

Managing diversity in the cruise industry: Exploring practices and metrics

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Abstract

The cruise sector is one of the industries where perhaps diversity is higher in the workforce, both due to the multicultural origin of the employees and differences in age and gender. However, diversity in the workforce does not necessarily constitute a guarantee of success.

Decades of research on the effects of diversity indicate that it can negatively or positively affect the organization's performance (Bell et al., 2011; Joshi and Roh, 2009; Van Dijk et al., 2012). Thus, the empirical literature does not demonstrate that a more diverse workforce automatically performs better, feels more committed to their companies, or experiences higher levels of satisfaction (Jackson et al., 1995; Williams and O'Reilly, 1998). As an alternative, the data suggests that diversity may produce more conflict, employee turnover, and creativity and innovation (Bassett-Jones, 2005). Some authors noticed that workforce diversity needs to be managed to transform differences into a catalyst for business success regarding different knowledge, skills, and abilities (Konrad, 2006; Zanoni et al., 2015)

This chapter explores the cruise industry's diversity and inclusion challenges and management practices. We studied the cruise sector itself as a subsector of the hospitality industry. We try to identify the leading practices companies are implementing, their relation to Human Resource Management Policies and Practices, and what metrics they use to measure the impact on performance. We do so based on the literature on this hospitality industry topic.

Despite this growing reality in the industry, we found scarce literature about workforce diversity in the cruise industry. This fact argues for an explorative and qualitative approach to these complex issues. We have reviewed the websites and sustainability reports of the four most crucial cruise companies worldwide. We looked at how they define diversity, their commitment as a company value, and their practices and metrics.

We present the results in this chapter. The main findings relate to four factors. First, the business case of the cruise sector presents some empirical evidence for the theoretical approaches underlying diversity. Secondly, there is a solid commitment to diversity

management by these companies who adopt practices very similar to those identified by the literature for the hospitality sector. Thirdly, there is a lack of metrics, and women are underrepresented on the board and in the board of directors. Finally, there is a need for further research in this sector that is well suited to the study of diversity management, including employee perceptions.

Introduction

The cruise sector is one of the industries where diversity is higher in the workforce due to the origin of the employees and a broad spectrum of differences in aspects such as culture, age, religion, or gender. However, workforce diversity does not necessarily guarantee success; it could negatively or positively affect the organization's performance (Gravel et al., 2011; Joshi et al., 2009; van Dijk et al., 2012). Empirical literature does not demonstrate that a more diverse workforce automatically performs better or feels more committed to their companies or experiences higher levels of satisfaction (Jackson et al., 1995; Williams et al., 1998; Millikin & Martins, 1996).

The hospitality industry is extensive and can be segmented into various sectors. The four main sectors are "Food & Beverage", "Accommodation", "Travel & Tourism" and "Entertainment & Leisure". The Cruise sector encompasses these four activities and can be considered a fully-fledged sub-sector of hospitality with its unique characteristics, which provides a total customer experience.

Our objective is to explore further the diversity management and inclusion challenges and management practices in the cruise industry as a hospitality sub-sector. Diversity management is a significant issue for any organization as it concerns people management; it is even more critical in the hospitality industry, as all functions and work performed are directly or indirectly related to people. Consequently, the study of effective practices to manage employee diversity in the hospitality sector is pertinent. The cruise industry also has unique characteristics that make its study even more compelling. Factors such as the multicultural nature of the crew and clients, the working conditions, the scarce presence of women, and the fact that the workplace and living conditions overlap during the routes made the study of diversity management in this sector at first sight attractive.

Diversity and inclusion are rising research topics and urgent issues facing the hospitality and tourism industry (Manoharan and Singal, 2017) and therefore deserve further investigation and discussion (Mooney, 2020). Academic research in the cruise sector has been growing in the last decade. However, it remains much more limited than in the hospitality sector. Despite the growing reality of the cruise industry, we find scarce literature on workforce diversity in the cruise sector.

This fact argues for an explorative and qualitative approach to these complex issues. We have reviewed the websites and sustainability reports of the four most crucial cruise companies worldwide. We looked at how they define diversity, their commitment as a company value, and their practices and metrics.

The following pages examine the main concepts and debates surrounding diversity management in the hospitality industry and the cruise subsector. In the first section, we review conceptualizations of diversity and consider the main explanatory theories of diversity effects. In the second section, we review the most relevant and current studies on diversity management in the hospitality industry and identify the leading practices presented by the authors. Then, we focus on the diversity in the specific case of the cruise industry, exploring its main challenges. After that, we identify leading diversity practices that cruise ship companies implement and employees' perceptions of them. With this aim, we review the sustainability and diversity reports of the following four largest cruise ship companies: Carnival Corporation & plc, Royal Caribbean International, Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings Ltd. and MSC Cruises S.A. by highlighting that although cruise companies are committed to diversity in their workforce, there is still a long way to go in terms of metrics to improve diversity management. The main findings, conclusions and limitations are then discussed. Moreover, finally, following the Business and Society 360 Book Series, the implications for research, industry and education are also presented.

a) Managing diversity in the Hospitality industry

In this section, we aim to define what is known as diversity, the main theories behind the positive and negative effects of diversity, what is meant by diversity management and finally, the main challenges of the Hospitality sector around this matter.

1.1. Diversity Concept

There is no unique definition of diversity. From a broad perspective, perhaps the most appropriate is Dobb's (1996) definition, which states that: "broadly defined, diversity can refer to any perceived differences among people, such as age, functional speciality, profession, sexual preference, geographic origin, lifestyle, and tenure or position in the organization" (1996, p.351).

Human differences can be distinguished into primary/surface and secondary/deep diversity. The surface diversity has immediate and visible dimensions such as age, gender, ethnicity, race, mental and physical abilities and sexual orientation, and secondary dimensions such as education, religion, personality, marital status, work experience, learning style and status (Mok, 2002; Van Knippenberg & Dijksterhuis, 2004). Deeper level diversity generally refers to cognitive diversity, a variable that is not readily apparent and, therefore, difficult to measure (McMahon, 2011; Lambert & Bell, 2019).

Bhavani (2001) offers a more refined and comprehensive definition of diversity. He defines it as "the ability to incorporate new perspectives, new ways of doing things, such that people feel valued by their group and differentiated individually" (Bhavani, 2001, p. 15). According to this author, diversity is the ability to stop perceiving people as having a single identity, which may be more or less visible, and start seeing people with their multiple identities, which define all sorts of complex forms. These singular ascribed

identities include skin colour, whether female or male, old or young, gay or straight, disabled or not. For example, a person may be a parent, a worker of Hindu origin, a Muslim, an engineer, or a customer. These different identities can be studied in different combinations or separately, in different ways, in other places and at various points. The idea behind this definition is that an individual cannot be pigeonholed. However, he must be treated in his or her multiple identities concerning him or her.

However, diversity cannot be seen as a positive thing for the company as it brings many challenges. The literature reflects both sides of diversity, and some speak of diversity as a "double-edged sword", as there are potential advantages and disadvantages to the cultural diversity of staff in organizations. The results are mixed, complex and unclear regarding the relationship between diversity and business performance (Shaw & Barrett-Power, 1998). Some studies show that diversity is related to high performance (Wright, Ferris & Kroll, 1995; Hartenian & Gudmundson, 2000), but others show that diversity is detrimental to business performance (Sacco & Schmitt, 2005). Richard, McMillan, Chadwick and Dwyer (2003) hypothesize an inverted U-shaped relationship, where high performance results from moderate levels of diversity. Northcraft and Neale (1999) and, more recently, Kochan et al. (2003) conclude that the claim that the existence of diversity in the workforce leads to better performance, revenues and returns on investment is not justifiable, i.e. the relationship between diversity and profitability is not conclusive. Although diversity is a social and business imperative, no empirical evidence supports its effect on company profits (Herring, 2009; Kochan et al., 2003; Van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007).

1.2. Main explanatory theories of diversity effects

Four main theoretical perspectives in the literature explain the effects of diversity (Harrison & Klein, 2007; Joshi et al., 2002). On the one hand, the benefits of diversity are explained by arguments based on cognitive resource theory and social capital theory. On the other hand, the challenges are explained by ideas based on the so-called "similarity-attraction paradigm" and social identity theory. We present below the critical points of each of these theories and the empirical evidence in the literature.

Cognitive resource theory. Cognitive effects refer to a group's ability to process information, perceive and interpret stimuli and make decisions (Benschop, 2001). Synergies can occur when people with different worldviews and experiences share ideas and perspectives and inspire new solutions to problems (Cox, 1994; Rosenzweig, 1998). The cognitive resources perspective emphasizes that diversity provides the group with different skills, perspectives and knowledge, which makes it more creative and innovative (Cox, 1994; Kandolla & Fullerton, 1998; Rosenzweig, 1998; Shaw & Barrett-Power, 1998). This theory is based on the dimension of diversity, categorized as informational diversity (John et al., 1999), which is related to the cognitive mentioned in the previous section. Informational diversity brings different talents, skills or visions to the team members. When group members have other skills, abilities and opinions, it increases the likelihood that the group will be influential as a unit (Eckel & Grossman, 2005). The key idea is that diversity increases available resources by bringing differences in skills, information and knowledge relevant to the task at hand, and this can benefit teams seeking innovation and creativity (Triandis et al., 1965; Jackson & Alvarez, 1992; McLeod et al., 1996; Chatman et al., 1998). Due to the cross-fertilization that occurs in a diverse work group, everyone brings qualities that complement each other (Northcraft

et al., 1995). In addition, diverse groups increase productivity (Richard, 2000) and complex problem-solving and decision-making (Nemeth & Wachtler, 1983; Cox & Blake, 1991; Watson et al., 1993).

Social capital theory. While cognitive resource theory emphasizes internal group resources (e.g. knowledge), the social capital perspective focuses on external connections with other groups. Social capital refers to the quantity and quality of personal contacts each group member has with other groups. The key idea behind the benefits of diversity is that a diverse group has a much broader and more varied external network at its disposal (Benschop, 2001). This external network can be an essential source of information, resources and opportunities for the organization. For example, in the case of the board of directors, an external social network can be critical for decision-making and implementation.

This theory is related to the symbolic effects of diversity (Benschop, 2001), which give the organization a better image and more legitimacy in its access to different customer groups and a possible increase in sales to culturally minority groups (Kandolla & Fullerton, 1998). The workforce composition is a message the organization sends to its environment.

Organizations with a diverse population can offer superior service because they better understand customer needs in increasingly multicultural markets (Adler, 1983; Gardenswartz & Rowe, 1998; Nguyen et al., 2022). Several studies have found that race and gender affect employee-customer interactions in service firms (McCormick & Kinloch, 1986; Juni, Brannon & Roth, 1998; Karaköse & Demir, 2011). According to Triandis, Kurowski and Gelfand (1994: 770), "service production requires employees with interpersonal skills, and cultural similarity between the service provider and the customer can improve the efficiency of service delivery and the perception of service quality". Numerous authors support the business implications of diverse workforce composition, claiming that it can increase organizational effectiveness and efficiency (McLeod et al., 1996; Naima, 2016).

Similarity-attraction paradigm. Studies show that turnover is higher in diverse teams (Wagner et al., 1984; Jackson et al., 1991; Riordan, 2000; McMillan-Capehart, 2005). This paradigm attempts to explain this fact. Its fundamental idea is that individuals prefer to relate to others similar to them (Triandis, 1976; Forehand et al., 2002; Barbuto & Gifford, 2001). The greater the conjunction between individual expectations and the reality of organizational life, the greater the likelihood that individuals will remain in the organization. Members of a culturally heterogeneous group may find it difficult to integrate their diverse backgrounds, values and norms and work together (John et al., 1999). As Northcraft et al. (1995:80) point out, "the aversion or apprehension that individuals experience when interacting with heterogeneous individuals for social categories may hinder integration when working in a team". Milliken and Martins (1996) conclude that a culturally diverse organization risks increasing ambiguity, complexity and confusion arising from different perceptions and communication difficulties.

This theoretical approach has contributed significantly to understanding diversity in the social integration of groups and their temporal stability. In general, differences may produce tensions that group members try to reduce by avoiding social relations with others who are different from them or even by leaving the group. The lack of a shared

language and low interpersonal attraction can lead to discomfort and difficulties in interpretation among members of a culturally diverse group (Milliken & Martins, 1996; Shaban, 2016) and high levels of emotional conflict (Pelled, 1996; Garcia-Prieto et al., 2003; Acar, 2010). Studies associate this diversity with a lower commitment, higher absenteeism and higher turnover of all members (Wagner, Pfeffer and O'Reilly, 1984; Tsui, Egan and O'Reilly, 1992; Leonard and Levine, 2006).

Social identity theory. Meanwhile, the similarity-attraction paradigm presents a sociological explanation of diversity; social identity theory focuses on the underlying psychosocial effects (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The basic argument is that society is essential to an individual's self-concept. People desire positive social identities, which leads to the tendency to classify people as in-group or out-group and to attribute negative in-group attributes to out-groupers (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Ashforth & Mael, 1989; 2004). For example, we define ourselves as male or female, as European or American, and we identify with our social group's values and cultural identity. In a series of experimental studies, now known as the minimal group paradigm, Tajfel and Turner (1986) empirically demonstrated that the mere distinction between members of the "in-group" and the "out-group" gave rise to favouritism towards members of one's group ("in-group") and discriminatory behaviour towards members of the other group ("out-group"). Since people are prone to perceive others based on their demographic characteristics (gender, race, even functional area), group diversity can encourage the re-emergence of stereotypes, favouritism, and lack of trust between members of different social groups. The result can be the division of the work team into "in-group"/"out-group" subgroups that end up competing rather than collaborating (Brewer, 2001; Stone et al., 2004).

The literature has shown that racial and ethnic minority individuals experience more stress in the organization (Beehr & Bhagat, 1985) and are less satisfied with their careers (Greenhaus, Parasuraman and Wormley, 1990) than their non-minority counterparts. Beer and Bhagat (1985) attribute this increased stress to differences in values, norms and attitudes, negative stereotypes and difficulty preserving one's cultural heritage due to pressure to adopt other value streams. In addition, supervisors tend to be less favourable in their perception and evaluation of subordinates who are different from them (Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989). As a result, individuals from cultural minorities may hide their potential for unique contributions to the organization's detriment (Milliken & Martins, 1996). Negative prejudices and stereotypes associated with different cultures and their symbols (e.g. dress, speech, lifestyle preference) can create and intensify misunderstanding and lack of trust among organizational members (Cox, 1993; Milliken & Martins, 1996). Therefore, increasing group diversity does not necessarily create commitment, motivation and reduced conflict (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004).

Having analyzed the above four theories, we can state, paraphrasing Farrer (2004), that the mere manifestation of diversity, or the adoption of diversity as a concept, does not guarantee success. Organizations must effectively manage diversity, which is one of the top management priorities for companies (Wikia, 2011). It is increasingly important to identify the conditions under which diversity can strengthen performance, especially as practitioners promote the potential benefits of diversity in the workplace (Childs, 2005; Ezine, 2003).

1.3. Diversity Management

Diversity management originates in North America (Kandola & Fullerton, 1994; Maxwell et al., 2003), especially in the USA, after affirmative action (A.A.) was established. A.A. was introduced in 1961 to prevent discrimination against employees among federal contractors and subcontractors. For this reason, the original approach was a way to manage diversity to correct past injustices.

In 1990, Thomas coined the term "diversity management", which changed the notion of diversity. As a starting point, companies began to incorporate diversity into their value codes, defining expressions of how to treat and value people (Schuler, 1992). Likewise, guidelines for action concerning diversity were also established in Human Resource programmes (Schuler, 1992), becoming a business imperative (Cox & Beale, 1997).

It is Olsen and Martins (2012) define diversity management and H.R. practices more systematically as: "the use of H.R. (human resource) management practices to (i) increase or maintain variation in human capital in some given dimension(s), and/or (ii) ensure that variation in human capital in some given dimension(s) does not hinder the achievement of the organization's objectives, and/or (iii) ensure that variation in human capital in some given dimension(s) facilitates the achievement of the organization's objectives" (p. 1161). It is the management of the differences in the workforce inside and outside of the organization (Pinnington et al., 2015). The goal of diversity management is to "create and maintain a positive work environment that values the similarities and differences of individuals" (Patrick & Kumar, 2012, p. 5).

The likelihood of diversity programmes' success depends firstly on situational factors, such as organizational culture, strategies, environment, and the people working in the organization (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004). There is no single way of developing such programmes (Roberson, Kulik and Pepper, 2003). Diversity programmes are likely to be better accepted in multicultural organizations with a "climate of diversity" (Glass & Graves, 1997) and in growth-oriented companies rather than in those pursuing a downsizing strategy (Richard, 2000). Therefore, it is necessary to consider the company's situation when implementing diversity initiatives.

Secondly, the success of diversity programmes depends on their specific objectives and achievements. Objectives are not about quotas, as quotas can lead to positive discrimination. Objectives should focus on what needs to be achieved, effectively develop strategies, and promote efforts to achieve them. Examples of objectives could be to improve relations with minority communities, develop mentoring programmes with minorities, or achieve cross-cultural learning.

Third, the success of diversity initiatives will depend on how they are configured. Diversity programmes should be framed as challenges and opportunities rather than threats to be overcome (Drach-Zahavy & Erez, 2002). Rynes and Rosen (1995) conclude that top management's perception of diversity training programmes is most strongly related to its success. A diverse management team is perhaps the most powerful method of supporting diversity initiatives in the company (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004). Affirmative action programmes are often poorly accepted for emphasizing group affiliation rather than the merits of the individual (Kravitz & Klineberg, 2002). These programmes even stigmatize their beneficiaries as incompetent (Heiman, Block, and Stathos, 1997).

Fourth, diversity initiatives are more likely to succeed when employees identify with their groups and the organization. This assertion is based on social identity theory (Tajfel

& Turner, 1986). The literature suggests that tasks and rewards must emphasize cooperation and motivate collegiality, provoking attitudes of mutual support (Brickson, 2000). Where this approach exists, the organization and the group are more important than the demographic differences between the individuals that make up the group. Conversely, individualistic and competitive reward, task allocation, and promotion systems create barriers to cooperation and prevent the realization of the benefits of diversity (Chatman, Polzer and Barsade, 1998).

2. Main Challenges of Diversity Management in the Hospitality Industry

The hospitality sector has traditionally emphasized the importance of diversity in its workforce. It is a labour-intensive and capital-intensive sector (Singal, 2015) in which the satisfaction of customers with very different backgrounds is the most critical business factor. Furthermore, the hospitality sector is a global industry that employs a labour force from all over the world and whose workers belong to a full range of nationalities. Diversity management has been considered a source of competitive advantage in this industry (Madera, 2018). As Ortlieb and Sieben (2013) state, diverse employees are essential resources for providing this service. Through them, they will access different experiences, worldviews, and cultural awareness information, meeting legal requirements and gaining stakeholder legitimacy. Diversity is the perfect way to bring in new perspectives and improve communication and innovation while increasing productivity.

Leading companies are committed to undertaking numerous diversity initiatives to improve their management (Gajjar & Okumus, 2018; Manoharan et al., 2021). They have seen positive results in their investment in diversity management programmes to train their employees (Ineson et al., 2013; Gröschl, 2007), for example, by improving the perception of diversity by customers and managers (Garib, 2013; Luoh & Tsaur, 2011). For instance, well-known companies in the hospitality industry, such as Marriott, Hilton, and Sodexo, have been inducted into DiversityInc's Hall of Fame for the Top Companies for Diversity. This award marks these companies on this prestigious list, recognizing the nation's top companies that hire, retain, and promote women, minorities, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ and veterans (Diversity, 2022). However, employee perception of these practices is the critical factor in the success of the implementation.

Madera (2013) discusses four categories of diversity management practices: diversity councils, diversity-related training programmes and supplier diversity. The minority groups' support, including women and the LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) community, employee mentoring programmes, networking, and cultural awareness, is particularly relevant. Gajjar and Okumus (2018) further include intergenerational programmes and disability benefits.

Kalargyrou, V., & Costen, W. (2017) identify a list of best practices among leading companies in the sector:

1. take employees seriously;
2. recognizing the capabilities of all employees;
3. support all employees;
4. communicate effectively with all employees;
5. value a diverse workforce;
6. respect different cultural beliefs;
7. create a corporate diversity council;

8. create a recruitment plan to attract a diverse talent pool;
9. develop diversity training programmes;
10. establish a supplier diversity programme;
11. create employee networks and mentoring programmes;
12. create cultural awareness;
13. support women and members of the LGBT community;
14. offer same-sex benefits.

This list is not exhaustive, and these practices are very similar to those discussed in the general literature on diversity management. However, the fact that leading companies in the hospitality sector have adopted them suggests an exciting mirror in which the cruise industry can look.

While we have identified practices, hospitality researchers have called for an understanding of diversity management in a more integrated way and not referring to separate practices (Reynolds et al., 2014). Furthermore, the authors claim the importance of considering the analysis of context, cultural and institutional factors in diversity management research (Manoharan & Singal, 2017).

Although there is abundant literature in the field of hospitality that addresses the benefits of diversity, specifying the different casuistries of different minorities, a gap in terms of theoretical support and empirical progress is evident (Kalargyrou & Costen, 2017).

3. Diversity in the Cruise Ship Industry

Having identified the main issues related to diversity management in the hospitality industry, we focus this section on the specific casuistry of the cruise sector. We start from the assumption that the hospitality and travel industries are intertwined branches that form one of the largest service industries and are set to become even more critical in the future.

Diversity is a particular and relevant characteristic to be considered when organizing Human Resource Management in the cruise industry. Thanks to Flags of convenience, cruise lines can recruit employees from all over the world, both managers and employees who work onboard (Bolt & Lashley, 2015).

There are many similarities between the service offered in a hotel and on a cruise ship; however, as Terry (2011) argues, cruise ships are international companies whose employees have diverse backgrounds, are of many different nationalities and have diverse cultural backgrounds.

Managing diversity with so many nationalities would be challenging, but onboard is even more significant considering that crew members live and work in the same place (Sehkaran & Sevcikova, 2011). The cruise ship is a closed environment with more confinement, and employees live with the same people at work and in their leisure time. Therefore, the problems that diversity can raise, which we pointed out in the theoretical section of the chapter, may be even more pressing in companies in this sector.

This section will review the more relevant academic studies about diversity in the cruise industry. Considering that although the concept of diversity includes a great range of attributes in a cruise line workforce, such as gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation, diversity onboard is fundamentally associated with multiculturalism and gender.

3.1. Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism on a cruise ship has been a recurrent subject in literature since the 90s until now (Testa, 2002). However, diversity management in the cruise industry is still under-researched. A study focused on Corporate Social Responsibility in the cruise industry concluded that few companies talked about the diversity of their employees, and discussion is limited to highlighting that their employees come from many different countries (Grosbois, 2016).

Research has contributed to cruise ship diversity by focusing on different aspects. A thesis carried out over a decade is alarming in terms of diversity and inclusion by asserting that "employees from certain countries, certain races and certain genders on average are less represented in more favourable ranks and ship positions and often receive less favourable salaries" (Bulikhov, 2009). More research is needed on this subject.

The mixture of cultures of the crewmembers causes communication problems not only because they speak different languages but also because the meaning of the symbols or words they use can provoke misunderstandings in their daily work. Verbal and nonverbal communication affects the crew's performance on a cruise ship, with colleagues from different nationalities and passengers (Gebauer, 2020). Appropriate diversity management could reduce the negative impact on performance that all these aspects can have.

Moving on to the relationship between diversity and work performance in general, we found that the literature does not demonstrate that a more diverse workforce performs worst or better (Bell et al., 2011; Joshi & Roh, 2009; Van Dijk et al., 2012), and in the cruise industry occurs the same. Both practitioners and researchers have pointed out the advantages and disadvantages of having a multinational crew working together regarding employee engagement (Radic, 2017) and performance concerning the impact on customer service experiences (Gebauer, 2020).

Some authors highlight cultural barriers influencing performance associated with the coexistence of people from various socio-cultural backgrounds on a cruise ship (Gebauer, 2020; Dawson, Neal & Madera, 2011; Brownell, 2008) that can harm the service offered to the passengers. For example, Baradelle and Lashley (2015) studied the crew homesickness aboard a cruise liner as an influencing factor in customer service. On a cruise ship, the crewmembers originate from very different cultural contexts. Sharing living accommodations with a diverse workforce, and the international location of the ship, contributed to feelings of homesickness (Baradelle & Lashley, 2015) and influenced work performance (Brownell, 2008). Testa (2004) studied the impact of cultural diversity in managing service quality in the cruise ship industry. The study asserts that "managers supervising those from other countries may be under more scrutiny in the workplace day-to-day". This fact may impact work performance with customers in the cruise environment.

Amy Alexy, chief human resources officer at Royal Caribbean Cruise Line, pointed out that the cruise ship sector must recruit flexible, open-minded people with problem-solving skills and empathy (McGrady, 2021). All these features are essential to minimize the cultural barriers in international assignments. It could help develop a cohesive organizational culture that may be useful in minimizing the impact of national cultural differences.

According to the president of Princess Cruises, diversity provides many benefits regarding teams' performance in a cruise line: "when you have a team of people with diverse viewpoints, you get to more creative, more effective solutions faster. And I think the performance of our company has proven that to be true in managers" (Sheivachman, 2018).

3.2. Gender

Regarding gender diversity, Bolt and Lashley (2015) pointed out gender segmentation as a feature of cruise ship employment. They highlighted the perception that working on a cruise ship is man-work. According to them, females are represented in service-oriented positions. Gibson's (2008) study highlights the frequent discrimination against women by their male counterparts on cruise ship crews. However, it should be noted that this may be due to cultural roots in which men do not "tolerate" having the same status as women.

Since 2000, the ITF has negotiated several agreements with the cruise industry, including seeking a working environment in which women are free from all forms of harassment, such as bullying and sexual and racial abuse (ITF, 2012i). A recent report, "Women's employment at sea", reveals that the main problems the industry has associated with this issue are:

1. Verbal and physical sexual harassment: women on board need protection.
2. Women's access to management positions: most men were unwilling to accept women as their superiors in the ship's hierarchy or as shore-based port captains.

Gender diversity is still a pendant issue for cruise ships, according to the Cruise Line International Association (CLIA, 2022).

Managing diversity on a cruise is a daily challenge due to the mixture of races, religions, sexual orientations, cultures, customs, habits, values, and languages on board. A small company in the cruise industry can have more than thirty nationalities gathered on a ship; in the most prominent companies, 1500 to 2000 people usually work on the ship for between four and ten months for 70–100 hours a week (Vega-Muñoz et al., 2020). For example, Carnival Corporation, the world's largest cruise company, is named one of the top companies in America on Forbes' annual list of Best Employers for Diversity and works with people from more than 150 countries (Carnival Corporation, 2019). With these figures, needless to say, that diversity management in the cruise industry is a constant concern for H.R. managers (Suárez et al., 2021).

4. Diversity in Cruise-line Companies: A review of Sustainability reports

This study sought to identify and describe behaviour patterns on company websites and in cruise companies' specific social responsibility reports. It is important to note that this study analyzes information on Diversity activities and does not measure or verify activities that may have existed but, for some reason, were not publicly reported. Esrock and Leichty (1998) argue that there may be little relationship between a company's CSR reporting and its actual CSR performance; however, this view may not always be accurate since more than 65% of companies use the Internet for CSR reporting. Perhaps because of this, Esrock and Leichty (1998) report that image building via the Internet has become an acceptable public relations practice.

The chapter is intended as a starting point in studying diversity management on cruise ships. We use websites and corporate sustainability reports as a source of information. We are aware of the bias that this source implies, and we assume it is a limitation of our research.

In this section, we attempt to summarize the practices to manage diversity that most prominent cruise lines carry out. For our analysis, we have chosen the four largest cruise lines in the world regarding revenue and passengers: Carnival Corporation, Royal Caribbean International, Norwegian Cruise Line and MSC Cruises. The ranking can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Largest cruise companies in the world

(Insert Figure 1 here)

Source: (<https://www.zippia.com/advice/largest-cruise-lines/>).

We have obtained information on these companies by analyzing the websites and examining 2021 sustainability reports.

4.1. Findings and Results

We explore the main themes based on previous research on diversity in the hospitality sector (Kalargyrou, V., & Costen, W., 2017), listed at the end of the section: "Main challenges of diversity management in the hospitality industry".

Some research findings are presented in figure 2, and the discussions below provide specific information for each company and its diversity management best practices.

Figure 2. Best practices

(Insert Figure 2 here)

Source: own elaboration

These results show the emphasis placed by large cruise industry companies on communicating diversity as a critical value and diversity management practices in their reports. We observe that the policies and practices carried out coincide with those of the hotel sector. However, there are companies that apparently, and based on the information consulted, seem to be more active than others. Royal Caribbean and Norwegian coincide not only in their policies but also in how they develop them through their policies and practices; while Carnival and MSC express a strong commitment but provide less information on these practices. However, we cannot infer from this that their commitment to diversity is high or low; we can only say that their effort to communicate it is less than that of the other companies consulted.

4.1.1. Carnival Corporation

Although the Carnival Corporation name did not emerge until 1994, the company's foundation was laid when the flagship brand, Carnival Cruise Line, was created. Carnival Cruise Line began operations in 1972. Over the years, the company has gained representation in virtually every market segment of the cruise industry. Today, it is one of the world's largest leisure travel companies, with operations in North America, Australia, Europe, and Asia. This company owns a fleet of 92 ships visiting more than 700 ports worldwide in normal operating conditions and totalling 223,000 lower berths. In 2019, Carnival Corporation's record full-year revenues totalled \$20.8 billion, placing the company in the top 160 of the Fortune 500. Carnival Corporation has a diverse

workforce of people from nearly 150 countries, and its brands historically welcome nearly 13 million guests annually, representing nearly half of the global cruise market. The company considers diversity as part of its DNA. In the words of its former CEO, Arnold Donald:

"Diversity is a business imperative. The key to innovation is the diversity of thought; having people from different backgrounds and cultural experiences organizing around a common goal is far more likely to create breakthrough innovation than a homogeneous group. That very diversity of thought is a powerful advantage." [1]

Their vision statement asserts that they are committed to a positive and just corporate culture based on the inclusion and the power of diversity. Their sustainability report states that they believe that efforts and conversations around diversity, equity and inclusion are not only essential topics in companies and boards around the world but are vitally important to maintaining and sustaining business success. In this regard, they claim to strive for greater performance by capturing the power of employee diversity across all elements, such as race, ethnicity, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation and identification. Carnival has won numerous awards and recognitions, including World's Best Employers and World's Top Female Friendly Companies by Forbes and has been recognized for the fifth consecutive year by the Human Rights Campaign as one of the Best Places to Work for LGBTQ+ Equality in 2021.

They are committed to initiatives such as "Catalyst CEO Champions for Change" to support the advancement of female leadership and diversity in the workplace and CEO Action for Diversity and Inclusion" of the Executive Leadership Council to support and encourage diversity in the workplace. It is the policy of Carnival Corporation & plc that disabled persons should receive full and fair consideration for all vacancies and promotions for which they are qualified candidates. In this regard, they seek to retain employees who become disabled during their service whenever possible and to provide appropriate training and accommodations.

The data provided in the appendix about diversity (data for 2019/2020/2021) is exciting and could be further analyzed. As for the nationalities of shipboard workers in 2021, 64.7% are Asian, 26.7% European and the rest of other nationalities such as African and Australian. It is noteworthy to remark that only 14.5% of the workforce are women.

The percentages vary significantly at the shoreside, where the percentage of women, 57.8%, is higher than this of men, 42.2%. Although on the board of directors, there are only 25% women compared to 75% men.

They summarize their ongoing objectives into two main themes:

- 1) Ensure that the overall shore-based employee base reflects worldwide diversity.
- 2) Expand shipboard and shoreside diversity, equity and inclusion across all ranks and departments.

We conclude our analysis of this company with the perception that Carnival, in its Diversity communication, defines diversity as a core value of the company. In terms of diversity management, the CEO's commitment to diversity and its appearance in external rankings based on specific metrics and comparing companies from all industries are particularly noteworthy.

4.1.2. Royal Caribbean Group

Royal Caribbean International is known for driving innovation at sea and has consistently redefined the cruise vacation since its launch in 1969, choosing the name "Royal

Caribbean" – with the connection to royalty signifying the high standards of service guests could expect from the new company. Royal Caribbean Group is the owner and operator of three award-winning cruise brands: Royal Caribbean International, Celebrity Cruises, and Silversea Cruises, and it is also a 50% owner of a joint venture that operates TUI Cruises and Hapag-Lloyd Cruises.

Royal Caribbean Cruise's total number of employees in 2021 was 85,000. This company is on the 2022 OUTSTANDING COMPANIES list. This list is comprised of companies whose data indicates they have the potential to make it to the DiversityInc Top 50 list. Noteworthy companies are judged by the same criteria used in the Top 50 competition, including their responses in the following areas:

- Human Capital Diversity Metrics: Gender and racial/ethnic representation of the overall workforce and management, as well as representation in new hires, promotions, turnover and top 10% of highest-paid employees.
- Leadership accountability: CEO and senior leadership engagement and accountability, diversity and inclusion management, and board and diversity council representation metrics and practices.
- Talent programs: Engagement metrics and practices for formal mentoring, formal sponsorship, employee resource groups and high-potential programs

The company believes it has an unwavering commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion as the foundation of its success and future as an employer. The Sustainability Report of 2021 states that they strive to attract talented professionals from diverse backgrounds, experiences and perspectives. They focus their strategy on three areas:

1. To increase the diversity of their core employees and leadership. To this end, they plan to increase the transparency of their reporting and focus their efforts on recruitment and retention policies.
2. To strengthen its culture of inclusion by enabling all team members to bring their complete and authentic personalities to work.
3. To reflect the growing diversity of their associates with diversity and inclusion initiatives that they genuinely value. To this end, they propose to develop a formal supplier diversity programme and continue to evolve our social media strategy.

These strategies take the form of a series of diversity management policies:

- *CEO action for diversity and inclusion.* In 2021, the CEO signalled leadership's commitment to diversity initiatives by signing the CEO Action for Diversity and Inclusion pledge. In doing so, he joined a coalition of 2,000 business leaders committed to promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace. He commits them to create environments that support open dialogue around diversity and inclusion issues, to share diversity and inclusion initiatives, and to engage their boards in diversity and inclusion strategies.
- *To attract diverse candidates.* In their commitment to diverse recruiting and to expand their talent pool, they have started a new Search for Excellence and Adventure University (SEA-U) internship program in 2021, with a strong focus on Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs).

- *To achieve diversity in the Board of Directors and executive management.* The 14-member Board of Directors will include two people of color (14%) and three women (21%) in 2021. In the executive management team, women represent 43% of the team and people of color 31%. Their goal is to increase these figures.
- *Onshore diversity.* Onshore teams are very diverse, with figures that exceed the averages on the DiversityInc list. In 2021, women represented 48% of its onshore employees internationally. DiversityInc recognized them as a top company on its Top 50 list. They were also recognized in the Forbes 2021 Best Employers for Diversity and Disability Equality Index 2021 Best Places to Work lists.
- *Onboard diversity.* The staff comes from more than 130 countries. Most of the crew comes from the Philippines, India, Indonesia and other Asian countries. The goal is to increase the number of nationalities.
- *Diversity performance indicators.* This company's commitment to diversity is significant that these indicators are included as forms of measurement: 1) Shoreside Representation, Female employees: 58%. 2) Board of directors, Female employees: 21%.

Royal Caribbean claims to carry out all the diversity management practices common to companies committed to diversity as the basis of their competitive advantage. Their upcoming inclusion on the Diversity Inc. list, one of the most prestigious diversity rankings, indicates that they not only communicate this in their reports but have the data to back it up.

4.1.3. MSC Cruises

Headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, MSC Cruises is part of the MSC Group, the leading privately owned shipping and logistics group. MSC Cruises is a cruise company belonging to Mediterranean Shipping Company, founded in 1987, and is currently the fourth largest cruise operator in the world and the second largest in Europe, surpassed only by Carnival Corporation & plc, Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. and Norwegian Cruise Line. It has a market share of approximately 6.4% worldwide. It has a fleet of 15 ships, in addition to the 14 ships that will be added in 2027. They employ more than 30,000 people globally.

They have around 120 nationalities on board and in their offices worldwide. The CEO talks about diversity at MSC, saying, "We believe in equal opportunity. We know that having a diverse and inclusive workforce makes MSC Cruises a stronger business. Our thousands of crew members represent more than 120 different nationalities, and we are making excellent progress ensuring that our workforce is gender balanced."

The company's website reaffirms the importance of cultural diversity for the enrichment it brings to their guests, crew, and office colleagues, stating that the diversity of their teams is crucial to their success. They claim to foster an open-minded and culturally diverse environment and support this idea with a video entitled the symphony of diversity. Video: <https://www.careers.msccruises.com/#/working-with-us/diversity> The Symphony of Diversity.

Its 2021 sustainability report appears in the materiality matrix, where it is classified as Important for stakeholders and Critical for MSC Cruises.

This company's goals around diversity and inclusion are primarily twofold:

1. Build a healthy and diverse inclusive work culture.
2. Achieve gender equality across its fleet. Increase the percentage of women working on board by 30% by 2025. In 2021 the ratio of female onshore employees was 54%, while the ratio of female onboard employees was 18%.

MSC publicly provides less information on how it manages diversity. The company considers diversity as one of its core values and declares its strong commitment to diversity and inclusion. It is a way of communicating this is through music and photography.

4.1.4. Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings Ltd.

Norwegian Cruise Line is an American-Bermudian shipping company, a subsidiary of "Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings Ltd". It began operations in 1966 under the name Norwegian Caribbean Line.

NCLH is a leading global cruise line operating under the Norwegian Cruise Line, Oceania Cruises, and Regent Seven Seas Cruises brands. With a mixed fleet of 28 ships with approximately 59,150 staterooms, these brands offer itineraries to more than 490 destinations worldwide. The company will introduce nine additional ships during 2027. They have a network of nearly 20,000 global suppliers and approximately 35,000 employees in 2021.

The CEO's message in the 2021 sustainability report states:

"To support our diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) efforts, I am pleased to report that in March, I signed the CEO Action Commitment for Diversity and Inclusion, further cementing our commitment to fostering an inclusive workforce where diverse backgrounds are represented, engaged and empowered to generate and execute innovative ideas. We also recognize the value of a diverse supplier base. Nearly 40% of our total U.S. supply chain spend in 2021 was with small businesses or businesses with minority, veteran or economically disadvantaged qualifications."

There is a section specifically dedicated to diversity in inclusion in its sustainability report, although this theme permeates the entire report. It details several critical components of the CEO's commitment, including fostering environments where open dialogue on diversity, equity and inclusion issues can occur; sharing of initiatives; training; board engagement; and evaluation of diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies. In addition to the CEO's commitment, the company's central diversity management policies are as follows:

1. *Talent acquisition.* They post job openings on diversity organization websites to achieve a diverse candidate base and participate in diverse career fairs and internship programs for students from underrepresented and disadvantaged communities.
2. *Training.* In 2020, the company launched online training for all ground team members to increase awareness and foster a workplace aligned with their Family and Community core values. The training focused on 1) Diversity, Inclusion and Sensitivity in the workplace, 2) Unconscious Bias, and 3) Microaggressions. All ground crew members were required to complete the training. In 2022, they included an additional module, Cultural Competence and Humility. This training is offered to all new hires. In addition, onboarding team members receive

cultural awareness training that emphasizes learning, appreciating, and celebrating differences.

3. *Partnerships and Commitments.* They have long-term partnerships with the National Diversity Council and sponsor the Florida Diversity Council and its local South Florida chapter, ATL Action for Racial Equity, among others. They are currently exploiting a partnership with Miami Lighthouse for the Blind, Florida's oldest and largest non-profit organization serving the needs of the blind and visually impaired, to increase their employment opportunities.
4. *Board of directors.* Another action is the CEO's commitment to involving board directors in developing and evaluating diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies.
5. *Supplier Diversity.* They place great importance on supplier diversity as it is directly linked to their corporate mission statement and aligns with their dedication to family and community. They recognize the value and importance of a diverse supplier base and are committed to facilitating, promoting, and encouraging the growth of small businesses and businesses from diverse and/or economically disadvantaged populations. The supply chain team includes a Certified Professional in Supplier Diversity (CPSD).
6. *Diversity performance indicators:* Shoreside: At the employee level, 59% female versus 41% male, and at the management level, 48% female versus 52% male.
 - Ethnicity is 47.9% Hispanic/Latino, 36.2% white and 11.5% black.
 - Shipboard: At the employee level, 22% women versus 78% men; at the management level, 14% women versus 86% men.
 - The ethnic origin is 48% Filipino, 12% Indonesian, 6% Indian, 6% from the United States and 28% from other countries.
 - The Board of Directors is 29% female and 14% underrepresented minorities.

With the latter company, as in the case of Royal Caribbean. Based on its published information, the company reports its consideration of diversity and inclusion as a corporate value and the implementation of practices to manage diversity in its workforce. The company highlights its commitment to supplier diversity and its efforts to improve the number of women and underrepresented minorities on the board of directors.

We have collected the female representation figures for the four analyzed companies, shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Women representation

(Insert Figure 3 here)

Source: Own elaboration

5. Conclusions and main limitations:

The conclusions of this chapter can be summarized in five main points:

- 1) ***Research on diversity and diversity management on cruise ships is scarce.***

Although this sector seems very suggestive for studying diversity and diversity management issues, the literature has focused on the hospitality industry, where diversity may be much smaller and the need to manage it less. The extreme

conditions of multiculturalism and cohabitation of cruise ship workers are absent.

2) *A business case for diversity in the cruise industry needs to be developed.*

Issues related to diversity and inclusion have a notorious presence in the CSR reports of the most important cruise companies. This fact reinforces "the need to discuss a business case for this industry" by analyzing the relationship between performance and implementation of these diversity and inclusion policies.

In the cruise industry, due to the characteristics of the business itself, there is great diversity. Diversity is present in the crew and customers who buy and enjoy the service. If we look at theoretical approaches to diversity, we find that Social Capital Theory speaks to the benefits of diversity for the opportunity to leverage customer interactions. We find numerous opportunities to improve customer service or increase cross-selling (Benchop, 2021) if the company has a diverse crew that matches the cultural characteristics of passengers in terms of language, race, sexual orientation or others. In addition, cruise ships that, as part of the customer experience, sell "onboard entertainment" need employees with much creativity who complement each other in decision-making. Remember that customer contact on a cruise ship is 24 hours a day. Therefore, the benefits of diversity referred to in cognitive resource theory (Cox, 1993; Kandolla and Fullerton, 1998; Rosenzweig, 1998) apply in this industry. Through the sustainability reports analyzed, we observe how cruise companies are committed to diversity in their workforces, considering this issue as one of their primary keys. Therefore, they strive to attract and retain people of different nationalities, gender and race.

However, as the theory underlines, diversity can create problems, which is explained by the social identity theory and the similarity-attraction paradigm. As there is significant multiculturalism on cruise ships, the lack of a common language can lead to misunderstandings between employees, workers, and customers. This multicultural workforce could hinder the integration of crew members, who may become isolated in ghettos depending on their origin. Communication complexity can be enormous and lead to tensions between different ethnic groups (Milliken and Martins, 1996). If not well managed, diversity can lead to racist behavior and make teamwork difficult. It is logical that on a cruise ship with very long working hours and where, in addition to working, one lives, these issues can be even more challenging to manage.

Based on these considerations, we suggest that future research study a model for diversity management on cruise ships, identifying the main drivers of benefits and the main detractors. Building a solid business case increases the likelihood of gaining the leadership commitment and resources needed to implement diversity initiatives successfully.

3) *The high similarity of diversity management practices with the hospitality industry in general.*

The third point concerns to diversity management policies. After reviewing the diversity policies of the major cruise companies, all claim to be committed to fostering an inclusive workforce in which diverse backgrounds are represented, engaged and empowered to generate and execute innovative ideas. It is clear from the review of sustainability reports that these companies talk about diversity management as key to their business. As mentioned in the commentary in Figure 2, diversity policies and practices are very similar to those developed by the hospitality sector.

Regarding policies, we found references in reports and websites to the same concepts that Kalargyrou, V., & Costen, W. (2017) identify for the hospitality sector. However, to our knowledge, these references are not supported by verifiable actions or the budget invested. Companies generally make a great effort to communicate their diversity policies and the CEO's commitment.

The most objective evidence of these companies' commitment to diversity can be found in their appearance in rankings such as Best Place to work or, more specifically, in the DiversityInc and Catalyst CEO Champions for Change rankings. We also propose that future research analyze these rankings and the associations of the companies.

4) Workforce diversity practices more specific to the cruise sector: Culture training.

The results we can draw from the analysis of the reports show the emphasis these companies place on multicultural management, as they manage workforces with 120-130 nationalities. The outcome is a genuinely multicultural environment where managers and their subordinates may maintain national and ethnic cultures that differ widely. The reports reviewed show that human resources managers are the ones who contribute to the cultivation of inclusive environments in which cultural differences are appreciated and celebrated. The companies know that talent attraction from various cultures demands establishing an inclusive environment where employees may feel safe, are respectfully treated, and have equal opportunities for access to resources.

In training policies, companies include practices for team members focused on cultural awareness, emphasizing cultural learning, appreciation, and celebrating differences.

5) Under-representation of women onboard.

The data collected in this chapter on the gender composition of companies is an indicator of the situation of women. These metrics highlight that women are underrepresented in cruise ship crews, which continue to be a male domain.

All the companies examined aim to improve the percentages of women working on ships and ensure equity. They also display their effort, and here they present good data on the presence of women on boards of directors.

The most important limitation of this study is the data source. As mentioned, our purpose has been to provide a first approximation of the research topic. It would be advisable for future research to conduct studies based on information from primary sources. Another limitation is that we have focused our study on the four most prominent companies in the cruise sector. Smaller companies specialize in different segments that can provide relevant and different information.

7. Implications: What is next?

To conclude the chapter, we propose the main implications of the study in three spheres: Academic, business, and educational.

Research agenda

First, we address what is next in the research agenda. In doing so, we seek to identify emerging issues in diversity research that apply to the cruise industry and, on that basis, suggest avenues for future research.

Integration of different theoretical perspectives. This chapter has reported on several theories, such as social identity theory, similarity-attraction, social capital theory and cognitive resource theory. Some support the positive effects of diversity, and others negatively, leading to equivocal and contradictory results. Thus, this study proposes that future researchers study the relationship between workforce diversity and performance by integrating several competing theories that can complement each other in the study of diversity management.

Dimensions of diversity. This chapter has studied the management of diversity based on surface-level characteristics so that future researchers could place more emphasis on deeper-level diversity attributes such as values, attitudes, and personality. In fact, limited research has explored the combined effects of diversity in its multiple dimensions. Therefore, we recommend that future researchers explore the combined effects of various dimensions of diversity and their effect on performance. In management practice and applied research on diversity management, it can be argued that the dimensional approach should be maintained, as it facilitates the conceptualization of individual practices and the monitoring of their impact.

Understanding the contribution of a multicultural workforce. To understand the contributory value of multiculturalism, research focused on the positive outcomes of being multicultural should be integrated with research on the adverse outcomes. This integration would result in a more rigorous understanding of the possible outcomes of managing multicultural workforces. In addition, there is a paucity of empirical work on the stability of cultural identity patterns over time and across contexts. Fitzsimmons (2013) proposed a framework to understand the dynamics of multiculturalism in the workforce. This model could be applied to the cruise industry.

Diversity and job position. Another topic underdeveloped by the literature and appropriate for this sector is to explore diversity management concerning the job position, as there are authors who question the generic concept and that it always provides a positive outcome (Webber and Donahue, 2001). There is a need to deepen the understanding of whether diversity is appropriate in all professional situations or whether there are more strength-based jobs where diversity can be a problem. It could be the case that the cruise sector allocates jobs based on

the demographics of its employees rather than their ability to perform their duties, which can raise difficult questions of business ethics.

Contextual variables. There is literature that has researched the effect of contextual variables on the success of diversity management. Variables such as corporate culture, diversity climate, team leadership, task interdependence, age of teams, team membership board composition, and social context have been studied. These studies often do not have very consistent results among themselves. We strongly recommend that future studies continue investigating contextual variables, specifically in the cruise industry.

Conducting multilevel studies. Much of the research on diversity management has been conducted at the group or organizational level, with very few studies at the individual level. To understand the diversity dynamics on cruise ships, we suggest conducting this multilevel study. In addition, understanding employees' perceptions of diversity practices will reinforce their legitimacy.

Business case of diversity. Discrimination, harassment, exclusion, and inequality in organizations persist despite decades of anti-discrimination legislation in many countries and the adoption of diversity and inclusion perspectives in the field. There is, therefore, still a long way to go towards a business case for diversity with more acceptable results in terms of performance and equity. More studies are needed on the relationships between diversity management practices between diversity dimensions and organizational performance. As mentioned earlier, developing the business case for diversity in the cruise industry can shed light on the effectiveness of practices on job satisfaction, absenteeism, and retention capacity. The specific contractual forms of the cruise company are particularly well suited to isolate this effect. The diversity management literature fundamentally bases its legitimacy on the business case for diversity. However, the moral value inherent in diversity management broadens and stabilizes the basis of this legitimacy. Proponents of diversity management within these organizations can rely on the stable narrative of doing something morally correct and profitable simultaneously.

Development of metrics. Previous research has frequently used Blau's index, the coefficient of variation and entropy to measure diversity. We suggest the use of this index to study diversity in the cruise industry, as well as the search for alternative indices to operationalize diversity.

Implications for the cruise industry

Findings confirm that although there is a concern about diversity management in the cruise industry, none of the largest cruise companies deeply specify what practices are put in place to measure and manage diversity for better performance.

This study can raise awareness in the relatively young cruise industry of the long way that remains to be done in diversity management. Also, to compare practices between them, they could arrange an industry event to discuss the challenge of diversity in a sector that necessarily has a diverse staff.

In addition, to improve the attention to diversity in this industry, companies could design a coherent diversity strategy. They could ask themselves what strategic objectives they pursue in diversity management. They could start choosing and focusing the measurement of diversity on some of the more typical dimensions in the cruise industry, such as gender, culture, and

nationality. Once choose the dimensions, they could create metrics, tangible diversity key performance indicators equal to what they do in other areas of the company, applying a kind of diversity Balanced Scorecard. In summary, to take advantage of a diverse workforce in the cruise industry, companies could try design a clear strategy with strategic objectives, goals in each diversity dimension, indicators and actual actions behind their diversity and inclusion statements.

Implications for Education

As we have seen, there is still a long way to go to achieve effective gender equality in the cruise industry, even more so if we broaden the view to diversity and inclusion understood globally.

Gender equality is not only a problem for the cruise sector, as could be seen in comparison with the

aviation industry. The 25 by 2025 initiative by IATA shows that gender balance in the tourism industry is still far from achieved. The aviation industry focuses on having a 25% female representation in senior roles by 2025. Our examples have shown that the cruise sector is more equilibrated in this state.

Nevertheless, limitation to gender outcomes is not sufficient, and the cruise industry has widened the scope to diversity: nationality, religion, disability, sexuality, etc. This shows that the cruise sector is advanced compared to other tourism sub-sectors.

Nevertheless, the data presented in this paper are still far from understanding diversity as a capital for companies and are mainly considered in terms of CSR. It is not enough to fulfil a diversity program or to enumerate the positive politics achieved or on the way.

Equally, the need to broaden the diversity of all kinds in companies must be actively included in the SDGs and not only in discourses. Moreover, cruise companies do not operate in a vacuum but are intertwined with other companies in the tourism sector and beyond. In this sense, it is significant that diversity studies, including gender diversity, are mainly offered without connection to other studies in universities and study centres.

Although postgraduate diversity studies exist, they are not systematically integrated into general higher studies. Then again, studies in hospitality include very comprehensive and complex curricula on the sector (hotels, agencies, cruises, etc.), but generally do not include subjects dedicated to diversity.

It is, therefore, difficult for those responsible for these issues in companies to have had the necessary studies to deal with diversity and to understand it as an asset for the institution.

In this sense, we believe that it is essential to incorporate diversity-related issues in the curricula of hospitality sector studies and specific training for working on cruise ships in nearly all positions.

Only when this reality has been consolidated will companies be able to focus on diversity in their H.R. policies. Due to their idiosyncrasies, we are convinced that shipping and cruise companies will be among the first to achieve this in an exemplary manner.

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