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# Diversity and Performance Outcomes: The Mediating Role of Diversity Management in Hotel Industry

V.G.Girish

## ABSTRACT

*This study was done to know the relationship between diversity (i.e. surface level diversity and deep level diversity), diversity management and performance outcome. This study also explains the mediating effect of diversity management on diversity and performance outcome. A conceptual model was developed and suitable propositions were made and the conclusion as well as implications was also discussed. This study gives an idea about the how diversity management plays an important role in influencing the performance outcome especially among diverse group of employees in the organization.*

**Keywords:** Diversity, Surface level diversity, Deep level diversity, Diversity Management, Performance Outcome

## Introduction

The service industry provides more than 70% of the employment in most industrialized economies (OECD, 2005). The present market size of Indian tourism and the hospitality industry is around \$120 billion and is expected to pass \$420 billion by 2025 (IBEF, 2013). Indian hotel industry has shown an increasing growth trend of approximately 14% during the last few years and it is predicted a similar growth trend will continue in the coming years (Vardharajan & Rajan 2013). The luxury hotels in India is also experiencing exponential growth. According to a report from the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (2012), in March 2012 there were 750 hotels in India with 4 or more stars. The figure is expected to reach 1338 by March 2017, and 2457 hotels by March 2022. This growth rate also creates demand for

trained Human Resources; the report forecasts that 587,000 by March 2022 for 4 star upward hotels. It also states that the employee turnover rate in star category (luxury) hotels was between 11 and 12% in 2011, compared with 20% in hotels in general (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2012). The brighter side is that India's working population of 630 million is expected to touch 830 million by 2016, with India having the highest percentage of working people in the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) (Business Today, 2007). Sengupta (2004) writes that HRD is "like a soft version of HRM...is unitary in approach and lays emphasis on building employee competence, commitment and strong organizational culture" (p. 172). Khandekar and Sharma (2005) found that HR capabilities are positively correlated to organizational performance and are a

significant predictor of sustainable competitive advantage while studying 300 HR managers from nine Indian and foreign global organizations in India. According to Fallon and Rutherford (2010), "hospitality employees in one organization ranked the most likely causes for high staff turnover as treatment by superiors, amount of work hours, job pressure, scheduling, training, fringe benefit packages, better opportunities elsewhere, and physical demands of the job" (p. 454).

Managing diverse work groups is one of the most difficult and ongoing challenges in modern organizations, which is part of a "grand experiment" that, by many accounts, is "not going smoothly" (Tsui & Gutek, 1999). Diversity is happening because of the result of changing demographics associated with population, due to the economic pressures on organization as well as other reasons to diversify their workforce (Loden & Rosener, 1991) and the need to attract viable work force for organization to remain competitive, in this era of globalization (Hoffman, 1998). In the general work force, these days we can find, increase in diversity and is widely acknowledged (Carvel, 2001; Johnson & Packer, 1987; Morris, 2002). There is indeed strong and consistent evidence that diversity can positively influence individual, group and organizational outcomes (Cunningham, 2007). Further, the organizations may also experience consistent pressure from increasing social tolerance and positive attitudes towards diversity by both members and customers who expect, and even demand that (their) organizations exercise social responsibility (Cunningham, 2007; Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999). Some organizations might resist these pressures; however, increasing diversity in the workforce appears to be an inevitable outcome of

these demographic, economic, legislative, and social changes (Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999; Gilbert & Ivancevich, 2000). The organizations that can successfully develop racially diverse workforces will derive sustainable competitive advantages which is a growing consensus opinion these days (Cox & Blake, 1991; Thomas, 2004). In order for organizations to achieve success with adverse workforce, employees need to perceive that their organization supports and values the contributions of all employees which are expressed by many diversity researchers since long time. (Kozzek & Zonia, 1993; Mor Barak, Cherin, & Berkman, 1998; Mor Barak & Levin, 2002; Thomas & Ely, 1996; William & O'Reilly, 1998). For instance, Ely and Thomas (2001) concluded that in order for an organization to achieve a benefit from cultural diversity, members of the organization need to integrate the insights and experiences that come from having a diverse group of employees and learn from these differences in order to do business. Merely creating a diverse talent pool is not enough. When you bring together people from different perspectives and value structures, there is a high likelihood that there is going to be miscommunication, disagreement and possibly some friction. But there is also evidence to suggest that, there is more creativity, and that can be a much more effective way to get work done (Whitney, 2007). Organizations must create an environment in which differences are engaged and leveraged to yield higher performance. Ongoing diversity and inclusion efforts are necessary for maintaining awareness, dispelling stereotypes and building more inclusive workplaces (Smith & Kattie, 2009).

In this study, the researcher tries to understand the mediating role of diversity

management on performance outcome. On the basis of review of literature, a conceptual model is developed and suitable propositions are made to understand the relationship between these constructs. As performance outcome is vital for the survival of service industry and hotel industry coming under service industry, the researcher would mainly interpret the relationships with special reference to hotel industry in Indian perspective. This article intends to propose a model focusing surface level and deep level diversity and its impact on performance outcome mediated by diversity management.

### Diversity

Diversity among the work force is very common in India. According to Mogashi and Chang (2009), diversity refers to differences in terms of nationality, ethnic group, gender, age, and those with or without physical and mental difficulties. Diversity is readily detectable attributes (e.g. race, ethnicity, sex, age) and underlying deeper-level attributes (e.g. attitudes, values, beliefs etc.) which are explained by Jackson *et. al*(1995) and by Milliken & Martin (1996) in their theoretical framework. A member of a group tends to categorize all of the other members of the group in different ways – by sex, by ethnicity, by physical attractiveness, and many other dimensions. This process of categorization results in behaviors that are modified, depending on the level of diversity present among the categories. That is, social categorization theory tells us that individuals will act differently in the presence of a homogenous group than they would in the presence of a heterogeneous group (Turner, 1987). In this study, the researcher uses the definition by Quinetta (2006) in his study,

that diversity encompasses the many ways people may differ, including gender, race, nationality, education, sexual orientation, style, functional expertise, and a wide array of other characteristics and backgrounds that make a person unique. Diversity researchers have often found that diversity has a negative impact on communication and cohesion, and promotes high levels of detrimental group conflict (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Jackson, Joshi, & Edhardt, 2003; Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999; Pelled, Eisenhardt, & Xin, 1999) and for extensive reviews see also (Milliken & Martin, 1996; William & O'Reilly, 1998) Many of the firm's diversity initiatives are aimed at changing the corporate culture so as to ensure a workplace where employees of all backgrounds and perspectives feel welcome, and where every employee feels her or his talents are matched by opportunities to grow and contribute.

### Surface Level Diversity

Surface level diversity can be defined as differences among group members in overt, biological characteristics that are typically reflected in physical features. These characteristics include age, sex, and race/ethnicity. As expressed by Jackson *et. al.*(1993) and in agreement with David *et. al.* (1998) these characteristics are generally immutable, almost immediately observable, and measurable in simple and valid ways which was again explained by Jackson and colleagues(1995)and by Millikens and Martin (1996). Surface level diversity is presumed to be important because they are thought to reflect underlying differences that can evoke individual prejudices, biases, or stereotypes (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990).Surface-level diversity is equivalent to what other researchers have labeled "social category diversity" (Jehn, et al.,

1999) or “demographic diversity” (O’Reilly, Caldwell, & Barnett, 1989). Most importantly, it is well established that individuals quickly use these characteristics to assign themselves and others to social classifications involving ascribed patterns of thought, attitudes, and behaviors (Fiske, 2000). Similarity-attraction paradigm theory also suggests that people are attracted to and prefer to be with the similar others because they anticipate their own values, attitudes and beliefs will be reinforced or upheld. (Barsade, Ward, Turner, & Sonnenfeld, 2000; Bryne, 1971)

### Deep Level Diversity

Deep level diversity is the presumed underlying differences between people in their attitudes, values, and personalities are the basis of similarity-attraction or fit paradigms, including social psychological theories about similarity in attitudes (Bryne, 1971; Newcomb, 1961) and organizational behavior theories about similarity in values and personality (Schneider, 1987). The people find it more pleasurable to interact with others who have similar psychological characteristics, because that interaction verifies and reinforces their own beliefs, affect, and expressed behaviors (Swann, Stein-Seroussi, & Giesler, 1992). Personality differences too might make up deep-level diversity. (Harrison, Price, Gavin, & Florey, 2002). At the individual level, Barrick and Mount (1991) demonstrated that conscientiousness was the “Big Five” personality dimension most consistently and most strongly related to performance in a variety of task settings. In the aspect related to values, O’Reilly, Chatman, and Caldwell (1991) argued that new employees whose individual values differed from the mean values of others in their work groups or small

organizations were less satisfied, demonstrated lower organizational commitment, and were more likely to quit. Attitude similarity is an important predictor of attraction and friendship (Bryne, 1971; McGrath, 1984; Newcomb, 1961).

### Diversity Management

Diversity management is defined as “company’s ability to give chances to and utilize resources of people from diverse “cultures”, where culture means nationality, ethnic group, or gender. Cox and Blake (1991) mentioned, that the touted benefits of diversity management may include attracting and retaining the best available talent, enhanced marketing efforts, higher creativity and innovation, better problem solving and more organizational flexibility. Diversity management is regarded as a reflection of commitment philosophy because it fundamentally implies company’s commitment to the diverse composition of the workforce as well as their diverse needs (Mogashi & Chang, 2009). Despite growing academic interest in diversity management, it has been noted that “diversity management” is a poorly understood, increasingly slippery, and controversial concept that is used “in an all-embracing fashion to include not just the social categories of AA [affirmative action] such as race and sex but a wide range of personal characteristics” (Ferner, Almond, & Colling, 2005). In African countries, politics assumes supreme importance in diversity management, while ethnicity dominates “most national debates on diversity” as the central issue (Healy & Oikelome, 2007). This is because some disadvantaged ethnic groups have been oppressed historically, and there are now increasing calls for radical remedial actions to address racial grievances. In

contrast, ethnic groups in Japan and Korea are relatively homogeneous; as a result, gender, women's marital status, and their related employment status may be the key source of workforce diversity (Cooke, 2010). In the U.S. and UK, workforce diversity may include gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age, disability, immigration status, social class, political association, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, and ex-offenders, among other categories. Society accepts many of these differences, protecting them by law and acknowledging them in company policy. Some characteristics, however, may not be acceptable socially or legally in Asian countries such as China and India (Cooke, 2010). Furthermore, significant differences may exist even within Asian countries. For example, caste, ethnicity, religion, and gender are the main sources of diversity in India, whereas age, gender, disability, and place of origin (e.g., rural vs. urban) are the main causes of social inequality in China (Cooke & Saini, 2010). The above discussion clearly indicates that a universal diversity management practices cannot be implemented and it should be tailored by taking into consideration the national and cultural perspective for maximum effectiveness.

### **Performance Outcome**

A substantial body of research on deep- and surface-level diversity in the workplace has repeatedly shown that whereas the negative impacts of surface-level diversity decrease over time in work groups, deep-level similarity (e.g., in values, goal orientations, and personality) consistently predicts positive workplace outcomes (e.g., turnover, job attitudes, team performance; (Harrison, et al., 2002; Liao, Chuang, & Joshi, 2008; van Emmerik & Brenninkmeijer, 2009). Diversity is a

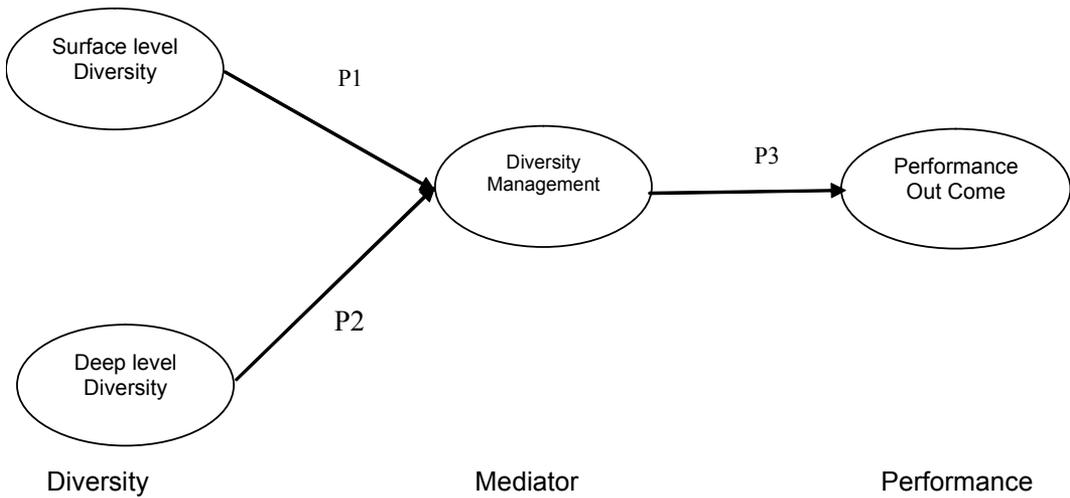
labor market imperative and a societal value and expectation. Therefore, "managers should do their best to translate diversity into positive organizational, group and individual outcomes" (Kochan et al., 2003). There is growing evidence through research that human resource management practices can positively affect organizational performance (Boselie, Dietz, & Boon, 2005; Combs, Liu, Hall, & Ketchen, 2006; Huselid, 1995), social capital and human capital are two important aspects. Social capital refers to the nature of the relationships (i.e., social structures and processes) among people internal and external to the firm (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998) and human capital is generally defined as the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) individually and collectively contained in the firm's human resources (Becker, 1964) and both these aspects will influence the performance outcome of the organization. Employee performance-management systems are specific HRM systems (Boselie, Dietz, & Boon, 2005) used in "creating a shared vision of the purpose and aims of the organization, helping each individual employee to understand and recognize their part in contributing to them, and in so doing to manage and enhance the employee performance of both individuals and the organization" (Fletcher & Williams, 1996, p. 169)

### **Conceptual Framework and Proposition Development**

Research outcome shows that diversity programs helps to mitigate negative reactions to unfavorable outcomes and decreases the negative repercussions that often follow bad news in the work place (R.J Bies, 1987). This opinion is also expressed by Bies & Moag (1986) as well as by Brockner (1988) and Shiparo (1991).

If trainees disagree in principle with the ideals of the organization’s formal diversity program and are firmly committed to their beliefs, or if they perceive that the organization is not serious about its diversity goals, diversity training is likely to produce little change (Nemetz & Christensen, 1996). In firms

with a well-supported, coherent, and integrated set of diversity activities, diversity training can create norms of behavior that facilitate cooperation and the motivation to solve collective action problems in diverse groups (Barry & Bateman, 1996; Hopkins & Hopkins, 2002; Johnson, 2001).



**Figure 1: Conceptual Model**

Majority of the individual’s stereotyping and prejudices (e.g. diversity training) is corrected by classical diversity management practices that changes the mindset of biased decision makers in a positive way regarding allocation and rewarding decisions ( e.g. formalization of HRM procedures), and to compensate for majority’s exclusion of minorities due to their bias (e.g. networking and mentoring programs). Allport (1954) and Pettigrew Tropp (2006) reported that contextual factors play a key role in triggering or diminishing negative in-group/out-group dynamics. Diversity management seeks to promote a broad notion of diversity including differences

of perspective and lifestyle in addition to designated groups. When diversity is understood as an assemblage of difference that is non-hierarchical, however, the concept of difference is extirpated from its links to discrimination and inequality, rendering it difficult to address racism, sexism or systemic disadvantage that produce persistent unequal outcomes ( Sara, 2007).It is not the concept of difference that limits diversity management’s utility; instead, it is the particular way that inclusion becomes defined in ways that are detrimental both to collective empowerment of workers and to the inclusion of meaningful differences (Suzanne, 2011) Most of the

research studies reviewed shows that diversity management positively influences diversity (i.e. surface level and deep level diversity) and improves the performance of the organization. On the backdrop of these review, the researcher proposes:

P1: Diversity management positively mediates the relation between surface level diversity and Performance Outcome.

P2: Diversity management positively mediates the relation between deep level diversity and Performance Outcome.

P3: There is a positive relationship between diversity management and performance outcome.

### Conclusion & Implications

The researcher in this study is only focused on surface level diversity and deep level diversity other than any other kinds of diversity. The researcher consciously treats diversity management as mediator because mediating events shift role from effects to cause, depending on the focus of analysis (Reuben & David, 1986). Relying on the existing reviews, the current studies focuses on how surface level and deep level diversity is mediated by diversity management in terms of performance outcome. Diversity management is held to be a reflection of

the commitment management philosophy. Companies pursuing commitment HR practices also tend to utilize diversity management, including family friendly policies (e.g., Osterman, 1995). Managers should always keep in mind, how an external intervention (in this research, diversity management) will influence the performance outcome of the organization. Diversity awareness education and awareness about different kinds of harassment as well as flexibility in scheduling the work will improve the performance of the organization.

### Limitations and Areas of Future Research

The proposed model is not tested and it may be difficult to universalize the perception of researcher until and unless, it is empirically tested to validate the propositions. Future researchers should carefully analyze other diversity issues related to performance outcome including the moderating and mediating effect. There may be many other diversity variables, that has to be explored (e.g.) seniority diversity or other variables to know the complete mediating and moderating effect related to performance outcome. When testing this model, country specific variables should also be incorporated.

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