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STRATEGIC RESTAURANT MANAGEMENT MODEL IN A MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT: INTEGRATING GENERATIONAL AND CROSS-CULTURAL APPROACHES

Summary. *This article presents a theoretical and practical analysis of adaptive management strategies in the restaurant industry, integrating cross-cultural and generational approaches. The study is based on a qualitative comparative method using case analysis, incorporating practical experience in managing large-scale and chain restaurants in Ukraine and the USA, observations of multicultural teams, and informal interviews with employees from Generations X, Y, and Z. The research identifies key differences in values, communication styles, motivational drivers, and work schedule expectations across generations, as well as the specifics of authority perception and feedback reception among various cultural groups (Ukrainian, Latin American, and American employees). Special attention is given to the transformation of the leader's role from a hierarchical manager to a facilitator, fostering a shared sense of purpose and a culture of trust. The importance of personalized motivation, adaptive scheduling, and multi-level feedback as employee retention tools is substantiated. The author's management model is presented, in which cultural sensitivity, the leader's emotional intelligence, and consideration of generational characteristics are viewed as complementary parameters for*

enhancing team performance. Systematization of practical cases demonstrates that combining flexible operational tools with differentiated incentives reduces staff turnover, minimizes intergenerational conflicts, and increases productivity in environments characterized by high cultural and age diversity. The article will be useful for researchers in human resource management, hospitality industry professionals, HR experts, and practicing managers working in multicultural and multigenerational teams.

Key words: *multicultural teams, generational differences, restaurant management, adaptive leadership, employee motivation, hospitality industry.*

Introduction. Globalization has intensified the managerial challenge of leading multicultural and multigenerational teams in the restaurant industry. Hierarchical models with one-size-fits-all motivation lose effectiveness against persistent cultural and generational differences.

A cross-cultural staff composition has become the norm both in the United States and in Eastern Europe. Generations X (1965–1980), Y (1981–1996), and Z (1997–2012) diverge in attitudes toward work, perceptions of authority, expectations regarding work organization, communication styles, sensitivity to incentives, and tolerance for uncertainty [8]. Under high emotional load and short interaction cycles, these differences directly affect team performance.

Despite a growing body of publications, a systematic analysis of strategies that account for the concurrent influence of generational and cultural factors remains fragmented. Approaches either confine themselves to HR practices or examine cultural context in isolation. Practice shows that it is precisely the intersection of these dimensions that creates both risk and growth zones; integrating Generation Z staff into teams dominated by Generation X requires recalibrated motivation and a shift by the leader from a directive model to a facilitative one.

The purpose of the study is to analyze strategic approaches to restaurant management in a multicultural and multigenerational environment and to propose an adaptive model that combines cross-cultural and generational principles.

Materials and Methods. A comparative method was employed, reflecting the complexity of the phenomenon under analysis, which brings together generational and cultural differences in managing restaurant teams.

The empirical base comprises the author’s practical management experience in restaurants in Ukraine and the United States. In the Ukrainian context, activities at the restaurant “Praha” (Kyiv, 2013–2022)—a major gastronomic project with 500 seats and a developed events infrastructure—were analyzed. In the U.S. context, examples were drawn from work in the Pura Vida network (Florida, 2022–2023), comprising more than 20 locations, and at Lemonica (Hollywood, Florida, 2024–2025), where adaptive HR practices were developed and implemented.

Empirical data include case descriptions with locations, operating periods, and scale of operations. Non-formalized interviews were conducted with staff ($n \approx 25$) representing multicultural teams: Ukrainians, Russians, Latin Americans, African Americans, and local Americans. The generational structure covered Generations X, Y, and Z, enabling identification of differences in perceptions of authority, motivational stimuli, and forms of feedback consistent with the observations of Seyfi S. [8] regarding generational features of expectations in the hospitality industry. Key analytical parameters included: perceptions of authority and leadership style; employee motivation and engagement; formats and tone of feedback; work–life balance; cross-cultural adaptation and its impact on productivity and retention.

The primary instrument was case analysis with elements of in-depth contextual comparison. Cross-case comparison made it possible to identify stable patterns of interaction across generations and cultural groups, and adaptive managerial practices that enhance the effectiveness of restaurant teams.

Interpretation drew on the following theoretical frames: the absorptive capacity model (ACAP) [6]; the theory of emotional brand attachment [2]; cognitive appraisal theory [11]; and studies on generational differences in employee behavior [8], [10]. This approach provided an integrated understanding of the interrelationships between generational and cultural factors in strategic restaurant management.

Results. The multigenerational structure of staff sets distinct values, modes of communication, and expectations. Generation X is oriented toward stability, hierarchy, and procedures. Stress tolerance and readiness for long shifts are higher, aligning with the role of organizational stability in retention [6]. Generation Y values meaning and participation. Involving staff in the development of service standards increases loyalty and initiative. In Ukraine, collective bonuses work better, whereas in the United States, individual metrics supplemented by a team bonus element are more effective [10]. Generation Z requires flexible schedules, visual communication, and instant feedback. It readily adopts new service formats but needs sustained personalized motivation [2], [11]. Hence, differentiation of KPIs follows: for X—stability and compliance with regulations; for Y—participation and contribution to standards; for Z—personal metrics with short feedback cycles.

Perceptions of leadership vary by generation and are shaped by cultural context. Liu B. [5] showed that national-cultural differences modify the willingness to experiment and the reception of new interaction formats in restaurant teams. In a multicultural environment, as Seyfi S. notes [8], these differences are amplified by generational features, requiring the manager to combine motivational tools with flexibility.

In Ukrainian restaurants, representatives of X and Y displayed greater tolerance for rigid schedules and centralized managerial decisions, whereas in the United States, Y and Z expected greater autonomy and transparency in managerial

processes. This accords with the findings of Bakr A. [1] on the need to account for individual and group values in building sustainable interaction models.

Intergenerational differences influence perceptions of authenticity. High authenticity more strongly lifts service evaluations among novelty-oriented Generations Y and Z [7]. It is affected by menu format and restaurant type [9]. This makes it necessary to consider generational composition when shaping the product offering. Table 1 systematizes values, communication style, key stimuli, and adaptation characteristics of X, Y, and Z.

Table 1

Comparative characteristics of Generations X, Y, and Z in the restaurant industry

Generat ion	Core Values	Communicat ion Style	Motivational Stimuli	Adaptation Characteristics
X	Stability, hierarchy, loyalty	Formal, hierarchical	Long-term employment, stable income	High stress tolerance, readiness for long shifts
Y	Meaningful work, career growth, participation in management	Team-oriented, open	Recognition of contribution, professional development, participation in decision-making	Work–life balance, positive response to collective bonuses
Z	Flexibility, digital interaction, quick feedback	Interactive, visual	Individual bonuses, visual stimuli, gamified elements	High digital literacy, low tolerance for routine

Source: compiled by the author based on sources: [3; 7; 11]

In multicultural restaurant teams, cultural and generational differences shape perceptions of authority, communication format, and feedback expectations [6]. Among Ukrainian, Latin American, and American employees, this manifests in business communication styles and adaptation pathways. Table 2 compares

attitudes toward leadership, communications, feedback, and adaptation strategies, highlighting regularities and managerial risks.

Table 2

Cross-cultural differences in employee expectations and communication styles in the restaurant industry

Cultural group	Authority perception	Communication style	Feedback preferences	Adaptation features
Ukrainians	Respect for hierarchy, formal role recognition	Formal, hierarchical	Sensitive to criticism, prefer carefully worded feedback	High value on stability, slower adaptation to flexibility
Russians	Strong respect for authority, expect clear hierarchy with some paternalism	Formal in official settings, but may switch to informal in close-knit teams	Prefer balanced feedback (constructive criticism + recognition); negative reaction to abrupt criticism	Value stability and predictability, adapt slower to rapid changes, but resilient under structured rules
Latin Americans	Prefer warm, inclusive leadership	Emotional, informal	Expect recognition and encouragement in verbal form	Adapt quickly in team-oriented environments
Americans	Expect clear boundaries and role transparency	Direct, structured	Prefer concise, metric-based feedback	Adapt well to structured but flexible schedules

Source: compiled by the author based on sources: [6; 8; 9]

Analysis of the characteristics in Table 2 indicates that national-cultural affiliation directly influences interaction styles and the reception of managerial signals. Ukrainian employees—especially from Generations X and Y—demonstrate high respect for hierarchy and formalized procedures, which supports process stability but can slow the adoption of flexible and horizontal managerial models [9]. Their reaction to feedback depends heavily on delivery; blunt criticism is often perceived as painful, whereas balanced and constructive comments foster engagement.

Latin American employees—particularly those from Generation Z—respond positively to emotionally engaging leadership and warm interpersonal communication. For them, recognition in oral form is a key motivational factor, even when behavior needs correction. This feature facilitates rapid integration into the team but requires high emotional intelligence from managers. American workers, most often from Generations Y and Z, prefer clearly defined roles and transparent expectations regarding tasks and outcomes [9]. Their feedback preferences tilt toward brief, structured comments supported by measurable performance indicators, which simplifies self-assessment and development planning.

Discussion. A shift from traditional hierarchical management to a “facilitator” role is a key condition for the effective functioning of restaurant teams comprising representatives of different generations and cultural groups. In this model, the leader allocates tasks and creates space for dialogue, mutual learning, and joint problem-solving, acting as a mediator of meaning and a coordinator of team processes [4].

The organization’s ability to absorb and integrate knowledge in multicultural teams manifests in how quickly and effectively team members adapt to new approaches and technologies [6]. A high level of ACAP in the restaurant setting allows diverse cultural work patterns to be combined into a coherent system, strengthening innovative potential. Alignment of cultural values between leader and team becomes a critical factor determining the pace of adaptation and the durability of achieved changes [7].

Core elements of successful leadership in such an environment include a shared conceptual and linguistic basis, trust, and the leader’s emotional intelligence [6]. A common language—both linguistic and semantic—ensures alignment of expectations, consistent interpretation of managerial signals, and minimization of cross-cultural misunderstandings. Trust is formed through consistency of action, transparent decisions, and respect for individual employee

values. Emotional intelligence enables the leader to register underlying team moods, respond to conflict in a timely manner, and sustain an atmosphere of mutual understanding [11].

The Lemonica case in the United States demonstrates how adopting a facilitator model integrated Generations Y and Z from different cultural groups (Latin Americans, Americans, Ukrainians) into a unified team without significant conflict. Leadership was built on daily team briefings, flexible role allocation, and encouragement of idea exchange among servers, cooks, and managers. The result was improved retention indicators and higher engagement, reflected in internal surveys.

Experience at Ukraine’s “Praga” shows that in a setting dominated by Generation X and a substantial share of local staff, a leader acting as facilitator can increase process innovativeness through targeted intergenerational project groups. Emphasis was placed on transferring experience from senior to junior staff and integrating digital service tools proposed by Generation Z. The outcome was shorter service times and improved customer satisfaction metrics.

The effectiveness of rewards and schedules is determined by aligning incentives with generational values. Generation Z responds more strongly to personalization and rapid feedback. When satisfied with service, this converts into loyalty and repeat patronage [10]. For X/Y, shared goals and predictable rules take precedence, boosting collective engagement and curbing turnover, consistent with intergenerational differences in values and expectations [8]. Table 3 summarizes: personalization for Z; collective orientations for X/Y; and adaptive scheduling as a universal flexibility mechanism.

Table 3

Effectiveness of motivational strategies by generations and cultures

Generation / Culture	Effective incentives	Response to adaptive scheduling	Retention outcome
X (Ukrainian)	Team goals, stable	Comfortable with fixed	Long-term tenure;

	income	and predictable shifts	low turnover
X (Latino)	Respect and recognition of contribution	Accepts moderate flexibility	Moderate increase in engagement
Y (American)	Career development; participation in decisions	Positive response to flexible schedules	Higher satisfaction; reduced turnover
Y (Ukrainian)	Collective bonuses; public acknowledgment	Prefers balanced rota (stability + flexibility)	Stable engagement
Z (American)	Individual bonuses; challenges; gamified elements	High value placed on short and flexible shifts	Strong engagement; risk of exit under rigid schedules
Z (Latino)	Visual feedback; fast recognition; micro-rewards	Flexibility is a key retention lever	High engagement under personalized incentives

Source: compiled by the author based on sources: [10; 11]

Comparison confirms that personalization of incentives is critical for retaining Generation Z. Individual bonuses, micro-recognition, and gamified tasks raise satisfaction and intentions for repeat effort via a direct “effort–outcome” linkage, whereas schemes neutral to individual contribution show weaker effects for this cohort. By contrast, for Generations X and Y, collective orientations—transparent rules, team goals, and rituals of contribution recognition—are more robust levers that sustain a sense of belonging and reduce perceived process uncertainty [8].

Adaptive scheduling emerges as a universal instrument of intergenerational flexibility. For Z, it acts as a baseline hygiene factor preventing role conflict outside work; for Y, a mechanism for balancing professional and family obligations; and for X, a way to preserve predictability with acceptable load variability. This configuration aligns with empirical models in which satisfaction mediates the link between interaction quality and repeat choice/repeat actions [10]. Finally, motivational strategies should account for the affective dynamics of perceived organizational “authenticity” and procedural fairness. When reward conditions and managerial messaging match actual practice, negative emotions

decline and positive emotions grow, supporting the intention to “return”—in this context, continued employment and willingness to take additional shifts [11].

Conclusion. The study confirmed the importance of adaptive leadership and motivation in managing multicultural and multigenerational teams in the restaurant industry. The most effective approach is a shift from a hierarchical model to a facilitative one in which the leader unites generations and cultures, forming a shared field of meaning and coordinated action.

Optimal motivation is achieved by combining personalized incentives and game-like elements for younger generations with collective goals and long-term bonuses for older cohorts. Effectiveness is raised by flexible schedules and digital planning tools, which increase satisfaction and reduce turnover while maintaining productivity. Accounting for cross-cultural differences in perceptions of authority, communication, and feedback is essential. Multilayered interaction formats, including formal and digital channels, make it possible to align service standards with the need for flexibility.

Sustainable development of such teams requires a unified managerial platform that combines process structure with adaptability and cultural sensitivity. Future research should be directed toward developing universal performance indicators, testing digital motivation tools, and assessing the long-term impact of facilitative strategies on the competitiveness of restaurant business models.

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