.

Assumption 1: Raising awareness about different cultural contexts during the staff orientation program contributes to improving communication and dialogue between local managers and foreign employees.

First of all, this assumption is based on the presumption that increasing cultural awareness from the very beginning, in other words, during the staff orientation program, can positively influence intercultural communication in the workplace. As Shahid (2022, p. 459) illustrates it: *“Educating the employees in an organisation can help provide a better understanding of intercultural differences, organisation-appropriate behaviours, and conflict resolution. Recognising the complexities involved between communication and culture has become a need for most organisations to gain a competitive advantage and shape a positive workplace environment.”*. In fact, introducing employees and managers to the cultural norms, values, and ways of communication of their colleagues could foster mutual understanding. The purpose of this assumption is to discover whether this cultural awareness could actually help to reduce misunderstandings and develop more open-minded dialogue between local managers and foreign employees. In the long term, this could improve employee satisfaction, retention, and inclusion, as well as the overall team performance

Assumption 2: When foreign employees are introduced to key cultural dimensions of Mauritius during the staff orientation program, they adapt more effectively to the work environment and interact more confidently with colleagues.

Secondly, this assumption suggests that providing foreign employees with key cultural characteristics of Mauritius during the staff orientation program can significantly facilitate their adaptation process. The idea behind this supposition is that by having a clear presentation of the cultural context they are entering, foreign employees may be more prepared to navigate social norms and create positive relationships with their colleagues and managers. This is what Ozer and Schwartz (2024, p. 128) implies in the following quotation: *“Cultural orientation represents an important concept, [...] leading to well-being through intercultural adjustment and success among foreign workers, benefiting both the workers and the organisations that employ them.”*. The expected outcome of this assumption is to evaluate if learning about local values, behaviours, and workplace expectations helps new recruits feel more at ease, confident and integrated in their new work environment faster.

***Assumption 3:** Communication challenges related to cultural differences are likely to arise, but targeted orientation can equip both managers and employees with the skills to reduce misunderstandings and foster smoother collaboration.*

Lastly, this third assumption acknowledges that communication difficulties are a common challenge in culturally diverse teams. However, the objective is to seek whether these tensions can be mitigated through training during the staff orientation program. Indeed, equipping both managers and employees with tools and strategies for intercultural dialogue may reduce “cultural clashes” such as verbal and nonverbal communication and encourage collaboration between the team. In fact, the study led by Wibowo et al. (2024) demonstrated that educating about intercultural communicative competence, which includes “*attitudes, knowledge, skills, and critical cultural awareness*” enhances employees’ capacity to navigate cultural differences. The results of this assumption would be that by addressing cultural differences, the hotel could stimulate a more inclusive atmosphere where the benefits of a diverse team are more prominent than the drawbacks.

To summarise, while each assumption targets a different point of the orientation process, they collectively treat the topics needed to answer the research question. Assumption One centres on improving communication through cultural awareness for both managers and employees; Assumption Two emphasises the adaptation process of foreign Family Members by explaining Mauritian culture and norms; and Assumption Three offers cultural training as a possible solution to potential communication issues. All together, they seek to examine how intercultural practices during the staff orientation program can impact core components of the manager-employee relationship in a multicultural workplace.

2. Research design and data collection

2.1. Understanding data collection: methods and approaches

“One of the main stages in a research study is data collection that enables the researcher to find answers to research questions. Data collection is the process of collecting data aiming to gain insights regarding the research topic” (Taherdoost, 2021, p. 10). As this quote explains, collecting data is an important part of any research thesis. Indeed, the findings of the research

will be based on the insights gathered during this process. Depending on the research design and objectives, some methods are more suited than others. These various techniques can be divided into two different categories: primary and secondary data.

To use Mazhar's explanation (2021), primary data refers to the information gathered directly by the researcher for the specific purpose of their study. It is original, firsthand data that has not been previously collected or analysed. For instance, interviews, surveys, and observations are considered primary data. In contrast, secondary data consists of information that has already been collected, processed, and possibly analysed by others for different purposes. This type of data is typically obtained from existing sources such as reports, publications, or databases.

Nevertheless, the core objective of this study is to gather primary data to directly address the research objectives previously mentioned. Yet, to achieve this, it is crucial to choose an appropriate methodological approach. Usually, research can be conducted using either a qualitative or quantitative method. Depending on the nature of the research, one approach can be more relevant than the other, or both can be used. But before going into further details about the method that is best fitted for the research objectives of this thesis, here is a brief presentation of both techniques.

On the one hand, there is quantitative research. As Watson (2015) explains, this method investigates social phenomena through the collection and analysis of numerical data. It relies on the assumption that the subject of study can be measured and quantified, allowing researchers to detect patterns, test hypotheses, and examine relationships between variables. This method often involves tools such as experiments or surveys. A key strength of quantitative research is its ability to provide measurable, objective results that can be statistically analysed. The whole purpose is to help researchers to interpret findings and draw evidence-based conclusions. This type of approach is best-suited for studies that seek to measure the impact of a specific factor such as employee performance metrics or customer satisfaction score for instance. Since this thesis focuses on human perceptions, only using this research method is not appropriate to obtain sufficient relevant insights.

On the other hand, there is qualitative research. The following definition is provided by Corte and Aspers (2019, p. 146): *"Qualitative research uses a variety of methods, such as intensive interviews or in-depth analysis of historical materials [...]. Like quantitative research, it can be utilised to study a variety of issues, but it tends to focus on meanings and motivations that underlie cultural symbols, personal experiences, phenomena and detailed understanding of*

processes in the social world.”. Contrary to the previous method, the latter is more pertinent and useful for this thesis, as the next section will develop in more detail.

Nevertheless, there are some cases in which a mixed research approach, mingling both quantitative and qualitative, can be useful. Indeed, this methodology allows researchers to explore a research question from multiple perspectives. By integrating numerical data with detailed contextual insights, mixed methods research provides a more comprehensive understanding of complex issues and captures both measurable outcomes and human experiences (Gunasekar, 2016). Although using this type of approach could have been appropriate to capture measurable outcomes such as staff retention following the orientation program, or surveys about communication effectiveness among staff from diverse cultures; a purely qualitative methodology enables a deeper exploration of intercultural dynamics through personal experiences. Therefore, the following section will provide a more detailed analysis of this methodology and present the specific data that will be used.

2.2. Justification and strategy for qualitative data collection

As a reminder, the key objective of this study is to explore the intercultural management practices used in staff orientation programs at Zilwa Attitude, and evaluate their impact on communication between managers and employees from different cultures. In his book *Research Design* (2008), Creswell explores the different types of methodology and explains how a research methodology, depending on the study of the researcher, can be more appropriate than another. Concerning the qualitative method, his arguments strongly echoes the topic of this case study. Indeed, he states that: *“Qualitative research is explanatory and is useful when the researcher does not know the important variables to examine. This type of approach may be needed because the topic is new, has never been addressed with a certain sample or group of people, and existing theories do not apply with the particular sample or group under study. [...] Individuals who enjoy writing in a literary way or conducting personal interviews or making up-close observations may gravitate to the qualitative approach.”* (p. 35). In light of this, although identifying the main challenges and assets of intercultural practices during staff orientation programs is not exactly a brand new topic, it is the context of the case study that makes it rather unique.

To go slightly further, this last sentence is intertwined with the concept of interpretivism. In research, the latter is based on the idea that social reality is subjective and shaped by

individual experiences and cultural contexts. In other words, instead of establishing universal theories, interpretivism tries to understand how people interpret their environment and interactions (Ma & Ma, 2022). This is exactly what I seek to do with the different interviews: exploring how managers and employees perceive and experience intercultural integration during the staff orientation program. Thus, once again, qualitative research appears as the most appropriate method to delve into this study.

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, a qualitative approach can involve different manners to obtain data. For this thesis, I used three different processes to collect relevant data: the analysis of Zilwa's Human Resources policies, interviews, and observations of staff orientation programs.

First of all, I collected various documents pertaining to Zilwa Attitude such as the procedure for staff orientation programs. The content of this document has been detailed in the previous chapter in the last section. Whereas this type of data is not the focus point of this data collection, it will still be interesting to analyse it in the next chapter as support and comparison.

Secondly, another way of collecting data is through interviews. The creation of interview guides and the answers obtained will be discussed in the third part of the thesis. Yet, the last section of this chapter will explain in further details the structure of the interview guides and the purpose of the questions.

Lastly, it is crucial to mention that during my internship as an administrative assistant in charge of updating all the Standard Operating Procedures at Zilwa Attitude, I was lucky enough to also assist the Human Resources Manager in a project. Indeed, I designed a sort of action plan and follow-up concerning the staff orientation program of foreign trainees and expatriates. Consequently, there is a part of reflexivity in this research since my personal experience has shaped both my interest and perspective on the topic. As Olmos-Vega et al. (2022) defines it, reflexivity in qualitative research involves recognising how the research's own background, experiences, and perspectives may influence the research process and interpretation of findings. Being aware of this subjectivity helps ensure ethical, thoughtful decision-making when engaging the "*complexities of real-world data*". On the contrary, ignoring reflexivity can affect the credibility and integrity of the research.

3. Sampling strategy and ethical considerations

3.1. Research population and recruitment approach

The sample strategy is a complex topic as there are a lot of different ways to select and recruit the participants to interview. Concerning the topic of this thesis, I need to choose people who are intertwined with it in order to gather relevant data during interviews. Therefore, I first needed to define the research population, also referred to as the mother population. The latter includes all employees who are directly impacted by or involved in the intercultural practices during the staff orientation programs at Zilwa Attitude. This population specifically gathers:

- Human Resources Family Members who are responsible for designing and implementing the orientation program. They will provide valuable insight about the structure of the program, the topics discussed and the way of introducing the company. But most importantly, we will discuss the place of cultural diversity and the presentation of Mauritian culture to foreign employees;
- Department Managers who daily supervise multicultural teams. Indeed, those managers are the ones who are confronted daily with potential miscommunication and issues due to cultural differences. Consequently, with their interview, I will be able to have an idea of how the points mentioned during the orientation program are applied in operations with employees.
- Foreign Employees who have completed the orientation and experienced its effects on their integration. As a matter of fact, interviewing them is crucial as they are the one that will be able to share their personal experiences and perceptions of the program and how it helped them to manage and integrate this new workplace and culture.

In order to select participants from within this population, I employed the sampling method entitled “purposive sampling”. This approach allowed me to purposefully choose people (depending on the availability) who have the most relevant experience among this group. As Rai and Thapa (2015, p. 13) illustrate it: *“The main goal of purposive sampling is to focus on particular characteristics of a population that are of interest, which will best enable you to answer your research questions. The sample being studied is not representative of the population, but for researchers pursuing qualitative or mixed methods research designs, this is not considered to be a weakness.”*

Besides, to refine the selection process and ensure the relevance of the insights during the interviews, I defined specific inclusion and exclusion criteria that participants have to be part of. This approach strengthens the overall alignment between the participant group and the research objectives⁹⁹. On the one hand, the inclusion criteria are the following:

- to be a current employee at Zilwa Attitude;
- to have at least a two-month experience in the hotel to have enough experience to take a step back and critically analyse it;
- to be a foreign employee except a Department manager or Human Resources staff member;
- to be a foreign employee who has undergone the staff orientation program.

On the other hand, the exclusion criteria are as follows:

- to be a local employee except a Department manager or Human Resources personnel;
- to be under 18 as it would require additional parental or guardian consent,
- to not adhere to the ethical standards;
- to be a foreign employee who did not participate in the staff orientation program.

Once the criteria were established, the next step was to create a recruitment process to identify and get to know which participant will want and be able to be part of the study.

3.2. Recruitment process

The recruitment process was carried out during several weeks to ensure clarity in the research method and respect the ethical standards. In order to have a more visual overview of this process, I created a Gantt chart to summarise it. This type of schedule also enabled me to discern the various steps in a logical manner, respect a detailed timeline, and track my progression on the process.

⁹⁹ Scribbr, "Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria | Examples & Definition", <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/inclusion-exclusion-criteria/>, June 22, 2023, [Accessed July 1, 2025]

Figure 13: Interview recruitment process Gantt Chart (June - July 2025)



During the first week of June, I defined the population of my study case and the sample population. At the end of this week, I also defined the inclusion and exclusion criteria. This mandatory step allowed me to have a precise idea of the participants I needed to interview to gather proper insights. In the second week, building on the sample population and the interview guides designed last during Master 1, I formulated three new distinct interview guides appropriate to each sample group and reflected on which candidate will be the most interesting to interview for each group. Straddling the end of the second week and the beginning of the third week of June, I prepared a consent form that included all the ethical considerations concerning the participants' confidentiality and started to identify the potential interviewees. Afterwards, I dedicated the rest of the third week and the beginning of the fourth one to initiating the first contact (regarding the interviews) with the potential participants. I offered to them the possibility to be part of my research study and detailed the topic and purpose of the interview. Thus, I took my time to select the most interesting candidates during the end of the fourth week and gather their consent through their signature of the consent form. Finally, I conducted the interviews across the two first weeks of July, in line with the ethical standards of qualitative research that will be outlined in the next section.

3.3. Ethical considerations

Given the qualitative nature of this research and the use of interviews to collect data, it is essential to ensure that the ethical considerations were respected. The latter refers to the need to protect the interviewees in order for them to share their honest view on the topic under study. *“During an interview process in qualitative research, the findings show that anonymity, voluntary participation, privacy, confidentiality, option to opt out and avoiding misuse of findings are ethical considerations that must be observed by the researcher.”* (Nii Laryeafio & Ogbewe, 2023, p. 94). Throughout the recruitment process previously detailed, as well as the data collection and analysis phases, I took several measures to ensure that my study adheres to the ethical rules for qualitative methodology.

Following these principles, when I met for the first time the several participants, I explained to each of them the topic and objectives of this research, the structure and confidentiality of the interview, and their rights to voluntarily accept to be interviewed and to withdraw even after the interview. To make sure that all of these points were correctly understood, I created a consent form summarising them and made them sign before the interview date.

Most importantly, I also guaranteed their anonymity during the whole recruitment process, transcription of the interviews, and presentation or publication on the study. To do so, their specific position in the hotel will not be mentioned, any personal identifiers were removed during the transcriptions, and the participants are addressed as a code followed by a number: HR for Human Resources, DM for Department Manager, and FE for Foreign Employee. As the interviewer and researcher, I addressed myself as “R” for the transcriptions of the interviews. The collected data such as the audio recordings and interview transcripts were only stored on my personal, password-protected phone and computer. This information will be retained until the validation of this thesis before being permanently deleted. These measures not only adhere to the ethical research standards but also allow the participants to feel more comfortable and at ease to take part in an open, culturally sensitive, and honest discussion. All of this also increases the credibility and trustworthiness of the results I collected.

Therefore, the following and last section of this chapter will describe the type of interview chosen, the creation of the various interview guides and how they are related to the research objectives.

4. Development of interview guides

4.1. Tool design

In order to collect relevant data aligned with the research objectives, it was essential to create interview guides tailored to each participant category. But before, it is necessary to differentiate the various types of interviews. The most used are the following, structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews. Although they might seem quite similar, each one of them caters to a specific objective.

As explained by Edelbrock and Bohnert (2000), structured interviews follow a fixed set of questions in a specific order, with clear rules on how to record answers. The interviewer has little flexibility. In fact, even if the interviewer changes, the interview guide is so structured that the way of asking questions and the answer obtained will be the same. With this type of interview, the researcher can gather consistent and comparable data.

Then, semi-structured interviews are used to explore participants' beliefs or perceptions in depth. This is a more flexible and adaptable method that allows both the researcher and respondent to explore important ideas as they come up during the conversation. It helps capture rich, detailed insights that later can be analysed qualitatively, rather than being limited to more predefined categories as in structured interviews (Smith, 1995). The purpose of these interviews is to come prepared but to have the choice to follow up on interesting points that may be different depending on the participants.

Finally, during unstructured interviews the interviewer will ask questions depending on the participants experiences and perspectives to better understand complex topics for instance. Indeed, *“the researcher comes to the interview with no predefined theoretical framework, hypotheses and questions [...]. Rather, the researcher has conversations with interviewees and generates questions in response to the interviewees' narration. As a consequence, each unstructured interview might generate data with different structure and patterns.”*¹⁰⁰.

Semi-structured interviews are the most suited type to ensure comparability between all participants from the same category with predetermined key questions, but also give space to add targeted questions related to the participants' roles, backgrounds, and experiences.

¹⁰⁰ University of Texas, “Unstructured Interviews”, https://pages.ischool.utexas.edu/vanz/Unstructured_interviews.pdf, [Accessed June 17, 2025]

To better understand the topic of this case study, I designed three different types of interview guides for each category of participants. Therefore the following sections will delve into the structure, topics, and expected results from these semi-structured interviews.

4.2. Interview guide for Human Resources Family Members

The interview guide designed for Human Resources employees is divided into three main sections (cf. Appendix E, p. 152). Usually, in semi-structured interviews, the questions are mostly open-ended and arranged by topic from general to most specific (Sadan & Vathsala, 2017). This is exactly how all the interview guides I created are organised.

The first part is quite broad as it embraces the presentation of the participant (professional and cultural background), but also the employee's role and responsibilities at Zilwa and mostly in relation to the orientation process. During the beginning of this interview, I hope to better understand the interviewee's level of involvement in the staff orientation program's development and implementation.

Then, the second part of the interview will dive into the structure, objectives, and topics tackled during this program. Thanks to these elements I expect to gain knowledge about the duration and format of the program but also the strategies used to present Zilwa's company culture and the new recruit's position.

Furthermore, the third part refers to the core of this study case which is the intercultural components of the orientation process. For this section, I plan to ask various questions concerning the way to introduce Mauritian culture and workplace norms to foreign Family Members as well as the specific training or support provided about cultural differences. Here, the goal is to discover how Human Resources Family Members address challenges or issues related to intercultural communication and in what ways this program impacts team communication and integration.

Overall, the insights I will gather after conducting this interview will help me discern the design, implementation, benefits and drawbacks of the staff orientation program and intercultural practices within it at Zilwa Attitude, but also the elements that could be improved.

4.3. Interview guide for Department Managers

Following the same pattern of the previous interview, this interview guide for the department managers is composed of three distinct parts (cf. Appendix F, p. 155). The first section aims to understand the manager's background and the department he/she is in charge of. Moreover, this part will include questions about the team's diversity such as the number of Family Members and their nationalities. Besides, the objective is to understand the manager's familiarity with managing culturally diverse teams in order to introduce the next main section.

Actually, it addresses the manager's daily experiences with intercultural communication. Throughout the questions I will try to explore how the participant handle Family Members from a different culture in terms of language, time management, the apprehension of deadlines... The ideal is to gather information about the challenges of managing a multicultural team as well as the strategies to do so and the benefits. The whole point of this section is to identify whether the manager feels sufficiently equipped and trained to deal with cultural differences and how he/she adapts to foreign Family Members.

Afterwards, the third and last part of the interview will focus on the thematic of the staff orientation program from the manager's perspective. First and foremost, it is important to know if the manager knows the course of the program, if he/she has received it when entering the company, and if he/she plays a part in it. Then, I intend to assess whether they believe the staff orientation program sufficiently prepares foreign recruits to work in a multicultural Mauritian environment. Depending on the answer, I will enquire about the positive effects of the program on daily team dynamics. Finally, I would like to know how managers apply the orientation's principles in real operational settings.

To summarise, the information collected from department managers will be valuable to evaluate the real-life impact of the staff orientation program, beyond the Human Resources procedures. This way, I will be able to acknowledge the potential gaps or strong points between the program's design and its implementation in the departments.

4.4. Interview guide for foreign Family Members

This last interview guide is designed for foreign employees working at Zilwa Attitude (cf. Appendix G, p. 158). Similarly to the two previous ones, the structure is also divided into three main parts relating to key topics. With the first section, I will familiarise with the participants by asking questions about his/her cultural and professional background, his/her position in the hotel, and adaptation to Mauritian culture and lifestyle.

Secondly, the main talking point will be the Family Member's experience of the staff orientation program. After defining the purpose of such a program, I will enquire about its relevance, its effectiveness in introducing the Zilwa's values and Mauritian culture, as well as the extent to which it helped him/her feel prepared and welcomed in the hotel. Furthermore, the aim of this section is to deeply understand the participant's cultural integration. In other words, whether any cultural differences were challenging at the beginning but the orientation program brought support and comprehension of the workplace norms and ways to communicate.

Finally, for this third part the discussion will revolve around the challenges encountered and potential suggestions. In fact, I intend to acknowledge the employee's relationship with managers and fellow colleagues, Mauritian and foreign ones. I will investigate if some cultural clashes have occurred and they were fixed in order to have an idea of the everyday realities of intercultural collaboration. But most importantly, I will end the interview by inviting the participant to share his/her thoughts on the assets and drawbacks of the staff orientation program from a foreign worker perspective.

All in all, the expected outcome of this interview is to gain insights about how foreign Family Members experience orientation and cultural adaptation at Zilwa Attitude. Their feedback is essential for analysing the relevance of the current orientation practices and identifying some points to improve to enhance intercultural support and workplace inclusion, as the international workforce is increasingly recruited.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, this second part of the thesis helped in defining the context of the case study and the methodological approach.

Although the Attitude Group is a locally rooted hotel brand that actively promotes the employment of Mauritian staff, cultural diversity remains a defining feature of its workforce. This is due not only to the island's historical background, marked by colonial and migratory influences, but also to its reputation as a worldwide renowned tourist destination. In fact, the hospitality sector attracts international guests as well as foreign professionals such as trainees and expatriates. Consequently, this evolving and multicultural environment necessitates adaptive managerial practices like cultural training, and this, as from the orientation period. For this reason, the case study focuses on the intercultural management practices during the staff orientation program and their impact on the relationship between local managers and foreign employees.

To do so, the first chapter presented a contextual overview of Mauritius, the Attitude Group, and the Zilwa Attitude hotel to better understand the relevance of the research topic and the case study. Then, the second chapter defined the research framework by introducing the main question and assumptions as well as the methodological choices such as the detailed design of the various interview guides.

Together, these two chapters pave the way for the third and last part of this thesis which will be reserved to the analysis of the insights gathered, the limitations of the study, and the different recommendations on the topic.

PART 3: DATA ANALYSIS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Following the detailed presentation of the case study and methodological approach in the second part, this third and final part of the thesis will be dedicated to the analysis, interpretation, and discussions of the various insights collected.

First of all, Chapter One will focus on the analysis of the data collected during the various interviews with Human Resources, Department Managers, and foreign Family Members. The goal of this chapter is to highlight and analyse recurrent themes or perceptions concerning the implementation and efficiency of intercultural practices during staff orientation program.

In addition, Chapter Two will use the results of the qualitative research and compare them to the assumptions formulated in the methodology chapter. The purpose of this section is to discuss the relevance of the assumptions related to cultural awareness, employee adaptation, and communication, as well as the effectiveness of the current orientation program regarding these matters.

Finally, Chapter Three of this thesis will address the various limitations of the study, whether methodological or contextual, and how they may have influenced the results. Nevertheless, this section will also provide recommendations at the Attitude level as well as hospitality in general, concerning the improvement of staff orientation programs and their benefits on multicultural work environments. In conclusion, based on the observations and analyses of the previous chapters, I will bestow some suggestions for future potential research.

CHAPTER 1: DATA PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS

The aim of this chapter is to present and analyse the information collected during the semi-structured interviews. Indeed, the six interviews conducted with two Family Members from Human Resources, two Department Managers, and two Foreign Employees provided me with a lot of material. Therefore this chapter will be divided into two different parts so as to clearly display the findings.

To begin with, the first section will be dedicated to the presentation of the two interviews conducted among each group of participants in order to identify similarities and differences. This first approach will underline the perception of each group regarding orientation practices and the integration of international employees. Then, the second section will discuss the results of all interviews through an analysis of the main themes touched on. Thanks to this more detailed interpretation, I will be able to understand the main characteristics about intercultural practices and how they impact the overall experience of foreign Family Members.

1. Processing the data collected

Before proceeding to a detailed analysis, it was necessary to organise and process the data gathered from the different interviews. As the questions from the interview guide I created were already divided according to the three assumptions, it was easier to identify the key answers and to compare the interviews. Therefore, the common ideas as well as the individual differences will be first presented as per each group of participants.

1.1. Common and different points among Human Resources participants

First of all, this section will tackle the perspectives of Human Resources Family Members 1 (cf. Appendix L, p. 186) and 2 (cf. Appendix M, p. 194) regarding several topics such as employee integration and retention as well as cultural adaption and support strategies. As a matter of fact, there are more similarities than distinctions in their point of views. To begin with, when it comes to employee integration, both staff members highlighted the central role of

introduction. As HR1 explains: *"We go over a checklist with all the topics. We explain transport, uniforms, locker keys..."*. HR2 adds that induction is also followed by the *"Buddy program"* and the *"90-Day Scripting program"*. Together they enable new recruits to have an assigned mentor, and to continuously give feedback about their adaptation with also a meeting in presence of the General Manager, the Hotel Manager, and the Human Resources Manager. These practices are very general for all newcomers. Beyond these, both Family Members also recognised that cultural adaptation is a challenge nowadays when dealing with foreign trainees and expatriates. Indeed, HR1 mentions: *"It's our duty to make sure they're happy at work, in their accommodation, with the hotel culture, and with our employees."*, and his colleague HR2 also notes that expatriates receive a different type of induction with *"more talk about Mauritian culture, Mauritius itself, what we have, the environment, the surroundings, where they live..."*.

Another point raised by both team members is the importance of active listening and gathering feedback. As described by HR2, the purpose of the practices put in place is to help them to integrate better and create a sense of belonging. He even reveals that when these practices were not yet implemented, *"employees felt rather neglected"*. Besides, HR1 shares that providing careful listening to all employees, but particularly to foreign ones is stressed as from the first meeting: *"We tell them that we are several people in the department. The person with whom you feel comfortable, go to them."* The goal behind all of this is obviously to create a welcoming workplace where all employees are integrated but also to retain them. Because, as both Family Members confess, Mauritian hospitality is no exception to the lack of workforce, the difficulty to reduce turnover rates and ensure employee retention. Consequently, they try to improve their programs to appeal to locals and foreign workers. Even if it is quite new for Zilwa to rely on foreigners, they have carried out changes in induction to facilitate their adaptation, as presented, but they also have equipped their managers. Indeed, they explained that all managers and frontliners assisted in cultural training delivered by the Attitude Head Office. HR1 gives an overview of the content: *"They say things like: here's how these people are, here's their specific culture, here's how they operate. For example, there can be a language problem. So today, you have to be ready to be much more attentive to them compared to others..."*. As a matter of fact, concerning the challenges encountered by foreign employees, there is sometimes this language barrier that can make it hard to effectively communicate through English, but the most difficult part is the adaptation to the Mauritian food.

While both participants shared very similar opinions, their suggestion for the improvement of the orientation program diverged. For HR1, the induction program should become longer and take the form of one week instead of two days as soon as new foreign or local

workers enter the hotel. *“We talk about so many things in the induction, maybe in too small parts, that we can’t develop fully.”*. This statement proves that he acknowledges the importance of taking time to explain all aspects of the workplace: *“That first week is so important, because many people join the hotel, they get very light information and cultural training, and then they go straight into work.”*. For HR2, it is more about the feedback part of the adaptation process: *“I think 90 days is too short to evaluate an employee. Maybe we should just extend it to get a better idea of where the employee stands and if they’ve adapted or not.”*. Altogether, these implementations showcase how both of them value employee integration and are determined to eventually improve foreign employees’ adaptation.

1.2. Comparative perspectives among Department Managers

This second segment will showcase the common and distinct points between the two interviews from Department Manager 1 (cf. Appendix H, p. 160) and Department Manager 2 (cf. Appendix I, p. 171). The objective is to identify patterns in their practices. To commence with, the discussion will present the common points, which are in greater numbers than the opposite ones.

The first similarity is that both managers agree on the essential role that induction plays in helping new foreign employees adapt to the workplace. Indeed, DM2 views the staff orientation program as an essential step to familiarise with the company and its mission, vision, and values: *“When the new staff arrive, we try to bring everyone together. And there’s that part of the induction where we present the hotel, the product, the teams, the management, the facilities, what you’re entitled to, the news, donations... everything that’s a bit corporate. [...] I think yes, it absolutely helps.”*. In addition, DM1 states that the induction part is the moment where employees discover their new work environment, operationally and culturally. Thus, it is a crucial phase for building confidence and starting to equip them with the basic learning necessary for an easier integration. *“Without the induction program, it’s like being thrown into the ocean without a float. [...] This program is there to help newcomers understand the basics of Mauritian culture.”*

Then, another element where both managers agree on is the presence of language barriers. More particularly, the majority of foreign staff coming to Zilwa do not know how to speak French. DM2 says: *“My only issue with them is that they don’t speak French”*. However, this challenge only affects the interactions of employees with French guests that do not speak

English. However, concerning the communication among employees, it is not really a constant source of misunderstandings since everyone uses English as the main language in the workplace. In fact, DM1 addresses this semi-issue by stating: *“Many of our new staff, from Nepal or Africa, only speak English. It’s not a problem for us, but with French-speaking guests, it gets more complicated.”*. Despite this lack of mutual understanding with the guests sometimes, both managers highlight the importance of human connection before everything else. At the same time between Family Members and guests, and among Family Members themselves. They both believe that the foundation of successful intercultural interactions lies in this genuine human connection. *“Human-to-human connection must not be lost. Once you have that, then everything else works.”* (DM1). *“Hospitality is hospitality. As we say, we are ladies and gentlemen, serving other ladies and gentlemen.”* (DM2).

Furthermore, the leadership style used to manage culturally diverse teams is also an important point raised by both managers. Their view on this matter is identical: a manager needs to remain accessible and attentive to the feedback of their employees.

For DM1, being approachable by his staff members is intertwined with the necessity to stay humble: *“I may be a manager, but I need to come here (showing the bottom with his hands) to truly understand what’s happening on the ground. If I stay here (showing the ceiling with his hands) I will never understand. We are all equals in the company, no matter our position. That value really guides me.”*. On the same note, DM2 stresses the fact that listening to employees’ requests or ideas is essential to correctly lead the team: *“As a manager, you have to be the pilot. And to do that, you have to be a good listener.”*.

Hence, keeping this core value of active listening at the centre of the interview, both participants highlight the importance of ongoing support after the orientation period. DM1 states that for an overall period of two years for the majority of the expatriates, the evaluation of their integration should not stop after the induction program. He mentions the possibility to organise *“an open-heart conversation”*. As a matter of fact, as DM2 explains, this meeting already exists: *“You have breakfast with the GM, the Hotel Manager, and the HR Manager. So there’s a touchpoint after 3 months to ask how you feel within the team.”*. Yet, in order to have accurate feedback from Family Members, the key is to build a relationship based on trust to break this vision of hierarchy. They both agree that foreign employees will definitely feel more at ease if managers know how to be friendly and open when it is needed.

Nevertheless, despite the many similar points of view, there is still one subject for which DM1 and DM2 did not share the same vision: cultural adaptation. Indeed, DM1 sees cultural adaptation as a complex and gradual process with several cultural barriers: *“Language, customs... There can be a cultural shock. [...] Of course, it’s not something they absorb in a week or two.”*. In contrast, while DM2 understands that Mauritian culture can be difficult to adapt for foreign employees with very different cultural backgrounds from the Mauritian one, he also sees the transition as easier for some foreign staff, especially those from culturally similar backgrounds: *“As a French person, I understand you might feel a bit... It’s not the same for you, and I totally get that. But for them, they kind of... It’s more or less the same culture [...] For them, it’s not that difficult. They’re Hindu, and here, the majority is Hindu too.”*

As a consequence, while both Department Managers share a common vision on essential aspects such as the importance of the orientation program, the inclusive leadership style or the need for human connection, their perception of cultural adaptation is a bit more distinct.

1.3. Shared views and differences for Foreign Employees

Last but not least, this third section will provide a comparison of the interviews conducted with two Foreign Employees working at Zilwa Attitude . By comparing their views on the same topics such as orientation, cultural adaptation, and support, the goal is to understand how individual backgrounds and expectations can shape intercultural experiences differently. In this case, it will be even more interesting as both employees are from Madagascar but still have quite divergent experiences and opinions.

The first common point between both employees is their initial difficulties to adapt to their job due to a lack of induction. For both of them, the process was either rushed or done later. They did not attend the group session. Indeed Foreign Employee 1 (cf. Appendix J, p. 175) says: *“When I arrived I did it on my own. My supervisors trained me one-on-one. But later, when they had a session I joined a bit just to see what it was about.”*. Similarly, Foreign Employee 2 (cf. Appendix K, p. 181) states: *“There wasn’t much of a formal process. [...] I didn’t get an official tour of the hotel.”*. It might be due to the fact that both of them were trainees. Although they have been welcomed by a Family Member from the Human Resources department, they felt that more introduction to the physical and operational work environment would have been necessary to put them more at ease.

Moreover, aside from this lack of formal orientation, both Foreign Employees mentioned that their respective supervisors really helped them to adapt and familiarise with their tasks. FE1 shares: *“My supervisors trained me one-on-one. [...] Anytime I didn't understand something, whether it was body language or whatever, I'd ask my supervisors. I'd mostly ask Mrs. X, and she would explain things to me.”*. This quote shows that supervisors or managers were approachable and played a big part in helping him. Concerning FE2, although he alludes to some disagreements with certain supervisors or managers, he still explains that he could find support in one or two supervisors: *“If I could name one person who helped me, it would be him. He also taught me to be curious, to feel comfortable asking questions, to not hesitate... everything.”*. These elements also highlight the fact that in general, supervisors and managers succeed in establishing a trust relationship with their foreign employee.

To continue with the common points between both employees, the two of them encountered several cultural differences that were quite difficult to adapt to in the beginning. On the one hand, Mauritian food is usually highly spicy, which can be a surprising yet difficult element to adjust to. Indeed, FE1 explains: *“I think it was mostly the food. They really like spicy food. Sure, we like spices too back home, but I wasn't used to this level.”*. On his side, FE2 addressed this matter with more concern. Not exactly regarding the spiciness but the diversity of Mauritian food and its impact on his work performance: *“They should adjust it because sometimes it wasn't very diverse. In hospitality you use a lot of energy, and if the food doesn't follow... You can't eat, you can't work.”*. On the other hand, some behaviours observed in the workplace also created a sort of “cultural shock” for both of them. Regarding FE1's experience, one example of body language that perturbed him is the kiss on the cheek that is often used to greet other Family Members. As he explains: *“I never really got used to that. Where I'm from, we only do that with close adult relatives, not with everyone. But here, they're used to it. So it felt a bit strange.”*. For FE2, one altercation with a superior really struck him: *“They're more likely to bang on walls or shout loudly, from what I've seen. It's probably normal here, but it wasn't normal for me.”*. These feedbacks highlight the fact that some cultural clashes can happen due to differences in communication styles or emotional expression. These can make foreign employees feel uncomfortable if they are not introduced to certain non-verbal communication norms beforehand. However, concerning the verbal communication part, even though they agreed that it was hard to understand Creole in the beginning, they both affirmed that their managers and supervisors made an effort to make them feel included. *“So generally they'd talk to me in Creole, a language I didn't know at all to begin with. So I was a bit lost. [...] They still made the effort so everyone could get it and to put everyone on the same page, it was English.”* (FE2).

“Yes, at the beginning, when they’d start drifting into Creole, someone would say, “Hey, speak French, he’s here”. And they’d switch to French. Later, they even tried teaching me Creole. Now that I understand it, they speak to me in Creole and I reply in French.” (FE1).

Although both Foreign Employees shared some similar perspectives, there are also several elements that they experienced differently. One of them is the adaptation to certain behaviours. As a matter of fact, this point was also mentioned as a common point because both had some difficulties to understand and adapt to specific behaviours but not all of them. For instance, FE2 easily adapted to the greeting hand sign: *“The hand sign, yes, since it’s their culture and I really respect people’s cultures. So yes, I had to adapt. Also, when you say thank you or greet someone, you always have to put your hand on your heart? I adapted to that, it wasn’t very hard.”*. However, FE1 struggled a bit more with this gesture: *“Sometimes when I see clients, I do it. But with colleagues, no. I just say “hi”. But not with the hand sign every time. I don’t like it. I’m just not used to it.”*. The conclusion is not that the FE1 is disrespectful but rather that the adaptation process can vary according to each person. What might feel normal and easy for some may feel uncomfortable for others.

In addition, the two Foreign Employees had a rather distinct overall work experience. Indeed, FE1 described a very positive environment where he felt empowered and valued: *“I feel good. Comfortable. [...] They tell me to be proud of who I am. They made me feel more confident in myself.”*. This quote highlights a genuine sense of belonging and a kind of emotional safety. FE1 decided to keep working at Zilwa after his trainee period. On the contrary, FE2 did not express the same overall feeling of inclusion: *“Sometimes; even if they were nice to you, they weren’t really here to help you.”*. In fact, he even alludes to some moments of marginalisation due to his nationality: *“People put you in a box just because of your nationality.”*. Therefore, these two different feedback suggest that depending on the department or colleagues there can be some foreign employees who might feel victim of cultural bias and emotional detachment. Despite these issues, he stated that he will only keep the positive out of this working experience: *“I think I had some bad experiences, but still got good things out of it.”*

2. Analysis of the data collected

Among the different interviews conducted, similar core themes were explored, although the questions were slightly adapted to suit the category and profiles of each participant. The previous section compared the responses obtained within the same participant groups. Therefore, the purpose of this section is to analyse the main that emerged across all interviews. By gathering feedback from Human Resources team members, department managers, and foreign employees, this part will present an analysis across groups to better understand how these different opinions align or differ regarding the efficiency of the staff orientation program and intercultural integration.

2.1. Intercultural orientation practices

The first recurring topic that emerged during the six interviews is inevitably the cultural aspect of the staff orientation or induction program at Zilwa. This aspect of the program was obviously at the centre of all the questions as it is the main concern of this study. As a matter of fact, all participants underlined the importance of the orientation program in facilitating the adaptation process.

According to Human Resources Family Members, the induction program is structured over two days (not always consecutives). It includes essential information on the hotel's internal procedures, diversity and inclusion policies, as well as a brief introduction to Mauritian culture such as local food habits, spoken languages, hierarchical relations, and the importance to communicate with supervisors and managers as soon as there is an issue.

Both Managers agreed on the structure of the program. However, from the Foreign Employees point of view, the induction part was a bit rushed as they would have liked more training and knowledge about the cultural norms. This may be due to the fact that both participants are trainees and the induction program is a bit more rushed for them as they are not at Zilwa for a long time. Trainees benefit from a more complete induction training with larger groups of trainees sometimes one month after their entrance date. This may be why they felt a bit lost in the beginning as they only had information about the basic part of Zilwa rules such as rights, uniforms, presentation of the hierarchy...

Then, regarding the structure of delivery, the interviews confirmed that the induction program is primarily designed by the Attitude Head Office and the Human Resources team. The latter are the ones that conduct the orientation while Department Managers are responsible for welcoming the new foreign recruits into the team, explaining specific tasks, and ensuring the day-to-day integration into the workplace.

Moreover, Managers undeniably agreed that explaining the Mauritian culture from the beginning is essential to integrate and thrive in this new work environment. People need to understand certain behaviours and norms of Mauritius before being let into the workplace. Yet, as the Human Resources personnel developed, it is still up to the colleague and the team in general to foster this inclusion by supporting new foreign employees. This is the reason why there is a buddy pairing procedure for all newcomers. The objective is to have Mauritian staff to help foreign Family Members to accommodate to the job and to cultural norms.

However Human Resources personnels recognised that for trainees, since they do not benefit from the special intercultural training from the Head Office, this part of their induction might be insufficient for them. As a matter of fact, this is also the perspective shared by the two foreign trainees interviewed. As discussed in the previous part, although on different levels, they both agreed that they felt quite lost in the beginning due to some lack of cultural information. Indeed, as foreign employees and first time workers, both expected a slightly more organised and detailed presentation of the workplace tasks and Mauritian habits.

2.2. Cultural adaptation and daily challenges

The concern of cultural adaptation was also tackled in all interviews. It is a two-way process that requires both foreign and Mauritian Family Members to adjust to each other's norms and behaviours. On the one hand, foreign employees definitely had to learn about several Mauritian norms to better fit in this new workplace. However, adaptation often means facing cultural surprises or challenges. Among these ones, the most recurrent was the struggle with Mauritian food. As highlighted in the former section with all the different quotes, Mauritian food is often described as too spicy and the cooking techniques can be very different. However, beyond these culinary adjustments, language was definitely a striking barrier for foreign employees at first.

Yet, both foreign employees underlined the constant efforts of their respective supervisors and managers to communicate in French or English to facilitate their integration and understanding.

Moreover, specific cultural practices such as greeting customs and body language differences sometimes required some time for foreign employees to adapt. The same goes for certain topics of conversations as mentioned FE1. Overall, the emotional response to these adjustments varied among the two participants. While FE1 felt included and valued by his Mauritian colleagues, FE2 had hard times at first to feel accepted among this new culture. Nevertheless, both of them mentioned the support of their supervisors to explain the cultural differences and their openness for conversation, even if it was not as easy for FE2 as it was for FE1. Regarding the topic of providing support, both Managers made a point of honour in stating that it was extremely important to assist foreign recruits and to discuss potential issues.

On the other hand, as DM2 explained that the adaptation process is not only the responsibility of foreign employees, it also comes from them. Mauritian staff also have to adjust their viewpoints and behaviours, which at times can be more complex than the other way round. Indeed, HR1 pointed out that some body language and verbal habits, particularly those of employees from Indian cultural backgrounds also required Mauritians to adapt. For instance, certain eating habits can be quite surprising at first, as noted HR1. Then, relationships in the workplace can sometimes be approached differently. Yet, this behaviour will not be echoed in the communication style, which will always be extremely polite.

Therefore the various elements and explanations tackled in his section showed that cultural adaptation is a mutual process that needs to be understood and applied by each Family Member. To reach team cohesion, efforts need to be made by everyone.

2.3. Communication, feedback, and team integration

The topic of communication was both a challenge and a tool for the integration of foreign employees. As highlighted during the interviews, some interpersonal interactions between local and foreign Family Members were sometimes difficult due to certain language barriers. Although English is used as the common language in the workplace, it happens that employees sharing the same mother tongue converse with it between them. For instance, Mauritians usually speak Creole or French with each other. However, Malagasy trainees speak French but not Creole and Indian trainees understand neither of them.

Yet, Indian and Nepali trainees can speak Hindi among themselves. Consequently, due to this melting pot of languages, sometimes it can be difficult for everyone to adapt their language to their audience. However, in a multicultural country like Mauritius, the line between barrier and strength is thin. Indeed, among Mauritian Family Members, several of them also speak Hindi which can create another common language to better communicate with Indian and Nepali trainees and make a step toward them to foster their inclusion.

Besides, efficient communication also needs efficient listening of Family Members' feedback. This is one of the central points that was mentioned and highlighted in the interviews. Indeed, active listening is a key element of the adaptation process for new foreign employees. According to HR1, new recruits are encouraged to approach either their immediate supervisors, managers, or the Human Resources department to discuss concerns or difficulties as soon as they arise. Yet, time constraints can sometimes limit the effectiveness of these exchanges. From the Managers' perspectives, listening to employees serves not only to support integration but also to gather feedback for improving certain practices. As DM2 explained, during the internship we both worked together to put in place collective and intimate sessions where foreign trainees and expatriates could reflect on their experience and adaptation. However, according to FE2, he felt hard in the beginning to be actively listened to in the early stage of his adaptation process by his superiors.

Consequently, to foster cohesion among all Family Members of diverse cultural backgrounds, the Human Resources team have implemented various strategies. On the one hand, there are the mid-year and end-of-year parties taking place at the hotel. These events are essential to bring together all staff to celebrate and give them an opportunity to interact cross-culturally beyond the context of the workplace routine. On the other hand, as FE1 mentioned, the Human Resources department is taking the initiative to organise events where a specific culture will be highlighted each time. The objective is to create a space to encourage mutual appreciation and cultural exchanges. In fact HR1 emphasised that such shared moments are among the most efficient opportunities to create and strengthen interpersonal bonds and open dialogue. Finally, on a monthly basis, there is the "Get Together" event during which all Family Members celebrate the birthdays of the month over cake and snacks. This is also the moment where several employees are congratulated for their positive actions with rewards and the years of service of others are honoured. All in all, events contribute to building a sense of belonging and fostering positive team dynamics and intercultural interactions.

CHAPTER 2: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The previous chapter of this third and last part examined the results of the interviews through both a within-group and across-group comparison. Through these analyses, several behaviours, practices, and challenges stood out. Therefore, this chapter aims now to interpret to what extent the findings support or refine the expectations of the initial assumptions. Finally, in light of this discussion, the main question and objectives of this research will be addressed at the end of the chapter.

1. Cultural awareness and its role in improving communication

1.1. Understanding expectations using Neuliep's model

As a reminder, the first assumption made to address this study was the following: *“Raising awareness about different cultural contexts during the staff orientation program contributes to improving communication and dialogue between local managers and foreign employees.”*. It relies on the idea that the knowledge of one another's cultural norms can facilitate the communication between local managers and foreign employees. The principle of cultural contexts mostly comes from Neuliep's Context Model of Intercultural Communication presented in the first part of this thesis. According to this theoretical model, if Zilwa's staff orientation program effectively presented the cultural contexts of the workplace, several expectations should be reflected in the interview findings.

Neuliep (2009) conceptualises intercultural communication as a dialogue that can be separated into several contexts: cultural, microcultural, environmental, perceptual, and sociorelational. However, to better suit this assumption and the expectations of the findings gathered, I grouped them into three different levels which are the micro, intermediate, and macro.

First of all, the “micro level” refers to the perceptual and sociorelational contexts. Both of them concern the personal and interpersonal aspect of intercultural communication. By grouping them together, it is easier to analyse the dynamics between local managers and foreign

employees. Applied to this assumption, it means that orientation sessions are expected to teach and sensitise foreign employees to the usual communication styles of the workplace. This is to say, if Mauritian managers are most used to giving direct or indirect feedback as well as if they talk formally or informally to their staff members. It is also about debunking the stereotypes foreign employees might have about the Mauritian culture and people, as they can influence the way they will perceive and address their managers. As Shuli and Dongyuan (2009) explain, misinterpretations often arise when we evaluate others' behaviour through the lens of our own cultural frame of reference, which can distort its intended meaning. Stereotypes further amplify this risk, as they lead individuals to possess and assess the information they receive in ways that may be inaccurate or inappropriate.

Then, the “intermediate level” gathers the environmental and microcultural contexts. In this research, the microcultural context is about factors such as shared norms and values among each group. The environmental dimension relates to the situation in which the staff orientation program takes place. Therefore, in the context of this study, the orientation program should present the key cultural dimensions of Mauritius as well as some explanations regarding hierarchy or decision-making, and the common etiquette required in the workplace.

Lastly, the “macro-level” is concretely the cultural context of the model. Indeed, according to Neuliep this dimension plays a role in shaping the day-to-day interactions and behaviours. In other terms, new foreign employees should be introduced to the broader historical context of Mauritius during orientation for them to know how to interpret or deal with certain Mauritian habits. This includes the multicultural aspect of the island and the general workplace norms.

To summarise, this first assumption seeks to understand if raising awareness of each other's cultural contexts during the staff orientation does improve communication. This point is definitely supported by Nguyen Vy Ngoc (2024, p. 263): *“Cultural and global awareness fosters cultural sensitivity which is the ability to navigate cultural differences thoughtfully. Sensitivity to cultural nuances, language, and non-verbal cues is essential for avoiding unintended offense and building stronger interpersonal relationships.”* If it is the case, the insights gathered during the interviews should reflect several outcomes such as more open exchanges between managers and foreign employees and a greater will from both sides to adapt their communication strategies.

1.2. Observed effects of cultural awareness on dialogue and integration

Before presenting the several outcomes, it should first be noted that the participants' answers focused on the orientation program offered by the Human Resources staff rather than the more comprehensive cultural training delivered by the Head Office as explained in the previous chapter. Moreover, managers do not attend the staff orientation program, instead they benefit from several cultural training divided throughout the year. Additionally, Zilwa's staff orientation program does not address the contextual dimensions of Neuliep's model as such. Because of this, Family Members did not directly mention these categories, but what they shared can still be compared to the aspects of the model.

It was expected that foreign employees and local managers would report more open exchanges, adaptation of communication styles, and reduced misunderstandings if the orientation program presented cultural contexts. The experiences of FE1 and FE2 show some contrasting outcomes across the three levels of intercultural interaction previously presented. At the "micro level", FE1 described feeling at ease with his manager: *"I can talk to him, ask for things. I never felt afraid of him or like I had to be extra cautious around him."* He even mentioned the trust he has in his superiors and colleagues, which underlines the positive interpersonal relations. On the contrary, FE2 explained that even if he felt that certain supervisors were *"nice"*, they sometimes missed in clearly explaining tasks which made it harder for him to build this personal connection when communicating: *"At first, I didn't really feel they wanted to explain things to me."* The Human Resources team noted that they encourage foreign employees to have direct dialogues with managers to resolve potential issues. Therefore, it suggests that the support and tools are actually put in place but not perceived as equally effective by all employees. In this scenario, foreign employees can feel overwhelmed by the unfamiliar cultural norms, rules, and values (Chen, 2015).

At the "intermediate level", foreign employee A recalled being told that *"Zilwa is one big family"*. This reference to family obviously echoes the term "Family Members" used to refer to the employees and reflects the collectivist orientation of the workplace. He also added: *"It's reassuring when everyone's nice and it's mutual"*. These statements align with Yang and Lee's (2023) findings showing that emphasising group cohesion, fairness, and mutual support favors employees' resilience in the work environment. Thus, these quotes highlight the willingness of the company to create a sense of belonging and to share their workplace values with everyone.

However, for both Foreign Employees, the communication process was still a bit tough in the beginning due to the main group norm which is language: *“They speak Creole among themselves”*. Concerning this type of challenge, managers recognise that it is part of the local culture and it can be difficult to always think of ways to adapt to it as it comes naturally. Nevertheless, they still acknowledge that the adaptation also comes from their side so they will try to be more careful. As a matter of fact, it is essential to work on this language barrier issue as it can quickly enhance exclusion and anxiety for foreign employees who will feel *“restricted and reduced”* (Tenzer et al., 2014, p. 8).

Finally, at the “macro level”, there is one specific quote coming from FE1’s interview that illustrates his successful integration into the broader multicultural context of Zilwa and Mauritius which is: *“They tell me to be proud of what I am”*. Indeed, by encouraging him to embrace his culture and personality, it proves that the general workplace culture, hence Mauritian norms, not only tolerates diversity but actively celebrates it. Notwithstanding, as highlighted before, FE2’s experience presented more exclusion.

1.3. Assessment of cultural awareness impact on communication

This assumption aimed to determine whether explaining and training on cultural awareness during the staff orientation program improved communication and dialogue between local managers and foreign employees. According to the expectations presented in the first section and the content analysed from the interviews detailed in the second section, the evidence from the field aligns with the assumption although the improvement of certain aspects varied. Indeed, indirectly mentioning the cultural contexts of Mauritius and the workplace during orientation did help certain foreign employees to better understand some communication styles and enhance relationships based on trust and openness. Nevertheless, it did not manage to eliminate all barriers that prevent efficient communication. Based on FE2’s experience, understanding the cultural contexts did not immediately mean having a successful intercultural dialogue.

To conclude, cultural awareness about the different contexts of communication during the orientation program is valuable and participates in improving intercultural interactions. Yet, it should be reinforced with concrete examples of dialogues between managers and foreign employees in different scenarios.

As Bezrukova et al. (2016, p. 1268) analysed, by implementing this approach in the program: *“People will be reminded of scenarios or situations they have learned while in training, which then is more readily maintained and even strengthened over time.”* It would enable all Family Members to be better prepared and to have more knowledge and practice. While this assumption focused on the quality of communication between local managers and foreign employees, the following one will address the adaptation of foreign recruits into the workplace.

2. Cultural introduction and employee adaptation

2.1. How cultural dimensions shape adaptation and confidence

The second assumption is: *When foreign employees are introduced to key cultural dimensions of Mauritius during the staff orientation program, they adapt more effectively to the work environment and interact more confidently with colleagues.* This one is grounded in the idea that introducing foreign employees to the key dimensions of Mauritius, as described in Hofstede's model (Hofstede, 2011), will enhance foreign employees' adaptation, integration, and confidence in the workplace. In the hospitality industry, cultural orientation or diversity training is widely used to facilitate employees' adjustment and therefore increase and maintain this diverse workforce (Madera, 2013).

As outlined in the literature review of the first part of this thesis, the Hofstede model is an essential tool when questioning cultural adaptation. For instance, understanding the country's high power distance would prepare them for more formal hierarchies and the importance of respectful forms of communication toward managers and supervisors. Moreover, due to the historical past of Mauritius, people tend to have a more collectivist behaviour. This one is seen through a lot of teamwork, emphasis on building relationships among Family Members and social connections in general rather than individualistic performances. Moreover, the moderate to low uncertainty avoidance in the workplace necessitates foreign recruits to be flexible and to adapt to sudden changes that may initially feel abrupt or even disrespectful depending on the circumstances.

By having this knowledge, foreign recruits could reduce potential uncertainty as to how to react to certain behaviours or unintentional etiquette errors. As a result, it will not only make them feel more accepted by their Mauritian colleagues but also boost their confidence when contributing to team tasks.

The main expectation in this assumption is that this cultural awareness will enable foreign Family Members to better understand this new professional environment. In other terms, to avoid certain misunderstandings due to cultural misconceptions and to approach their Mauritian colleagues more easily. As noted by Lin et al., (2012, p. 546): *“When foreigners misunderstand the literal meaning of the behaviour of local people and have difficulty with communication, they become frustrated. When there is difficulty managing such emotions, the adjustment to local culture suffers.”*. This point of view showcases how equipping new foreign recruits with cultural knowledge is essential to reduce the risk of emotional fatigue and helping them to navigate the workplace with more ease from the beginning.

2.2. Perspectives on adaptation in practice

The interviews offered a clearer picture of how these expectations unfolded in practice. Although Hofstede's dimensions were not explicitly mentioned by the participants, the framework still guided the analysis as explained in the previous section. The cultural comparison between France and Mauritius developed in the literature review shaped my interpretation of the data, allowing me to classify the findings according to the cultural categories they most closely reflect.

On the one hand, while Mauritius scores relatively high on power distance in Hofstede's model, the hotel presents a more nuanced approach. During induction, the hierarchical structure is clearly explained, from the General Manager to senior supervisors and supervisors, which reinforces the importance of respecting roles and authority. At the same time, the Human Resources team and Department Managers always enhance the fact that every Family Member is equal. Therefore, it will not be considered overstepping boundaries if employees discuss their issues with their immediate supervisor or above. *“To reassure them that our doors remain open, and that just because of our positions today, they shouldn't be afraid to come talk to us.”* (HR1). This demonstrates how the hotel acknowledges the cultural norm of hierarchy while also fostering a more open and approachable leadership style to encourage dialogue and support.

Then, the significance of the buddy pairing system was also mentioned a lot of times during the interviews: *“A Buddy is someone who will help the newcomer adapt better. And then, they’ll accompany them for two or three weeks.”* (HR2). This reflects the country’s collectivist orientation. Rather than focusing on individual performance, Zilwa’s culture values collaboration and solidarity among Family Members regardless of their cultural background. It both enables new foreign recruits to integrate more easily and create bonds with their colleagues.

Moreover, Mauritius ranks quite low in the uncertainty avoidance dimension. *“Sometimes we’re caught at the last minute by situations where I have a meeting, but unfortunately I need to attend another meeting that just came up. So sometimes it’s difficult.”* (HR1). He recognised that it can be difficult to understand and adapt for foreign employees who do not share this cultural norm. Consequently, this idea leads the discussion to the Foreign Employees’ point of view of the adaptation process at Zilwa.

Although all participants agreed that foreign recruits are introduced to Mauritian cultural norms during the induction program, FE2 revealed that it still lacked some more concrete explanation. This point of view proves that adaptation is a gradual process that relies a lot on experience and interaction. As they both mentioned, they mostly learned about cultural norms by observing and asking questions to colleagues and supervisors rather than during the formal presentation of the induction program. *“The induction program helped me mainly for the job... like knowing what’s what. As for integrating with the Mauritian staff, that comes more through meeting people naturally.”* (FE1). This statement is also supported by the following quote: *“It must be practiced constantly and learned over time through continuous experiences of intercultural encounters and exchange.”* (Pintor & Premazzi, 2024, p. 97). Concerning the workplace practices, both employees did not mention any specific struggle directly due to the culture, it was rather linked to the job itself and its tasks. Surprisingly, the most difficult part for them was the adaptation to the local food. Over time, both employees relatively managed to build confidence with their respective colleagues and feel more included in the team.

2.3. Limits and contributions of cultural induction on adaptation

This second assumption proposed that when foreign employees are introduced to key cultural dimensions of Mauritius during the staff orientation program, they adapt more effectively to the work environment and interact more confidently with colleagues. Based on the

findings discussed above, this assumption is partially confirmed. In fact, the induction program plays a crucial part in presenting the general cultural context of the workplace to new recruits such as the hierarchy, the buddy system, and teamwork. By extension these practices typically reflect Mauritian standards on power distance or collectivism for instance.

However, the interviews also make it clear that the orientation program alone is not sufficient for total and successful cultural integration. Even if it creates an initial awareness, managers and supervisors must continue and complete this learning in everyday situations. As both foreign employees underlined, the most effective way for them to understand and embrace Mauritian cultural norms was through practical experience. Indeed, observing, asking questions to their superiors, and interacting with local colleagues was what truly helped them. At the same time, the induction program itself needs to evolve in response to foreign employees' feedback to remain useful and more complete. As Baum (2015) emphasised: *"An organisation needs to keep its human resources aligned with the business needs by transitioning quickly and easily from one configuration to another."* This idea of adaptability is also echoed in DM1's observation: *"Now we're adapting. Training is coming, management is looking for ways to support this new dynamic."* These perspectives prove that cultural integration requires both learning on the field and the continuous improvement of the induction program itself.

Overall, the core principle of the assumption is true: cultural introduction during the orientation program does support foreign employees' adaptation. Yet, to be effective it needs to be combined with ongoing guidance from managers and supervisors on the ground. The mix of a structured and continually updated induction and a constant support from superiors would lead to a greater adaptation and integration for foreign Family Members.

3. Managing communication challenges

3.1. Expectations through intercultural competence

The third and last assumption used to tackle this study is the following: *"Communication challenges related to cultural differences are likely to arise, but targeted orientation can equip both managers and employees with the skills to reduce misunderstandings and foster smoother collaboration."*

In a multicultural work environment like Zilwa, differences in language, hierarchy, politeness norms, and work habits can easily lead to misunderstandings or conflicts if they are not properly addressed. Yet, the core suggestion of this assumption is that by implementing a structured orientation program and training managers and foreign employees, these challenges can be overcome. To achieve this, they need to develop intercultural competence.

The latter, as described in the literature review, is a tool used to manage intercultural exchanges. As Magrini Nammur (2024)¹⁰¹ defines: *“Intercultural competence is the ability to effectively interact with people from different cultures, involving understanding, knowledge, skills, sensitivity, and adaptability related to cultural differences. It involves a deep understanding of one’s culture, as well as an appreciation and respect for the values, beliefs, costumes, and behaviours of individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds”*. The three main elements that this assumption focuses on are: the capacity to function effectively across different cultural settings, the ability to act and think appropriately when faced with unfamiliar norms, and the skill to communicate with culturally diverse colleagues. Therefore, the orientation program was expected to encourage openness in mindset and communication as well as cultural awareness to enable Family Members to handle differences in a constructive manner. If the assumption is confirmed, foreign employees should state that the induction program explained Mauritian workplace norms and helped them adjust their communication. Regarding Department Managers, they should explain how they provide feedback, support, and handle misunderstandings with foreign Family Members.

As a matter of fact, this last assumption is closely intertwined with the two precedents. Assumption One focused on cultural contexts and mutual communication, whereas Assumption Two examined the cultural adaptation of foreign employees. Yet, Assumption Three concentrates on the skills and strategies needed to efficiently manage intercultural misunderstandings.

¹⁰¹ LinkedIn, “The Power of Intercultural Competence”, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/power-intercultural-competence-fernanda-silviano-magrini-nammur-ltgze#:~:text=Intercultural%20competence%20is%20the%20ability,adaptability%20related%20to%20cultural%20differences.>, January 23, 2024, [Accessed August 18, 2025]

3.2. Current communication challenges and approaches

The findings for the third assumption show that communication challenges due to cultural differences did arise at Zilwa. Those issues can be separated into two groups: verbal communication struggles and non-verbal ones. On the one hand, concerning verbal communication, foreign employees reported that language and accent were recurring barriers. This point is not surprising as it is usually the first and most frequent issue encountered when interacting with someone from a distinct culture (Wolff, 2024)¹⁰². In this case study, the main aspect of language that bothered foreign employees was the difference of native language, as previously mentioned. In addition, even if English was used as the common language in the workplace, the accent sometimes made it more difficult to understand, as explained FE2: *“Sometimes it was hard to understand because it’s not their native language.”* On the other hand, non-verbal aspects of communication also created incomprehension and discomfort at some point. For instance, the behaviour of one supervisor surprised FE2 and the invasion of his personal space made him uneasy.

Consequently, to face these various misunderstandings, Foreign Employees developed some coping mechanisms to adapt to this new cultural environment. FE1 explained that even if there are some parts of the culture that he never really got used to, he managed to navigate them because he adopted a Mauritian perspective rather than a Malagasy one, which made it easier to normalise things that initially felt unusual. As a matter of fact, this mindset reflects the one that DuPraw and Axner (1997, p. 15) encourage people to have in order to gain intercultural competence: *“Don’t assume that there is one right way (yours!) to communicate. Keep questioning your assumptions about the “right way” to communicate.”* For FE2, adaptation was mostly made smoother by asking questions directly to superiors. Together, these strategies show the development of intercultural competence on the ground. However, it also suggests that while the orientation program introduced them to basic cultural and communication aspects, it did not sufficiently equip foreign employees with tools and skills to recognise and manage these daily misunderstandings.

¹⁰² Lokalise, “What are language barriers and can you be a borderless business?”, <https://lokalise.com/blog/what-are-language-barriers/>, January 30, 2024, [Accessed August 19, 2025]

Finally, the role of managers' support was also mentioned as essential so as to overcome communication barriers of all sorts. As DM2 stated: *"We need to step in to explain, interpret, and make sure tasks are well understood. It can slow down the adaptation, but it's more of a positive challenge. Helping someone adjust is part of the job."* These are competences that all managers and frontliners got the opportunity to learn during the cultural training sessions mentioned by both Human Resources Family Members: *"There's a programme designed by the Head Office, which was delivered to our Family Members, as I said, supervisors, frontliners, and so on. It was about how to help expats adapt to Mauritius."* Overall, it confirms that orientation is necessary but it is also managerial guidance and their own intercultural skills such as empathy that improve foreign employee's adjustment and reduce cultural misunderstandings over time.

3.3. Intercultural competence as a key to overcome communication challenges

Lastly, the third assumption suggested that cultural differences may cause communication challenges, but targeted orientation and training could help managers and foreign employees to reduce misunderstandings and collaborate more effectively. Thus, the insights gathered during the interview confirm this assumption. Indeed, communication challenges related to cultural differences did emerge at Zilwa. They ranged verbal barriers to non-verbal behaviours that caused discomfort. Nevertheless, Foreign Employees and Department Managers developed some strategies to address these issues, which prove that they are not insurmountable. FE1's choice to adopt a Mauritian perspective and FE2's questioning of superiors show how intercultural competence can be built in practice. This process reflects Bennet's (2009) idea that intercultural learning begins with adapting to the host culture and the skills can later be transferred to other cultural contexts.

Moreover, managers underlined their responsibility to also adapt to foreign employees and guide them, which proves that, in addition to training, support is also important to reduce miscommunication.

Yet, the results also imply that introducing the intercultural competence tool as from the orientation program could lessen this initial awkwardness experienced by foreign employees. In fact, equipping them with the right strategies and information from the start may accelerate their adaptation into this new cultural environment.

All in all, combining early cultural awareness and training during orientation and managerial support is the right solution to reduce cultural misunderstandings and improve collaboration among all Family Members. As Chen (2015, p. 102) highlights: *“Being well-adjusted involves learning socially appropriate norms via intercultural training, and that social learning enhances cultural effectiveness, further resulting in a psychological involvement in one’s job.”*

Overall, at the Attitude Group, intercultural management practices embedded in staff orientation programs cultivate relationships between managers and employees from diverse backgrounds by establishing a well-defined learning pathway for adaptation. During the orientation, foreign employees are introduced to the Group’s core values, local norms, and the operational routine. On the one hand, they help reduce uncertainty and build a sense of belonging and confidence as from the beginning. On the other hand, these practices also foster dialogue, inclusivity, and encourage active listening. The main purpose is to navigate more easily potential cultural misunderstandings and therefore strengthen team collaboration and efficiency. Nevertheless, the study also revealed that orientation alone is insufficient to fully achieve these objectives. Managers must provide their constant support and guidance and every Family Member must be willing to learn and make efforts to adapt to each other.

CHAPTER 3: LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Limitations of the study

Although this thesis has provided valuable insights into the role and importance of intercultural orientation within the hospitality industry, and most particularly within the Mauritian one, it is still essential to honestly and critically assess the methodological and contextual limitations that may have influenced or impacted the study and its outcomes.

While at the end of the day, all of these boundaries are intertwined, this section will be divided into four different parts, each corresponding to a specific limitation to better understand them in detail.

1.1. Methodological constraints

As explained in the methodology chapter of this thesis, the qualitative approach was a better suited option for this topic as it favored a deeper comprehension of the subject through personalised interviews. Nevertheless, like any methodology, a qualitative approach has its strengths and drawbacks. As Mwita (2022) underlines, this type of approach involves a degree of subjectivity, as interpretations can be influenced by the researcher's perspective and participant dynamics. Additionally, the complexity and volume of qualitative data make analysis more time-consuming and replication more difficult.

First, regarding the sample size, I limited the number of participants to two per category. This decision was mostly due to the time constraints of the six-month internship during which I spent only four months at Zilwa before being transferred to Paradise Cove Boutique Hotel in mid-July. As illustrated in the Gantt Chart, it was quite challenging to interview all participants in this short amount of time. Every participant having his own responsibilities and schedules, it made it difficult to coordinate the interviews. Consequently, the small number of interviews limits the variety of perspectives and may prevent full saturation across the hotel, the Attitude Group, and the wider hospitality sector in Mauritius.

Moreover, time constraints also had an effect on the depth of data analysis. Indeed, with more time, it would have been possible to carry out more detailed comparisons and interpretations.

On another note, it is important to acknowledge the limitations related to language and communication. As a matter of fact, although working in Mauritius means working in a multicultural environment, it does not necessarily imply that everyone is able to correctly communicate. English served as the common language for the interviews, but it was not my first language nor the one of the participants. Thus, it may have made it difficult to discuss more complex topics such as intercultural management. As a consequence, some nuances may have been lost in the process due to the language barrier that may have influenced the clarity and completeness of some responses.

Finally, it is crucial to mention the possibility of bias, both in participant selection and in the responses collected. In fact, the interviews were conducted in a professional setting. Although anonymity was guaranteed, some participants may have been cautious when giving their answers or offering their critical perception of certain organisational practices. In addition, as the researcher, my own role and limited experience may also have influenced the process, since in qualitative studies the researcher acts as the primary research instrument. This dual role can shape the way I asked questions, interpreted answers, and presented the findings.

1.2. Contextual limitation

Another limitation of this study case lies in the small setting and context.

As a reminder, the research concerned exclusively one Mauritian hotel group, the Attitude Group, and more particularly, one of its properties: Zilwa Attitude. Each company operates according to its own mission, vision, values and corporate culture. Together, they directly influence its internal policies as well as the management styles and communication. Consequently, the structure and content of the staff orientation program studied reflected the company's perception of hospitality and key practices. The fact that this study only analysed one hotel limits the extent to which the data collected and their interpretations can be applied to broader Mauritian hospitality.

Even within the same hotel group, different properties may adopt distinct approaches to intercultural management. It can depend on factors such as the hotel's category, its target market, and the leadership styles of the managers.

For instance, a comparison between the two hotels I did my internship in, Zilwa Attitude and Paradise Cove Boutique Hotel, could have revealed different intercultural practices and values while being part of the same company. This highlights a first limitation linked to the managerial perspective: results drawn from a single hotel, or even from within one hotel group, may not fully capture the diversity of approaches to intercultural management. A second limitation concerns the broader context of the industry. Even if the study had been expanded to cover all the hotels of the Attitude Group, this would have increased the contextual scope, but it would still not have reflected the practices of the wider hospitality sector in Mauritius, which includes more diverse hotel categories and forms of hotel management.

1.3. Cultural representation scope

The study is also limited in terms of cultural representation among the participants.

As a matter of fact, the two foreign Family Members interviewed were both from Madagascar. Whereas each had their own distinct experience, they still come from a relatively similar cultural background and are potentially used to the same cultural norms and values. Moreover, Madagascar is a country that is very close to Mauritius geographically and somewhat culturally through certain aspects of language and religion. Thus, although they were foreign employees, the cultural contrast may have been as pronounced than it would have been with employees from more distant or culturally distinct continents such as Europe, America, and even other countries of Africa.

This type of narrow cultural sampling definitely constraints the study's ability to explore and analyse the full range of intercultural challenges that can happen in multicultural work environments. In the case of Zilwa Attitude, most of the foreign workforce are either Malagasy, Indian, or Nepali. They are from countries that share certain cultural traits as previously mentioned. Therefore, they are in some ways already familiar with some elements of Mauritian culture and lifestyle. As a result, the cultural differences observed may be more subtle than those experienced by staff coming from other cultural environments.

Overall, the various limitations of this research, starting from the methodological constraints to the contextual and cultural restrictions, underlined the importance to cautiously interpret the results mentioned in the previous chapters. This does not mean that the

interpretations are less valuable. It only shows that the conclusions of the assumptions are not necessarily the same for every hotel. Yet, they still offered a slight overview of the intercultural integration in hotels in Mauritius. Hence, this mix of findings and challenges is still useful to tackle and discuss some recommendations.

2. Recommendations for the hospitality industry

2.1. Zilwa Attitude

Mauritius has the chance to already benefit from a multicultural society. Therefore, employees are used to working with people from different cultural backgrounds and to adapting their linguistic skills. This is a strength that should be enhanced during the staff orientation program.

For instance, the already existing induction program at Zilwa could dedicate a part of its slides to the presentation of Mauritius's various cultures. This way, when foreign employees (or even Mauritian ones) integrate the team, they would have a complete display and explanation of several norms, traditions, and habits of these cultures. To do so, it could be interesting if it was a different Family Member who presented his/her own culture. Thus, it could add more meaning and personalisation to the speech with concrete examples and discussions. Otherwise, a specialised professional could be hired precisely to dispense intercultural training tailored to foreign employees and be available to answer their questions or issues related to this topic. To make this feasible, the Human Resources team would need to spare some time within the induction program to add internal sharing or external expertise, or both. The positive impact would be richer cultural awareness and stronger team cohesion, while the main challenge could be the additional cost for an external professional and the risk of presenting cultures in an overly simplified way if it is done by a Family Member.

On another note, it was raised during the interviews that some new recruits did not undergo the staff orientation program because of their status in the company. For instance, trainees that only stayed for three to six months, did not benefit from the complete and detailed training about Mauritian culture. It is a shame as most of the time they are the youngest Family Members and it is their first work experience. Thus, it is even more important for them to have a complete presentation of the work environment to make them feel at ease, confident, and

supported. However, due to certain constraints of time and resources, it may be difficult to implement this training. Indeed, the Human Resources Family Members are already in charge of many tasks and might not have the time to deeply proceed with this aspect of the induction. Moreover, as the majority of companies, the hotel has a defined budget regarding the recruitment of foreign expatriates and trainees. Thus, a limitation to implementing all of these practices could be the costing. A feasible compromise could be to design a shorter, tailored version of the program specifically for interns, which would require less resources but still provide cultural knowledge. This would positively impact their adaptation and integration, though the challenge remains in finding a balance between the extra time and cost and the benefit of training short-term recruits.

Then, the majority of the participants mentioned the necessity to monitor the feedback of Family Members concerning their adaptation and integration. Indeed, it is a crucial element to take into account in order to improve some practices such as the induction program. On the one hand, employees will feel listened to as their opinions will be acknowledged. On the other hand, it is the only efficient way to understand the assets and drawbacks of some practices and to work on the current issues. This monitoring could take the form of in-depth meetings with the Human Resources department or more general surveys to have a broader perspective. A participant from the Human Resources department even suggested creating an application proper to Zilwa to enable all Family Members to share their perspectives on various matters at any time. Implementing these measures would reinforce communication and help improve induction practices, but it may require additional time, coordination, and technical resources to manage the feedback effectively.

Finally, as tackled during the interviews, the Human Resources department is trying to implement some events dedicated to exhibition of each culture through discussions, as well as food making and testing. Even if it is not directly linked with the staff orientation program or typical cultural training, it is still a brilliant idea that could help foreign Family Members to discover the culture and create bonds with other employees. Even for Mauritian Family Members. Although they have always lived in this multicultural setting, sometimes they do not know certain aspects of their colleagues' cultures. After all, it is during these types of gatherings that people share stories and become more connected to each other, which will improve team cohesion at the end of the day. These events are not too complicated to put in place with proper

planning and can enhance intercultural understanding and, once again, team cohesion. Still, ensuring that all Family Members participate remains a challenge.

All in all, the gathering of all these suggestions could positively impact the day-to-day operations at Zilwa Attitude. Indeed, the recommendations concerning the gathering of feedback from employees would at the same time give them a voice to put forward their opinion and allow the management team to continuously improve their practices. Combining in-depth meetings with the creation of an application would also enable them to save time while still caring about their Family Members' well-being and remarks. Moreover, dedicating more time for the cultural awareness side of the staff orientation program for all foreign newcomers would help them to feel engaged from the beginning, be better prepared for the Mauritian work environment, reduce misunderstandings with colleagues and guests, and consequently foster employee and guest satisfaction altogether.

2.2. Attitude Group

Succeeding the previous paragraph about the recommendations for Zilwa Attitude, here are some further ideas for the whole company. First of all, the Attitude Group could create a module for cultural training common for all hotels of the company. This course could be dispensed during the staff orientation program, as mentioned above.

Moreover, the group could put in place additional dedicating training sessions once or twice a year. These sessions could be more tailored to the employees' needs by gathering their feedback through surveys. This way, the training could be organised by themes such as non-verbal behaviour or communication styles for instance. According to Mandal (2023)¹⁰³, *"84% of employees enjoy working in global teams with different cultures"*, which makes it essential to provide the appropriate training to make them grow professionally and personally. Mostly in Mauritius where intercultural communication happens every day between guests, staff, inside and outside the work environment.

¹⁰³ The Culture Factor India, "What are the Key Elements of an Effective Cross-Cultural Training Program?", <https://theculturefactorindia.com/what-are-the-key-elements-of-an-effective-cross-cultural-training-program/>, May 25, 2023, [Accessed July 29, 2025]

Following this idea of implementation, the Attitude Group could add intercultural skills as a new evaluation criteria during their performance reviews of all employees. As a consequence, each Family Member will benefit from another personal development goal that will help them to collaborate more easily across cultures. Indeed, it is one thing to be competent at one's job, but knowing how to teach others, especially those from different cultural backgrounds, and being able to communicate and adapt one's behaviour depending on the cultural context is another. This criteria could be first put in place for all managers and supervisors as they are the ones in charge of leading and training their teams.

Lastly, the Attitude Academy, created from the partnership between the Attitude Group and EHL, could also play a key part in this area. In fact, the objectives of the courses provided by this program are to educate and train people from 17 years and above to become hospitality professionals. As students, we first begin to understand the world through the education we are provided, which is why it is essential to address intercultural topics even before entering the professional world. Thus, by introducing classes about cultural and emotional intelligence, or cultural awareness and intercultural competence, students will be able to develop the skills needed to navigate more easily the challenges that they may encounter once joining the workforce. They will also be equipped to explain the benefits of intercultural management. Consequently, it could be an efficient way to form future leaders that will already be empowered with these crucial knowledge.

2.3. Hospitality in Mauritius and abroad

Among the various recommendations presented in the two precedent sections, most of them can also be applied to the more broader hospitality sector in Mauritius but also worldwide. Indeed, no matter the size, location, brand, or target market of the hotel, they are all subject to the ongoing globalisation that leads to having multicultural teams. To handle this rather new type of diverse workforce, all hospitality companies should invest time and resources in the strengthening or implementation of solid intercultural practices, and it starts with the staff orientation program.

The latter does not only need to tackle the history of the company and the presentation of the hotel structure and values, but also dedicate some time to discuss and teach to employees the importance of intercultural competence.

As tackled in the previous chapters, this concept is essential to learn how to adapt one's behaviour to different cultural contexts and how to effectively communicate. *“Cultural sensitivity training provides numerous benefits for both staff and guests. For staff, it enhances communication skills, increases cultural awareness, and fosters a more inclusive work environment. [...] Cultural sensitivity training can improve team dynamics and morale, as employees learn to appreciate and respect each other's cultural differences.”*¹⁰⁴. Besides, these skills will also be useful when discussing and attending international guests as employees will be able to adapt the etiquette to each cultural background.

Then, in addition to training employees, managers above all also need to be educated about intercultural management in order to lead by example and foster a more inclusive workplace. This is the reason why it is crucial to implement it as from the orientation program and to maintain these classes on a yearly basis. As people become more and more aware about the impact, challenges, and assets of intercultural practices, the number of professionals teaching cultural competency training is increasing too. For instance, there are a lot of new companies that focus on delivering these courses to various types of enterprises including hotels. They adapt their classes to their audience (managers, supervisors, employees, entrepreneurs...). They offer lectures, group discussions, case studies and different exercises to understand and apply the techniques to the field¹⁰⁵.

3. Recommendations for future research

Throughout this last chapter, I exposed the several limitations that may have influenced the study, alongside the recommendations for improvement at different levels within the hospitality industry. While this study offered valuable insights into intercultural management practices during employee orientation in the hospitality sector, the topic could also be opened up to various directions for further academic research. In fact, potential future studies could ameliorate, challenge, or refine the findings I gathered and the analyses I deducted. To do so, researchers might opt for different methodological approaches or try to expand the variables and criteria selected.

¹⁰⁴ Training Hotels, “Cultural Sensitivity Training: Preparing Staff for International Guests”, August 7, 2024, <https://traininghotels.com/2024/08/07/cultural-sensitivity-training-preparing-staff-for-international-guests/>, [Accessed July 28, 2025]

¹⁰⁵ Reademy, “Cultural Competency Training Certification Course”, <https://reademy.com/course/cultural-competency-training-certification-course/>, [Accessed July 28, 2025]

3.1. Exploring alternative methodological approaches

The methodology chosen to explore a topic is the most important part of the study as it can totally change the type of results obtained. As longly discussed in the methodology chapter, I selected a qualitative approach in order to gather specific data about personal experiences. Nevertheless, this methodology also has its own limitations. Thus, combining it with other methodological approaches could bring a new dimension to the study.

First of all, adopting a mixed approach by adding a quantitative approach to the qualitative one would definitely allow the researcher to collect data on a broader scale. Indeed this kind of approach permits the analysis of relations between different variables (Abuhamda et al., 2021). For instance some variables for this study could be employee satisfaction, intercultural management, the perception of cultural competence or even the efficiency of the orientation program. Yet, to collect data through surveys about these elements, it requires the researcher to precisely define them so that all participants easily understand the terms. But these topics can be quite complex to define in a structured, clear, and simple manner. Thus, people might not truly understand them and the results may be affected. Therefore, it is also important to gather insights through more personal interviews as the participants will be able to share their own detailed interpretation and opinion of each variable. This is the reason why doing a mixed approach could be an interesting recommendation for future studies.

Furthermore, there is another type of methodological approach that could suit this study. The latter is called the longitudinal approach. By definition: *“Longitudinal research follows the same individual, group, or organization over time. [...] It encompasses studies of individuals in particular professions or disciplines, a person’s general style or approach to work or life, or a process that enhances creative productivity.”* (Arnold et al., 2011, p. 63). This approach unveils a brand new side of the study as it could be possible to observe the progressive development of intercultural competence by foreign employees and their integration. As a consequence, these data would enable the researcher to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of intercultural practices within staff orientation programs in the long term. Usually, the timeline for this type of approach can go up to several years. However, for this study, the “long-term” could be up to six or eight months after the orientation to have a large overview of the different steps of the integration into the new cultural context. This methodology coupled with the qualitative approach could ensure a very realistic analysis of the advantage of intercultural management in the hospitality industry.

Finally, as previously discussed, a comparative case study approach could bring more comprehension into how intercultural orientation practices differ across hotels, groups, regions (cities, countries, continents...), or corporate cultures. By analysing several real-case scenarios, the researcher could identify recurring challenges and patterns or on the contrary practices that are proper to each cultural context. With this methodological approach, it could be easier to detect the factors that contribute to the effectiveness of the staff orientation programs.

All in all, all of these different yet appropriate methodological approaches could enhance the credibility of the interpretations about this study. Most of all, they could certainly draw a more precise illustration of the complex topic which is intercultural dynamics in the workplace for the hospitality industry.

3.2. Investigating additional aspects or variables

Intercultural management is a subject that is intertwined with a lot of different variables. For this study, I focused on the effectiveness of staff orientation programs and communication between managers and employees from different cultural backgrounds. However, beyond these facets, there are plenty of other variables that could be examined to bring a new angle of research to the study.

On the one hand, one valuable direction could be to explore in more detail each employee's identity and background. Indeed, each person has their own way of adapting to a new environment depending on their age, nationality, gender, educational level, professional background, religion... These factors significantly influence how individuals adjust themselves to a new environment. To be directly in link with the research done in this thesis, future researchers could work on how these characteristics impact the communication preferences, the speed of integration, and the overall ability to adapt by studying one culture in particular. In this study, I used the Hofstede Model to showcase some cultural differences between France and Mauritius to set the general cultural context for the case study. However, the selection criteria for the participants in my interviews was not limited to one culture in particular for foreign employees or one specific type of professional background for Managers. They all have presented distinct profiles and experiences. Therefore it could be interesting to concentrate the study on foreign employees from the same culture and identify some patterns.

To go further, the study could do a comparison between the adaptation process of employees from two or three different cultures. By analysing these various dynamics, the research could help to define a more personalised orientation program that could target the recurrent aspects in which employees of each culture struggle the most. The objective being to foster their integration and well-being into the new cultural and work environment.

On the other hand, exploring the link between leadership styles and cultural expectations of foreign employees could be a potential field of research. *“Leadership styles vary significantly across cultures, influencing how employees perceive and respond to management practices. Understanding these cultural differences is crucial for organisations operating in diverse global environments, as it can impact both employee commitment and performance.”* (Gasmi & Nadeem, 2024, p. 2). As this quote explains, the concept of leadership is not universal. Depending on the countries and cultural contexts, what may be considered effective somewhere may be seen as inappropriate and be resisted somewhere else. Thus, investigating how managers can adapt their leadership styles when working with culturally diverse teams could highlight another side of intercultural managerial practices in hotels. Moreover, it could be interesting to compare the leadership styles of managers who have worked abroad with those who have never. This analysis may reveal differences in communication skills, flexibility, and intercultural sensitivity and awareness. Thanks to these results, companies could implement more tailored training for their managers. These would help them understand how they have to manage and adapt their work practices to reach out to foreign employees and bring out their best while maintaining team cohesion.

One last recommendation in order to broaden this topic could be to expand the research beyond internal employee communication to study how cultural differences also impact interactions between employees and international guests. As a matter of fact, the main purpose of the hospitality industry is to create connections with guests through accommodation. The guests' experiences are definitely marked by the way employees interact with them. Therefore, equipping staff members with intercultural skills would enable them to navigate daily dialogues with guests coming from all parts of the world. Including this new aspect in the research could offer another perspective on how intercultural practices can not only benefit comprehension and conflict resolution among employees but also with guests.

CONCLUSION

The third and last part of this thesis developed on the outcomes of the data collected and their significance. The first chapter presented the insights gathered from the six different interviews as well as their analysis. I examined the perspectives of the participants through various lenses. On the one hand, I treated the data of each group separately to highlight the similarities and differences. On the other hand, I identified several main themes such as the role of orientation and the challenges of communication which enabled me to have a nuanced point of view about Zilwa's practices.

Then, the second chapter discussed the findings in relation to the three assumptions. This comparison of expectations with realities demonstrated the assets, lacks, and areas of improvement of Zilwa Attitude's orientation program. Through this discussion, the findings revealed that cultural awareness and managerial support are extremely important to reduce misunderstandings and ameliorate the adaptation of foreign employees. In particular, the results underlined that a structured induction program, mingled with intercultural exchange with colleagues, and continuous feedback systems is the perfect recipe to make employees feel welcomed, confident, and integrated. Besides, both Department Managers and Human Resources members benefit from being aware of cultural differences, as this enhances communication and unity among the workplace.

Finally, the third chapter addressed the study's limitations and offered several recommendations at different levels. Indeed, it acknowledged the constraints of focusing the study case on one single hotel and therefore its quite limited sample although it enabled me to gather valuable and precise insights. For the recommendations, I summarised the ideas suggested by the participants regarding Zilwa's work environment. I also gave some advice for the more general hospitality sector as well as other methodological approaches for potential future research.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

In today's hospitality industry, it is increasingly common for diverse teams to work together. This is the reason why the question of how organisations manage cultural diversity has become more important than ever. Usually, the role of orientation is perceived as a mere practical guide to rules and regulations. However, it is really a deciding moment that can determine the quality of relationships between managers and employees from different cultures. As this thesis has illustrated, the implementation of intercultural management concepts in the orientation program is not only relevant but essential to create inclusive, collaborative, and effective teams.

This research proved that the hospitality sector was an interesting field to tackle this topic. Indeed, the whole service depends on teamwork as well as on communication. Thus, the way employees are integrated has a direct impact on both collaboration and guest experience. The Attitude Group in Mauritius and more particularly Zilwa Attitude served as a valuable case study to examine these dynamics. Its orientation system, which includes induction sessions, buddy programs, and follow-up initiatives gave the framework to the integration process. Still, the findings also demonstrated that the orientation program alone is not sufficient for successful adaptation. It needs to be coupled with constant support from the managers.

The semi-interviews conducted revealed complementary perspectives. Human Resources participants stressed the organised aspect of induction but acknowledged cultural adaptation as a challenge. Then, Department Managers emphasised the importance of human connection and approachable leadership. Nevertheless, their views on adaptation were not unanimous. Finally, foreign employees highlighted the personal side of integration, going from the feeling of being part of the group to that of being left out. Together, these insights confirm that orientation is both an organisational process and a lived experience that influences workplace relationships.

When confronted with the research question, the results make it clear that intercultural management practices within orientation programs do facilitate the relationship between managers and employees from diverse cultural backgrounds. This facilitation is made possible through the processes of follow-up, continuous support from the managers, and daily interactions with local colleagues. Moreover, the research also points to the existence of certain gaps in

addressing the less visible cultural aspects such as food preferences, and non-verbal communication.

To conclude, it can be said that intercultural collaboration is central in the hospitality industry. Consequently, understanding how to navigate these cultural differences and equipping all employees with the proper tools, like cultural sensitivity, active listening, and adaptive leadership, to do so are the keys to build efficient and long-lasting relationships in the workplace. The objective is to move beyond a multicultural environment toward a truly intercultural workplace.

Looking ahead, intercultural orientation practices are likely to become a standard expectation in hospitality rather than an added value. The challenge for hotel groups such as Attitude will be to ensure that the orientation is remaining both practical and culturally relevant and up-to-date. Beyond this, future research could expand the analysis by comparing several hotel groups, evaluating the impact of orientation on foreign employee retention and service quality over time, as well as the positioning of the Mauritian case within the global context of the hospitality industry.

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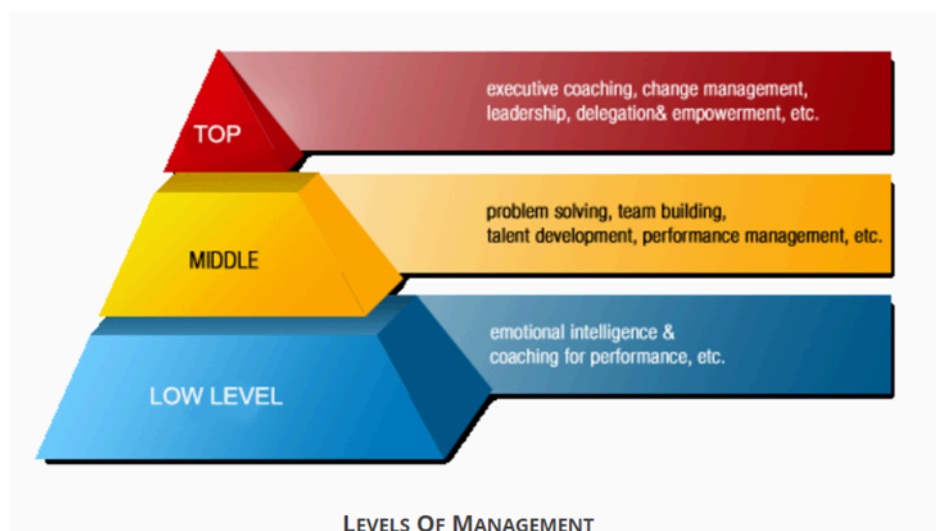
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Functions of Management– Planning, Organising, Staffing, Directing and Controlling¹⁰⁶



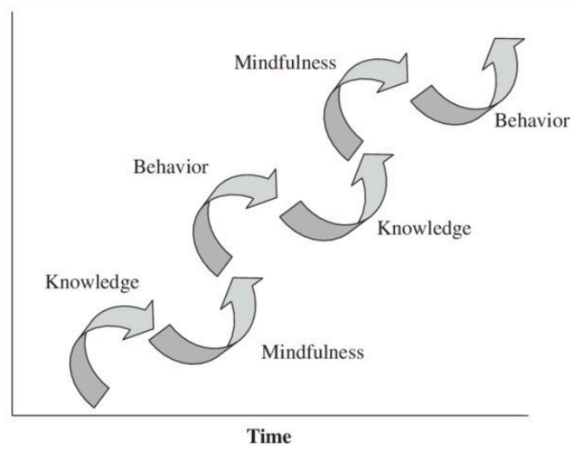
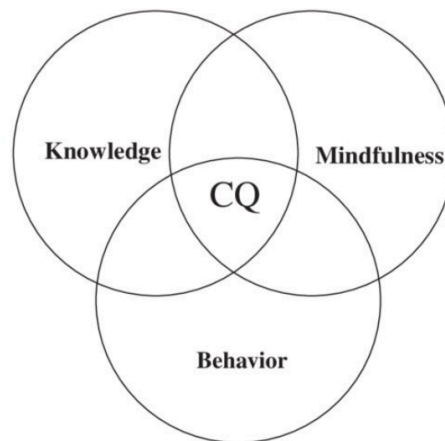
Appendix B: Levels of Management - Top, Middle, and Lower¹⁰⁷



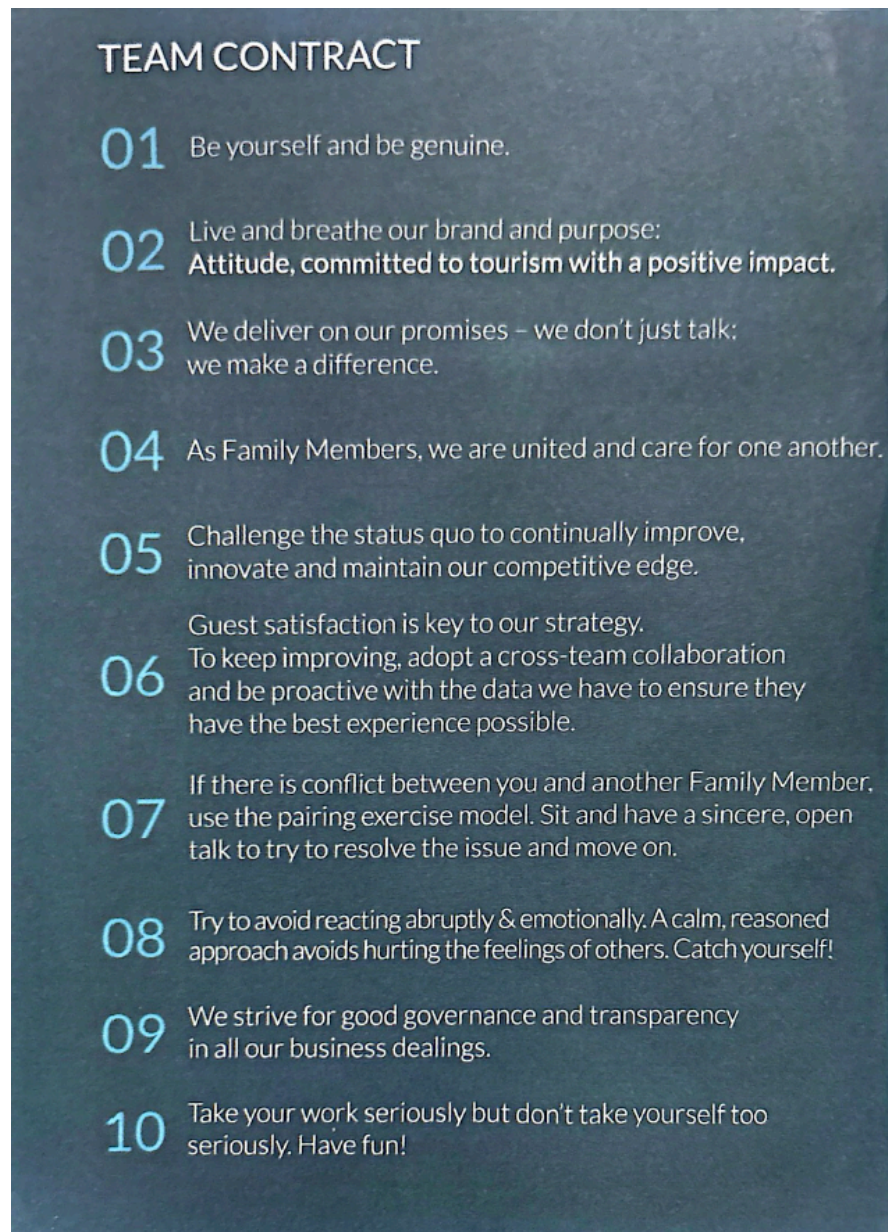
¹⁰⁶ Functions of Management, <https://www.geeksforgeeks.org/functions-of-management-planning-organising-staffing-directing-and-controlling/>, July 2023, [Accessed February 28, 2025]

¹⁰⁷ Levels of Management, https://managementstudyguide.com/management_levels.htm, February 2025? [Accessed March 2, 2025]

Appendix C: *Components of CQ and Development of Cultural Intelligence (Thomas, 2006)*



Appendix D: Extract of Zilwa's Employee Booklet, "Team Contract"



Appendix E: Interview guide for Human Resources Family Members

Assumption	Interview section	Question number	Questions	Expected result
Assumption 1	Preliminary questions about the professional background	N°1	Can you describe your role and responsibilities in the HR department?	To understand the participant's relevance to the research study.
		N°2	How long have you been involved in organising or implementing staff orientation programs?	
	Structure and objectives	N°3	Could you describe the current structure of the staff orientation program?	To understand the design of the program.
		N°4	What are the core objectives of the orientation program?	To know if improving communication among employees is part of the goals.
		N°5	How is the orientation program adapted to suit different types of employees (local, foreign)?	To understand if the program is culturally inclusive or differentiated.
	Intercultural elements	N°6	Does the orientation program include any content focused on intercultural awareness or cultural adaptation?	To identify if cultural awareness is mentioned and explained during the program.
		N°9	Have you received any feedback from foreign employees regarding the intercultural aspects of the orientation?	To assess the effectiveness of the program from foreign Family Members' point of view.
	Evaluation and perception	N°16	In your opinion, how does the orientation program affect communication between culturally	To link cultural orientation with communication.

			diverse Family Members?	
Assumption 2	Intercultural elements	N°8	How are foreign Family Members introduced to Mauritian cultural values? What about workplace norms?	To examine how cultural integration is supported through orientation.
		N°11	Have you observed recurring challenges in integrating foreign staff into the team?	To identify the potential difficulties in the adaptation process.
	Implementation	N°14	How often is the orientation content reviewed or updated?	To understand how the program evolves and adapts to new challenges.
	Evaluation and perception	N°15	How is the effectiveness of the orientation program evaluated?	To link program assessment and adaptation.
Assumption 3	Intercultural elements	N°7	Are these parts delivered formally (slides, factsheets) or informally (discussions)?	To understand the delivery style of intercultural training.
		N°10	Do you notice differences based on nationality, language, or professional background?	To assess the complexity of intercultural misunderstandings.
	Implementation	N°12	Who typically delivers the orientation program?	To determine who is responsible for delivering cross-cultural knowledge.
		N°13	Is there collaboration across departments when designing or reviewing the orientation content?	To determine if there is communication between department managers and HR Family Members about potential misunderstandings due

				to culture.
	Evaluation and perception	N°17	Is there anything you would like to improve or add to the current orientation program?	To identify potential improvements to better manage cultural misunderstandings.

Appendix F: Interview guide for Department Managers

Assumption	Interview section	Question number	Questions	Expected result
	Preliminary questions about the professional background	N°1	Can you describe your role and responsibilities as a Department Manager? How long have you been exercising at this position?	To understand the participant's relevance to the research study.
Assumption 1	Team context and communication	N°2	How often do you work with culturally diverse Family Members?	To know the participant's exposure to cultural diversity in the work environment.
		N°7	Are there any recurring cultural differences you notice that affect team dynamics?	To highlight the potential intercultural tensions and how orientation can address them.
	Application and impact	N°8	Do you see any impact of the staff orientation program on your team collaboration or communication?	To know how orientation can help foster better dialogue and communication.
	Role perception	N°13	In your view, what role does cultural awareness play in leading or managing your team?	To assess the perceived importance of cultural sensitivity in management practices.
	Orientation impact	N°4	From your perspective, how helpful is the current staff orientation program in helping new foreign Family Members understand the cultural norms and values of Mauritius?	To assess the program's effectiveness from a Department Manager's point of view.
		N°9	Do foreign Family Members usually adapt well after orientation, or	To understand if orientation alone is enough for

Assumption 2			are there additional steps you take to support them?	adaptation of foreign staff.
	Employee feedback	N°10	Have employees ever shared their thoughts with you about the orientation they received? Did they comment on the cultural content?	To know foreign employees' perception of the orientation program.
	Orientation impact and challenges	N°14	Are there common aspects of Mauritian culture where foreign employees struggle most when they start?	To identify if orientation informs well enough about Mauritian cultural values and what are the points that should be emphasised.
Assumption 3	Orientation involvement	N°3	Are you involved in the orientation process? If yes, in what ways?	To understand how managers contribute to orientation.
	Communication challenges	N°5	What are some challenges you've faced in communicating with employees from different cultural backgrounds?	To identify real intercultural communication challenges in the workplace.
	Orientation content	N°6	Do you feel the orientation program addresses potential cultural misunderstandings?	To assess if orientation content tackles and gives examples of common intercultural issues.
	Implementation	N°11	What, in your opinion, could be improved in the program to better support intercultural integration and communication?	To gather insights about potential intercultural improvements during the staff orientation program.
		N°12	Are there other support tools or training you believe could enhance intercultural management?	To identify broader solutions for reducing cultural conflicts and foster mutual

				understanding.
		N°15	Have you developed personal strategies or communication styles to overcome cultural barriers?	To understand how managers adapt their leadership style in response to intercultural challenges.

Appendix G: Interview guide for foreign Family Members

Assumption	Interview section	Question number	Questions	Expected result
	Preliminary questions about the professional and cultural background	N°1	Can you describe your role in the hotel?	To understand the participant's relevance to the research study.
		N°2	Where are you from? Is it your first time working in Mauritius and how long has it been?	
Assumption 1	Orientation and cultural awareness	N°3	What do you remember from the staff orientation program? Anything related to cultural awareness in the workplace?	To identify what content was the most striking and if cultural awareness was part of it.
	Intercultural relationship with Managers	N°4	Did the orientation help you understand how to interact with your Manager? Or what is expected in the Mauritian workplace when it comes to hierarchy?	To know if the orientation prepares foreign employees for working with local Managers in a culturally appropriate way.
Assumption 2	Orientation content	N°5	Was Mauritian culture or workplace behaviour explained during your orientation (social norms, greetings, expectations)?	To assess the cultural depth of the program.
	Cultural adaptation	N°6	Did learning about Mauritian culture help you feel more confident in your early days at work?	To understand the link between cultural knowledge and adaptation.
	Orientation content	N°7	Were there aspects of Mauritian work culture that surprised you despite the orientation? Did you feel prepared or unprepared to face them?	To identify potential gaps in the program.

	Cultural adaptation	N°8	How did you personally adapt to the Mauritian work environment?	To understand the adaptation process and the role of orientation in it.
Assumption 3	Verbal communication	N°9	Have you experienced any misunderstandings at work due to language or communication style?	To identify verbal communication barriers caused by cultural differences.
	Non-verbal communication	N°10	Have you noticed any differences in gestures, body language, or behaviour that led to confusion?	To highlight non-verbal cultural misunderstandings.
	Conflict resolution and implementation	N°11	How did you handle situations where cultural differences caused tension or discomfort?	To identify conflict resolution techniques that could be implemented.
	Intercultural relationship with Managers	N°12	Have you ever felt unsure about how to speak to or approach your Manager because of cultural differences?	To know if cultural misunderstandings with managers occurred and how they were handled.
	Employee feedback and implementation	N°13	What could be improved in the orientation to help prevent cultural misunderstandings and foster integration for foreign employees?	To gather insights about potential improvements.

Appendix H: Interview of Department Manager 1 (DM1)

R: Could you start by telling me about your professional background, what you've done, how long you've been at Zilwa, and your responsibilities?

DM1: Sure; I've been in the hotel industry for 30 years now; I've been with the Attitude Group for 15 years, and I was assigned to Zilwa 11 years ago, about 6 months after it opened.

R: And you started as Assistant Manager of your department?

DM1: Yes, I was transferred here as Assistant Manager. That's been my role for 11 years now.

R: So you must've seen quite a few managers come and go over the years?

DM1: I'm in charge of operations. So, everything that is operational within the department. That includes managing the staff, or as we call them, the Family Members. I handle Family Members relations, guest feedback, and I make sure that service runs smoothly overall. I work closely with both Family Members and guests.

R: Right. Would you say you often work with Family Members from different cultural backgrounds?

DM1: Definitely. As you know, Mauritius is a multicultural, multiracial country. Hindu, Muslim, Chinese, Catholic and whatsoever. There's a bit of everything.

R: Have you seen Zilwa's staff orientation program? It's called "induction" right?

DM1: Yes, induction.

R: Have you taken part in it? Did you go through it yourself?

DM1: Yes, I did, way back at the opening. Every new Family Member who joins the team is sent through the induction program. It's meant to help them understand how the hotel works, the hierarchy, and the Zilwa Attitude culture.

R: So, things like mission, vision, values...

DM1: Yes. Exactly mission, vision, values.

R: Have you had a look at the current induction program recently.

DM1: Not recently. The HR team handles that, they're really strict about it. We refer new Family Members to them when needed. Since we did it ages ago, we might occasionally pop-in during a session, but that's just briefly.

R: During those two days of induction do you step in to present your department?

DM1: Not always. The new recruits are usually introduced to us on their first day, they meet the heads of departments and section supervisors. In my department there is the Assistant Manager, Outlet Manager, Supervisors... They do a hotel tour to get familiar with all the outlets and meet the current team. But the full understanding comes progressively.

R: And do you think the induction program includes anything about Mauritian culture, to help foreign employees adapt?

DM1: Absolutely. When you say different culture you're referring to the non-Mauritian, like you for example. It's very important. Language, customs... There can be a cultural shock. This program is there to help newcomers understand the basics of Mauritian culture. We've had a lot of Nepali recruits recently, and it's important they get a sense of where they are. Of course, it's not something they absorb in a week or two. But at least they get an introduction to the island's history and diversity.

R: If you had to describe Mauritian culture in just a few words, how would you describe it?

DM1: I'd say... rainbow.

R: That's a nice word. Since you work with people from different cultures and nationalities, do you see recurring challenges that they face?

DM1: Yes, adaptation.

R: You mean in terms of language, habits...?

DM1: Yes, adaptation in general. As Mauritians, we're bilingual and if you don't count Creole, trilingual. We speak English and French fluently. Many of our new recruits, Nepali or African, only speak English. It's not a problem for us, but it becomes a challenge when dealing with French-speaking clients. That's where we need to step in to explain, interpret, and make sure tasks are well understood. It's not a major challenge, but it's always there.

R: So that's on the client side. And what about within the team, between managers and Family Members? Are there frequent communication issues?

DM1: Not really. English is the base language here, so it works. The real barrier is cultural, languages, customs, and environment. It can slow down the adaptation, but it's more of a positive challenge. Helping someone adjust is part of the job. And these barriers are usually overcome quite quickly.

R: So, a matter of a few weeks.

DM1: Exactly. It's just the initial adjustment period.

R: Speaking of cultural norms, some things considered normal in Mauritius might not be the same elsewhere. Like time management for instance. Do you think that creates difficulties?

DM1: Not really. Time management applies more to the managerial level than to frontliners. Frontliners are here mainly to support. They usually come with basic knowledge. Sure, it's a bit different from what they've known, but the core of service remains the same. Timing and work style vary, but they adapt quickly.

Within two or three weeks, especially with mentoring. We pair newcomers with experienced staff, they shadow them like a buddy system. After a couple of weeks, the mentor evaluates whether things are going well or if there's a blockage that needs support.

R: Do you think having the induction program helps them adapt more easily?

DM1: Hugely, yes. Without it, it would feel like being thrown into the unknown, like swimming in a pool one day, and suddenly being thrown into the ocean. No guidelines, no safety. The induction program is essential.

R: Do Family Members ever come to you with feedback on the induction, positive or negative?

DM1: Yes; they do open up. So far, I haven't received any negative feedback about the induction program.

R: In the general work environment, do they tend to be reserved when it comes to raising issues? Or do they come to you directly?

DM1: They come to us, but often... not directly. It's human nature. Frontliners are more likely to talk to colleagues than to managers because they're more comfortable with people they work closely with. So our role is to build trust. I always approach them in a friendly way, I try to put myself at their level. If I act like a manager on a pedestal, no one will open up. You won't hear someone's struggles unless you show you're there to listen.

R: So you're intentionally trying to break the hierarchical barrier?

DM1: Exactly. One of Attitude Group's core values is that we're all equal, regardless of our position. I may be a manager, but I need to come here (showing the bottom with his hands) to truly understand what's happening on the ground. If I stay here (showing the ceiling with his hands) I will never understand. I don't know who wrote this but I like the sentence that says that we are all equals in the company, no matter our position. That value really guides me.

R: It's like your mantra as a leader.

DM1: Yes, definitely.

R: As a manager, do you receive training on how to support staff from different cultural backgrounds?

DM1: It's starting now. Before, we didn't work with many foreigners. Attitude used to be 100% local. But with the current labour shortage, we've had to recruit foreign staff. No one was really prepared for it. Now we're adapting. Training is coming, management is looking for ways to support this new dynamic.

R: And, are people generally open to this shift? Or do you sense some resistance to the idea that the workforce is no longer fully Mauritian?

DM1: Listen, we're all human beings. Unfortunately, rivalry or resistance does happen... It's human nature. But we have to set those differences aside if we want to move forward. Imagine if we went to work in another country, how would we want to be treated? If I go to Africa for instance, there will be a barrier of language, culture...if I go there and they look at me differently...I wouldn't want this. It's about changing the mindset.

R: True. And the way you support new foreign Family Members, did someone teach you that? Or did you learn it through experience?

DM1: It's all experience, learned on the ground. Nobody trained us for this. We were thrown into it. We adapt, we move forward.

R: As I want to become a manager in the future, what's one piece of advice you'd give me so that people in my team would adapt well?

DM1: Stay humble.

R: Stay humble.

DM1: That's the foundation of everything. Never forget where you come from. Staying humble doesn't mean letting people walk over you, it means being open, keeping your values, and always having a door open for others to speak to you. As I like to say, you can be manager, minister, or the Pope, we're all human before anything else.

R: That's beautifully said. In terms of Mauritian culture is there any aspect that foreign Family Members struggle with more than others?

DM1: The food.

R: The food? Really?

DM1: Yeah, the food in general.

R: If there's one thing that could be added or improved in the induction program to help with adaptation, what could it be?

DM1: I would say continuous support and listening.

R: More like a support unit, to be more attentive then?

DM1: Because we do the induction, I'm not saying it doesn't go well, on the contrary...

R: Yes, it's very important, it's the foundation.

DM1: ...but after that, one or two days, what happens next? That's immediate.

R: There's too big of a gap between...

DM1: There's too big of a gap because they're on their own. They work, they adapt, they start to find their footing and all that. But after six months... I think it's important, because for expatriates, they're on a two-year contract. After six months, I think we need to call them, the managers, the Hotel Manager, the GM. I don't want to say the GM, because the GM, well, he has...

R: ...he has a lot on his plate.

DM1: Yes, exactly. Better the operation managers. A small meeting over a cup of tea, coffee, some little goodies. Not goodies, but small sweets. Sit down, break the ice... Have a... how can I say it? I'll say... an open-heart conversation. Because surely there are things they won't want to say. But if we say, today I'm not Manager X, I'm just X. Come on, let's talk.

R: And do you think they would actually be able to see the difference between A the manager and A the person who's really here to hear what they have to say?

DM1: I would say yes. Yes, because based on my experience with Family Members here, when there's a problem, if I say I want to do a one-to-one... For example, I'll take your name. Carla, I've seen her for a week, she's sad, she's not feeling good in herself, she comes to work, Carla always with a smile... But I can see something's wrong.

Me, as a manager, I approach her. "Carla, are you okay?" What is Carla going to say? "Yes, Mr. X, everything's fine, don't worry;". I ask the same question again. She'll say yes again, out of respect for my rank.

But if, by the third time, I say, "Come on, let's go". I take her aside while walking, not arriving on site. No, already by doing that little walk with her, I say, "Listen, I'm calling you Carla. My name is X, you know my name. Right now I'm not the boss like they say. I'm X, ok? I'm not

saying I'm your friend. No, I'm X. If you've got something to say to me, say it. Please, this isn't professional, it's personal."

And to make it easier there to have more openness in that one-to-one, what I do is, I start with myself.

R: That helps to open up the discussion.

DM1: Exactly, I start with myself. I'm not telling you, tell me everything. I start with myself, you know... I've got problems too... No matter what level they are.

I start by opening up the discussion about myself to already make it easier for the other person to talk. That already builds trust. And then it just flows from there. It comes naturally after that. I'm not saying, tell me what happened at home. No, it's just, tell me what's bothering you. Do you want to talk about it? If you don't want to talk about it, that's ok too. But at least tell me something because I want to help you.

R: And at that point, it works?

DM1: Yes.

R: So what's really important is breaking that dynamic of sitting behind a desk, face-to-face, manager-employee, and instead being in a different kind of cultural context.

DM1: First of all, to have that fluidity, there shouldn't be a table. That's the first barrier. There should be no table. We have to sit, I put you here next to me or across from me. But there should be no piece of furniture creating that barrier. I learned that.

R: And it works?

DM1: Yes it works.

R: So you think that having all that, the induction program, managers who, for example, do what you do... that helps improve employee retention a bit, helps to build employee loyalty...

DM1: Yes and no. If someone has it in their mind that after 6 months they're going to leave, they will leave.

R: Yes, that's true.

DM1: But at least let them leave knowing that tomorrow, they could come back. I'm not coming back for the hotel. I'm coming back because that person made me feel safe. They helped me understand certain things. They helped me grow, maybe not professionally but personally. That already is a valuable return. Of course, if I helped that person professionally, even better, the holy Graal as they say, but it's not always like that. But it can be. It can also be that.

R: I see.

DM1: And that's what I was taught. That's the old school.

R: But is there a difference with the new school?

DM1: The new school is technology.

R: What do you mean?

DM1: The old school is this. It's the field. It's human-to-human. And that's what I do best. I learned on the ground. That's why I am still out there. That's what I was always taught. And I love it, I really do. You put me in an office, I'll say no. You give me this (points at my laptop), I'll say, are you crazy or what? What is this? No, no, honestly. And everyone knows that. Everyone knows that. Have you ever seen me sit in my office?

R: (laughs) No.

DM1: There you go.

R: Do you think that's getting a bit lost with the new generation?

DM1: Look I am not saying it's bad...

R: No, no, not at all.

DM1: On the country, it's evolution. It's progress, it's progress. But some values are getting lost.

R: Oh really?

DM1: Some values are getting lost because when we are too focused... it's technology, it's modernism, that's what it is. When I started out there wasn't all of this, there wasn't even this (holds up his phone) either. Emails? No. Only faxes. It was a different generation. It's changing. In 10 years, 15 years, it will evolve again. I don't even know how it'll look then. But I'm sure it will be for the better. What I mean is we must not lose the source, the foundation.

R: Human relationships.

DM1: Yes, human relationships. For me, it's... how can I put it? It's... that instinct, that gene that we must not lose. That must not be lost.

R: Which is also the foundation of hospitality in general. Because it's about pleasing people, welcoming people.

DM1: Exactly. The real thing is one human being in front of another. Not artificial intelligence in front of a human. Because with a human, you can feel things. You can know, I can tell if you're happy or not. But if I'm communicating over a call, do I really know what you're feeling?

R: Not really.

DM1: You can't. Even if I do a video call I won't really know. Because there's always a barrier. Whereas here, there's no barrier. I can look you in the eyes, I can see your smile, I can sense a certain energy that flows between us.

R: And feel, see whether it's sincere or not.

DM1: Yes, you can feel it. But through other means, you don't feel it. And that, that's what we must not lose. I'm not saying we should put all that technology aside. On the contrary, it's a tool now. But human-to-human connection must not be lost. Once you have that, then everything else works.

R: Thank you very much.

DM1: You're welcome.

R: Do you have any other questions? Anything else you'd like to add?

DM1: Other questions? Me? Other questions... No, actually, I don't have any questions. No, no, not really. But in any case, I am really happy with this interview.

R: Really? It's a topic I chose and I really like it because I'd like to work in hospitality later. And potentially become a manager. That's one of my goals.

DM1: I wish you the best.

R: Thank you. I think it's really important... just the communication between employees. Not just saying that hospitality is about pleasing customers. Because without employees there is no service.

DM1: And that's the foundation of everything.

R: Sometimes, some companies tend to really underestimate that. They always think about making sure the guests are happy. But if the employees are not happy first, they won't create a good service, and your company will not succeed.

DM1: And so guests are also part of a chain. You know the saying... "Treat your staff well, and they'll treat your guests well". So, if your employees are not treated well... If there were only the GM and the Hotel Manager, would things run?

R: No, it'd be too complicated. They can't manage everything at once.

DM1: Exactly, you need employees. 300 employees... If tomorrow 50% of the employees decide to leave because they're not treated well...

R: There wouldn't be a hotel anymore.

DM1: That's it. The human being, that's the foundation of everything, really. Without the human you can't do anything. You need these two hands, this head, these two legs to make it all function. And from my experience, we always tend to say that guests return because of the hotel. Yes, I'm not saying no. The first time, sure. "Wow this hotel, blah blah blah, it's amazing..."; But when a guest comes back 3 times in the same year, is it for the hotel or for the people?

R: A mix of both.

DM1: But when we talk about locals?

R: From my point of view, if it were just about the place itself, I could try to find something else elsewhere that might be prettier or less pretty, whatever. But, if I had a good experience it's also because I appreciated the people who worked there. Because the hotel can be amazing, but if the people treat me like I don't exist, or as if they didn't care, or don't want to be there, I'm not going to fill any connection. I'll just want to leave, so I won't come back.

DM1: Of course, of course, of course. And you know, we've had some people come here, and it's sad to say, but they're locals with big wallets. So those ones, they've just come out of school, haven't even finished their management degree, they come here to see how things work, and they don't want to get their hands dirty. They say to themselves, "I'm a future manager, so blah, blah, blah..." They don't want to mix with anyone. But a future manager has to get their hands dirty.

R: Right, and not feel superior.

DM1: Exactly.

R: Have you ever worked abroad, to gain that kind of perspective or way of helping people from different cultures, different nationalities to adapt?

DM1: Unfortunately, no. I never worked abroad. But I read a lot. I read through magazines, sometimes online. I enjoy watching Etchebest.

R: Philippe Etchebest? Cauchemar en cuisine?

DM1: Yes, yes. I like watching to understand where we stand. I don't mean my level, I mean us as Mauritian hoteliers. Of course, there's a big difference. There's a big difference. Hospitality in Europe or America versus here in Mauritius, it's different. Except maybe in Palace hotels. When we're talking about resorts like this one, things are very dynamic. There's a lot of movement. It's different. It's really, really different. I will say it's in the approach.

R: The approach towards the guests?

DM1: Yes.

R: Compared to Mauritian hospitality?

DM1: Yes.

R: In 2 or 3 words, how would you describe Mauritian hospitality?

DM1: We have an easier approach.

R: In terms of creating connections, right?

DM1: Yes.

R: In terms of going up to people and starting conversations?

DM1: Yes, we've got that boldness. I'm not saying you don't have it, but I think there are always like, three little switches that click in your head... I don't know what exactly. And when I say "you", I mean people in general. There are those three mental steps. But for us, well I'm speaking for myself, if my GM says, "A, I sent you a comment from one of your guests," I read the comment; I don't even question it. I just want to know where the guest is. I have to go meet them, sit down, and really listen and understand them. It's not about "What am I going to say? What's going to happen? Are they English? Are there South Africans? Oh no!". No.

R: So you don't approach them with stereotypes.

DM1: No, I go straight to them...

R: It's genuine. That's the word I'd use as well to describe the hospitality here. You don't feel like it's fake. Because sometimes, in hospitality, you arrive somewhere, people greet you, and you feel like it's unnatural...

DM1: ... when someone comes up to you, it feels commercial.

R: Exactly.

DM1: But when someone approaches you with real sincerity, you can see it. And that's where things open up and everything starts going well. The problem becomes a solution. It's through that conversation, about the problem, that the solution naturally appears. Because the person who complained sees your sincerity. They might try, again, to test you... but when they realise that you are sincere, it's fine. That's something I experience every day. I live it. And I love doing that. Honestly, I really love doing that.

R: I can tell you love your job.

DM1: 30 years, huh...

R: That's inspiring.

DM1: And let me tell you, it's a job I once said I'd NEVER do. I wasn't attracted to hotels at all. I fell into it just like that. I decided to give it a try, to really start the adventure. And ever since then, I've been in it. Ever since then, I've been in it. And... my strength, you know what it is? I come from a poor family. I'm not rich, but don't get me wrong, I'm not complaining either.

I work, I have a salary, I pay my debts like everyone else. I don't own a car, I still take the hotel transport. I do everything I can so that my daughter can have a good education, so she can follow her dreams. I don't have savings, because I invest everything in my daughter's education.

And I'm not complaining. I'm happy. I didn't have much education. I only did 3 years of secondary school. I didn't even finish? Just three years, and then I left school and started working. I don't even have a certificate from... what do you call it? Any kind of high school. Any kind of institution.

No, no. I didn't go to university either. I didn't finish school? But anyway, I started liking it. I was already out there working, sometimes I was a house painter, sometimes a boatman, sometimes a weaver, sometimes a screen painter. That's it. Just doing what I could do to earn a little money. But little by little, I started enjoying it.

My pride, my personal achievement, is this: I come from a very poor background, with no real education. My father was a fisherman. My mother was a housemaid. Five children and I'm the youngest. Today I'm Assistant Manager of my department. I don't want more. Because to me, this is already huge. People ask me: "Why don't you go for the next position up?"

R: Because you're happy where you are.

DM1: I'm good here. It's not that I'm in my comfort zone. I'm used to driving at 150 km/h. If you tell me to go to 250 km/h, I can do it... but only for a short time. I'm definitely not going to crash into a wall. I'd rather keep driving at 150 km/h and reach where I'm meant to go, than go 250 and crash.

R: True. We'll stop here, because I can see that work is calling you (a Family Member is approaching). But thank you again for your participation.

DM1: You're welcome

Appendix I: Interview with Department Manager 2 (DM2)

R: First of all, thank you for accepting.

DM2: My pleasure.

R: Could you tell me about your responsibilities at the hotel? How long have you been working here? How long have you been in the hospitality industry in general? Your professional background...

DM2: I started in 2007 at XX hotel. I started as a receptionist. I stayed there for 3 years. Then, I took a little trip. I took a short 2-month break. I joined XX as a supervisor. I stayed there for three years as Front Desk supervisor. I was promoted to Front Office Duty Manager. And from there, I left for Bali as a management trainee. I did an international cross-exposure. It was truly enriching, I must say.

It's something else. The hotel, the level, the hospitality, the people you work with... it was really something different. I came back and joined Zilwa in 2014. In March 2014, as Assistant Front Office Manager. Around September, the GM offered me a position as CS Event Coordinator. The person who was there was leaving, so I took on the challenge. And I got my promotion 6 months later as CS Event Manager.

During a conversation, we said that there were a lot of comments, that we didn't have a guest counter. It was mentioned that in all the other hotels, there's a guest relations counter. But we didn't have that, we only had the reception, which you know is in the back. It wasn't even like it is now, it was closed off. It was something else. So, we set up a Guest Experience counter, which didn't exist.

So, I became Guest Experience Manager. At first, with a team of four. Then, we grew to five, then six, then seven... We had great success, I must say. The team was amazing, very dedicated people. I worked my way up, and after COVID, I don't remember what year that was anymore, in January 2022, I was promoted as Manager of several departments.

Today, all those departments fall under me. Thus, I supervise the management of the operations for several departments.

R: Alright, thank you. So, my topic concerns the staff orientation program. Here, it's called the induction program. Do you know what it involves? Are you involved in it?

DM2: Yes, in the beginning, yes. Now, less and less, since I don't directly oversee a department... I have more heads of departments under me. So yes, it's more the managers I oversee.

Yes, of course, induction is when... it's onboarding. When the new staff arrive, we try to bring everyone together. And there's that part of the induction where we present the hotel, the product, the teams, the management, the facilities, what you're entitled to, the news, donations... everything that's a bit corporate.

And then, I'd say the onboarding continues with the 80-day scripting. You have breakfast with the GM, the Hotel Manager, and the HR Manager. So there's a touchpoint after 3 months to ask how you feel within the team. And it's not the manager who does this, it's the management.

R: Alright. Is there a part dedicated to culture? How to adapt? A description of Mauritian culture for staff coming from a different culture or nationality?

DM2: Like most of us, hoteliers in the industry, it's the first time we're working with expatriates, especially for us. I'm 100% Mauritian. Today, with the shortage of labour in hospitality, we've had to go elsewhere, to Nepal and so on. Yes and no. I would say yes and no. Because adaptation doesn't only come from them. Adaptation also comes from us. It's about listening, it's the same, it's about communication. I would say yes and no at the same time. Because it comes from both sides. You can't impose things, neither us nor them. It's about adapting.

I think it's actually less complicated for them than for us, too, because they're Hindu, and the majority of our population is Hindu. And as you know, in Mauritius, we celebrate everything. We're very multicultural. So I don't think that's complicated.

For them, it's more about homesickness. For us, it's more like, "Yes, they're new, they don't know." But at the end of the day, after a while, I think they're settled now.

And to me, there's no difference. It's just that they don't speak French. And I do have an issue with that when it comes to French guests. But apart from that, no...

R: And for example, if you had to describe Mauritian culture in a few words?

DM2: I'd say it's a melting pot. I'll take my own example. I'm Muslim. My mother is Hindu. My in-laws, they're Tamil. They're baptized. They're Christian. My brother-in-law and my partner are Christian of course? My sister-in-law is Chinese. Me, Muslim... I think I'll stop there.

You see, we celebrate everything, really. It's not new. It's been like that since I was born. I'd say since birth. I was very little. My nanny was an elderly Catholic woman. I grew up among Hindus, Catholics, Muslims. So we celebrated Diwali (Hindu festival). We celebrated Christmas. There were no barriers. And that's what I find beautiful about Mauritius.

R: It's very different from other countries.

DM2: It's a bit more complicated these days with everything going on. It's international, it's not just us. But before, it was more interesting. A bit safer.

R: And in terms of the induction program, do you think it helps new foreign Family Members to integrate?

DM2: Already, just discovering the concept, everything corporate, the two elements. I think yes, absolutely.

R: And when it comes to culture, specifically in the work environment, for example, are there norms that are specific to Mauritius that wouldn't be the same in another country?

DM2: Apart from the signature concepts, I don't think so.

R: The signature concepts?

DM2: Yes, but I don't think there are other barriers. No, hospitality is hospitality. As we say, we are ladies and gentlemen, serving other ladies and gentlemen. Apart from Kot Nou (restaurant at Zilwa), that's Mauritian cuisine, and Taba-J (snack point at Zilwa), that's all Mauritian. But beyond that, service is service.

R: Have you ever had situations, for instance, where cultural differences affected team dynamics or communication?

DM2: (shakes his head to say no), I don't think so, no.

R: No? There haven't been moments, for example, of cultural misunderstandings?

DM2: That's mostly because they don't speak French or Creole. It's mainly a language barrier.

R: And in terms of, say, non-verbal communication, do you sometimes feel there are...

DM2: You know, I have expats. Apart from homesickness, and the culture you have back home... As a French person, I understand you might feel a bit... It's not the same for you, and I totally get that.

But for them, they kind of... It's more or less the same culture. But in terms of service, apart from the language, in terms of service, if I say homesick, missing home, sure. It's not like what they're used to back home, that I understand. But if we're talking service-wise, pure service, service is service.

R: And as a manager, would you say knowing how to speak, how to approach people, and how to do a bit of training...

DM2: For me, it's important. It's important. Listening, understanding. You don't really need technical skills to succeed. I think as a manager, you drive. At the end of the day, you need to be the driver. To be the driver, you need to be a good listener. Understand. Even when you're tired, it's draining, so you need that ability to listen.

R: Do you think your ability to connect well with foreign staff comes from your experience abroad, from having been in that position yourself?

DM2: I think it helped me. I understand what homesickness is, not having your family during the holidays. And learning how to adapt to a culture that's different. Yes, I think it helped, yes.

R: And currently, for managers, is there training in place to help them support this adaptation for new people, since bringing in a foreign workforce is still quite new?

DM2: We've had training.

R: Is that annually or a one-time thing?

DM2: I'll be honest. I know there have been several sessions. I haven't attended all of them. But there has been training. So it's definitely something more serious, more structured.

R: And regarding the induction program, is there anything you think could be improved, or something that could help make adaptation or understanding the hotel's operations even easier?

DM2: That little mission we carried out, (Manager B refers to the follow-up meetings we implemented regarding the integration of foreign Family Members), we were the ones who triggered it at the end of the day. We ran the first session, and that's where everything followed. I think the first time, it's important to have someone who is neutral, not from management, not from the team. And I think it worked really well with you because we weren't there. And this, we initiated it ourselves. It wasn't just HR. And I think that's important.

R: So you think that having regular follow-up like that is also essential?

DM2: They feel heard. And even for us too, we get follow-up. What's going on? If we don't have the information, we can't correct anything as managers. You need to have the information. And that's important.

R: Do employees sometimes come to talk to you? Maybe not fully open-hearted, but are they able to be honest without feeling that hierarchical barrier?

DM2: Yes, they do... Sorry, we'll have to stop here unfortunately... I have to take this call, it's important. Sorry.

R: No problem, I understand. Thank you for taking the time.

Appendix J: Interview with Foreign Employee 1 (FE1)

R: Can you tell me where you're from and is this your first time working in Mauritius? How long have you been here?

FE1: It's my first time working here. Since I'm a student, this is actually my first time working in Mauritius. I arrived here last November, but I started at Zilwa in mid-April this year.

R: What's your job at the hotel?

FE1: I'm a trainee. I mainly take care of everything related to the system like adding new members or removing leavers, I handle all of that. I also do uniform inventory, files... I work with the store too, and all that.

R: When you arrived, did you do the staff orientation program, the one called induction?

FE1: Induction, well, when I arrived I did it on my own. My supervisors trained me one-on-one. I didn't have the group induction with everyone else. But later, when they had a session I joined a bit just to see what it was about.

R: What happens during those sessions?

FE1: During induction sessions, they usually talk about everything so you really understand where you're working and what brand you're working for. They even talk about Zilwa's origin and the origin of the Attitude Group itself.

R: Is there a part that focuses more on culture or the workplace norms at Zilwa?

FE1: Yes, definitely.

R: And about Mauritian culture, what do they say?

FE1: When it comes to Mauritian culture, they mostly talk about the entertainment side of things, like how Zilwa tries to showcase Mauritian culture to all guests, and especially expats and all.

R: So, there's not really a part about how you're expected to adapt to a typically Mauritian work environment? Like norms in Mauritius, for example?

FE1: Yes, of course. They tell us what norms we need to respect and everything. They also explain what we need to know about Mauritian culture so we don't feel too out of place. Like the mix of cultures, different languages, all that. They explain.

R: Do they also explain a bit about the hotel's hierarchy? Like how to address your superiors, the kind of distance or relationship between managers and employees... Do they present the hierarchy as something very formal?

FE1: They do explain the hierarchy. From Head Office, other hotels, and Zilwa's own internal hierarchy. But they also explain that Zilwa is one big family. Everyone's a "Family Member". There's not this huge gap between Heads of Department and regular Family Members. Of course, we still have to respect our Heads of Department and all, but the way they put it is that there are people responsible for different departments, yes, but we're all equal, part of the same big family.

R: And did that help you when you first started at the company? Having that kind of program and explanation of the hotel?

FE1: Yeah.

R: In what way did it help you?

FE1: It mainly helped me not feel too much like a beginner or too alone... Especially since I'm the one Malagasy person there. At least I had an idea of everything I needed to know.

R: Do you think it's helped you integrate better?

FE1: Yeah.

R: Integrated more with the Mauritian staff or just into the job in general?

FE1: Mainly for the job... like knowing what's what. As for integrating with the Mauritian staff, that comes more through meeting people naturally.

R: Yes it's more of a voluntary adaptation.

FE1: Yeah.

R: Was there anything in Mauritian culture that surprised you when you started working? Something you found unusual?

FE1: I think it was mostly the food. They really like spicy food. Sure, we like spices too back home, but I wasn't used to this level.

R: Yes it didn't work out for you... And things like meeting deadlines, time management, being on time for meetings... Was that different from Madagascar, or not too much of a shock?

FE1: No, it wasn't too shocking. It's kind of the same.

R: So you felt somewhat prepared for this new work environment, thanks to...

FE1: Well, the first few days, the first week, it was a bit tough, I felt a bit alone. I only knew my department's team. But after that, yeah, it was okay, it helped me.

R: And how did you manage to adapt to the job? What helped you feel comfortable?

FE1: Having good relationships with colleagues really helps. It's reassuring when everyone's nice and it's mutual. Like, you say hi to everyone, you're kind to everyone, and they're kind in return. Honestly, the staff at Zilwa are mostly nice.

Just trying to fit in, to talk... but, yeah, you have to make the move yourself. You can't expect them to come to you first.

R: Did you ever notice differences in language, gestures, body language, things that might have been confusing if they hadn't been explained?

FE1: Yeah, at the beginning.

R: Can you give examples?

FE1: Well, at first I didn't understand Creole at all. I was totally lost. Their habits were hard for me too, because it's not the same back home. There are topics that are totally taboo where I'm from. Madagascar is very conservative, so I wasn't used to certain things. But they were... it's part of their language, their way. That threw me off a bit at first. But now I've gotten used to it. It's okay.

R: And what about body language?

FE1: The kiss on the cheek. I never really got used to that.

R: The fact that they do it or don't?

FE1: The fact that they do it. Where I'm from, we only do that with close adult relatives, not with everyone. But here, they're used to it. So it felt a bit strange.

R: And the little hand wave greeting? Do you manage to do it all the time? I know most people here do it regularly. I tend to just nod my head instead. Do you manage to do the hand gesture?

FE1: No, not really. Sometimes when I see clients, I do it. But with colleagues, no. I just say "hi". But not with the hand sign every time. I don't like it. I'm just not used to it.

R: You don't like it because it bothers you, or you just forget?

FE1: No, I just don't like it. I'm not used to doing it all the time. With clients, I try my best. But with Family Members, no, I can't.

R: Have you ever found yourself in awkward or confusing situations because of these differences? And how did you handle it?

FE1: Anytime I didn't understand something, whether it was body language or whatever, I'd ask my supervisors. I'd mostly ask Mrs. X, and she would explain things to me. She'd say, "You don't have to do this, but here's why we do it". That really helped me.

R: So there was a lot of support. She helped you a lot with that?

FE1: Yes, I had a lot of support.

R: And now, with Creole, are you more comfortable?

FE1: Not entirely. There are still some words I don't get, but I understand most of it.

R: At the beginning, when people would talk amongst themselves in Creole, and you were there, did they make an effort to switch to French or English for you?

FE1: Yes, at the beginning, when they'd start drifting into Creole, someone would say, "Hey, speak French, she's here". And they'd switch to French. Later, they even tried teaching me Creole. Now that I understand it, they speak to me in Creole and I reply in French.

R: Yes, it's easier to understand than to speak, I think. It's simpler that way. And your relationship with your manager, not personal but professional, do you feel comfortable talking to him about things that come up? Or is there some distance?

FE1: It's fine. He's cool. I can talk to him about anything.

R: Have you ever needed to go to him about an issue or something?

FE1: I haven't really had any problems.

R: Not problems, but you don't feel intimidated? Like "Oh no, that's the manager"?

FE1: No, not at all. I can talk to him, ask for things. I never felt afraid of him or like I had to be extra cautious around him.

R: Do you think other foreign Family Members feel the same way about their managers?

FE1: I can't say for sure, but from what I see, in some departments, yes. They can speak directly to their manager, calmly. From what I've seen at Zilwa, I think all the managers and trainees are really cool. They're open to conversations. You can talk to them about anything.

R: If there were one thing to improve in the induction program to help new people from other cultures feel more at ease, what would you suggest?

FE1: I think they shouldn't separate people. Sometimes they do inductions just for expats, and I don't think that's a good idea, it makes you feel a bit excluded. I think they should always mix everyone together.

R: Like Mauritian recruits and expats doing the same induction?

FE1: Yeah, all mixed, so they can talk to each other, share their cultures, you never know. Right from the start.

R: Do you think HR should also organise more, not parties, but small gatherings where employees can talk and maybe learn about each other's cultures? Like having Indian or Nepali staff cook and present their culture?

FE1: That's already in the works, actually. It's something the HR team has been thinking about. Soon, it'll be Indian National Day, so they're planning that they'll cook, do the decorations. We'll celebrate their country so they don't feel too out of place. It's already a project. We're trying to celebrate all the cultures at the hotel, so no one feels left out.

R: And do you sometimes feel homesick or want to go back home?

FE1: Personally, I'm okay. Things are going really well with my colleagues, so I don't feel like that. Of course, sometimes you miss your family. But I've never woken up thinking I'd rather be home. I'm fine. My colleagues are really kind.

R: So do you plan to stay and work in Mauritius? Or go back home?

FE1: Right now, I'd rather stay here. Maybe I'll go back for vacation, for a month or two. But more than that, I don't think so. I'd rather stay in Mauritius or go to another country. For now, my plan is to stay at Zilwa.

R: And what made you want to stay at Zilwa?

FE1: Mainly the work environment. I've been discriminated against a lot before. But at Zilwa, that's not the case. I really like it.

R: Discriminated in your country or here, in another hotel?

FE1: No, I have never worked in a hotel before. I'd never worked at all. But since I was little, through school, high school, university, I'd always get comments or side remarks. I was always the only girl. But at Zilwa, that doesn't happen. I feel good. Comfortable. Around people I trust. They even tell me things about myself I didn't know.

R: Oh really?

FE1: For example, about a physical trait of mine, I knew it was supposed to bring good luck. But they told me more meanings I didn't even know. Now I know. They made me feel more confident in myself.

R: It's really a place that lifts you up. That's great? That's why you want to stay.

FE1: They tell me to be proud of who I am. And I think that's true for everyone at Zilwa, to be proud of who they are. It really shows.

R: Okay. Is there anything else you'd like to add? Any questions?

FE1: No, I'm good.

R: Thanks for answering the questions.

Appendix K: Interview with Foreign Employee 2 (FE2)

R: First of all, thank you for agreeing to do this interview. To start off, could you just introduce yourself, tell me where you're from ? Is it your first time working in Mauritius, and what your job was in the hotel?

FE2: Sure, I'm from Madagascar? Do you need my age too?

R: No, that's not necessary, thank you.

FE2: And yes, it was my first time coming to Mauritius for an internship in a specific department. But in the end I ended up working in quite a few outlets. You had to adapt to everything, do a bit of everything. Sometimes I even had to take on extra responsibilities.

R: And how long did you stay?

FE2: I stayed for 5 months and 3 weeks.

R: Did you do the staff orientation program, or what they call the induction, when you first arrived?

FE2: Yes and no. There wasn't much of a formal process. I felt like it was a bit shaky because I had just arrived. I didn't know anyone. Basically, someone from HR came to welcome me. Then they introduced me to the managers, showed me where I'd be working, and introduced the person in charge of that outlet.

R: And how long did those introductions last? Did you get a tour of the hotel or not?

FE2: No, I didn't get an official tour of the hotel. The person just showed me the area where I was going to work, and I stayed in that outlet for 3 months. I had no idea where the other outlets were in the hotel. Even though I was there for 3 months.

R: And that first day when they introduced you to the company, how long did that last? Did you spend a day just observing how things worked?

FE2: No, they put me straight to work. They asked me to do certain tasks right away, just to follow the pace. And honestly, it was a bit rough since it was my first internship in a hotel. I didn't know what to do. So everyone started giving me instructions I didn't understand.

R: Did they tell you a bit about the Attitude Group and what they do?

FE2: Not at all. Just during the interview, when I had the interview for the internship, the HR staff member asked me what I knew about the Attitude Group. I explained that from what I

knew, they were eco-friendly, they were environmentally responsible and all. That's actually what made me want to take the internship.

R: So on your first day, they didn't really explain anything about cultural differences, Mauritian culture, what to expect, what languages are spoken?

FE2: Not really, no. Just on the first day, I didn't know that the hotel staff don't all speak French. So generally they'd talk to me in Creole, a language I didn't know at all to begin with. So I was a bit lost.

R: Were you able to adapt at some point? And if so, was it thanks to some managers or did you adapt on your own by trying to understand Creole? Or did you have some support? Did the supervisors help you in the early days?

FE2: At first, I struggled with the managers because for them, it wasn't really about teaching me things, it was more about me being efficient for them. I didn't really feel they wanted to explain things to me. Then there was another supervisor. He's the one who taught me everything. How to speak to guests, how to get client recognition, how to use the systems, and how to manage the different moods in the team, because that was also really hard. And he's the only one who taught me that. So, if I could name one person who helped me, it would be him. He also explained the hierarchy, like who's who, who does what as a manager, what the supervisors do and what's expected of an intern. He also taught me to be curious, to feel comfortable asking questions, to not hesitate... everything.

R: At the beginning, they didn't introduce you to the hotel's top management either?

FE2: No, not really.

R: Okay. Was there something about the work environment at Zilwa that surprised you the most or that you struggled to adapt to?

FE2: I thought Mauritians were very welcoming... But not all of them. As a Malagasy, I noticed there are a lot of stereotypes, especially in the hotel. People put you in a box just because of your nationality? That really surprised me? It wasn't everyone? Sometimes; even if they were nice to you, they weren't really here to help you. You're there to work, you're paid to work.

R: They're not paid to help you? Depends who? Because supervisors and managers... that's kind of their job right?

FE2: Yes, it depends on the person... There was another supervisor who helped me a lot too. As a supervisor it's their role to guide us. But I only got to work with him at the end of my internship. Thankfully, because I still got to learn some things during my time there.

R: Okay. And about not speaking Creole, when you were in a space where everyone else was Mauritian and speaking Creole, did they make an effort to speak in French or English because you were there?

FE2: Yes, of course. Normally English is used so everyone can understand what's going on.

R: Like for briefings, were they only in Creole, or did they make an effort to speak in another language so everyone could follow?

FE2: It depended; it wasn't always the same supervisors. Some did briefings in French or English, which helped me since I could understand. Sometimes a bit of Creole, but they'd always check if I could understand. Others spoke only in French or only in English. Sometimes it was hard to understand because it's not their native language, but they still made the effort so everyone could get it. Because the team wasn't just Mauritians. There were also Indians, Malagasy, Nepalese... But overall, to put everyone on the same page, it was English.

R: In terms of communication, verbal or non-verbal, were there things that people do here in Mauritius that surprised you, that you liked or didn't like? Like for example, the hand gesture when greeting? Did you always manage to do it?

FE2: The hand sign, yes, since it's their culture and I really respect people's cultures. So yes, I had to adapt. Also, when you say thank you or greet someone, you always have to put your hand on your heart? I adapted to that, it wasn't very hard.

R: Not necessarily hard, but sometimes it can be tricky to get into the rhythm.

FE2: No, that was fine. It was easy. I adapt quickly.

R: Were there things you couldn't adapt to, like in terms of body language, for example?

FE2: Sometimes I saw that someone could yell at you just because they were stressed out or...

R: That's more verbal no?

FE2: Yes, but yelling, I mean not just the words, but slamming something on the table when yelling, for instance? Once I couldn't answer a question properly about a task I was doing. And the person slammed what they were holding onto the table. It shocked me a bit, but in the end...

R: Was that more about culture, or just that person's personality?

FE2: Culture, I think. Mauritians, they're more likely to bang on walls or shout loudly, from what I've seen. It's probably normal here, but it wasn't normal for me. Yes, it was a bit hard.

R: But in general, do you feel like you managed to adapt to Mauritian culture?

FE2: You adapt quickly because you don't really have a choice? You're there for 6 months.

R: But did you still enjoy it?

FE2: Yes. There were moments when it wasn't easy, but it showed me what I want and don't want in life, what's good and what's bad in the working world, what I can and can't accept in terms of how colleagues or superiors treat me. I learned a lot, and I try to focus on the good rather than the bad. It was a professional experience that gave me more of... how do you say it? Toughness, I guess.

R: It made you stronger.

FE2: It made me stronger, tougher.

R: And for example, when you said someone yelled, what did you do to manage it, to not let it shock you anymore? Did you have a coping mechanism?

FE2: Right away, since I wasn't raised like that in my country, we don't do that. I took the initiative to talk about it with people around me, like other colleagues. I wasn't gossiping, but I told another supervisor that I didn't like how that person had spoken to me. She helped me explain it to them. She acted as a mediator and told them I didn't understand or appreciate what they did. She told them it wasn't right to raise their voice. They needed to show, not yell. So yes, in the end, I adapted to that. Anyway, in the end, you can't change someone. So you breathe, you take it in, say "it's fine", go home, sleep, come back in the morning, and move on. It happens. You can't take everything to heart in the workplace.

R: Yes, for sure. But you felt like you could still talk to some supervisors or managers?

FE2: Some of them, yes.

R: You felt free to talk, to say what was going on instead of keeping it all inside?

FE2: At first, I didn't know I could talk about it. Because the first time I tried to speak to a manager, it didn't go very well... this person didn't want to deal with complaints. So at first, it was tough because you didn't really know who you could open up to. But later on, there were two or three people I could talk to to let out my emotions or try to solve a problem. There were two or three people, yes. For example, once I had a health issue and a supervisor immediately told me to go to the infirmary or get help. Even the person who yelled the other time, he later realised what the issue was. This person took steps to fix it and handled it properly. But not everyone's like that. Everyone has their own way of doing things.

R: So if there was one thing you'd want to improve to make those first few crucial days better for a new foreign employee, what would it be for you?

FE2: I'd say that people need to understand that we haven't grown up with them. That we don't have the same logic right away. That they should be more attentive to newcomers. Because we're there to learn. If we already knew everything, we wouldn't be there. We're here to learn. So it's up to them to teach us what to do. Some people didn't dare to ask questions, so maybe they didn't learn as much as they could have. They did the work but without really understanding it, and I think that's a shame. There should be more training from the start. At least one or two days. Just to get everyone on the same page from the beginning.

R: Yes, so you can absorb everything. Okay.

FE2: Also, I think the canteen. The food. They should adjust it because sometimes it wasn't very diverse. In hospitality you use a lot of energy, and if the food doesn't follow... You can't eat, you can't work.

R: And do you think it's the food at the hotel or Mauritian food in general?

FE2: Both (laughs).

R: Do you have anything else to add, or any questions?

FE2: I think I had some bad experiences, but still got good things out of it. I learned to take initiative. To grow in an environment different from what I was used to. And it helped me understand that when you work, you're not dealing with one person. You're dealing with several sides of a person. That was important because it was the first time I saw that. Someone can smile at you now and be mad at you and yell two minutes later. But yes, in the end, it brought me more good than bad.

R: Okay, thank you.

FE2: You're welcome.

Appendix L: Interview with Human Resources Family Member 1 (HR1)

R: Hello and thank you for accepting. Can you start by describing a little bit your professional background and how you got here?

HR1: So it all started with an internship 21 years ago. I was looking for an internship and I found one in a hotel, which was the XX at the time. It was a six-month internship, so I applied and everything started from there. They didn't want to put me in Human Resources at first because I was supposed to go through all the other departments. I explained that based on my internship agreement, I had specific tasks to complete, and with a bit of difficulty, they accepted to let me do two weeks of HR during the six-months. And those two weeks went so that they told me: "In that case, don't leave, stay."

So I learned very quickly, and there was a lady who was in charge of payroll, coincidentally, after six weeks, she handed in her resignation letter and asked me if I'd be interested, but after the internship. I did her job for the remaining four months, so that's how it started.

I did six months, and then after the internship. I worked six months as HR Coordinator, the first position I held in HR.

Then I was promoted to Training and HR Coordinator, and I did that role for about a year and a half. After that, I was promoted again to HR Executive.

Later I wanted to grow further, but I wasn't given the opportunity. They found me too young at the time, and I looked even younger, so they needed someone older. I was a bit disappointed because they judged me based on appearance, whereas I really thought it was a company that would evaluate based on skills. So I applied elsewhere and got a job in XX, a hotel in the South, as Assistant Manager. I managed there for five years, and always seeking something new, I applied online just randomly for the same position, Assistant Manager, at a Mauritian group, XX, based in the Seychelles. I went there on a one-year contract.

Unfortunately, the contract couldn't be renewed, so I returned and saw a job ad in the newspaper: Zilwa was recruiting. I applied and got selected for here.

So how did I get selected? It was also due to my studies, I studied in Lille, in France, a beautiful place, but very cold.

R: Very different from here.

HR1: Different. The sun was rare. And then I did business-oriented studies, business management, HR marketing, and accounting. So, mainly those three areas. And that's how I ended up at Zilwa.

R: So today, what are your responsibilities in the HR department? What do you manage and coordinate on a daily basis?

HR1: On a daily basis, it's HR as a whole, everything from salaries, recruitment, disciplinary cases, training the whole welfare side, so staff well-being through activities, morale support, sports activities, team well-being. Day-to-day things: uniforms, the canteen, transport, personal

situations as well, so moral support for those who need it. All the HR areas, and that's a lot, but the list goes on.

R: Speaking of Family Members, how many are there at Zilwa, and what is the ratio of foreign to local?

HR1: So for foreign staff, you have a recruitment budget, a quota we more or less need to reach in order to manage the workforce across departments. Right now, we have about 340 employees, that's the hotel staff. Then there's the external workforce: security, gardeners, the nautical base, contractors—like pest control for bugs, maintenance, etc. That's a major part, but they're not included in the 340.

Currently, our expatriate workforce will soon reach around 50 people. As of today, there are 25 expats directly employed by the hotel. Unfortunately, we haven't been able to recruit locally. So we turn to people like you, foreign students who want to intern in Mauritius, discover the island, gain experience, maybe learn more about Mauritian or foreign culture.

We also talk about language, those who want to improve or perfect their English come for internships. We now have around 40 Indian students coming over a 6-month period. So every six months we have 30 to 40 students coming, which totals 70 to 80 per year.

That's a lot, but they're here for a short period. For us, it provides affordable labor. They're paid about the same as a local trainee, with a 2000-rupee difference. It may not seem like much, but it's still a difference. They're paid for overtime just like others, as we discussed last time. They're on the same level, except they don't contribute to the same social security schemes as locals.

R: Concerning the induction program, I saw that it lasts two days.

HR1: Two days. Day one is a half-day where three HR people handle the arrivals. We go over a checklist, the induction checklist, with all the topics. We explain transport, uniforms, what to do if a uniform is damaged, if you lose your badge or locker keys, that's all covered in the half-day. That's the first part. The second part is handled by another team member, because there are only four of us in the team. We don't do individual inductions for each new employee. Instead, we gather all those who started during the past one or two months for a group session.

R: So not directly on arrival, for logistical reasons?

HR1: Exactly. On arrival, there's a checklist, new employees get their contract, job description, and a document with hotel rules they sign to acknowledge. One copy for them, one for the file.

R: I saw the slides used on induction day. There's a part on diversity, inclusion, and equality. Is there also a section on Mauritian culture, what to expect in terms of workplace norms and local culture, potential language barriers, etc.?

HR1: You have to understand that expats are very recent, it started just a few months ago. We began in March, while some Attitude hotels started in December. We did the standard induction

for locals. Then the Head Office came to give us a one-hour training session to prepare us for welcoming expats. They told us what our responsibilities would be toward them. We did about 25 sessions, reaching over 90% of employees. Then, when expats arrived, the Head Office also trained them, groups of 2, 3, or 10, with a two-hour session on Mauritian culture: language barriers, food culture, local norms. For example, seeing an Indian person eat with their hands, it should be seen as normal, not shocking.

So we're prepared to say "that's normal", not "oh my god, what's he doing?" So both sides received training. When they arrive, we pick them up, settle them in their accommodation, explain house rules, and then notify the Head Office. Within a day or two, they come for the induction focused on Mauritian culture. After that, we handle the hotel-specific induction—departments, a tour of the hotel, etc. Finally, a little tour of the hotel.

R: Okay, it's kind of divided into two modules that are connected, but not delivered by the same people.

HR1: No, exactly.

R: Okay. And is that just for the expatriates or is it also the case for the trainees who come, because they're also here for six months. And they also come from a different culture. But do they benefit from this part offered by the head office?

HR1: No, not yet. But it's in the works. Not for now, since the contract was different. Not all the hotels either... You know, the choice of Indian students, for example, today we have Zilwa, Paradise Cove, Lagoon, Ravenala. Other hotels won't do it, because they are smaller hotels, they don't necessarily have a real labor shortage, and today the head office doesn't commit for short durations. The investment... the trainees come for four to six months. I've even had students who came for only three months. So, for the short duration, the Head Office didn't come for that. So it was up to us to do what was needed with the students. So, to talk about the same aspects that they present to expatriates, but in a shorter version for students.

I have a new person in my team today with me, so she's taking on a bit more... being herself from a foreign nationality, and she understands better. To explain a little bit what needs to be done to make them feel comfortable already. A visit to the different departments, already to make them understand that there are rules. There is also a learning aspect for them. So, these are students who need to come with a mindset ready to work, who want to learn, and who may make mistakes, but through those mistakes, they'll learn even more, and today, to know the different people who will be there, understand the hierarchy as well.

So, if they have a problem, who are the people they should go see. So we talk about all that on the same day. To reassure them that our doors remain open, and that just because of our positions today, they shouldn't be afraid to come talk to us. We are several people in the department. The person with whom you feel comfortable, go to them.

So I'm here. If you see people, come. If we need to schedule a meeting, we schedule it.

But it has to be fluid and accessible. So we reassure them during that first meeting. And afterwards, among them, we see some people who are a bit more extroverted, who come: "Sir,

how are you?" But that's nice. Now, it's also up to them to see how they'll adapt to evolve over the months.

R: And on the ground, in the end, do they really manage to come and talk about their problems if they have any or is it still a bit difficult, they struggle to come and dare say what's happening?

HR1: Well, yesterday, for example, I met a team of three people who had some small issues. Their issues were mostly monetary, but that's something they can discuss with their manager. Now, if the manager wasn't able to listen then the information needs to go higher up. So escalate the information to the manager above their supervisor.

But they're a bit scared. So that's why they come to see us because maybe it's easier. But at that moment, I went back, explained again. So we'll try to resolve it. So they're a bit afraid because they're students who, for them... but still, we have students who don't exactly hold their tongues either. They're a bit rebellious. But at some point, they need to understand that the culture is like that and just because they want certain things doesn't mean they'll necessarily get them, there are parameters, there are rules, there's information and unfortunately, not everyone can have what they want. So we need to explain it to them, and that's it.

R: Do you think that having small sessions where we listen and we require them to come... Well, "require", yes, schedule appointments to say, now, we're going to talk about what's going on here, if it's positive, if it's negative. Is it important for you to get feedback from all the foreign employees?

HR1: Today, the hotel, the group, we haven't yet invested in systems that, for example, would allow you to share... Today, everyone has a phone. We should have an app for the hotel, Attitude for example, that would take you directly to the management somehow, with us in Human Resources, that would allow us to have a discussion and a format where we can communicate while remaining discreet, anonymous or not. I don't like anonymous stuff.

I think we need to know the names. So you, even if you are a trainee here, you must've noticed that, sometimes, the office stays busy or, sometimes, we're caught at the last minute by a situation where I have a meeting, but unfortunately I need to attend another meeting that just came up. So sometimes it's difficult. These are situations that can happen.

So, we worked together not long ago on small sessions with these trainees. Why? Because I'll take two examples, the trainees and the employees. The trainees remain a part of the hotel, who are really like children, young ones.

When I say children, I mean some are 17. So young people today who leave their families, who come to another country, who will have to manage, cook for themselves or for the whole community they live with. It's not easy. I see some as children, which means they also need support. I wouldn't say maternal or paternal, but like older siblings. Sometimes, they need even more attention and not be treated 100% like other employees who have responsibilities.

But at the same time, many of them, they discover a new country, a freedom they don't always have back home. Living independently for 4 or 6 months. I can't control them outside of the workplace when it comes to things like alcohol, for example.

So, they miss work. So there's that to manage too. So for some, not all, there is a high absenteeism rate. So yes, we should be more attentive to these people. But today, we're not in a culture where time allows us to spend even more time with them.

Sometimes it's very difficult. Already to make time for our employees and now to go and do more listening sessions, sharing sessions, especially sharing, because I think it's through sharing that they may take away a few words, a few small phrases and say, "Hey, that might help me in the future. I hadn't thought of that. Now I can see things differently." Time.

R: Time. Okay, but in an ideal world, we'd say it would be good to invest, to make time for that kind of session and for that kind of training, too, for the trainees.

HR1: We've done small sessions among us. With a small group of 3-4 people. 3-4 people become much more intimate and much more manageable, whereas in a room with 20 people, some wouldn't speak or sometimes it would go in all directions. I find that one-to-one, four-to-one, it's something... You can create a connection more easily.

Some come more with, not fear exactly but... A smile. But sometimes also, you know, there's... something that happens where people... go a little overboard and it becomes a bit too friendly. So their culture is different too. So for them, everyone is like brothers and sisters. In India, there are a lot of people that I know. You're a colleague, you're... Yes, a colleague, but for them, many people, it's like a brother, sister. So, at that point, there's a lot more camaraderie, but no one would ever address you without saying "Sir" or "Madam." Even if I tell them it's not necessary, for them it's important, it's part of their culture, it's respect, no matter what. Another thing, on departure days, something very important for them is photos. So, the photos happen, they're a memory. They last. We have to take photos with you, with me, with all the supervisors. We take the photo with all the certificates, all the letters. It's nice, it's fun, but it's also a pleasure to share this moment. It's another culture, whereas with someone from the University of Mauritius, to whom we would give the same thing, they just say "thank you" and "good bye." That's it, nothing more. Whereas with the orders, there's a whole process. And honestly, we enjoy this little moment of sharing too, especially since some of them have decided they want to come back to work here in the future, though we've explained that it's not that simple.

R: Yes, especially with the visa documents. And for the manager's side, do they have training, for example, intercultural competence, knowing how to adapt their behavior, their way of speaking, according to the cultures they're dealing with? For example, body language, certain cultures won't accept, say, a handshake. Do managers receive training on that, on how to adapt depending on the employees, the foreign employees, they have in front of them?

HR1: No. The training that was provided by headquarters, the managers also took part in it, everyone participated. And then, there are also little exchanges with the managers to say: here's how these people are, here's their specific culture, here's how they operate. For example, there can be a language problem. So today, you have to be ready to be much more attentive to them compared to others, because we've invested in bringing them here. We don't want you, as it's on us. So if they're unhappy, it's our duty to make sure they're happy at work, in their accommodation, with the hotel culture, and with our employees.

We've heard, for example, that there was a bit of discrimination at the start when the Indians arrived. We're talking about Indians and Nepalis, not necessarily just interns but also expatriates. Now, they speak among themselves in the language...But that's normal, because we also speak Creole among ourselves. And when we speak to our teams today, we can't just speak French, because the Indians don't necessarily understand French. So we have to find a middle ground, which is English. Even though English is our official language, we don't actually use it much.

R: Yes, it's not the mother tongue, it's not the one that comes to us first when we think.

HR1: Exactly. Today, it's Creole and French. And English, yes, we use it, but it still feels...

R: ...like a meeting point language for both sides, not one either side is perfectly fluent in, just a shared language of understanding.

HR1: Yes. And let's not forget that 60% of Mauritius, of Indian origin, speaks Hindi. So now, you see, Indians can speak more easily with locals who also speak Hindi. So in a way, language is not a barrier. Indians can communicate easily with the majority of employees who speak Hindi. Me, I don't speak it, I can understand a few words, but not hold a conversation. So there is a barrier, but at the same time, that barrier also connects them with others.

R: Right. But in the future, since there will surely be more foreigners coming to work in hospitality, it's the case all over the world, could intercultural competence become a criterion for managers' evaluations, monthly or annually, to avoid cultural discomfort? Could it become part of the performance criteria?

HR1: Today, I can only give you my personal opinion, not the company's position. I work in a company that's still learning this culture. I've always worked with students, but they came only for a few months, and then they left. Now, we're recruiting a workforce that will work for two years, with contracts that can be renewed for several more years. So already, we're talking about two to three years minimum. These aren't people who will leave in two or three months—they'll be with us for a while, so there will be much more cultural exchange. We'll learn more from them. But there are also certain rules you can't go beyond when recruiting expatriates. I can't, unfortunately, just increase the number of expatriates. I could, but I would have to respect certain limits to ensure safety, housing, and many other factors.

(A Manager enters and tells the participant that someone wants to resign)

HR1: You see these situations? Unfortunately, departures, sometimes you have to accept them. And sometimes you actually have to make them happen, because it's really toxic for the environment, for others, and we have to manage it. Shall we continue?

R: Yes, so, it was just about the idea of putting intercultural competence as a sort of evaluation criterion, in quotes, in the future.

HR1: Well, what I wanted to say is that we are still learning. This is all new. We also need a little time to understand what the need is, what is missing, in a way, within our team today. Do they, the managers, also need this training to lead their team? For example, in a department like housekeeping, a team of 60 people, at the moment I only have two expats in a team of 60. That's not a lot. It's not a lot, but the training is useful for everyone. So that's what I'm saying. Today, expats are not that numerous.

I'm trying to figure out, as we go along, what the needs are on both sides: the expats, the locals, and also the management's expectations of them. We're trying to learn but I haven't yet found, as you said, whether we should have some kind of specific skills, technical or analytical, for our management team.

Maybe it will eventually become part of the KPIs for managers when we set the new indicators in September for the 2025-2026 year. Maybe it will be a line or two.

R: Yes, without making it the main focus, but just as an acknowledgement, because it's becoming part of everyday life now.

HR1: Exactly. And similarly, for expats, we will still have specific indicators just for them. Today, when we invest in an expatriate, does that lead to stronger performance, the same or less than locals? For example, their attendance rate may be better because they currently have fewer family emergencies, no maternity or paternity leave for now. So perhaps they're more productive. But what is their real reason for coming to Mauritius?

R: It's often, in general, for financial reasons, and then for the experience.

HR1: Exactly, more for financial reasons. Much more. Experience is secondary, but in terms of life, earning more money is the main thing. If they're absent, they earn less. If they don't work on Sundays, that's to their... To their own loss, in a way. So we also try to analyse this part: are they more present overall, or have they adapted to Mauritian life in such a way that they'll decide not to work for this or that reason? All of this... we're starting now, after four or five months, to set up dashboards with different parameters and analyses to see whether, for the expat side, I should invest more in them or keep things as they are for now. In the future, I think we need to give ourselves at least a year to fully understand the situation and take stock.

R: Right. And if there was one thing you would like to improve, for example, in the induction programme?

HR1: Something to add? There's a lot we could do. Really, we talk about so many things in the induction, maybe in too small parts, that we can't develop fully. If we start talking, we could easily reach several days, even a week, of cultural training.

No, I think that Mauritian culture... no... really, I try to understand, but training, learning, patience especially young people today are impatient. They don't give themselves enough time. After just two days, they're already dissatisfied. So really, we have to tell them to be patient today, to give themselves time and remember to have a lot of empathy for others.

Sometimes we're very self-centred thinking only of ourselves. You mentioned something to me last time, about making an appointment, it's true. And afterwards, it's not that we don't value it, it's not about that kind of importance, I mean other situations. Here, unlike in other countries or companies, things are much more programmed, very organised, everything is set. I've seen short videos, they're caricatures, but at the same time they're true.

If work ends at 4p.m., in a 35-hour workweek system, for example, at 4 p.m., people are gone. Not 4:30, not 4:05, 4 p.m. sharp. That's the culture. Here, we think we can leave at 4 p.m., fine. But if my meeting ends at 4 p.m., and I'm not finished, I'll keep going until 5 p.m. Even if I have another appointment at 4:30, I'll just tell the other person, "Sorry, we'll do it later." We don't yet have that culture of saying, "Right, we plan, we show up." We're very relaxed about it here. That's just how it is. Whereas when I worked in Seychelles for a year, it was even more extreme. It's different. What you see here—Seychelles is even worse.

R: So this is the softer version of Seychelles.

HR1: Yes, definitely. But what would I change in the induction? I would really like to have this training, but I just can't make it happen, gathering everyone together, running the training over two full days before they start work. That would be ideal for me. But right now, I only have two. So we do the half-day with my HR colleagues, and then, a month later, we meet again for training.

R: Because at the beginning, they need support so they don't feel abandoned.

HR1: Yes. That's also why we recruited a manager from a sister hotel to come on as a trainer. Soon, we won't have that problem, because in the near future, we'll have an in-house trainer so that whenever we recruit, we can run training immediately from day one, be there to listen, and share. Once again, that first week is so important, because many people join the hotel, they get very light information, and then they go straight into work. Especially when they're very young, they get lost. For those with experience, it doesn't matter so much because they've only changed environments, the work itself they already know. It's really for the new and young, without experience, that this would be useful. So again, two categories: experienced and inexperienced. There you go.

R: Alright. Thank you very much for your time and your answers.

HR1: My pleasure.

Appendix M: Interview with Human Resources Family Member 2 (HR2)

R: So first of all, could you tell me a little about your background and how you ended up working at Zilwa?

HR2: Ok, let me introduce myself. I'm part of the Human Resources team at Zilwa Attitude. It's been 4 years now that I've been with Zilwa. I started as a trainee, just like you. In 2020, I started as a trainee for a 6 month internship. And then afterwards, that's when it all began. After that, I was offered a permanent position. That was as an assistant at the team. Later, I became coordinator in 2020, a year after. And then afterwards, I was promoted.

R: Alright. What are your responsibilities within the HR team?

HR2: I'm mainly in charge of compensation and benefits. When I say compensation and benefits, that includes payroll. Payroll, all the remuneration part, which is very confidential within HR. And then, all the parts about job titles, promotions and so on. That part falls under my responsibility. And then, of course there are other responsibilities like recruitment tasks, talent acquisition. And in HR, there's also training, as we say. Training sessions, deliveries as well.

R: Ok. Do you take part in Zilwa's Induction Programme?

HR2: Induction Programme, right. Speaking about the Induction Programme, at Zilwa we have a programme called 90-Day Scripting. What is 90-Day Scripting? 90 days, if you divide it, that's three months. When someone joins us, let's take a simple example. An employee who starts today, there are follow-ups we have to do. We have people, for example, we have a programme called the Buddy Programme, which is part of the 90-Day Programme. What is the Buddy Programme? For example, if an employee joins today, they're automatically assigned a Buddy. A Buddy is someone who will help the newcomer adapt better. And then, they'll accompany them for two or three weeks.

After that, the person who joined will have to complete a feedback form. Feedback on whether everything went well during those three weeks I mentioned. And if there are gaps, we'll check and analyze why that's the case. It's like having a complaint programme within the 90-Day Scripting. Then afterwards, there are two evaluation phases done at the end of the sixth week. Again, another feedback form to complete. That's the second part of the 90-Day Scripting. And finally, if the employee is still with us, we complete the 90-Day Scripting. It ends with a coffee with the GM, the HR Manager and the Hotel Manager. The new joiners present themselves. They'll say what went well, how they adapted.

And give feedback on the Buddy who supported them. And if everything went well, the Buddy will receive an allowance for having participated in the programme.

R: Ok. So that's more the part where, once they're in the company, they shadow someone to better understand how things work. And afterwards, you take feedback.

HR2: Exactly.

R: But right at the start, from the moment they arrive. For example, the first day when they arrive by van and it's the first hour, in the Induction Programme, you have to present the company, a little about Mauritian culture.

HR2: Exactly. We do that on the first day, it's like a mini-Induction. More like a mini-Orientation. We show the newcomer the work environment, a walk-around, etc. Then we explain which departments exist, who the HODS are, and so on. That's what we cover on the first and second day. And then, when we reach completion of the 90-Day Scripting, there are two things we do. Like I mentioned, there's the coffee with the GM. Because it's not that easy to get access to the GM. So we give employees the opportunity to meet the GM and the HM too, of course.

R: Ok. So my focus is more on the Induction, the very beginning. In that programme, is there a part where you really present Mauritian culture, the expected norms, how to address managers or other employees? Whether for trainees or expatriates coming from another culture? For example, Indian or Nepali trainees or expatriates. Do you explain to them how Mauritian culture works right from the start, so they're not left on their own?

HR2: Exactly, exactly. Now, for expatriates, let me give you an example.

The base is the programme called 90-Day Scripting. But for expatriates, for example, we classified a new programme for them because of the language barrier.

It's not the same. For them it's different. Now we'll talk a little about Mauritian culture, talk about Mauritius itself, what we have, the environment, the surroundings, where they live, etc.

For them the programme is different. And for them, we do a full evaluation twice a month. For them it's harder. Different culture, different country, and so on.

R: And is this programme, the one you say is different for expatriates, delivered by the Head Office?

HR2: Exactly, it's delivered by the Head Office, not by us.

R: So there's a difference between induction for local employees and foreigners.

HR2: For foreigners as well. We modified it a little, just to have this... Because of the language barrier, different cultures, and since they come from India, Nepal and so on.

R: So would you say the language barrier is one of the main challenges now?

HR2: Well, in the hotel not necessarily, because the expats we recruit, they speak English, nor French unfortunately. And in Mauritius practically everyone knows English. Maybe not fluently, but still... And the advantage we have is that in Mauritius, most of the people originally come from India. And so, Indians communicate directly in their language, for example, Hindi. And

Hindi too, the staff... Usually, that's the case. Our staff also speak Hindi, and so do the expats. So for them, it's easier to communicate with each other.

R: And in terms of challenges or difficulties to manage, since it's still quite new for Zilwa to welcome trainees or expatriates from other cultures?

HR2: The main challenges are maybe... The main challenges are maybe cultural ones. Culture first of all, for example, adapting to food. For them, I'll take the example of expatriates. The feedback I received is mostly about food. But it's not really a major challenge, like I said. It's not a major challenge. It's more things like food, adaptation, because many of them are married, and they've left their families to come work here.

R: More like homesickness, right? For the younger ones...

HR2: Exactly. Some homesickness.

R: And afterwards, once they're in the workplace with colleagues, does it go well, or is the feedback more mixed?

HR2: It goes really well. There's collaboration between expats and colleagues too.

R: Ok. And for supervisors or managers on the ground, do they also get training regarding the arrival of new cultures? For example, to learn about communication differences, or differences in body language?

HR2: Exactly. There's a programme designed by the Head Office, which was delivered to our Family Members, as I said, supervisors, frontliners, and so on. It was about how to help expats adapt to Mauritius. That was the first training delivered by the Head Office. That was last year. Because we already knew we'd be having expats. We mustn't discourage them. We had to know how to encourage them to stay and adapt too.

R: So it's new, but you're still trying to put in place several training sessions so that everyone is on the same page.

HR2: Yes, yes.

R: And regarding the Induction Programme or the 90-Day Scripting, what are the core objectives?

HR2: The objective of the 90-Day Scripting is mainly to know whether we're... For example, in the hotel industry the major challenge is resignations. We have a lot of employees leaving us. And it's not easy to retain employees. The idea behind the 90-Day Scripting was to help employees. To make them experience this family culture, first of all. And then, to help new joiners adapt to their workplace. And to integrate better. That was the idea behind the creation of

this programme. And then we also evaluate their feedback. If, for example, they faced issues during these three months, we'll then try to find a solution.

R: So for you, the main point is also active listening. And gathering lots of feedback to improve...

HR2: Exactly. To give them that sense of belonging. For example, in the past, we didn't have the 90-Day Scripting, and employees felt rather neglected.

R: So you've seen a change since this programme was put in place?

HR2: Yes, we listen more. And there are a lot of one-to-ones with HODs too during the 90-Day Scripting.

R: And this programme, or even the Induction Programme, is reviewed, for example, once a year? Or since it was implemented, has it not been reviewed? Or is a review planned soon?

HR2: No, in fact, it's a program designed by the Head Office, so all the reviewing, improvements, that's done by them. It's not at our level.

R: So you can't directly change what's inside.

HR2: No, but we can give suggestions. For example, if we find something isn't working. Of course, we have meetings with the Head Office, so our job is to inform them about what doesn't work. For example, if we see a lot of people leaving... That's the main factor used to evaluate if the 90-Day Programme works or not. If there's high turnover, then the idea is to improve it. But looking at this year's turnover rate, it's 26%, so we're right in the middle of the targeted delivery.

R: Ok. And from your point of view, do you think that the fact managers and supervisors have this cultural training, could it become, in the coming years, a criterion in annual or monthly performance evaluations? To check whether they get along well, whether they manage to communicate properly with the foreign workforce?

HR2: Of course, we evaluate that differently. The 90-Day programme ends before that. But when we get to the sixth month, there's the "Profession Review" where the HOD has to complete a form. They evaluate the employees' performance. For example, for a new Family Member, did they reach their objective? There are objectives for employees. And for new Family Members, the criteria are different.

R: For you, if there was something to improve in the Induction Programme or in the 90-Day Scripting, what would it be?

HR2: That's just my personal opinion. I think 90 days is too short to evaluate an employee. Maybe we should extend it, align it with the 6-month "Profession Review." To get a better idea of where the employee stands and if they've adapted or not. For me, it's a bit too short. In hospitality, it's really complex in Mauritius right now. And our workforce breakdown is 75% Mauritian, 10% Indian trainees, and the rest expatriates.

I'd suggest maybe extending the 90-Day Programme to 120 days, at least for local Mauritians, because many people come work here, stay 2 weeks just to test things out, see if it works, if it doesn't... They're basically trying out the hotel. That's why I say a 120-day programme could be better for the employee. From the moment they join, they'd have this backbone, this longer follow-up. And based on that, we could create a more personalized programme for the employee, if they want to grow and become a supervisor tomorrow... That would be the idea.

R: I see. Well, thank you very much for participating, it's very kind of you to accept.

HR2: My pleasure. Thank you.

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**ABSTRACT: INTERCULTURAL MANAGEMENT IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY:
FOCUS ON THE STAFF ORIENTATION PROGRAM**

As the hospitality industry becomes increasingly multicultural, organisations face the challenge of integrating employees from diverse cultural backgrounds while maintaining a collaboration. Staff orientation programs play an essential role in equipping both managers and employees with tools to navigate cultural differences effectively. This dissertation investigates intercultural management within these programs, focusing on how it facilitates relationships between local managers and foreign employees. Using the Attitude Group, more precisely the hotel Zilwa Attitude as a case study, the research highlights how orientation programs combined with ongoing support reduce communication gaps and improve team cohesion. By demonstrating the advantages of intercultural management in staff induction, this thesis provides practical recommendations and insights for hospitality companies seeking to improve inclusion, communication, and workforce effectiveness in increasingly diverse workplaces.

Key words: intercultural management, staff orientation, cultural adaptation, communication

**RÉSUMÉ: MANAGEMENT INTERCULTUREL DANS L'HÔTELLERIE AXÉ SUR LE
PROGRAMME D'ORIENTATION DU PERSONNEL**

Dans un contexte où l'industrie hôtelière devient de plus en plus multiculturelle, les entreprises doivent relever le défi d'intégrer des employés issus de cultures différentes tout en favorisant un environnement de travail harmonieux et collaboratif. Les programmes d'orientation du personnel jouent un rôle clé en fournissant les outils nécessaires pour gérer efficacement les différences culturelles. Ce mémoire examine comment le management interculturel s'inscrit dans ces programmes, en mettant l'accent sur la manière dont il facilite les relations entre managers locaux et employés étrangers. A travers l'exemple du groupe Attitude, et plus particulièrement de l'hôtel Zilwa Attitude, l'étude montre que des programmes d'intégration bien structurés, associés à un accompagnement continu, réduisent les obstacles à la communication et renforcent la cohésion des équipes. En mettant en lumière les bénéfices concrets du management interculturel dans l'accueil du personnel, cette analyse propose des recommandations pratiques pour les entreprises hôtelières souhaitant améliorer l'inclusion, la communication, et la performance de leurs équipes dans des environnements de travail toujours plus diversifiés.

Mots clés: management interculturel, orientation du personnel, adaptation culturelle