'Friction' in cross-cultural service interactions: Narratives from guests and service-providers of a five star luxury hotel

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Dedication

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Abstract

Service interactions are increasingly cross-cultural as invariably they now involve parties from different cultural groups. Tourism establishments, however, have not always been able to create successful cross-cultural service interactions as negative interactions are widely reported. Negative cross-cultural service interactions affect tourists' and service hosts' experiences, and disfavour tourism businesses. Thus, there is a need to understand what factors shape cross-cultural service interactions and how these factors might influence the outcomes of cross-cultural service interactions in international tourism.

The literature suggests that cross-cultural service interactions are complicated by personal and interpersonal factors of two dichotomies - guests and service-providers, who often blame the other for negative interactions or use stereotyping as a coping strategy in their interactions. The thesis's primary aim is to explore for *how personal and interpersonal factors* influence cross-cultural service interactions and how stereotyping is employed as a coping strategy in cross-cultural service interactions. A further aim is to identify a dynamic paradigm that recognises the complexities of cross-cultural service interactions.

The cultural friction paradigm (Shenkar et al., 2008) was adopted as the conceptual framework because it recognises complexity in cross-cultural interactions and the importance of including the perspectives of both interacting parties. Focusing on the meanings in the interactional relationships, this research adopted a methodological stance with an interpretivist's assumptions, a constructivist's ontology and a qualitative data collection approach. In total, 12 participants were recruited through purposive sampling and snowball sampling in a five star luxury hotel. Service-providers were recruited from executive and frontline positions and guest informants included both leisure and business

travellers who held a range of occupations. Data were collected via participant observations, elite interviews and semi-structured in-depth interviews. Narrative inquiry, which focuses on collecting stories based on participants' experiences, was the overarching approach, in conjunction with the critical incident technique, which enabled participants to recall critical interactional experiences.

The findings of this research suggest that personal and interpersonal characteristics (i.e. actors' goals, power and control), as well as cultural differences, are salient factors influencing cross-cultural interactions between guests and service-providers. Goal congruity between service-providers and business travellers was found to discourage interactions. Control was prominent under situations of perceived cultural similarity rather than under perceived cultural dissimilarity, such as between Singaporean guests and Malaysian service-providers. Perceived cultural dissimilarity (e.g. Eastern versus Western culture) contributed to positive interactions as, in under these conditions, both parties were more accommodating of each other. The findings further suggest positive stereotyping under situations of cultural similarity and negative stereotyping under situations of cultural dissimilarity and that service-providers in lower job positions were more often found to stereotype which resulted in negative outcomes.
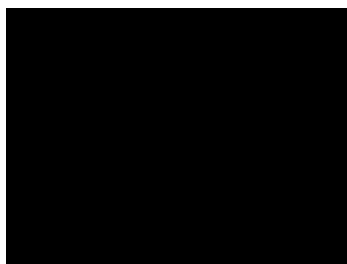
While this research has advanced our knowledge of cross-cultural service interactions, further research is needed on this topic. Future research could adopt an observation-based paired dyadic approach, using videoing to observe interactions *in situ*; extend this study to different settings, such as accommodation settings or in tourist attractions, and to consider the views of key players who are not directly involved in the interactions, such

as family members or travel partners to obtain a more comprehensive view of cross-cultural service interactions in tourism.

Declaration of Authenticity

"I, Jason Cheok Boon Chuan, declare that the PhD thesis entitled *'Friction' in cross-cultural service interactions: Narratives from guests and service-providers of a five star luxury hotel* is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work".

Signature: Date:

                                                                    28th February 2016

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List of Publications

Cheok J, Hede A-M and Watne TA. (2013) Explaining cross-cultural service interactions in tourism with Shenkar's cultural friction. *Current Issues in Tourism* 18: 539-560.

Cheok J, Aleti T and Hede A-M. (Forthcoming 2015) Stereotyping − Predispositions, activations and applications in cross-cultural service interactions: Views from service-providers in Malaysia. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*. doi:10.1177/1356766715604661

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 BACKGROUND

Despite global economic challenges in recent years, international tourism has remained robust. In 2014, a record number of 1,138 million tourists travelled worldwide (UNWTO, 2015). As a result, the international tourism industry has experienced an increase in cross-cultural service transactions involving interacting parties from different cultural groups (Reisinger, 1994; Moufakkir, 2011; Eusébio and Carneiro, 2012). Cross-cultural service interactions between tourists and those who provide services to them (e.g. frontline employees, hoteliers, tour guides, shop assistants and taxi drivers) are now ubiquitous (Reisinger et al., 2010).

Cross-cultural service interactions play a critical role in the overall tourism experience (Brunner-Sperdin and Peters, 2009) as they are co-created by tourists and service hosts (Prebensen and Foss, 2011). In turn, the success of these interactions is dependent on an understanding of the perceptions, expectations, rules of engagement and the communications of the parties involved (Tsang and Ap, 2007). While positive perceptions of service hosts held by guests are associated with customer satisfaction which then leads to positive interactional outcomes (Manzur and Jogaratnam, 2007), negative perceptions are associated with customer dissatisfaction leading to negative interactional outcomes (Lockwood and Jones, 1989). For example, a service host's appearance, behaviour or difficulty in communicating can leave tourists with negative impressions of their service interactions (Walls et al., 2011). The same outcome can occur for service hosts when tourists are 'authoritarian, arrogant, impolite, demanding and loud speaking' (Yeung and Leung, 2007: 401).

Tourism establishments, however, have not always been able to create successful cross-cultural service interactions (Winter et al., 2009; CNN Travel, 2013; The Standard China's Business Newspaper, 2008). Negative cross-cultural service interactions are still widely reported. For example, of Indian tourists with European service hosts (The Hindu, 2012); of Chinese tourists with Maldivian service hosts (International Business Times, 2013) and with French service hosts (The Standard China's Business Newspaper, 2008).

Negative service interactions affect service quality and impact tourists' satisfaction which can lead to complaints (Svari et al., 2010; Svensson, 2006), and service failures (Lee and Sparks, 2007b; Magnini and Ford, 2004; O'Neill and Mattila, 2004). Negative cross-cultural service interactions not only affect tourists and their tourism experiences, they also affect service hosts, many of whom have reported their discontent following encounters with tourists (The New York Times, 2005). This situation can lead to service quality being affected and to negative word-of-mouth. Ultimately, this could lead to loss of tourism revenue (Lewis and McCann, 2004a). In developing nations, many livelihoods can depend on tourism (Tao and Wall, 2009) because there are strong links between tourism and other businesses sectors. Loss of tourism revenue could, therefore, impact a nation's productivity, income, and employment (Dwyer et al., 2000).

Given the potential impact on tourism revenue, on the tourism experience and the subsequent behaviour of tourists and service hosts, a more robust understanding of cross-cultural service interactions is needed (Hudson and Ritchie, 2001). Specifically, there is a need to understand what factors shape cross-cultural service interactions and how these factors might influence the outcomes of cross-cultural service interactions in international

tourism. There is also a need to understand how the parties interact with each other and the strategies they employ to deal with their interactions as tourists or as service hosts. Gaining a thorough understanding of the complexities in cross-cultural service interactions, however, is not a straightforward matter. It necessitates an examination of the complexities involved and the use of a research approach that can accommodate those complexities in cross-cultural service interactions. This is examined in more detail in the following section.

1.1 TOURISTS AND SERVICE HOSTS: COMPETING DICHOTOMIES

In tourism, most service interactions involve two dominant parties from competing dichotomies (Uriely et al., 2009; Sherlock, 2001). Generally, these two dominant parties have different interests (Aramberri, 2001; Uriely et al., 2009) and hold negative attitudes towards each other (Nyaupane et al., 2008; Brunt and Courtney, 1999; Gursoy and Rutherford, 2004). The following anecdote provides one example of how a group of Chinese tourists blame service interaction failures on their service hosts:

> *If you look at surveys and forums in China, the majority of Chinese people are not satisfied with the service they get when they travel. The problem is that even when management understands that Chinese outbound tourism is a large and important market in the world, this awareness isn't manifesting itself on the frontline with service staff who are actually in touch with customers. Chinese tourists often say they feel treated like second class people, even when they spend a lot of money (CNN Travel, 2013: 1-5).*

Service hosts express similar negative attitudes, blaming tourists for service interaction failures:

A busload of package tourists from China descended on a department store here and began clamouring for all the skin refiner and "wrinkle de-crease" they could buy. Karen Eu, one of three clerks attending to them and herself [a Singaporean] of Chinese ancestry, opened her eyes wide in exasperation. "Oh, my God," she said as she carried another fistful of Chinese yuan to the cash register. "They talk so loud I have to yell until my throat hurts" (The New York Times, 2005: 1).

These two anecdotes highlight that there is a projected feeling of 'us' and 'them' (Maoz, 2006; McDowell, 2008; Chhabra, 2010). Each party has its own vindication and holds their counterparts responsible for service interaction failures. Tourism studies, however, have tended to focus on tourists (Cohen, 1995; MacCannell, 1999; Beerli and Martín, 2004) and neglected the service hosts (Sharma et al., 2009; Mattila and Enz, 2002) in the analysis of service interactions. Such a one-sided approach focused on the tourist cohort generates limited understanding of cross-cultural service interactions (Nyaupane et al., 2008).

As both guest and service host behaviours influence service interactions (Johns, 1999), examining both groups as individuals and as cohorts, and in comparison, are requisite to gaining a holistic understanding of service interactions (Mehmetoglu, 2004). A research approach to consider both tourist and service host perspectives would enable researchers to see how individual and cohort demographic attributes influence behaviours, and allow comparison to see patterns of similarities and differences between the two cohorts.

1.2 CROSS-CULTURAL SERVICE INTERACTIONS: COMPLEX INTERACTIONS

A numbers of factors are thought to influence cross-cultural service interactions. This includes the presence of others (Wu and Liang, 2009; Sirakaya and Woodside, 2005), or individual behaviours (Garavan, 1997; Gountas and Gountas, 2007), or characteristics of

the interacting parties (i.e. tourists and service hosts). The characteristics of the interacting parties include personal factors and interpersonal factors (Riley, 1995; Stangor et al., 1992; King and Garey, 1997). The former refers to one's personal attributes (Lin et al., 2014; Frew and Shaw, 1999) and the latter to one's interpersonal attributes that influence behaviours with others (Ekinci and Dawes, 2009). Hibbert, Dickinson and Curtin (2013) suggest that interpersonal factor is under-examined in the tourism literature.

As Singh commented (1991: 228) '…the quality of service delivery rests to a large degree on the way in which the provider-consumer interaction (i.e., service interaction) proceeds and consequently, it is unpredictable a priori'. The unpredictability of behaviour occurs because of idiosyncrasy, as each individual's personal characteristics are different and unique and can influence service interactions (Solomon et al., 1985). Idiosyncrasy further impedes consistency in service delivery as it discourages standardisation (Michel, 2001). For example, tourists possess unique personal demographic characteristics that influence their behaviours (Pearce, 2005; Kulik and Holbrook, 2000; Sujithamrak and Lam, 2005), and individual service hosts possess unique personal demographic characteristics that influences their job performance (Lam et al., 2001; Karatepe et al., 2006).

Demographic characteristics include gender (Khan et al., 2015); age (Littrell et al., 2004; Shoemaker, 1989) and level of education (Beerli and Martín, 2004; Baum, 2007) and social class status (Sommer and Carrier, 2010; Wearing et al., 2010). Social class status, however, which can determine inequality in socio-economic standing between parties in social encounters, is overlooked in tourism research, even though it has been considered an important factor influencing cross-cultural service interactions (Berghe, 1993).

Tourists are often perceived as the 'haves' and service hosts as the 'have nots' (Krippendorf, 1999) and the affluent social class status of tourists affects their contact with hosts (Pearce, 1982). Tourists are often seen with 'demand-ness' and expect special treatment, awaiting service hosts to be friendly and welcoming (Truong and King, 2009), but service hosts often view tourists as persons in contractual economic relationships (Lashley, 2008). This 'rich guests versus poor hosts' mind-set instigates negative behaviours in tourism (Nicely and Ghazali, 2014; Kozak et al., 2007). Furthermore, in the context of service interactions in international tourism, the literature tends to suggest that service hosts are the instigators of negative behaviours rather than the guests (McElroy et al., 2007).

Additionally, the interpersonal characteristics of tourists and service hosts can also influence cross-cultural service interactions. The two groups may have different interpersonal characteristics, such as their goals which may shape their behaviours (Johns, 1999). For example, service hosts' goals are work-oriented (Krippendorf, 1999), but guests' goals are personal, hedonic in nature and likely to involve emotional fulfilment (Morgan et al., 2010). These differences are complicated further by other interpersonal factors, such as a need to control the situation. As control is a basic human instinct and a pervasive personal feature exhibited in all social interactions (Bruce and Thornton, 2004) and a derivative of power (Pfeffer, 1981; Rucker et al., 2011), it is possible that both parties will seek to control the situation to achieve their goals. Studies have shown that different cultures exhibit different control patterns (Ji et al., 2000). The sense of being in control is less important for Asians as it is for Westerners (Ji et al., 2000; Sastry and Ross, 1998). Thus, the interpersonal factors of power (Van Kleef et al., 2006; Raven, 1992) and

control are often seen as 'tools' to handle interactions in culturally unfamiliar situations (Lustig and Koester, 2006).

Matsumoto and Yoo (2006) suggest that personal characteristics are inseparable from culture, and that cross-cultural researchers should explore for the personal characteristics of participants and examine possible relationships between those personal characteristics and cultural differences. This brings to focus cultural differences as a factor influencing cross-cultural service interactions. Culture is prevalent in the tourism and hospitality literature and has brought the issue of cultural differences to the forefront of debates on international tourism (Reisinger and Turner, 2002; Dimanche, 1994; Reisinger, 1994; Weiermair, 2000).

Considering that many service interactions today involve service hosts of one culture interacting with customers from another culture (Sizoo et al., 2005), cultural differences can influence cross-cultural service interactions (Reisinger, 2009). Since beliefs and expectations are shaped by one's unique culture, cultural differences impact service experiences when one finds counterparts to be culturally different (Mattila, 1999a). Cultural misunderstandings can eventuate in unhappy customers or frustrated service hosts (Cushner and Brislin, 1996). Normally, cultural similarities suggest commonality and attractiveness with positive consequences (Härtel and Fujimoto, 2000), and cultural dissimilarities suggest strangeness and anxiety with negative consequences (Neuliep and Ryan, 1998; Ellingsworth, 1988).

As culture further influences an individual's value system (Feather, 1980; Yau, 1988), another way cultural differences can affect service interactions is through the perception

of the 'value' that is created during co-creation of value in service interactions (Grönroos and Voima, 2013). This is the perceived 'value' in co-creation of service that determines the interacting parties' willingness to participant in service interactions (Vargo and Lusch, 2008).

Co-creation of value in service involves two individuals and their sense making of value subjectively in their service experience (Helkkula, 2011). Although co-creation of value in service has been widely researched in the service literature (Plé and Cáceres, 2010; Shaw et al., 2011), it is overlooked in the tourism literature (Prebensen et al., 2014; Prebensen et al., 2013). This has created a vacuum and, in order to gain a holistic understanding of this thesis, it is fundamental to include both interacting parties in the examination of this dyadic interaction (Helkkula et al., 2012).

A discussion of guest and service host characteristics and cultural differences indicates that cross-cultural service interactions are influenced by complex and interplaying factors that cannot be examined in isolation from each other. Yet existing research tends to focus on only one factor, such as cultural differences (Mattila, 1999b; Turner et al., 2002). Therefore, to gain a more comprehensive and thorough understanding, there is a need to consider many factors simultaneously and explore how these influence cross-cultural service interactions between tourists and service hosts and further understand how tourists and service hosts cope with service interactions

1.3 CROSS-CULTURAL SERVICE INTERACTIONS: COPING STRATEGIES

Hosts and guests are likely to use a number of coping strategies in their cross-cultural service interactions. Sutton (1991) proposed that some people use antecedent cognitive appraisals as a form of coping strategy, and illustrated this with how debt collectors assess debtors so they can remain emotionally detached. In a sense, antecedent cognitive appraisals are similar to stereotyping, or what Lippmann (1922) described as the 'pictures in our heads' of others used to simplify how people think about human groups. Put together, there is a possibility that stereotyping is employed as a coping strategy in cross-cultural service interactions.

Stereotyping has become a widespread means of judging others, providing justification to categorise others into social groups (Operario and Fiske, 2008; Jost and Banaji, 1994). Stereotyping information, however, is often based on limited and, at times, inaccurate information (Rothbart and Taylor, 1992). Despite often being inaccurate, stereotyping information is shared with others and has the potential to create negativity among the members of a group, thus activating more widespread stereotyping (Podoshen et al., 2015). Put in the context of tourism, Ward and Berno (2011) suggest that stereotyping greatly impacts both service hosts' attitudes towards guests and guests' satisfaction.

A number of scholars have highlighted that analysis of stereotyping in tourism settings is limited (Wu and Pearce, 2012; Huang and Lee, 2010). In addition, although Moufakir (2015) and Podoshen, Hunt and Andrzejewski's (2015) recent research explores stereotyping, much of the extant literature appears to put forward the tourists' view and has neglected to present the service hosts' perspective. There is a dearth of knowledge of

how stereotyping might be employed by both tourists and service hosts as a coping strategy in cross-cultural interactions. In addition, little is known about stereoptyping in an Asian context as pointed out by Wu and Pearce (2012). Although it has been predicted that stereotyping will increase as a result of the influx of Chinese and Indian tourists (McKercher, 2008), with the increase in Asian tourists undertaking travel in Asia (Xiao-Lu and Pras, 2011; Wilkins et al., 2007) and cross-cultural interactions between Asians are on the rise (Guo et al., 2001). These are gaps in our knowledge worthy of addressing.

1.4 RESEARCH PROBLEM, AIMS AND QUESTIONS

In the preceding section, it has been illustrated that cross-cultural service interactions between tourists and service hosts are complex phenomena involving conflicting cohorts and idiosyncratic individual(s) that are affected by the interplay of a number of factors. This reaffirms what tourism scholars have been emphasising: that tourism, by nature, is inherently a non-linear, dynamic and chaotic system that is better described and explained with a paradigm that recognises this complexity (Baggio, 2008; Russell and Faulkner, 1999). The problem, however, as highlighted by McKercher (1999), is that existing paradigms in tourism fail to recognise this complexity and tend to treat tourism phenomena as orderly, stable and linear. Consequently, there is a need to identify a dynamic paradigm and research model that recognises the inherent complexity of cross-cultural service interactions.

This research goes beyond the conventional linear assumption of the tourism system, as it recognises that cross-cultural service interactions between tourists (henceforth guests) and service hosts (henceforth service-providers) are complex phenomena. The primary aim of this research, therefore, is to explore for *how personal and interpersonal factors*

influence cross-cultural service interactions in tourism, and examine whether stereotyping is employed as a coping strategy, and if so, how is it employed, in cross-cultural service interactions in a tourism setting.

Based on these aims, two research questions were posed.

RQ1) How does the interplay of personal and interpersonal factors, culture and the co-creation of service influence cross-cultural service interactions between guests and service-providers?

RQ2) How do the cultures and beliefs of guests and service-providers influence their application of stereotyping in cross-cultural service interactions?

A further aim is to identify a dynamic paradigm that recognises the complexities of cross-cultural service interactions, and to develop a research model that reflects this.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE AND CONTRIBUTION OF THE RESEARCH

This research is significant because cross-cultural service interactions are increasing and often accompanied by reports of negative service interactions. It has been forecast that international tourists arrivals to Malaysia will reach 1.6 billion by the year 2030 making Asia the most visited region in the world (UNWTO, 2011). In this context, cross-cultural service interactions are also likely to increase. In the hotel industry, in particular, where there is a high degree of interaction between guests and service-providers, there are also many opportunities for service failures or negative service interactions to occur (Lewis and McCann, 2004b). Despite the efforts and precautions hotels make to avoid flaws in delivery of service, at one time or another negative service interactions are bound to occur

(Lee and Sparks, 2007a; Seawright et al., 2008) due to the human element involved in service delivery (Magnini and Ford, 2004; McDougall and Levesque, 1998). Indeed, according to Boshoff (1997: 110), "mistakes are an unavoidable feature of all human endeavour and thus also of service delivery."

This research is significant because understanding cross-cultural service interactions is important as it affects service satisfaction and shapes the tourism experience for guests and service-providers (Kim et al., 2002). This research is also significant because cross-cultural service interactions shape service satisfaction and the tourism experience for guests and service-providers (Kim et al., 2002). Service satisfaction in guests can lead to loyalty and repeat visits (Yuksel et al., 2010; Yoon and Uysal, 2005), recommendations (Hui et al., 2007) and positive word-of-mouth (Blackshaw, 2008). Service satisfaction in service-providers can lead to job satisfaction (Chiang et al., 2014) and job loyalty (Hon et al., 2013); and, service dissatisfaction can occur from negative service interactions with guests (Dallimore et al., 2007), resulting in low morale, burnout, absenteeism and job turnover (Faulkner and Patiar, 1997; Dallimore et al., 2007; Chiang et al., 2010).

The research allows for the generation of tacit knowledge to enable implementation of appropriate cross-cultural interaction strategies. This would reduce negative service outcomes, which may dampen tourism revenue, and benefit individual guests and tourism stakeholders employed directly or indirectly in tourism.

There is a gap in existing tourism studies in cross-cultural service interactions that provide a holistic understanding on cross-cultural service interactions that include both guests' and service-providers' perspectives (Mattila and Ro, 2008; Ganesh et al., 2000). While

the information from the guests' perspective is useful and has made a contribution to both theory and practice, little attention has been afforded to the service-providers to gain their perspectives. Therefore, this research which includes both guest and service-provider perspectives contributes to knowledge and provide academia with a balanced view on service experiences.

Given the lack of a suitable paradigm that recognises complexities in cross-cultural service interactions, this research further provides a theoretical contribution as it extends the cultural friction paradigm (Shenkar et al., 2008) beyond B2B to a business-to-consumer (B2C) context. No other tourism study has applied this paradigm to a person-to-person context. Based on the cultural friction paradigm, the theoretical contribution of this research also includes building and presenting a dynamic research model suitable for investigation of complex interactional cross-cultural service.

Additionally, factors influencing cross-cultural service interactions, such as the interpersonal factors of actors' goals, power, and control, are usually studied in isolation in social research. They are seldom addressed simultaneously even though they are often connected and influence one another (Wilkinson, 1998; Emerson, 1962). In this research, another contribution to knowledge is through addressing the three factors of actors' goals, power, and control simultaneously provides a better understanding of cross-cultural service interactions.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, KEY ASSUMPTIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

Upon review of several cultural paradigms, the cultural friction paradigm (Shenkar et al., 2008; Shenkar, 2012), which addresses 'friction' between two cultures that produces positive and negative outcomes, designed for the business-to-business (B2B) context was deemed to be suitable to the overall context of the research. As far as the researcher is aware, this paradigm has not be been applied outside of the B2B context. To develop a research model, the thesis focused on influencing factors (also referred to as key themes) and their constructs (also referred to as sub-themes). To the best of the researcher's knowledge, these influencing factors have not been considered together in existing tourism research involving guest and service-provider cross-cultural service interactions.

Given the dyadic nature of service interactions and the existence of service co-creation involving subjective sense making, it is necessary to develop *a posteriori* knowledge (Helkkula and Kelleher, 2010) at the individual and cohort levels. To obtain insights through the acquisition of 'meanings' (Ospina and Dodge, 2005), the qualitative methodology of narrative inquiry was adopted, centred on the concept of 'experience' as participants narrate and share their life experiences in the form of stories that allow for extraction of meanings (Polkinghorne, 1998; Connelly and Clandinin, 2006). In this research, stories in the form of narratives were collected from semi-structured in-depth interviews using Flanagan's (1954) critical incident technique to examine key issues pertinent to the research questions.

In addition, the research adopted Shenkar's (2001, 2012), and, Shenkar, Luo and Yeheskel's (2008) cultural friction paradigm as the theoretical framework. As already

discussed, this paradigm has the capacity to illuminate the nuances of cross-cultural service interactions. Using the components of the cultural friction paradigm, a research model was developed to explore for the complexities in cross-cultural service interactions within the research context.

1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

Chapter One has introduced the research. Chapter Two provides a literature review focussing on factors influencing cross-cultural service interactions, including guest and service-provider characteristics and cultural differences. Coping strategies related to stereotyping are also reviewed. Chapter Three reviews cross-cultural paradigms used to explore cross-cultural service interactions. As the cultural friction paradigm by Shenkar et al. (2008) was deemed suitable for this research, the components of the paradigm were presented and contextualised and the conceptual framework and the research model presented.

Chapter Four provides the research stance and outlines the stages of data collection and qualitative methods used in the research. Chapter Five presents the findings and discussion about research participants' profiles. Individual narrative excerpts are presented and the coding process used to conduct the narrative analysis is explained. Chapter Six presents the comparative analysis of the guest and service-provider cohorts, focusing on the key themes and sub-themes. Chapter Seven presents an overall summary of the research and the key findings in relation to the research questions and key conclusions. The chapter also highlights the contributions to the body of knowledge, managerial implications, and limitations of this research and recommendations for future research are made.

1.8 SUMMARY

This chapter has underscored how problematic cross-cultural interactions between tourists and service hosts can be. It has also highlighted the complications and shortcomings of research relating to cross-cultural service interactions in international tourism to date. These complications include factors influencing cross-cultural service interactions and competing dichotomies of individual(s) and cohort(s) of guests and service-providers. Chapter One has stressed the need to identify a dynamic paradigm and framework in which to analyse cross-cultural service interactions in the context of international tourism. The cultural friction paradigm from business management was adopted for this purpose and is central to the discussion presented here.

Chapter 2: Factors Influencing Cross-Cultural Service Interactions

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The problems of cross-cultural service interactions between guests and service-providers in international tourism were outlined in previous chapter. In this chapter, the literature review on the factors influencing cross-cultural service interactions are presented. First, Section 2.1 defines the roles of guests and service-providers in cross-cultural service interactions. Sections 2.2 and 2.3 focus on the factors influencing cross-cultural service interactions, including the personal and interpersonal characteristics of guests and service hosts, as well as culture and cultural differences. Finally, in Section 2.4, coping strategies employed in cross-cultural service interactions are reviewed concentrating on the formation and application of stereotyping as a complex social phenomenon.

2.1 GUEST AND SERVICE-PROVIDER ROLES IN CROSS-CULTURAL SERVICE INTERACTIONS

Service interactions are considered 'cross-cultural' when service-providers of one culture interact with guests from another culture (Reisinger, 2009; Dimanche, 1994). As beliefs and expectations are said to be shaped by one's unique culture, differences in culture impact service experiences when one finds counterparts to be culturally different (Mattila, 1999a; Tsaur et al., 2005). Also, service interactions are 'dyadic moments of truth' as they are co-created by service-providers and guests (Prebensen et al., 2013). In a service context, successful service outcomes are dependent on the mutually coordinated behaviours of guests and service-providers according to the roles that have been prescribed to them (Solomon et al., 1985; Tam et al., 2014).

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The term 'role' refers to socially defined expectations of individual behaviours in particular social positions (Colton, 1987). A role provides an individual with a complex set of identities, which become the source of individual interpretations of social situations (Blumer, 1969; Stryker and Macke, 1978; Biddle, 1986; Jenkins, 2014). Social position and role are thus closely related. However, a given role can fluctuate with changing social structures (hence changing expectations), while social position is not susceptible to such fluctuations (Sheldon and Burke, 2000).

According to Solomon et al. (1985), successful service interactions require agreement between guests and service-providers as to each other's roles and the expectations of those roles in interactions. Any deviation from these requirements may cause misunderstandings and dissatisfaction in the service experience (Bitner et al., 1997; Kim et al., 2014). Given that tourism is a service oriented 'product', with an emphasis on its experiential component (Fick and Ritchie, 1991; Cooper and Hall, 2008), the experience that occurs in cross-cultural service interactions plays a substantial part in determining not only guests' contentment (Choi and Chu, 2001; Winsted, 2000; Bolfing, 1989; Cadotte and Turgeon, 1988) but also that of service-providers (Sizoo et al., 2005; Chiang et al., 2014; Michel et al., 2013; Choi and Dickson, 2009). Further, meeting guests' expectations (Pizam et al., 2000; Mey et al., 2006) and service-providers' expectations (Lee and Way, 2010; Spinelli and Canavos, 2000) is important, as expectation leads to satisfaction, which dictates service quality (Tsaur and Lin, 2004; Kandampully et al., 2001) and service outcomes (Yuksel et al., 2010; Baker and Crompton, 2000; Forozia et al., 2013). Positive interaction outcomes are commonly associated with guest satisfaction, which manifests in positive word-of-mouth and repeat patronage (Kandampully and

Suhartanto, 2000; Barsky and Labagh, 1992; Knutson, 1988). On the other hand, negative service interaction outcomes are commonly associated with guest dissatisfaction and can be disruptive, resulting in service failures, complaints and negative word-of-mouth (Huang et al., 1996; Gundersen et al., 1996; Wang and Mattila, 2010; Liat et al., 2014; Lee and Sparks, 2007a).

Therefore, one way to meet expectations is to ensure that there is congruence in the role of guests and service-providers in service encounters (Broderick, 1998; Price et al., 1995a; Mohr and Bitner, 1991). Sharma et al. (2009) commented that the issue of congruence or agreement on roles in the service interaction might be more important in a cross-cultural situation because cross-cultural service encounters involve two different cultures; misinterpretations of each other's roles could lead to disagreement. Several asymmetric conditions accompanying the roles of guests and service-providers that contribute to lack of agreement have been suggested, as follows:

- **Perceived alternatives**. In most situations guests may be able to choose who they want to be served by, however, service-providers may have little or no choice in terms of who they wish to serve (Nagel and Cilliers, 1990).

- **Information asymmetry**. Generally, service-providers have more information about the service compared with the guests. The different levels of information possessed by the two parties creates an information asymmetry that leads to differences in their perceptions and evaluations of each other (Singh and Sirdeshmukh, 2000). For example, service-providers may have more knowledge about the local cultures and circumstances of service delivery compared with the guests. Hence, service-providers may tend to be more realistic in their

expectations and can be cynical about other people's expectations (Sharma et al., 2012; Mudie, 2003).

- **Perceived employee behaviour**. Compared with guests, service employees may focus more on the level of professionalism, objectivity and standardisation rather than relationships, subjectivity and customisation in a service encounter (Gremler et al., 1994). Also, service-providers experience pressures that guests do not, such as commitment to their employer, coupled with an emphasis on efficiency and quality in their job performance (Mudie, 2003).

In addition, service interactions between guests and service-providers are challenged and impacted by the often transient and superficial nature of the interaction (Tomljenović, 2010; Sutton, 1967), as well as language barriers (Reisinger et al., 2010), disparity in socio-economics between the interacting parties (Sutton, 1967), cultural backgrounds (Reisinger et al., 2013; Mattila, 1999b), individual expectations and knowledge (Hopkins and Hopkins, 2002; Hopkins et al., 2009), and characteristics of the guests and service-providers (Kulik and Holbrook, 2000; Gutek, 1995). These may influence service interactions and might disqualify meaningful contact for positive interactions (Allport, 1954), making it necessary to consider which factors influence cross-cultural service interactions.

2.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF GUESTS AND SERVICE-PROVIDERS

Tourism behaviour is influenced by the characteristics of guest cohorts (Beerli and Martín, 2004; Andereck and Caldwell, 1994; Xia et al., 2010) and service-provider cohorts (Lockyer and Scholarios, 2004; Nickson et al., 2005). One way in which the

characteristics of interacting parties influence tourism behaviour is through the formation of 'perceptions' (Armstrong et al., 1997; Hede and Jago, 2005; Hede and Kellett, 2011). For example, guests' perceptions in the initial contact with service-providers form the first impression of the host's nation and becomes part of the overall tourism experience in the host nation (Knutson et al., 2009).

Due to their differences in characteristics, guests and service-providers have competing perceptions and expectations of each other (Knutson et al., 1993; Nasution and Mavondo, 2008). Often guests' perceptions and the expectations of the service-providers are not aligned with the service-providers' perceptions and expectations of themselves (Sharma et al., 2009). Thus, it is necessary to examine the characteristics of guests and the service-providers in order to obtain a better understanding of why they have different perceptions and expectations.

While guests are typically described as people who undertake a journey to various destinations distant from their normal place of residence or work (Ross, 1994), scholars attempted to better define guests through 'classifications' (Nickerson and Ellis, 1991; Munt, 1994). In the first phase of classification scholarship, for tourism marketing purposes, guests were classified mainly into one group with general characteristics consisting of homogenous types of travellers (Goodrich, 1978; Woodside et al., 1986). However, classification of guests in this phase tended to rely on empirical methods or emphasise the number of travellers. This approach failed to focus on the underlying variation in characteristics or dynamics of the travellers in the group (Sherlock, 2001). Therefore, the classification of guests into a single homogenous type offered limited

understanding in relation to guests' tourism decisions or behaviours (Nickerson and Ellis, 1991).

In the second phase of classifying guests, once it was recognised that guests were not a single homogenous type, they were segmented into various typologies and classified into heterogeneous types of travellers (Cohen, 1972; Cohen, 1974; Plog, 1987). This enabled a robust understanding of guests - that different types of guests have different characteristics and needs and, in turn, the different needs influence their behaviour. Finally, scholars recognised that guests are also dynamic individuals with variations in characteristics, who are diverse in their demographics and attributes, and have fragmented and niched tourism needs (MacCannell, 1999; Cohen, 2003; Poon, 1994). In order to better understand how individual dynamics influence tourism decisions and behaviours (Munt, 1994; Sherlock, 2001), it was necessary for researchers to focus on the individual guests. Dynamic individual guests are sometimes referred to as contemporary travellers (or 'post-tourists'), a term coined by Feifer (1985).

Contemporary travellers are generally wealthier, better educated, mature and supposedly more 'desirable tourists' due to their travelling patterns (Milne, 1998; Maoz and Bekerman, 2010). They have distinct travelling characteristics of separating themselves from mass-package tourists, and are more likely to choose individually centered facilities and activities (i.e. a preference for luxury or boutique accommodation) (Walls et al., 2011; Mcintosh and Siggs, 2005; Cetin and Walls, 2015). Torres (2002) associated several key words - individualised, specialised and niched - with the general characteristics of contemporary travellers to suggest that these travellers are individualistic and demand to be treated so. Munt (1994) also noted that contemporary travellers put the 'self' above all

other factors, and that their motivations for any trip were likely to be based on self-realisation and self-discovery.

The importance of 'self' in travel motivational behaviours, expectations and satisfaction is often linked to fulfilling the need for experiential, emotional and personal need (Gnoth, 1997). For example, one of the peculiar characteristics and behaviours of wealthy contemporary travellers is that they are more likely to complain, are easily frustrated, and typically take their complaint directly to management, bypassing the service-providers (Susskind, 2015). This may well suggest that contemporary travellers have unique tourism behaviour with the potential to affect others, such as the service-providers surrounding them (Pearce, 2011).

With regard to the behaviours of contemporary travellers and specifically to their interaction behaviours with their service-provider hosts, several scholars have contested their entitlement as a 'guest' in the traditional sense (Aramberri, 2001; Berno, 1999; Maoz, 2006; Maoz and Bekerman, 2010). For one, these 'so-called guests' do not always behave as traditional guests in the sense of being supportive and respectful of their hosts as they would be of family members (Maoz, 2000; Berno, 1999). Underlying such unruly behaviours is the presence of 'power' by guests over their counterparts - the service-providers (Cheong and Miller, 2000; Maoz, 2006; Urry, 2000).

As for service-providers, one of the prominent characteristics of the people-oriented tourism industry is the 'constant manoeuvring between challenging and unfamiliar situations on one hand, and cyclical and monotonous situations, on the other' (Pizam and Shani, 2009: 143). This requires employees in the tourism industry to have unique

characteristics different from those required in other industries (Ford and Heaton, 2000; Hemmington, 2007). For example, during service encounters, hospitality employees are required to be open-minded and sensitive to the needs of a variety of people from various backgrounds (Pizam and Shani, 2009). Commenting that service-providers in tourism need to have versatile, dynamic and enduring characteristics to suit their work, Wood (1997: 198) described hospitality work as a '…largely exploitative, degrading, poorly paid, unpleasant, insecure and taken as a last resort or because it can be tolerated in the light of wider social and economic commitments and constraints'.

Tourism scholars suggested that the characteristics of service-providers can be observed from their levels of job satisfaction, or, from verbal expression of service-provider evaluations of their job based on events or experiences in connection with their jobs or occupations (Katzell, 1964). In general, job satisfaction in hospitality is low, indicating that service-providers are unhappy in their employment (Baum, 2007; Wood, 1997; Yeh, 2013). The characteristic of being unhappy and not highly satisfied when working in hospitality in Asia, specifically in Hong Kong, is well known (Lam et al., 2001).

Locke (1976) went a step further to describe high job satisfaction as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's experiences in job delivery; and low job satisfaction as an unpleasant or negative emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's experiences in job delivery. Regardless of their level of satisfaction, service interactions with guests make up a large part of service-provider experiences (Sharma et al., 2015). Therefore, whether service-providers' job satisfaction in relation to their interactions with guests has significant implications for tourism establishments (Yeh, 2013).

In hotels where guest perceptions, satisfaction and loyalty are developed during interactions, frontline service-providers need to be satisfied themselves in order to deliver quality service to satisfy guests (Spinelli and Canavos, 2000). Thus, the characteristics of service-providers and the relationship of these to job satisfaction in hospitality should not to be ignored. Job dissatisfaction may induce stress and stir emotional reaction (Wang and Mattila, 2010), result in intentions to quit (Kusluvan et al., 2010), or be evident in a lack of motivation, low morale, or low productivity (Lam et al., 2001). These findings suggest that the service-providers' job satisfaction may have a bearing on service interaction.

2.2.1   Personal Characteristics of Guests and Service-Providers

Given the influence of individual characteristics on social behaviours (Hoxter and Lester, 1988; Jackson et al., 1999; Pearce, 2011), there is also a need to understand the influence of personal characteristics on tourism behaviour and on individual behaviours in tourism (Jackson and White, 2002; Frew and Shaw, 1999; Nickerson and Ellis, 1991). To examine the influence of personal characteristics on tourism behaviour, scholars have commonly looked to the demographic factors of guests (Wong, 2000; Pearce, 2005), and of service-providers (Deery and Jago, 2002; Kong and Baum, 2006); as well as the social class status of interacting parties (Hornung, 1977; Stryker and Macke, 1978; Berger et al., 1972). These are now explored in further detail.

2.2.1.1 Demographics Factors

In tourism, guests possess unique personal demographic characteristics that influence their tourism behaviour (Pearce, 2005; Kozak, 2002; Sujithamrak and Lam, 2005), and

service-providers possess unique personal demographic characteristics that influence their job performance (Karatepe et al., 2006). As cross-cultural service interactions are complex social encounters that also involve individual negotiations and subjective interpretations of the experiences (Crouch, 1999), individual demographic characteristics such as the gender, age and educational level of the interacting parties will influence their interaction behaviours (Kim et al., 2009; Thrane, 2008).

In service interactions, the individual demographic characteristics of service-providers, as well as the individual demographic characteristics of their guest counterparts, affect the service-providers' treatment of guests (Martin and Adams, 1999). Likewise, the individual demographic characteristics of guests, as well as the individual demographic characteristics of service-providers, affects the guests' treatment decisions (Kulik and Holbrook, 2000).

In the Middle-East, for example, gender was found to have an effect on guests' tourism behaviour (Khan et al., 2015) and is an important factor that influences Middle-Eastern guests' perception of service interactions (Florian and Zernitsky-Shurka, 1987; Al-Makhamreh and Lewando-Hundt, 2008). Generally, Middle-Eastern guests are more comfortable and more satisfied with service-providers who are of the same gender. Middle-Eastern guests expect management and service-providers to take the cue and assign same gender service-providers to assist the guests accordingly (Khan et al., 2015). Similarly, the demographic characteristic of gender also has an effect on service-providers, with the general conclusion that females have less job satisfaction than their male counterparts do, due to income and promotional disparity (Kim et al., 2009; Thrane, 2008).

Another individual demographic characteristic that influences guest and service-provider behaviours is age (Littrell et al., 2004; Huang and Petrick, 2010; Sarker et al., 2003; Shoemaker, 1989). In the Asian context, age has been found to have an effect on tourist destination preferences, such as senior mainland Chinese tourists choice of Hong Kong due to cultural familiarity (Hanqin and Lam, 1999), senior Japanese tourists choice of Hong Kong due to distance (Heung et al., 2001) and young Indian tourists choice of Bangkok due to diversity (Siri et al., 2012). However, these studies did not focus on interactions with service-providers. Other studies, which are non-Asian in context, focus on guests' age in relation to interactions with service-providers. Classifying those aged 50 and over as seniors and those aged below 50 as non-seniors, studies have found that senior guests generally enjoy meeting other people, spending time with family, learning about new cultures and interacting with local hosts to gain personal and cultural enrichment (Horneman et al., 2002; Javalgi et al., 1992).

Other studies have differentiated guests using different age segments, such as those individuals in their 60s and 50s (Mitchell, 1995), their 40s (Huang and Petrick, 2010; Littrell et al., 2005) and the late 20s to 30s category (Harmon et al., 1999). Generally, characteristics of 60s and 50s are that they prefer social interactions, want more control, but are also more receptive to information (Kahle, 1995). Characteristics of those in their 40s are said to prefer comfort and relaxation, are less sociable and emphasise individuality and privacy (Francese, 1993).

Individuals in the late 20s to 30s categories are more affluent, better educated, are more ethnically diverse (Sullivan and Heitmeyer, 2008; Huang and Petrick, 2010) and

technologically savvy (Goldgehn, 2004). They are more tolerant and value ethnic diversity and emphasise equality (Paul, 2001; Noble et al., 2009). The late 20s to 30s categories have also been found to be individualistic and demanding (Brooks, 2005), more pragmatic and expect prompt and reliable service with appealing facilities and well groomed staff (Kueh and Voon, 2007). Particularly, compared with individuals in late 20s to 30s categories in other parts of the world, individuals in late 20s to 30s categories in Asia have higher expectations of service quality (Kueh and Voon, 2007).

As employees in tourism and hospitality, individuals in late 20s to 30s categories are deemed to have positive work attitudes and are more polite, more respectful to customers, inquisitive and energetic (Goldgehn, 2004; Eisner, 2005), but have less job satisfaction as they tend to want more power and control at work, and view empowerment as a priority (Solnet and Hood, 2008; Gursoy et al., 2008). They also value team collaboration and are strongly influenced by their colleagues and peers (Pendergast, 2010). They have less respect for authority or higher management and use their own thinking and methods to resolve customer issues at work (Cairncross and Buultjens, 2007).

Those employees in their 40s are said to be entering their peak earning years (Huang and Petrick, 2010). Many are in their midlife and entering into the 'power' phase, taking up management roles in the workforce (Pendergast, 2010). The 40s category of employees set themselves apart from the other generations with emphasis on quality of life, and may leave their job if they feel that their work–life dynamic is not balanced (Wong and Ko, 2009). The 40s age category employees recognise the intrinsic value of hospitality, such as the opportunity to meet a variety of guests, its scope for autonomy, and they value team cooperation from small working groups that are like family. As a consequence, they are

prepared to seek satisfaction from such attributes even in the face of low rates of pay (Riley et al., 2002).

Many of the 60s and 50s employees have moved into leadership positions (Yu and Miller, 2005) and tend to have higher job satisfaction, as they seem to have realistic expectations of their jobs (Ronen, 1978; Bedeian et al., 1992). Findings suggest that 60s and 50s respect authority, while the 40s age category rebel against authority (Gursoy et al., 2008). Findings also suggested that while 60s and 50s 'live to work', the 40s age category 'work to live' and that the 60s and 50s are willing to wait for their turn for promotions and rewards and are very loyal.

Another individual demographic characteristic that influences behaviours in tourism between guests and service-providers is the level of education (Beerli and Martín, 2004; Baum, 2007). Generally, while guests with higher levels of education are likely to be interested in local cultures and cultural products (Hughes, 1987), they are also more likely to interact with local hosts to learn and experience new cultures (Richards, 1996; Richards, 2002). The influence of level of education, however, in relation to service-provider job satisfaction raises conflicting conclusions. For example, although Vollmer and Kinney (1955) found that higher/lower levels of education level correlate with higher/lower levels of job satisfaction, Lam et al., (2001) found otherwise, arguing that higher levels of education correlate with higher levels of job dissatisfaction. In addition, Sinha and Sarma (1962) found that levels of education had no effect on job dissatisfaction.

2.2.1.2 Typology Factor

In addition to demographics factors, another way to observe the influence on individual behaviour in tourism is through types of travellers (Foo et al., 2004). For example, examining those who are leisure travellers (Jones and Chen, 2011) or business travellers (Callan and Kyndt, 2001; Dolnicar, 2002), highlights differences in travel behaviours. Business travellers have distinctive behaviours in the selection of accommodation (Griffin et al., 1997), as they place priority on cleanliness, location, room design, and brand reputation (Weaver and Oh, 1993; Mccleary et al., 1993).

Increasingly, business travellers are emphasising the level of customised or personalised service as an important evaluation criterion, and as grounds for spreading word-of-mouth (Ariffin and Maghzi, 2012; Kandampully and Suhartanto, 2003). The reception or check-in interaction process is strongly associated with evaluation of service (Barsky and Labagh, 1992; Gundersen et al., 1996). Among other factors, this includes the perception of service-provider attitudes, normally with emphasis on efficient and prompt service, followed by friendly and courteous interaction (Knutson et al., 2009).

On the other hand, leisure travellers are said to place priority on safety, security, room rate and value in their hotel selection (Clow et al., 1995; Marshall, 1993). They are less likely to place a priority on a hotel's reputation and brand awareness (Ananth et al., 1992). With regard to safety, Knutson (1988) mentioned that leisure travellers' main concern with a hotel's safety and security might stem from the idea that leisure trips often involve families.

Service interactions are, however, still important to leisure travellers. Parasuraman et al. (1988) found that the quality of personal interactions with service-providers was a critical component of the service quality evaluation for leisure travellers. Similar to the case of business travellers (Mccleary et al., 1993), it was also noted that the evaluation of service quality by leisure travellers was based on comparison of past experience with other service-providers in other hotels (Knutson et al., 2009; Clow et al., 1995).

Leisure travellers are different from business travellers with regard to their expectations of service-providers. Leisure travellers place more importance on service-providers being friendly and courteous, rather than efficient and prompt (Knutson et al., 2009; Chu and Choi, 2000). Leisure travellers' expectations of service-providers are important considerations as they eventually determine satisfaction (Poon and Low, 2005) and are grounds for spreading positive or negative word-of-mouth (Lewis and McCann, 2004a).

On the other hand, typology of service-providers also influences their behaviour at work (Lee and Way, 2010), not only in terms of their interactions with guests, but also their job satisfaction (Gutek et al., 1999). One way to see how typology of service-providers affect individual service-provider's interactional behaviours is through their role and work behaviours (Pizam and Shani, 2009) in relation to job positions. In hospitality, there are two distinct service-provider job positions that exhibit differences in relation to job satisfaction (Yeh, 2013): executive (high job position) and frontline (low job position) (Sherman, 2007; Davidoff, 1994).

The service-providers in hospitality who hold executive or high job positions generally have higher levels of education but they also have higher expectations of salary,

incentives and recognition (Vollmer and Kinney, 1955). Higher expectations generate greater pressure to perform and, if the higher expectations are fulfilled, this results in higher job satisfaction (Lam et al., 2001). In this sense, executives' high expectations are likely to be congruent with the high expectations of guests who frequent luxury hotels (Martin, 1995; Luk and Layton, 2002). Nevertheless, results show contrasting indications. For example, although executive service-providers were found to have high satisfaction or overall job satisfaction in an earlier study (Vollmer and Kinney, 1955), they were found to have lower satisfaction in a later study in the context of luxury hotels in Asia (Lam et al., 2001).

Reasons provided to explain low job satisfaction in executive service-providers include their desire to seek more personal power together with the freedom to use power in order to handle guests' demands and complaints are not granted by management (van Oudtshoorn and Thomas, 1995). Another is a deficiency in training opportunities that, if completed, would have enhanced their competency and "promotability" (Lam et al., 2001). The job satisfaction of executive service-providers is also said to rely on the cooperation of co-workers (Gallardo et al., 2010).

In contrast, frontline employees in hospitality, who hold low job positions, have a lower educational level and lower expectations of salary, incentives and recognition (Sinha and Sarma, 1962) than those in executive positions. Frontline employees' low expectations are likely to be incongruent with the high expectations of luxury hotels guests (Dolnicar, 2002; Martin, 1995). One factor contributing to low job satisfaction in frontline service-providers is that often they are under-trained and are bypassed by management for training programs (Cheng and Brown, 1998; Baum, 2007). Still, they consider training as

necessary and view it as a means to enhance their knowledge capital for empowerment (Ayupp and Chung, 2015).

Further, it was found that the existence of a 'leader-member' relationship is important for frontline service-providers (Liao et al., 2009). In what could be an emotional bond (Wang, 2008), frontline employees look to their supervisor as a leader for support in handling stressful conditions in their daily work (Wayne et al., 1997). Due to the 'collective emotional labour' nature of their job, another way for frontline service-providers to cope with stress is to rely on collective peer support (Korczynski, 2003; Shani et al., 2014).

2.2.1.3 Social Class Status

Social class status is also thought to influence tourism behaviour (Beerli and Martín, 2004). Such status can act as both facilitator and barrier to interactions, whereby it may bring particular individuals who have symmetrical social class status together, and it may also keep individuals who have asymmetrical social class status apart (Stryker and Macke, 1978; Sheldon and Burke, 2000). In social interactions that involve two or more people, the interacting parties' status is defined by the individual social class (Gray and Kish-Gephart, 2013; Berger et al., 1972). Furthermore, cross-cultural interactions are often embedded with inequality, exploitation and unevenness between the two interacting parties (Wearing et al., 2010), where the two are seldom equal in social class – socially or economically (Allen, 2004).

Although, social class carries different meanings to different disciplines, Bourdieu (1984) suggested that differences in social class status can be viewed as the relative social rankings of individual members based on differences in their economic capital (i.e.

wealth), social capital (i.e. networks and connections), and cultural capital (i.e. cultural tastes and social practices developed through educational and personal experiences). Individuals are known to readily assess each other's social class (Argyle, 1994; Gorman, 2000), and use their own judgements (Côté, 2011). They also assign differential competence to others and judge others' social behaviours through 'habitus' - a term used to capture how social class differences manifest in society (Bourdieu, 1984).

Habitus is a set of dispositions, expectations, and behaviours that influence the 'practices, perceptions and attitudes' that members of a social class construe as normal or appropriate (Bourdieu and Thompson, 1991: 12). Habitus is evident in: food preferences, dressing, tastes, the manner in which one carries oneself, and social etiquette (Dirks et al., 1994; Lareau, 2003). It is evidenced by the presence of 'class specific schemata of experiencing, perceiving and interpreting the world' (Strydom, 2006: 226). The habitus of one's social class is learned through socialisation and experiences (Gray and Kish-Gephart, 2013).

In luxury hotels where perceptions of social class inequality between the guests and service-providers is evident (Sherman, 2007), the idea of habitus poses challenges, as the service-providers who are from a lower social class are expected to exhibit upper class habitus similar to those of their upper class guests (Ahmad, 2012; Hanser, 2012). Sherman (2007) noted that service-providers are required by management to 'act out' habitus to meet the expectations of guests. He suggested, as a result, that service-providers use various strategies involving power and control to reconcile their dignity to address the issue of asymmetries in social class. One of the ways that luxury hotel service-providers normalise the asymmetries is through exercising the knowledge capital they have. This is particularly the case with guests who have perhaps just been promoted to the upper social

class due to new wealth but who are not familiar with the upper class habitus (Sherman, 2005; Sallaz, 2010).

Social class can be determined by culture. This occurs when asymmetry arises in social class structure, leading to social inequalities and interaction patterns dictated by culture (Berghe, 1993). For example, in India, for centuries the *jajmani* or the ideology of the *sub-caste* system has decided one's class status and determined one's social position and appropriate social etiquette, and social treatments (Henderson, 2002). When meeting someone for the first time, people who emphasise the *sub-caste* or social class cultural system will generally ask "What is your sub-caste?" in order to establish the basic parameters of social etiquette (Henderson, 2002: 184). The line between cultural social classes is often exhibited through attire and communication, such as dialects. In India, in the historical caste system, the upper social class are often referred to as the 'big' people, and they are expected to be respected and flattered; the lower class, or the 'small' people, are expected to be toady, obsequious and submissive (Henderson, 2002).

Social class status is not always influenced by culture. For example, unlike India, in China a social class status structure only emerged in the 1980s, when four main social classes became evident: *xingui* (the new rich), *fuhao* (the rich and powerful) the *zhongchan jieji* (the middle class), and *mingong* (peasants and migrant workers). This stratification was found to affect social interaction patterns within China (Goodman, 2008). Particularly, with the emergence of a new social class group in China, the 'new rich', there has been a tendency to exhibit an exaggerated consumption lifestyle, such as owning expensive cars and houses (Pinches, 2005). In contrast, the rural migrant workers and farmers often remain in the lower social status and, due to an uneven economic distribution, they have

become critics of the new rich (Goodman, 2008). In China, jealousy and envy of the new rich has surfaced in social interactions (Fuller and Narasimhan, 2007). However, there is little information relating to attitudes about China's new rich outside of China.

Some scholars have explored social class status by dividing it into two distinct groups consisting of "objective" through socio-economic status, (i.e. based on income or occupation) (Sayer, 2005; Gray and Kish-Gephart, 2013) and "subjective" through socio-psychological status based on subjective perceptions of class rank vis-à-vis others (Côté, 2011; Hall and Lew, 2009). Subjective social class is where interacting parties have socio-psychological status asymmetry and interacting parties discursively create the subjective perceptions of social class during social interactions (Fiske and Markus, 2012). Thus, subjective social class is a symbolic boundary that occurs in the mind, producing a feeling of inequality (Lamont and Molnár, 2002). Feelings of asymmetry in social class status during interactions can contribute to psychological stress leading to negative consequences (Hornung, 1977). Perceptions of subjective social class are influenced by sociological (Resnick and Wolff, 2003), political (Marx and McLellan, 2008[1967]) and cultural views (Henderson, 2002).

Social class can also be explored objectively through asymmetry in socio-economic status, via income, education and occupational prestige (Sayer, 2005; Gray and Kish-Gephart, 2013). This has been found to affect social interactional patterns (Fiske and Markus, 2012; Javidan et al., 2006). Specifically, when looking at socio-economic status, scholars zoom in on the imbalance in wealth between two interacting parties (Milanovic, 2011; Milanovic, 2008).

In tourism, objective social class status manifests itself when guests and service-providers are grounded with income inequalities (Wearing et al., 2010; Fagence, 2003). For example, income inequalities are epitomised on luxury hotel beaches (Wearing et al., 2010), where Western guests are projected as the 'haves' and the non-Western service-providers as the 'have nots' (Krippendorf, 1999). In luxury resorts in Jamaica, income inequalities are evident when the local service-providers are paid less than the minimum wage of USD 30 per week (Sommer and Carrier, 2010). Income inequalities in international tourism have received much criticism, as elaborated by Sommer and Carrier (2010, p. 178):

> *… in hotel beaches in Jamaica, the Western foreign guests occupy the lovely location that requires substantial resources to maintain. There, they are served by the local Jamaicans who are the service-providers, the waiters and the security guards of lower social and economic status. The waiters serve the guests imported foods and the security guards ensure that no ordinary or locals penetrates the special place ...*

In tourism, it is argued that income inequalities brought about by guests create an imbalance in the society which they visit (Moutinho et al., 2011). Commonly, Western tourists have been accused of having little regard for the social, cultural and economic effects of tourism on developing nations (Mowforth and Munt, 2008). As a result, social researchers have been called upon to pay attention to the income inequalities between guests and marginalised service-providers, in order to gain insights into the cross-cultural service relationship (Truman, 2000; Sommer and Carrier, 2010).

While income inequalities have been traditionally portrayed as a phenomenon between wealthy Western guests and non-Western service-providers (Joseph and Kavoori, 2001), the tourism industry is increasingly seeing rich Asian, or non-Western guests, visiting

countries in Asia and interacting with Asian or non-Western service-providers (Winter, 2009; du Cros and Jingya, 2013). This has created a 'new' gap, with wealthy Asian guests now the 'haves' and fellow Asian service-providers the 'have nots'. This provides opportunities for academics to explore income inequalities in an East-East context.

2.2.2 Interpersonal Characteristics of Guests and Service-Providers

Studies on service encounters have further identified that besides personal characteristics, interpersonal factors can also influence cross-cultural social interactions (Mattila, 2001; Wearing et al., 2010). The evidence suggests that personal and interpersonal characteristics are often not the same, and what makes an individual behave socially toward others depends on the situation they find themselves in (Chase and Hayes, 1991). For example, an individual's personal character may be shy and retiring, but his interpersonal character may be dominant and outgoing in certain social situations.

As social interaction involves two interacting parties, the success of the interaction is dependent on the interpersonal characteristics of the interacting parties (Garavan, 1997). This interaction involves coordinating their reception and interpretation of perceptual cues, making appropriate responses both verbally and nonverbally, and taking the opportunity to receive feedback and take corrective action when necessary. Several common interpersonal factors have been identified: dominance or dependence, the need for aggression or warmth in relationships, extroversion or introversion, and stability or neuroticism (Garavan, 1997).

The conclusion drawn is that although a person's behaviour may not be as consistent as one might expect from one situation to another, there is an identifiable range of

behaviours from which any particular response may be drawn. This is dependent on the interacting parties' perception of each other (i.e. in terms of demographic characteristics, age, status, gender, culture etc.), social skills, and motivation (i.e. goals) (Lundberg et al., 2009; Tepeci and Bartlett, 2002). This suggests that a person's interactional behaviour, in addition to their personal demographics, is influenced by interpersonal factors.

A number of theories have been proposed to explain interpersonal behaviours. One is the interpersonal octagon, which focuses on "relatedness" or how humans relate to each other (Birtchnell, 1994; Birtchnell, 2014). In essence, "relating" is what a person does to another, so it is an interpersonal characteristic of an individual (Birtchnell, 1996). The interpersonal octagon consists a proximity axis, which concerns interacting parties relating either closely or distantly to each other, and a vertical power axis, which concerns controlling others or being controlled (Birtchnell and Shine, 2000). The interpersonal octagon makes a distinction in interactional relationships to show distinct positive or negative outcomes in interpersonal interactions. In relation to proximity, the positive and negative are addressed through closeness and distance. For positive close relating, characteristics include friendliness, involvement, interest, protecting, caring and helping (Birtchnell, 2014).

For positive distant relating, characteristics include needing personal space, privacy, obedience, maintaining order, and controlling (Birtchnell, 2014). For negative close relating, characteristics include possessive, intrusive, fear of rejection or separation (Birtchnell, 2014). For negative distant relating, characteristics include uncommunicative, withdrawn, suspicious, self-reliant, intimidating and tyrannising (Birtchnell, 2014). The interpersonal octagon is thus able to show how individuals relate

(negatively/positively) to others or how others relate (negatively/positively) to them (Birtchnell, 1996).

Based on the interpersonal octagon, three interpersonal factors that are likely to affect interpersonal interactions are apparent. One is the issue of power, which influences interpersonal social interaction (Birtchnell, 2014), another relates to control (Birtchnell and Shine, 2000). The third, which had already been proposed by Birtchnell (1994), relates to being goal-oriented. These interpersonal factors have also been stressed by other scholars: actors' goals (Price et al., 1995b; Lewis and McCann, 2004a; Surprenant and Solomon, 1987), power (Halualani and Nakayama, 2010; Martin and Nakayama, 2011), and control (Ji et al., 2000; Langer and Saegert, 1977).

2.2.2.1 Actors' Goals

Parties involved in interactions often have competing goal-orientations. Differences in goals are found in the perceived purpose and expectation of the interaction between guests and service-providers (Truong and King, 2009). For example, the service-providers' goals are often task-oriented and are usually commercially motivated or economically inspired (Solomon et al., 1985; Goodwin and Smith, 1990; Goodwin, 1969). In contrast, the guests' goals are usually hedonistically-oriented where leisure travellers are comfort and pleasure inspired, and business travellers are comfort and efficiency inspired (Mattila, 1999a; Krippendorf, 1999). Actors who share similar goals are more motivated to interact with each other (Ellingsworth, 1988), whereas a divergence in goals can demotivate individuals to interact with each other (Amir, 1969). Furthermore, actors' goals are often culturally-specific, with goals determined by cultural backgrounds that shape interpersonal behaviour (Liu, 2011).

Differences in goals can shape interactional outcomes negatively. For example, differences in goals create conflicts (Martin and Nakayama, 2011). Service-providers who are task-oriented are often obligated to engage in service interactions despite having differences in goals with their guests (Krippendorf, 1999). In addition, guests can instigate conflicts as they tend to presume that it is the service-providers' duty to socially interact with them (Goodwin and Smith, 1990). Conflict can be deepened by management, as their evaluation of service-providers' performance is based generally on meeting the guests' needs (Bettencourt and Gwinner, 1996; Hartline and Jones, 1996). The undue attention that is given to achieving the customers' goals has created a vacuum in understanding the impact of differences in goals on interactions from the service-providers' perspectives (Garbarino and Johnson, 2001).

Furthermore, differences in goals can imply that both parties seek to take control to achieve their goals. This may well suggest a relationship between actors' goals and control since control is seen as a basic human instinct that tends to be exhibited in all social interactions (Bruce and Thornton, 2004; Gecas, 1989). Control is also a derivative of power (Pfeffer, 1981; Rucker et al., 2011). Putting all these ideas together, the actors' goals have been found to not only influence the need to be in control, but also to have an influence on whether actors might assert power (Wilson and Putnam, 1990).

2.2.2.2 Power and Control

Power is a basic feature of social relationships and an important factor that affects social interactions and communication (Guerrero et al., 2007). Russell argued that, 'The fundamental concept in the social sciences is power, in the same sense in which energy is the fundamental concept in physics' (Russell, 1971[1938]: 11). Power is part of culture

and it is exercised in all societies, families, and work (Harrison and Dye, 2008; Olsen and Marger, 1993). It is the perception of authority or dominance, often verbally manifested in social events through a loud tone, vocal pitch, bargaining, complaining, whining or ingratiation (Levine and Boster, 2001; Fleischmann et al., 2005). Power is also manifested nonverbally through physical appearance, interpersonal space, facial expressions, and body movements (Andersen, 1999; Burgoon and Saine, 1978; Afifi, 2007; Carney et al., 2005).

Patterns of social interaction are configured when power is asserted on others (Martin and Nakayama, 2011; Moon, 2010). For example, as '…space is fundamental in any exercise of power' (Elden, 2001: 120), people often use places to create opportunities to exercise power. Based on the utilisation of place to exhibit power (Lopez, 2010), studies have illustrated how power is borne out in relationships. For example, power is manifested between parties in the workplace (Holmes, 2014; Holmes, 2000), education (Apple, 1995; Freire, 1985), and tourism (MacLeod and Carrier, 2010; Sommer and Carrier, 2010).

While power is an important issue for service-providers and holds the symbolic meaning of "retaliation" over guests (Sallaz, 2010; Lashley, 1995; Lopez, 2010; Karatepe et al., 2006), in tourism, however, studies tend to focus on power played out between hotel managers and their subordinates, (Guerrier and Adib, 2000; Erkutlu and Chafra, 2006). With the exception of Sherman (2007; 2005), little information has been garnered on the issue of power between guests and service-providers. Furthermore, Sherman's work (2007, 2005) only examines power from the service-providers' perspective.

Power is, however, relationally created, implying that people only have power if others choose to give it to them (Oetzel, 2009) Without power, people might resort to negotiation or conflict (Martin and Nakayama, 2011). This suggests that individuals can take control and decide if they want to be a passive receiver or active rejecter of power. Hence, a discussion on power is incomplete without an acknowledgement of control.

Skinner (1995) asserted that control is a perception. People want to perceive that they are in control and be their own free agents (Guerrero et al., 2007), and the need to control others is a central motivation underlying human behaviour (Bruce and Thornton, 2004; Gecas, 1989; Gecas, 1982). In cross-cultural interactions, control is gained through cross-cultural communication competence (Matveev and Nelson, 2004). This competence involves possession of cultural knowledge about oneself and about the persons with whom one is interacting (Gasset, 2003) and communication skills that enable individuals to communicate successfully with people from other cultures (Spitzberg, 1997; Klyukanov, 2005).

Control can also be gained through manifestation of social status or social dominance (Lustig and Koester, 2006), exhibited through power or assertive verbal behaviours (McElwain and Volling, 2002). Rucker et al. (2011) and Pfeffer (1981) noted that power is derived from control and that power is exerted once control of the resource or situation is gained. In service interactions, control is an important factor addressed through self-efficacy or the expectation of how successful the participants themselves or their counterparts are in producing a desired or intended effective result (Bitner, 1990). Guests use control as a tool to evaluate service satisfaction (Winsted, 2000), and service-providers perceive taking control as part of their job performance (Karatepe and Uludag, 2008; Karatepe et al., 2006). For example, service-providers often take control in the early

stages of service interactions by initiating a smile or conversation with guests, as they hope that this might reduce potential conflicts (Nikolich and Sparks, 1995).

2.3 CULTURE AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Not only do the characteristics of guests and service-providers influence interactional behaviours (Grove and Fisk, 1989; Tam et al., 2014), the cultural background of the interacting parties is thought to also influence the overall tourism experience (Reisinger and Turner, 1999; Sizoo et al., 2005). For example, some scholars have examined the extent to which the ethnicity of guests and service-providers affects the interactional relationship in tourism (Etgar and Fuchs, 2011; Hitchcock, 1999). Since culture through social systems can enhance the understanding of the mechanisms of service interactions (Edvardsson et al., 2011), it is necessary to look at culture and its influence on cross-cultural service interactions. In order to understand cultural influence on human behaviour in interactions, the underlying assumptions and definitions in the context of social interactions must be considered (Reisinger et al., 2010; Alasuutari, 1995).

2.3.1 The Meaning and Assumptions of Culture

Although "Culture" has been around for centuries, discussion of culture relating to its specific importance on social behaviours was emphasised in *Primitive Culture* (Tylor, 1920 [1871]). Culture is important as it determines social actions, constitutes standards for decision-making (Goodenough, 1971), and guides daily behaviours as it is 'acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and generate social behaviour' (Spradley, 1979: 5).

One assumption relating to culture is that it is "visible" through three common characteristics (Nanda and Warms, 2004). First, culture is socially created, shared and

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produced by groups of people who share similar ideologies and a way of life (Harris and Johnson, 2007; Neuliep, 2006). Members from the same group tend to do things in a similar manner and pattern. Second, culture is learned via enculturation or learning (Miller, 2004) through cultural systems that are developed from symbols, signs or language (Geertz, 1973). Cultural systems are stored in the mind and extracted to assist in interpreting, judging, and making decisions on daily behaviours (Lavenda and Schultz, 2000). Third, culture is integrated through social functions that form harmonious links in society (Nanda and Warms, 2004). Any changes in the functional systems (such as inequalities) can disrupt cultural harmony (Kottak, 2008). These characteristics of culture support the view that culture is multifaceted and complex, as it is connected and influenced by other functional elements in life (Raeff, 2004).

Culture can be better understood through its definition (Jahoda, 2012). The definitions of culture, as relate to social interactions, were selected from influential social scholars since this thesis is set within the study of social sciences. The commonly used social science definitions of culture, based on influential books on culture, and their underlying assumptions are listed in Table 2.1:

Table 2.1 highlights that culture is closely connected to people's lives through materials, texts, history, symbols, society, language, communication, knowledge, values, and attitudes. As shown, although there is overlapping emphasis in some of the definitions, each scholar's definition and their underlying assumptions are different. For example, Hall's (1959) definition of culture focuses on learned behaviour whereas Geertz (1973) suggests that culture has a symbolic meaning that requires anthropologists to decode its

meaning. Hofstede's (2001) definition assumes culture to be a collective programming of the mind.

Table 2.1: Commonly used social science definitions of culture (based on influential books on culture and underlying assumptions)

Authors (year)	Definition	Underlying assumptions
Tylor (1920 [1871])	…is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals law, customs, and many other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (p. 1).	Complex whole
Kroeber and Klucholm (1952)	…consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other hand, as conditioning influences upon further action (p. 181).	Consists of traditional ideas and values
Hall (1959)	…the way of life of a people, the sum of their learned behaviour patterns, attitudes and material things (p. 20)	A learned behaviour
Geertz (1973)	…denotes a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life (p. 89).	Formed by symbolic meanings
Spradley (1980)	…is the acquired knowledge people use to interpret experience and generate behaviour (p .6).	Use for life experience Interpretation
Hofstede (2001)	…is a collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another (p. 9).	Collective programming of the mind

Although scholars had made efforts to narrow the definitions of culture to capture its specific aspects (see Table 2.1), Moore (2009) commented that Tylor's (1920 [1871]) classic definition of culture using a "complex whole" stands out in comparison to others. This is because Tylor was a pioneer in reflecting the complexity of social dealings between humans (Brown et al., 2000). Tylor described this in his (1920[1871]) definition of culture, which contemplates culture's complex influence on the many spectrums of

life. Particularly, Tylor's recognition of cultural influences on human activities, such as shaping people's attitude towards others in social interactions, was comprehensive (Moore, 1980). The assumption that culture complicates social interactions has prompted researchers to focus on the role of culture in social interactions. Since culture is broad, to focus on how culture influences social interactions, it is necessary for researchers first to refine the concept of culture. One way to do this is through determining levels of culture.

2.3.2 Levels of Culture

There are two distinct levels of culture that allow researchers to address culture succinctly: national culture and individual culture (Karahanna et al., 2005; Cameron and Quinn, 2011). National culture assumes traits, such as values, and customs are common manifestations of behaviours shared by the citizens of a country (Bond, 1996; Smith, 2011). One of the strongest supporters of this view is Clark (1990), who suggested that national culture provides a framework to explain phenomena. Others point to difficulties in distinguishing between sub-cultural groups (Chick et al., 2007). However, the adoption of national culture had resulted to the neglect of 'individual culture' (Birkinshaw et al., 2011).

In contrast, individual culture focuses on individuals and groups. The supporters of the notion of individual culture stress the importance of the individual's identity, such as their ethnicity (Lott, 2009; Harris and Johnson, 2007), as well as personal traits that shape an individual's behaviour (Matsumoto and Yoo, 2006). Ethnicity reflects idiosyncratic cultural behaviours and thus provides a better sense of who a person is (Mura and Tavakoli, 2014). Differences in individuals are shaped by ethnicity (Darling et al., 2006), via the norms and values imposed by the ethnic culture (Schein, 2010; Triandis, 1972).

As such, the relative influence of ethnicity on a person is not to be ignored in the investigation of social behaviours (Karahanna et al., 2005).

A major supporter of individual culture is Dann (1993), who embraced the notion for its implicit knowledge in understanding differences in social behaviours. Other reasons to support individual culture focus on the increasing power of consumers in ethnic segments (Chattaraman and Lennon, 2008; Holland and Gentry, 1999). Countries such as Australia, Canada, England, and the United States of America (USA) are no longer homogeneous but are increasingly characterised by cultural diversity and a range of different ethnicities (Pires and Stanton, 2005). Ethnicity has become increasingly relevant because it extends into consumer behaviours (Huang et al., 2013; Emslie et al., 2007).

2.3.3 Differences in Culture in Interactional Behaviours

Culture is known to influence behaviours in situations among people who speak the same language, and impact those living in close proximity who share the same values (Brislin, 2000; Mio et al., 2006). Cultural differences or the 'the differences in the ways of viewing and doing things among various cultural groups' (Potter, 1989: 18) can, however, create interaction discomfort between two interacting parties, and affect their expectations and evaluations of interaction experiences (Paswan and Ganesh, 2005; Hall, 1976; Chen, 2002). Therefore, another way for researchers to refine their research on culture is to examine cultural difference and its influence on interactional behaviours (Brislin, 2000).

Cultural differences can be explored through both perceived cultural similarities and perceived cultural dissimilarities. The range of cultural differences via perceived cultural similarities and perceived cultural dissimilarities is represented in the "intercultural-ness" continuum (Reisinger, 2009), as shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Continuum of 'intercultural-ness'

Least intercultural-ness (cultural similarity)   **More intercultural-ness (cultural dissimilarity)**
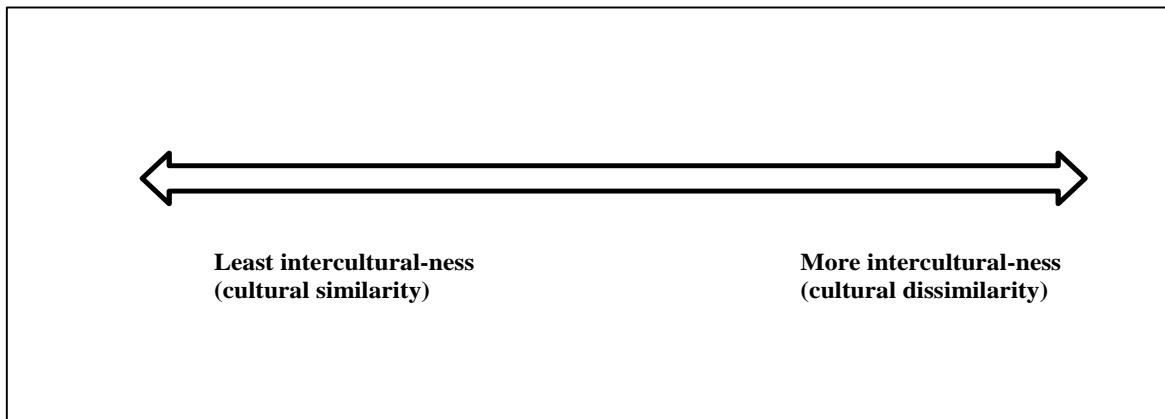
Source: Modified from Reisinger (2009), adapted from Lustig & Koester (1993)

In turn, the loci of the "intercultural-ness" continuum depicts the degree of differences that impact cultural interactions. Three interaction situations may arise (Sutton, 1967):

- parties involved have very similar cultural backgrounds;

- parties involved have small differences in cultural backgrounds; and

- parties involved have large differences in cultural backgrounds.

Large perceived cultural dissimilarities between interacting parties imply strangeness and anxiety and can lead to negative consequences in interactions (Neuliep and Ryan, 1998). By contrast, large perceived cultural similarities imply commonness and attractiveness and can lead to positive consequences (Härtel and Fujimoto, 2000).

Nevertheless, cultural similarities do not necessarily mean that the person is familiar with the so-called "similar culture". Perceived cultural familiarity and perceived cultural unfamiliarity indicate how familiar or unfamiliar individuals are in interacting with different cultures (Elfenbein and Ambady, 2003). It appears that familiarity is a precondition for trust - a prerequisite of social behaviours - and perceived cultural

familiarity helps to promote trust by providing confidence in dealing with strangers during encounters (Beaupré and Hess, 2006). Through trust, perceived cultural familiarity can counteract culturally dissimilar situations, whereby even though the parties are perceived as being culturally dissimilar, individuals can familiarise themselves with their counterpart's culture. Cultural familiarity can be acquired through knowledge and communication skills (Pulido, 2004; Ting-Toomey and Chung, 2012).

To examine cultural differences, scholars use language, religion, values, attitudes, customs, aesthetics, arts (Czinkota and Ronkainen, 2004), and even food (Meigs, 1997). While there is a myriad of factors on which culture may be differentiated, Reisinger & Turner (2003) suggested that areas of cultural difference in communication, social categories, rules of social behaviour and service interactions are deemed important due to their profound association with social interactions in cross-cultural settings. They also provide better focus to investigate cultural phenomena and better understanding on the effects of culture on social behaviours in social settings (Turner et al., 2002).

2.3.3.1 Cultural Differences in Communication

Cultural differences produce different communication patterns. Verbal communications include language, discourse, questioning and semantics (Holliday, 2013) and nonverbal include body movements, facial expressions and proximity (Lustig and Koester, 2012). Cross-cultural communication usually involves interacting parties speaking in different languages. The concept of linguistic relativity suggests that language determines a person's thoughts and influences a person's behaviour in how they interact with others and how they perceive the world (Whorf, 1956). Most cultural groups have their own

language with unique features that allow those who speak it to share and enjoy specific experiences (Eastman, 2014).

Owing to this, language is often used as a cue to seek commonness in each other's cultural background and to discern "in-group" and "out-group" membership (Maass et al., 1989). How an individual is treated socially is said to be based on attitudes toward the language spoken by that individual (Fasold, 1984). Generally, *Asian xenophilics*, or Asians who admire Western influence (Kwong, 1994; Zerrillo and Thomas, 2007), have the tendency to look up to people who speak English (Lan, 2003). This is because English is a world language and is often the *lingua franca* or language adopted as the common language between speakers whose native languages are different (Jenkins and Leung, 2013). Consequently, one's command of English can influence how one is treated socially (Kachru, 1986).

2.3.3.2 Cultural Differences in Social Categories

Cultural differences are found in the way individuals deal with the social categories of themselves and of others in their social roles, status, class and hierarchical structures (Kim, 1988; Barth, 1998; Miller, 1984). Various cultures perceive social categories differently because of the influence of culture on individuals' values, perceptions, attitudes, evaluations and opinions (Triandis, 1972). One of the major differences that influences how an individual perceives others in social categories is the individual's value system, instilled through culture (Scollon et al., 2012).

Values 'are beliefs upon which a man acts by preference' (Allport, 1961: 454) and are prescriptive beliefs about what is right or wrong (Rokeach, 1973). Values are used to

differentiate cultural groups and explain group/individual behaviours (Schwartz, 1999; 1997). Collectively, different cultural groups exhibit different values (Segall, 1986). Vast differences in values are associated with groups that exhibit lifestyle behaviours that distinguish them from others (Rokeach, 1973). This can be seen in America, for example, with the Shakers' simple and monastic lifestyle (Waller, 2005)**,** and in the Middle East with the social segregation of women (Moghadam, 2007). Generally, Easterners afford greater value to the group, whereas westerners afford greater value to the self (Bond, 1992). Based on their value system, individuals socially categorise others and this defines their attitudes in intergroup dealings (Tajfel, 1982).

2.3.3.3 Cultural Differences in Rules of Social Behaviour

Cultural differences further determine social behaviour (Tajfel, 1981; Haslam et al., 2000), where cultural groups are guided by their social rules (Triandis, 1972; Triandis, 1994). The differences in Asian and Western socialisation patterns are said to be associated with cultural differences (Chen et al., 2014b). For example, stemming from the Confucian doctrines, social patterns in Asia differ from those in North America because of the Eastern emphasis on social relationships as opposed to North American emphasis on individualism (Yum, 1988). One of the cardinal principles of Confucianism is "particularism", which emphasises the application of different social rules to different people, such as applying more formal social rules when dealing with those in the higher social hierarchy (Tan et al., 2009). In Western societies, however, "particularism" is not practised and is regarded as odd (Yum, 1988).

In addition, because social rules are the processes by which people act toward or respond to others, they form the foundation for group relationships in society (Kendall, 2012).

Social rules dictate the way cultural groups interact and behave (Argyle, 1978). Rules, however, are not always universal. Behaviours that are socially acceptable in one cultural group may be taboo in other cultures. Similarities or differences in the cultures of interacting parties (Levine, 1979) and the ethnicity of the parties can determine interaction (McPherson et al., 2001). For example, those from similar cultures who share commonness and the same social behaviour rules, would likely have positive social interaction outcomes (Gallois, 1994; Matsumoto, 1990; Bochner, 1982).

2.3.4   Cultural Differences in Service Interactions

Besides influencing the various aspects of social behaviour, cultural differences can also influence service behaviours (Weiermair, 2000; Tsang and Ap, 2007). For example, the differences in cultural background can create different expectations and perceptions about each other's role and performance in cross-cultural service interactions between guests and service-providers (Zhang et al., 2008; Sharma et al., 2012). Further, cultural differences can make guests' expectations and their evaluation of service experience more critical and pronounced, sometimes resulting in negative outcomes (Turner et al., 2002; Mattila, 1999b; Winsted, 1997).

Cultural differences shape perceptions of service-providers' performance through service quality (Wall and Berry, 2007), where perceptions are opinions and impressions formed about others through one's own judgement (Hargie, 1986). For example, perceptions of service quality can be based on the service-providers' level of courtesy (Malhotra et al., 1994). Variations in the perceptions of service quality have been observed between Asians and Westerners (Furrer et al., 2000). Westerners' opinions of courtesy are associated with the service-providers showing respect for the individual's privacy and rights; whereas Asians' opinion of courtesy relate to the service-providers respecting the

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customer's cultural and social norms (Ueltschy et al., 2009). Furthermore, there are distinction between non-Westerners and Westerners as the later have the tendency to emphasise tangible cues and personalised service in the determination of service quality (Mattila, 1999b).

Cultural differences also shape guests perceptions about service-providers who are culturally different from them (Sharma et al., 2012; Wong, 2000). For example, the preference for service-providers who share the same ethnicity and cultural background with the clients is an important factor in the selection of professional healthcare service-providers (Harrison-Walker, 1995; Etgar and Fuchs, 2011), and for the selection of domestic over foreign airlines (Al-Sulaiti and Baker, 1998). Similarly, in tourism, guests tend to prefer service-providers who share the same ethnicity as themselves because of a greater sense of trust and cultural familiarity (Kulik and Holbrook, 2000).

Likewise, cultural differences have also shaped service-providers' perceptions of guests (Kim et al., 2002; Kim and Lee, 2009), with a tendency to prefer interactions with guests of the same ethnicity and cultural background as themselves (Martin and Adams, 1999; McCormick and Kinloch, 1986). In general, service-providers tend to smile more, thank, and establish eye contact when interacting with guests who share the same ethnicity and cultural background as themselves (Sharma et al., 2012).

Sharma et al. (2009) explained the preference of interacting with others who share the same ethnicity and cultural background using the similarity-attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1997). Sharma et al. (2009) suggested that similarities in language, values, and norms between guests and service-providers could facilitate their communication with each

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other and improve the quality of their interaction and its outcomes (Sharma et al., 2009). For example, guests and service-providers who are both from Chinese cultural backgrounds share and speak the common language of Mandarin (Zhang and Chow, 2004; Li et al., 2011), and are brought up with the ideology of Confucianism (Mok and Defranco, 2000; Kwek and Lee, 2010). Besides differences in perceptions, cultural differences in service are also noted in the differences in interpretation of satisfaction (Kim and Park, 2008; Diener and Diener, 2009). Cultural differences between guests and service-providers can affect consumer satisfaction (Pearce, 1988).

The literature on cultural differences discussed above tends to suggest that cultural differences have negative implications and cultural similarities have positive implications for cross-cultural service interactions. Most of this literature seems to have neglected the notion that there could be positive or negative outcomes through the "friction" between two different cultures in cross-cultural service interactions (Shenkar et al., 2008).

2.3.5   Co-Creation of Value in Service

Another way cultural differences affect service interactions is through its influence on the co-creation of "value" in service (Arnould et al., 2006; Chan et al., 2010). A cultural schema such as value, helps consumers to enact their consumption patterns (Etgar, 2008; Yau, 1988; Feather, 1980). Value, which is rooted in culture, constitutes an important bases for attitudes or enduring beliefs that a specific mode of conduct or end state of existence is personally and socially preferable to alternative modes (Rokeach, 1973: 5). Values are embedded in history, culture, and the economic development of a society, and are influenced by personal, socio-economic and cultural formation (Xie et al., 2008). It is expected that the values that people hold will influence social behaviours directly and indirectly through attitudes towards social interactions (Kahle, 1983; Kahle, 1995).

In mature economies such as Western Europe, North America and the Far East, changes in consumer culture have emphasised experience-seeking and encouraged customisation and co-production (Lovelock and Gummesson, 2004; Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Pine and Gilmore, 1999). Further, the demand for experiences requires individuals to decide on their involvement in terms of participation, interaction and co-production with service-providers (Payne et al., 2008; Cabiddu et al., 2013).

Service encounters highlight the interactive and dyadic dimension (Surprenant and Solomon, 1987), as well as the importance of perceiving value and its co-creation in service during interactions (Veloutsou et al., 2005; Vargo and Lusch, 2008; Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Service dominant logic literature assumption is that customer is always a co-creator of value (Vargo and Lusch, 2008). However, value is perhaps one of the most elusive and ill-defined concepts in service and marketing (Sánchez-Fernández and Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007; Woodall, 2003). So far, attempts made to create holistic conceptualisations of value have concluded that it should be addressed on an individual level (Holbrook, 1999), considered for its trade-off between benefits and sacrifices (Woodruff and Gardial, 1996; Day, 1999), and focused on its experiential perspective in the context of customer experiences (White et al., 2009).

One can make distinctions between value creation and value co-creation (Grönroos, 2011). Value creation is a process that involves a series of activities performed by an individual customer to achieve a particular goal (Payne et al., 2008). This can be carried out on an individual level, as an individual can create value by themselves (Gummerus, 2013). Thus value is an individualistic construct with each individual perceiving value

very differently (Grönroos, 2011). Value co-creation, however, represents the cooperation of two individuals (Grönroos, 2008; Helkkula and Kelleher, 2010), and only occurs when dyadic interactions take place (Grönroos, 2011). Thus, in this context, the interacting parties are value co-creators (Lusch et al., 2008; Vargo and Akaka, 2009). In their discussion of the role of service-providers, Vargo and Lusch (2011: 5) state that these 'actors cannot create value for other actors but can make offers that have potential value'. This reinforces the need for cooperation in dyadic service encounters.

In the value co-creation that takes place in interaction, ultimately it is the quality of the service interactions between the parties that is fundamental for value co-creation (Fyrberg and Jüriado, 2009). In turn, the quality of the service interaction is likely to depend on the place where the service takes place, which provides the interaction platform (Payne et al., 2008), and the contributions of each of the parties in value co-creation (Grönroos, 2008). For example, each party contributes knowledge, expertise or resources (Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Gummerus, 2013), and the motivation to participate in value co-creation is to get something of value out of it (Grönroos, 2008).

Customers (or guests) are only willing to co-create if they perceive value in co-creation of service (Boswijk et al., 2007). Guests' perceptions of value are often associated with achieving a positive experience during encounters with service-providers (Holbrook, 2005; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). Guests' perceptions of value are influenced by past, current, and future expectations of experiences (Helkkula and Kelleher, 2010). This may include nostalgic reinterpretations of previous experiences of value that represent guests' interpretations or reinterpretations of the anticipated experiences of what might

be in the future (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009). Thus, current value in the experience can affect how a customer makes sense of past and future experiences (Helkkula et al., 2012).

While the motivations of guests to become involved in value co-creation have been explored by scholars such as Grönroos and Voima (2013), Payne et al., (2008) and Helkkula (2011), the motivations for service-providers are not well understood (Prebensen and Foss, 2011; Shaw et al., 2011). What is known is that service-providers are provided with a role to play, where role refers to socially defined expectations of individual behaviours in particular social positions (Colton, 1987). Position and role are closely related, the notion of a role not only provides an individual with a complex set of identities, it also becomes the source of individual interpretations of their social position (Blumer, 1969).

In the context of value co-creation, with their differing knowledge and skills, the role of the service-provider is to support customers in co-creating value (Edvardsson et al., 2011). All social interactions involve symbolic interactions, and individuals attach symbolic meaning to objects, behaviours, themselves, and others (Gopal and Prasad, 2000). In co-creating value in service with guests, service-providers' social positions are not equal to that of guests, this asymmetry in status may discourage the co-creation interactions (Edvardsson et al., 2011).

2.3.5.1 Value Co-Creation in the Tourism Experience

Since offering unique and memorable experiences for guests is paramount in order to remain competitive, the concept of value co-creation in the service experience is important in tourism (Grissemann and Stokburger-Sauer, 2012). Guests are becoming

more individualistic and are increasingly gaining power and control, they demand the creation of a meaningful, personal and valuable experience with tourism establishments (Binkhorst and Den Dekker, 2009). Nonetheless, evidence is scarce in relation to research on value co-creation in the tourism experience (Cabiddu et al., 2013), and the few studies that touch on the subject, discuss it only from the perspective of tourists, but neglect service-providers (Prebensen et al., 2013).

Prebensen and Foss (2011) revealed that co-creating behaviours and the subsequent evaluation of service experiences indicate that guests are not passive onlookers in the value co-creation experience with service-providers. They are active as well as emotional participants in that co-creation experience. For example, guests may show feelings of anger when they are disappointed with their personal or family members' well-being in the co-creation experience process. Indeed, an unpleasant co-creation experience can ruin the guest's whole experience for the rest of their trip (Prebensen and Foss, 2011).

Although the Prebensen and Foss (2011) study seemed to focus on guests as emotional "victims" in the value co-creation experience, others have recognised that the concept is a dyadic phenomenon that requires taking the other party's perspectives into account (Grönroos, 2011). The notions of value co-creation (Grönroos, 2011) and customers as co-creators of value (Vargo and Lusch, 2004), are often two misinterpreted and different concepts. The former suggests that service as an entity values the customers' efforts in co-creation, whereas the latter implies that customers contribute positively to service. However, not all guests or customers contribute positively to service, rather often they "co-destruct" (Echeverri and Skålén, 2011). As Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004: 21) stated '…not everyone enjoys such an interactive co-creation process ... Nor are all co-

creation experiences positive'. For example, rude guests can co-destruct rather than co-create value in service by creating difficulties for service-providers.

Indeed, guests are equally responsible for negative service outcomes, however, researchers tend to focus only on guests and neglect service-providers (Choi and Mattila, 2008; Swanson and Hsu, 2009). Even though service-providers are "part and parcel" of complex service encounters (Ng and Mirchandani, 2008), seldom are they listened to or their perspectives considered (Reynolds and Harris, 2005). Few studies have adopted a dyadic approach to explore service interaction. Mattila and Enz (2002) revealed, however, that the outcomes perceived by guests are not always aligned with service-providers. Guests might view a service to be negative, while the same service is viewed by service-providers as positive. Thus, there is a need to include both the guests' and service-providers' perspectives in order to gain a holistic understanding of service interactions (Sharma et al., 2009; Sizoo et al., 2005).

2.4 COPING STRATEGIES FOR INTERACTIONS

In addition to knowing how factors influence cross-cultural service interactions, there is also a need to understanding how guests and service-providers manage their service interactions with coping strategies. Coping strategies are considered to be defence mechanisms for individuals (Endler and Parker, 1990). The need for coping strategies in interactions is warranted due to the likelihood of heightened emotions (Wang and Mattila, 2010), and stressful or negative outcomes of those interactions (Folkman et al., 1986; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Carver et al., 1989). Coping has also been conceptualised as a response to external stress or negative events brought about by others (Billings and Moos, 1981; McCrae, 1984). One cause of stressful or negative interactions is that the

interacting parties may feel that they have lost the locus of control (Ross, 1995a; Ross, 1995b).

Service-providers and guests use various strategies to cope with service interactions (Prebensen and Foss, 2011; Wang and Mattila, 2010). Service-providers commonly use peer support, including 'talking to co-workers, consulting, or trying to enjoy oneself' as coping strategies to deal with service interactions (Law et al., 1995: 280). Guests often use avoidance, emotional and confrontational strategies to cope with service interactions (Mick and Fournier, 1998) The level of stress and the types of coping strategies employed depend on the individual characteristics and demography of the interacting parties (Chiang et al., 2010; McCrae and Costa, 1986). For example, O'Neill and Davis (2011) reported that managers have significantly more stressors compared with frontline service-providers.

There are a number of other interaction coping strategies, such as goals alteration (Renshaw and Asher, 1983), politeness (Goody, 1978), or a mastery of language (Bejarano et al., 1997). Some coping strategies might be considered improper (Sherman, 2007), such as "poking fun" at wealthy guests behind their backs (Sherman, 2005). Service-providers have been reported to invoke association with their wealthy clients, considering themselves as equal to the guests in terms of competence, intelligence, privilege, and power (Sherman, 2005). Thus some service-providers employ "looking up" coping strategies. In contrast, others adopt a "looking down" on guests strategy, which can be explained in terms of stereotyping (Carter et al., 2006).

2.4.1 Stereotyping

Stereotyping refers to the act of making strong and consistent inferences about individuals on the basis of their group memberships. This can lead to intergroup bias (Spencer-Rodgers et al., 2007). Lippmann (1922) described stereotyping as the pictures in our heads of others, simplifying how people think about human groups. As a strategy to help them cope with social interactions, some people tend to put others into social categories based on some *a priori* knowledge (Nikolich and Sparks, 1995; Yeung and Leung, 2007). Stereotyping is done through categorising individuals (known as subjective essentialism), or through categorising groups (known as entitativity) (Yzerbyt and Schadron, 1994; Spears et al., 2004; Leyens et al., 1994). This can dramatically shape how individuals perceive and interact with members of different groups (Allport, 1954). Often stereotyping is accentuated in intergroup social interactions (Tajfel, 1982) or when individuals meet new people or are faced with new situations (Reisinger, 2009). Stereotyping is intensified when the interacting parties are unequal in socio-economic status (Sommer and Carrier, 2010) and have different cultural backgrounds (Reisinger et al., 2013). In addition, there is a robust tendency for lay people or people, who do not have professional knowledge on a subject, to stereotype others based on gender, race, ethnicity or sub-cultures (Prentice and Miller, 2007).

Although stereotyping can have either positive or negative outcomes (Moufakkir, 2011), it tends to have negative outcomes in service interactions (Pizam and Ellis, 1999; Čivre et al., 2013; Reisinger, 2009). For example, in a study on stigmatism (which is a kind of stereotyping) in the Netherlands, Moufakir (2015) identified that the quality of Arab-Muslim tourism experiences '…is both undermined and reduced, if not by direct stigma, it is through stigma by association'. Similarly, in their study of Jewish tourists who had

visited Holocaust sites in Poland, Podoshen, Hunt and Andrzejewski (2015) concluded that exchanges that are predicated on stereotypes and shared with fellow tourists have the potential to create negativity among the members of tour groups and activate more widespread stereotyping. Stereotypes resulting in negative outcomes, are more memorable than other interactions (Itakura, 2004), and affect customer satisfaction (Wilkins et al., 2007) and are problematic to service evaluation (Price and Arnould, 1999). Tourists who feel judged by a service-provider, for example, might retaliate, complain, not return to the destination or spread negative word-of-mouth.

2.4.1.1 Stereotyping: Predispositions, Application and Activation

Stereotyping is associated with negative attributions such as rudeness, unfriendliness and control, as well as positive attributes such as politeness, intelligence and shyness (Bastian and Haslam, 2006; Jarvis and Petty, 1996; Pratto et al., 1994). Stereotypes may be positive in the sense that they help to guide brief encounters by injecting a degree of predictability into interactions, attempting to meet the expected needs of others (Čivre et al., 2013).

Further, service-providers might stereotype their guests and, depending on the valence of the stereotype, this may lead to adverse interactions. Furthermore, stereotypes are often shared with others (Kashima, 2000; Levine et al., 1993), such as colleagues, to cope with service interactions and act as a rationale to explain others' peculiar behaviour (Crawford et al., 2002). As such, it is important to understand how stereotypes come into play and how they influence behaviour in tourism. Stereotypes often emerge for service-providers as soon as they start thinking about tourists from other parts of the world (Moufakkir, 2011). Stories or events that have been stored in their memories may be retrieved (Operario and Fiske, 2008), providing the triggers for stereotype applications.

The process of stereotyping has been perceived as 'thinking categorically about others', referring to activation and application of social categories stored in a person's memory (Macrae and Bodenhausen, 2000: 93). Thus, the stereotyping process involves the following sequence: stereotype predisposition > stereotype activation > stereotype application (Devine, 2001; Fiske et al., 2002), as presented in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: The sequence of stereotype predisposition, activation to application
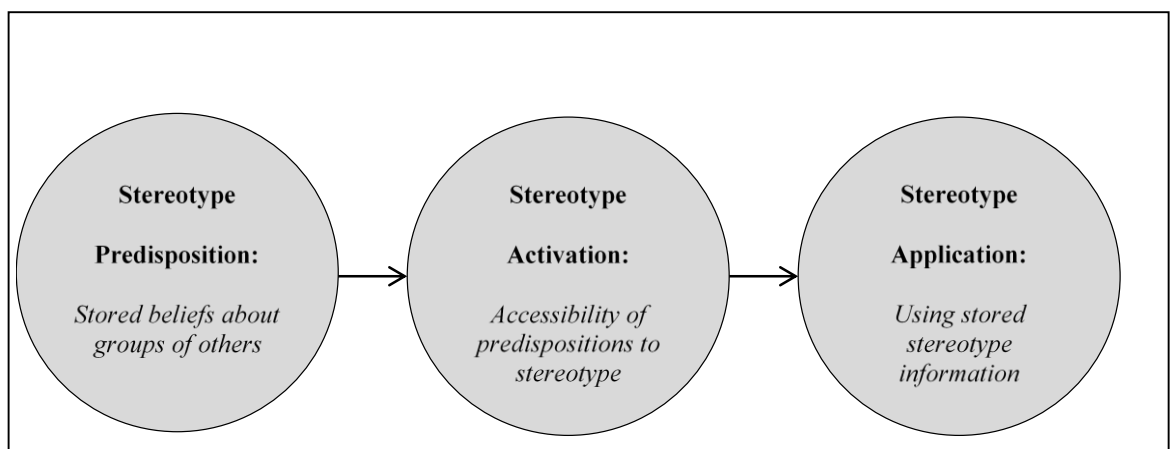
Adapted from Divine (2001) and Fiske et al. (2002)

While most people have predispositions to stereotype and the information they have stored about a group is retrievable, there is little evidence to suggest that predispositions come to mind when they interact with a member of the stereotyped group (Kunda et al., 1997). Rather, their behaviour relies on stereotype activation (Gilbert and Hixon, 1991). Stereotyope activation deals with the accessibility of predispositions to stereotype in one's mind (Kunda and Spencer, 2003). While predispositions may remain in a dormant condition, they can be readily surfaced upon activation during an interaction with a member of a stereotyped group. (Kunda and Spencer, 2003).

Some scholars argue that sterotype activation can be knowlingly surpressed (Lepore and Brown, 1997; Blair and Banaji, 1996), but most agree that stereotype activation is a spontancous occurance (Devine, 1989; Macrae et al., 1994). Stereotype activation may, therefore, be related to perceptions of the dynamism of human attributes (Levy et al., 1998). Thus, the way people view humans, or their implict theories about humans, is relavant to stereotype application (Levy et al., 1998; Levy et al., 2006).

2.4.1.2 Stereotyping and Implicit Theories

Implicit theories suggest that one's beliefs help in the decision to accept or reject available knowledge, as well as influence social judgements and actions (Levy, 1999). For example, one's beliefs can influence whether an individual believes human attributes are fixed or malleable, which then shapes perceptions and social experiences (Hong et al., 2001). Opinions about human attributes are often considered by researchers within two categories - entity-theory or incremental-theory (Chiu et al., 1997; Levy et al., 1998). Those in the entity-theorist category assume that the personal attributes of individuals are fixed and predictable (Dweck et al., 1995; Levy et al., 1998). Entity-theorists make extreme judgements about others (Dweck et al., 1995) and are prone to engage in stereotyping (Levy et al., 1998).

As such, with an entity-theorists' way of thinking, strong attributes are inferred from sparse knowledge that is actively and confidently used to predict an individual's behaviour (Levy et al., 1998). Thus, in cross-cultural service interactions, entity-theorist service-providers' predispostions to stereotype will be quickly recalled and activated. That is, service-providers will attribute stereotypes to the service interactions they can recall. Rather than recalling events individually, they recall cross-cultural interactions in terms of how groups of people from a particular location behave, as well as how the

groups of people respond. This may well suggest that in the case of service-providers who have an entity-theorist's style of thinking, stereotype activation will occur frequently.

In contrast, those with an incremental-theorist's way of thinking hold the assumption that the personal attributes of individuals are not fixed but are malleable (Dweck et al., 1995). Incremental-theorists believe human attributes are less predictable and they subscribe to the view that an individual's behaviour can be changed (Levy et al., 1998). Incremental-theorists make fewer inferences on the attributes of others and are less likely to stereotype (Chiu et al., 1997). Their inferences about others are also likely to be positive (Erdley and Dweck, 1993). In this research context, this may suggest that predispositions to stereotype during cross-cultural interactions may not be recalled by service-providers who are incremental-theorists. Rather, service-providers with an incremental-theorist's style of thinking will approach each service interaction uniquely, without neccesarily applying stereotpyical beliefs, and stereotype activation will occur infrequently.

2.4.1.3 Application of Stereotypes and Influence of Culture

While predispositions to stereotype relate to stereopype recall, activation may not result in application. For example, while a service-provider may recall a stereotype (e.g. about how Chinese tourists behave), this does not mean that they will use this information while interacting with Chinese tourists. Thus, it is important to examine how stereotypes are applied in addition to how they are activated. Stereotype application is thought to be controllable (Gaertner and Dovidio, 1986; Banaji and Hardin, 1996; Devine, 2001; Moskowitz and Li, 2011). A number of factors may inhibit stereotype application (Kunda and Spencer, 2003), such as one's level of education (Dambrun et al., 2002) or anti-discrimination legislation (Brown, 2011).

Culture is said to influence social interaction through stereotyping under in-group (i.e. those with cultural-similarity) or out-group (i.e. those with cultural-dissimilarity) conditions (Fiske et al., 2002). Generally, cultural similarity implies congruency and affinity (Härtel and Fujimoto, 2000; Yoo and Sohn, 2003) and suggests positive interactions, whereas cultural dissimilarity implies non-congruency, strangeness and suggests negative interactions (Neuliep and Ryan, 1998). For example, when people meet new people or when they face new situations under cultural dissimilarity, they may stereotype, leading to the discouragement of social interactions (Reisinger, 2009).

Within a Southeast Asian context, a number of similar cultures can be found between, as well as within, national borders. Within a country, people may have different identities and feelings of belonging to one group or another. For example, the Taiwanese hold different identities and feelings of belonging to the Chinese (Chen et al., 2014a). Further, Malaysian Muslim tourists perceive China as a more familiar destination than Korea or Japan, but they still hold more favourable images of Korea and Japan (Kim et al., 2015). The perception of familiarity towards China may be a result of the large minority of Chinese Malaysians (Mura and Tavakoli, 2014). However, Mura and Tavakoli (2014) point out there is a certain level of tension between the three ethnic groups within Malaysia (Chinese, Malay and Indians). Thus, familiarity of a culture is not necessarily related to favourable images or positive stereotyping. In the context of service interactions, service-providers may apply positive or negative stereotypes based on their own ethnic identity as well as the (perceived) identity of the guest. For example, Malays may apply stereotypes to Chinese tourists that Chinese or Indian-Malaysians may not apply.

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A way to understand culture's influence on stereotyping is through the association of culture and social interactions. To do so, scholars refer to a number of dimensions, one being the notion of individualism-collectivism (Triandis et al., 1988; Hofstede, 2001). Collectivist cultures favour cultural-similarity and view this as a prerequisite for positive interactions (Triandis et al., 1988). For example, Ho (1993) noted that in-group sentiments strongly influence the interactions of Asians (collectivists), with Asians perceiving cultural-similarities as an integral factor of positive interactions. Within this paradigm, Asians place the group above the self in order to seek harmony (Hong et al., 1999) and aim for social connectedness rather than differentiating the self from others (Chiu and Hong, 1999). People who aim for connectedness believe in the fixed reality of the social world, and that it shapes and governs the individual's social actions (Miller, 1984; Morris and Peng, 1994).

The "distinctiveness principle", however, challenges the similarity and connectedness thesis. The premise of the distinctiveness principle is that under conditions of cultural-similarity, where a large common collective identity is shared, there is a motivation for establishing or maintaining a sense of differentiation away from the larger collective identity (Brewer, 1991; Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Hong et al., 1999). In this context, a "common-bond" attachment to fellow members is maintained (Prentice et al., 1994). In relation to stereotyping, the distinctiveness principle suggests that this would occur under conditions of cultural-similarity, countering the view that stereotyping is enhanced in this context where differences in culture, demographic attributes and language are distinct (Hui, 1988; Rhee et al., 1996; Chatman et al., 1998; Clausen, 2010). This may suggest that negative interactions prevail with people from similar cultures.

To further explain the influence of culture on social interactions, scholars also refer to the notion of power distance (Triandis et al., 1988; Hofstede, 2001). The Power Distance Index represents the 'the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally' (Hofstede, 2011: 9). In this dimension, people in the lower level of the hierarchy perceive and accept the existence of inequality and differences in power between them and people in the high level social structure of a cultural system (Hofstede, 2011). The high level hierarchy is correlated with wealth (Hofstede, 2011). A high level in the Power Distance Index indicates that the hierarchy is clearly established and executed in society, without doubt or reason. A low level in the Power Distance Index signifies that people question authority and attempt to distribute power (Hofstede et al., 2012).

As power distance represents the inequality in societies (Hofstede and Bond, 1988), it helps explain how people of different social status interact in society (Hofstede et al., 2010). For example, people in the lower level of the hierarchy are not to be seen as equal to those in the high level, and should not voice their own opinions but rather exhibit dependence on the high level's opinions. Such restrictions form customs in society, creating social rules that could result in nervous stress during interactions (Hofstede, 2011). Asia, including Malaysia in particular are known as high power distance societies (Hofstede, 1983), where inequality is more readily accepted and people know their "rightful place" in society (Hofstede, 1983). In this context, people in the lower level maintain a social distance from people in the high level.

In tourism, Magnini, Kara, Crotts and Zehrer (2012) found that travellers from high power distance cultures were less likely to write about positive service interactions in their travel blogs than their low power distance counterparts. This does not mean that high power distance tourists do not have positive service experiences, but it does suggest that in service interactions between Asians, the lower status of the frontline service-providers would necessitate a higher level of service, as Asian guests are sensitive to status (Mattila, 1999c). Thus, the disparity and assertion of power distance between frontline service-providers and guests may leave staff applying negative stereotypes to their Asian guests.

The high level of power distance in Asia suggests that negative interactions could prevail with people from similar cultures. Asian service-providers of lower rank may be motivated to differentiate themselves from other Asian guests, because of a perceived gap in social status. Thus, negative stereotyping could take place as a result of status sensitivity and feelings of being looked down upon. Unlike implicit theories, which will influence predisposition activations, it might be expected that power distance, as a dimension of culture, would affect stereotype application. This is because culture relates to how people are expected to act within society, as opposed to what they have experienced themselves or their personal thinking patterns. This may well suggest that when Asian service-providers interact with guests from similar cultures, stereotype applications would likely relate to: a) negative service interactions when the power distance is high; and b) positive service interactions when the power distance is low.

2.5 SUMMARY

This chapter has reviewed the literature relating to the role of guests and service-providers in cross-cultural service interactions, the factors influencing those interactions and the

coping strategies employed, including stereotyping. Table 2.2 provides a summary on all the factors reviewed.

Table 2.2: Summary of factors influencing cross-cultural service interactions

Factors	Topics	Sub-topics
Characteristics of guests and service-providers	Characteristics of guest cohorts	
	Characteristics of service-provider cohorts	
	Personal characteristics of guests: • Leisure travellers • Business travellers	Demographic factors: • Gender • Age • Levels of education Social class status: • Subjective social class status • Objective social class status
	Personal characteristics of service-providers: • Executive • Frontline	Demographic factors: • Gender • Age • Levels of education Social class status: • Subjective social class status • Objective social class status
	Interpersonal characteristics	Actors' goals Power Control
Cultural differences	Cultural similarity Cultural dissimilarity	Perceived cultural similarity and cultural dissimilarity with counterparts' culture
	Cultural familiarity Cultural unfamiliarity	Perceived familiarity and unfamiliarity with counterparts' culture
	Co-creation of value in service	Wiliness to participant in cross-cultural service interactions
Coping strategies	Stereotyping	Stereotyping: predispositions, activation and application

The literature review revealed that the factors identified above have the potential to influence cross-cultural service interactions. The review further highlighted the need to consider these multiple influencing factors simultaneously, rather than in isolation. In addition, it has been noted that researchers have failed to consider the perspectives of both guests and service-providers in exploring cross-cultural service interactions. Most studies tend to focus on the guest, despite the fact that service interactions are dyadic phenomena involving both guests and service-providers. The literature review also highlighted how stereotyping may be used as a coping strategy in cross-cultural interactions. The chapter

further looked at the stereotyping process, involving predispositions, activation and application.

The thesis now continues with Chapter Three providing a review of cross-cultural paradigms, in order to develop the conceptual framework for the exploration and investigation of cross-cultural service interactions.

Chapter 3: Cross-Cultural Paradigms & Conceptual Framework

3.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the literature review highlighted the fact that cross-cultural service interactions are multifaceted and complicated by factors relevant to international tourism. This chapter reviews cross-cultural paradigms, identifying the one best suited to this research in guiding the conceptual framework. In Section 3.1, the following paradigms are examined: intergroup contact theory, Hofstede's cultural dimensions, cultural distance and cultural friction paradigms. As the cultural friction paradigm was deemed to be the most appropriate for this study, Section 3.2 further explores its components and Section 3.3 presents the research model used in this research.

3.1 REVIEWING PARADIGMS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL INTERACTIONS

A paradigm may be defined as 'a loose collection of logically related assumptions, concepts, or propositions that orient thinking and research' (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998: 22), or 'the philosophical intent or motivation for undertaking a study' (Cohen et al., 1994: 38). Paradigms are also referred to as theoretical frameworks that are distinct from theories (Mertens, 2005), which influence the way knowledge is studied and interpreted (Smolicz, 1970; Bryant, 1975). The choice of paradigm sets down the intent, motivation and expectation of the research. Without a paradigm, there is no basis for subsequent choices regarding methodology, methods, literature or research design (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). Before settling on the cultural friction paradigm, for this research a number of paradigms were considered, as discussed in the next sections.

3.1.1 The Intergroup Contact Theory

The intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1954) is one of the most prominent and influential social interaction paradigms developed to examine intergroup interactions in face-to-face situations (Schlueter and Scheepers, 2010; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006; Pettigrew, 1998). While socio-economic inequality is often neglected in interactional research (Brock and Durlauf, 2001), the intergroup contact theory stands out in terms of its recognition of equality in socio-economic status and its impact on social interaction (Brown and Hewstone, 2005; Tajfel et al., 1979; Riordan, 1978).

The intergroup contact theory posits that positive interactions between people of different groups are dependent on certain conditions, namely: 1) equal social status among the interacting parties; 2) intergroup cooperation; 3) shared common goals; and 4) support from authorities, law, or customs (Dovidio et al., 2003; Gaertner et al., 1990; Gaertner et al., 1993). Failure to meet these conditions would likely result in negative interactions (Nyaupane et al., 2008; Amir, 1969; Riordan, 1978).

While the intergroup contact theory is considered by some to be effective for improving intergroup relations (Dovidio et al., 2003), it has not been without its critics. Criticisms include a belief that the theory lacks rigor (McClendon, 1974); that it fails to represent the various settings of daily life (Ford, 1986); that it fails to consider other influencing factors (Pettigrew et al., 2011); and that the central theme focuses too exclusively on prejudice for failure of positive interactions (Hewstone and Swart, 2011).

As this thesis focuses on cross-cultural service interactions in international tourism, where the interacting parties are not always equal in social class status or share common goals, the conditions of the intergroup contact theory were deemed not relevant. In addition, the theory does not consider cultural differences and other interpersonal behavior factors, such as power and control, which were considered important in the context of this research.

3.1.2 Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Paradigm

Hofstede's cultural dimensions paradigm, however, places emphasis on cultural differences to explain behaviours (Sivakumar and Nakata, 2001; Draguns, 2008). According to Hofstede (2001), national cultural differences in values, beliefs, and norms underlie behavioural differences and influence social behaviour. Hofstede's paradigm is considered to be seminal and is used to study the effects of national cultural differences on consumer behaviour (Soares et al., 2007; Kang and Mastin, 2008; Søndergaard, 1994). Hofstede's paradigm introduces six cultural dimensions: individualism/collectivism, small/large power distance, strong/weak uncertainty avoidance, masculinity/femininity, long-term/short-term and indulgence/restraint (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005; Hofstede, 2011). Each of these is said to have a bearing on behaviour.

The individualism/collectivism cultural dimension refers to a national and individual characteristics (Hofstede, 2001), with one's national culture influencing one's likelihood to act individually or collectively as a member of a group (Woodside and Ahn, 2008). Individualistic nations tend to exhibit independence, privacy, emotional detachment and self-reliance (Triandis et al., 1988), whereas collectivistic nations tend to integrate into cohesive in-groups, such as extended families (Hofstede, 2001). As such, the cultural

dimension of individualism/collectivism influences the way people interact and shapes their social behaviours (Triandis et al., 1988). On the other hand, the small/large power distance cultural dimension refers to a nation's degree of acceptance of authorities in power and is used to address inequality in societies (Hofstede and Bond, 1988), as it helps to explain the interactional patterns of people in different levels of social status (Hofstede et al., 2010).

The high/low uncertainty avoidance cultural dimension refers to the degree to which people feel threatened by ambiguity and uncertainty in unstructured situations (Hofstede, 2001). People from high uncertainty avoidance nations dislike novel situations, prefer strict behavioural codes, and the enforcement of law (Hofstede, 2011). In contrast, people from low uncertainty avoidance nations treat the unknown or the different as a curiosity rather than a danger. They prefer fewer and less formal rules (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005).

The masculinity/femininity cultural dimension addresses how social gender roles are treated in a nation and how they can affect social behaviour (Hofstede, 2001). In nations that are considered masculine, social gender roles are clearly defined and distinct, but in nations that are considered feminine, social gender roles are less clearly defined and often overlap. The masculinity/femininity cultural dimension suggests that masculine nations exhibit dominant social values of assertiveness, competitiveness and toughness. In contrast, feminine nations exhibit social values of modesty and caring (Woodside and Ahn, 2008).

Hofstede also referred to the long-term/short-term value dimension, whereby long-term values are associated with perseverance, thrift, and orderly relationships by status (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). The long-term cultural dimension has a positive connotation and is desirable (Fang, 2003). Short-term values are associated with selfishness, being overly concerned with "saving face" and personal stability (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005).

Finally, the indulgence/restraint cultural dimension addresses gratification versus control of basic human desires related to the enjoyment of life (Hofstede, 2011). It refers to perceptions of happiness through control and thrift (Minkov, 2009). Accordingly, nations that place constraints on their people's freedom to indulge will have a lower percentage of happy people (Minkov, 2009).

Despite its capability to capture cultural differences, Hofstede's (2001) theory is considered by many to be too simplistic (Steenkamp, 2001); focused on socio-economic rather than on cultural factors (Baskerville-Morley, 2005; Baskerville, 2003); philosophically flawed in the long-term/short-term cultural dimension (Fletcher and Fang, 2006; Fang, 2005); inconsistent in research replications (Chanchani, 1998); lacking in minority representation (Moulettes, 2007); and overused in business and social research (Peterson, 2003).

Other criticisms of Hofstede's (2001) paradigm focus on its underlying assumptions and methodology (Williamson, 2002). For example, the paradigm equates nations with cultures in its assumption of 'national culture' (McSweeney, 2002; Baskerville, 2003). It also requires the use of a quantitative methodology that emphasises objectivity, causation

and deduction (Javidan et al., 2006), and ignores the possibility of qualitative approaches (Baskerville-Morley, 2005). As subjective meaning and inductive approaches are absent in the paradigm, it is difficult to explore for individual perceptions of culture and gain a subjective understanding of cross-cultural phenomena (Javidan et al., 2006).

Within the context of this research, Hofstede's paradigm was not considered suitable as this study places importance on individual culture rather than national culture. Also, Hofstede's paradigm does not reflect the differences in ethnicities in the interacting parties (Laroche, 2004), which is an important consideration for this research. Further, in comparison to interpretative research paradigms and methods, the positivist-led cultural dimensions are not likely to reveal tacit insights into the complexities in service interactional phenomena.

3.1.3   The Cultural Distance Paradigm

The cultural distance paradigm, which is based on Hofstede's (1980) paradigm, was introduced as an alternative in order to measure cultural differences (Johanson and Vahlne, 1990). Cultural distance refers to the degree of cultural difference between two national cultures (Kogut and Singh, 1988) or the extent to which the shared norms and values in one nation differ from those in another (Drogendijk and Slangen, 2006: 362). The paradigm is represented by a distance index (Hennart and Larimo, 1998; Moufakkir, 2011). A high distance index infers cultural dissimilarities and a low index infers cultural similarities (Wan et al., 2003). Further, it suggests that a low distance index is associated with positive outcomes since the interacting parties share a common language, beliefs, and social norms (Ghemawat, 2001; Lin and Guan, 2002). Whereas a high distance index

is associated with disruption, risks and anxieties (Crotts, 2004; Quer et al., 2007; Chirkov et al., 2005).

The cultural distance paradigm has been very influential and widely used to explain behaviours in business, such as in relation to foreign direct investment (Tihanyi et al., 2005; Ojala and Tyräinen, 2008); headquarters-subsidiary relations (Babiker et al., 2004); and expatriate behavioural issues (Ambos and Ambos, 2009). It has also been used to explain behaviours in tourism relating to travel decisions (Ng et al., 2007; Crotts, 2004), tourists' participation (McKercher and Chow, 2001), and tourism quality (Weiermair and Fuchs, 2000).

Despite its popularity, the positivist dominance of the cultural distance paradigm (Burrell and Morgan, 1979) has attracted criticism for its methodological and conceptual assumptions (Shenkar, 2001; Shenkar, 2012). One criticism of cultural distance paradigm relates to its unit of measurement, again using a national rather than individual level of culture (Drogendijk and Slangen, 2006). Other criticisms include those relating to its primarily quantitative approach (Fink et al., 2005). Cultural distance paradigm is also criticised for its sole focus on the 'home' nation (Tsing, 2005; Shenkar et al., 2008; Shenkar, 2012). According to Shenkar (2001: 523), cultural distance paradigm also suffers five faulty conceptual assumptions, or what he refers to as 'illusionary conceptual properties', namely: symmetry, stability, linearity, causality and discordance. Other scholars such as Ambos and Håkanson (2014) and Beugelsdijk et al. (2014; 2015) have supported Shenkar's criticisms.

First, Shenkar (2001) suggests that cultural distance paradigm's assumption of cultural symmetry is unrealistic (Selmer et al., 2007; Shenkar, 2001). Second, cultural distance paradigm's assumption of cultural stability implies that culture is independent and not influenced by other factors (Boyacigiller et al., 2004). Third, cultural distance paradigm assumes linearity in interactional relations. Indeed, Erramilli's (1991) and Davidson's (1980) studies demonstrated that business relations are not linear but are, in fact, chaotic and complex in nature. Fourth, cultural distance paradigm assumes causality and sees culture as the only factor affecting behaviours but, in reality, other factors such as socio-economics, psychology and language can affect behaviours (Galan and Gonzalez-Benito, 2006). Finally, cultural distance paradigm assumes that discordance (or conflict) is due to cultural differences. Shenkar (2001) argues otherwise, stating that cultural differences can in fact possess positive synergies that complement and enhance relationships. Furthermore, Shenkar, Luo and Yeheskel (2008) have criticised cultural distance paradigm as incapable of explaining complex phenomena subjectively. Instead, they proposed the metaphorical cultural friction paradigm.

Shenkar, Luo and Yeheskel (2008) suggested that replacing distance with friction denotes shifting the emphasis from the abstract focus (distance) to a more realistic and specific entity (interactions between parties). They suggested that the word friction indicates that a culture is not static, but alive, as it is created and recreated (Jelinek et al., 1983) by the interacting parties during their interactions. Cultural friction paradigm recognises that the interacting parties are asymmetrical in terms of their culture, their relationship is unequal, and that there are inequalities in the socio-economic status between the parties. Finally, cultural friction paradigm places an emphasis on both the home and the host cultures and both of their voices are considered as they are deemed to have equal power in influencing

cross-cultural interactions. The differences between cultural distance and cultural friction are summarised in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Summary of comparisons between cultural distance paradigm and cultural friction paradigm

Components for comparison	Cultural distance	Cultural friction
Directions	One-way	Two dimensional
Participation	Non-interactive Only one party, mainly the home, is active, the other party (the host) is presumed dormant	Interactive Both home and host are active participants and contribute to the outcome of the interaction
Home vs host power	Hosts are perceived to be more powerful and dominant, whereas local constituencies are perceived to be weak and passive	Host and local constituencies both possess power in the mutual relationship
Symmetrical properties	Symmetrical in nature The feelings between home and host are the same. How party A feels about party B is the same as how party B feels about party A	Asymmetrical in nature. The feelings between home and host are not the same. How party A feels about party B is very different from how party B feels about party A
Perspective	Simple, one-sided perspective	Complex, two-sided perspective
Framework	Confining and simplistic framework which consists of only two key players, mainly the home and the host, assuming that the home determines the outcome	Complex framework that includes the components of key players, cultural carriers, point of contact and cultural exchange. All four components determine the outcome
Dynamics	Less dynamic Emphasis is placed entirely on the home and outcomes are predetermined by one party	Dynamic. Emphasis is placed on both the home and the host; outcome can be influenced and changed depending on the interactions between the home and the host

Source: Cheok (2016)

3.2 THE CULTURAL FRICTION PARADIGM

Friction can mean the action of chafing or 'the rubbing of one body against another' to produce either positive or negative outcomes. (Brown, 2002: 1035). Tsing (2005) used

this meaning as a metaphor to study cross-cultural relations between multinationals and indigenous Indonesians in the rainforest of Indonesia. She illustrated the concept with the example of rubbing two sticks to produce light (positive) or excessive heat (negative). She concluded that likewise, cultural friction between multinationals and indigenous Indonesians is not always negative but can also have positive outcomes. Using Tsing's (2005) metaphor, Shenkar et al., (2008) developed and introduced the cultural friction paradigm (Shenkar et al., 2008). The premise of this paradigm is that not all cultural differences are disruptive and dysfunctional, and that some can even be complementary and conducive to positive relationships (Shenkar, 2012).

The cultural friction paradigm provided a new platform to explore and investigate cross-cultural interactional phenomena, recognising the complexities between interacting parties (Shenkar, 2012; Shenkar and Arikan, 2009). It concedes that there may be asymmetry in socio-economics underlying guests-host relations, but recognises two-way interactional dynamics and the importance of including the perspectives of both interacting parties (Shenkar et al., 2008). Cultural friction paradigm is rigorous as it focuses on the meanings in relationships and acknowledges that both the cultural and personal characteristics of interacting parties can influence cross-cultural interactions. Given these factors and the context of this study, cultural friction paradigm was deemed a suitable paradigm to guide the exploration of complexities in cross-cultural service interactions.

3.2.1   Components of the Cultural Friction Paradigm

Tourism studies suggested service hosts and guests (Binkhorst and Den Dekker, 2009; Sherlock, 2001), platform for service interactions (e.g. hotels) (Sherman, 2005; Chiang et al., 2014) and content of service experience (Prebensen and Foss, 2011; Zhang et al.,

2006; Eusébio and Carneiro, 2012) are components to be considered in understanding cross-cultural service interactions. These components are reflected in cultural friction paradigm. Shenkar had proposed four components in cultural friction paradigm consist of: key players (e.g. home and host); the cultural carriers (e.g. individuals who transmit cultural content); point of contact (e.g. the platform to conduct interactions) and cultural exchange (e.g. the content of interactions). Each component was applied to the context of this research and is discussed as follows.

3.2.1.1 Key Players

In cultural friction paradigm, the key players are not static or passive but are dynamic parties, entering relationships with each bearing power and control. In an international management context, key players consist of multinational companies and local hosts. The key players exhibit self-interest, which influences behaviours and the outcome of cross-cultural interactions. In the context of cross-cultural service interactions in international tourism, the key players are the guests and the service-providers who take part in the cross-cultural service interactions. Similarly, guests and service-providers will likely exhibit self-interest, which steers their behaviour in interactions. When there is a divergence in their interests or goals, they are likely to display power and control.

3.2.1.2 Cultural Carriers

Cultural carriers are individuals (or groups) who transmit their home cultural content to others during encounters (Shenkar et al., 2008). In international business, cultural carriers are assigned to work as representatives in another country (i.e. expatriates). They can also be the key players in cross-cultural interactions. Focusing on cross-cultural service interactions, guests and service-providers are carriers of their cultures. They are acting in

their roles and at the same time are representatives of their culture. While this may create misunderstandings on the part of the guests or the service-providers regarding cultural identity (Miller, 1984; Bochner, 1982), they can also impart their culture to others who are not familiar with their culture.

The cultural friction paradigm suggests that differences in the cultural backgrounds of the cultural carriers play a role in shaping interaction behaviours (Shenkar et al., 2008). There is a general assumption that cultural similarities will result in positive interactions and that cultural dissimilarities will initiate cultural conflicts (Shane, 1994; Tse et al., 1997). Thus, in an international business context, strategies are often put in place to appoint cultural carriers who are culturally similar to the host country, hoping that this will minimise the chances of cultural misrepresentation (Caligiuri, 2000). In the case of international tourism, service-providers in hospitality are often recruited because of their cultural similarity to guests, or service-providers are trained to become aware of the cultural nuances of the guests that they are serving.

3.2.1.3 Point of Contact

In Shenkar's model, point of contact refers to the place or the investment entry mode for international business (Shenkar et al., 2008). Place becomes the platform where cultural friction occurs as each party tries to demonstrate power and control. Focusing on cross-cultural service interactions in international tourism, place is the social setting (e.g. a five star luxury hotel, restaurant or tourist attraction). The place-identity literature suggests that individuals might use place to display power and control (Proshansky et al., 1983) and that people in the place are important in shaping behaviour. Thus, cultural differences are thought to affect place-identity (Hernández et al., 2007).

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3.2.1.4 Cultural Exchange

Cultural exchange refers to the content or the cultural systems being exchanged. In international business, cultural exchange refers to what is communicated (Shenkar et al., 2008). Both of the interacting parties are in a position to influence the interaction outcome through what is communicated (Shenkar et al., 2008). Focusing on cross-cultural service interactions, the content or meaning refers to the substantive information that is conveyed in a particular interaction (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Communication involves generating correct interpretations of its content meaning for mutual understanding (Ting-Toomey 1999). Cultural differences are known to affect cross-cultural communication (Brislin, 2000). Success in choosing the right communication mode depends on: the quality of the individual (e.g. cultural flexibility, enthusiasm), skilfulness (e.g. language capability, ability to express), and knowledge (e.g. training, listening skills) (Gudykunst, 2002). Specifically, cultural knowledge helps to effect cross-cultural communication (Ting-Toomey 1999). For example, the ability to speak a widely understood language is likely to influence the guest and service-provider's cross-cultural service interactions.

3.3 CROSS-CULTURAL SERVICE INTERACTIONS CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Now that cultural friction paradigm and its components have been described and examples provided as to how the paradigm can be applied to the context of cross-cultural service interactions into tourism, the conceptual framework that guides this thesis is presented. The components of the cultural friction paradigm are translated into the research context of tourism and presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Cultural friction: cross-cultural service interactions in tourism

Components	Guests/hotel service personnel
Key players	Guests (tourists) and hotel service personnel
Cultural carriers	Hotel service personnel
Point of contact	Cross-cultural interactions in five star luxury hotels
Cultural exchange	Content of cross-cultural interactions

Using the components of the cultural friction paradigm, and drawing upon the literature review in Chapter 2, a model was developed and this is presented in Figure 3.1. As seen in this figure, the model incorporates the factors that influence cross-cultural service interactions (i.e. the characteristics of guests and service-providers, cultural differences and stereotyping as a coping strategy), as discussed in Chapter 2. These were amalgamated into the conceptual framework. To facilitate the exploration of guest and service-provider cross-cultural service interactions, these factors were used to form the main themes and key themes. The constructs derived from each of the key themes were then developed to form sub-themes, as depicted in Table 3.3.

Figure 3.1: Dynamic model of cross-cultural service interactions
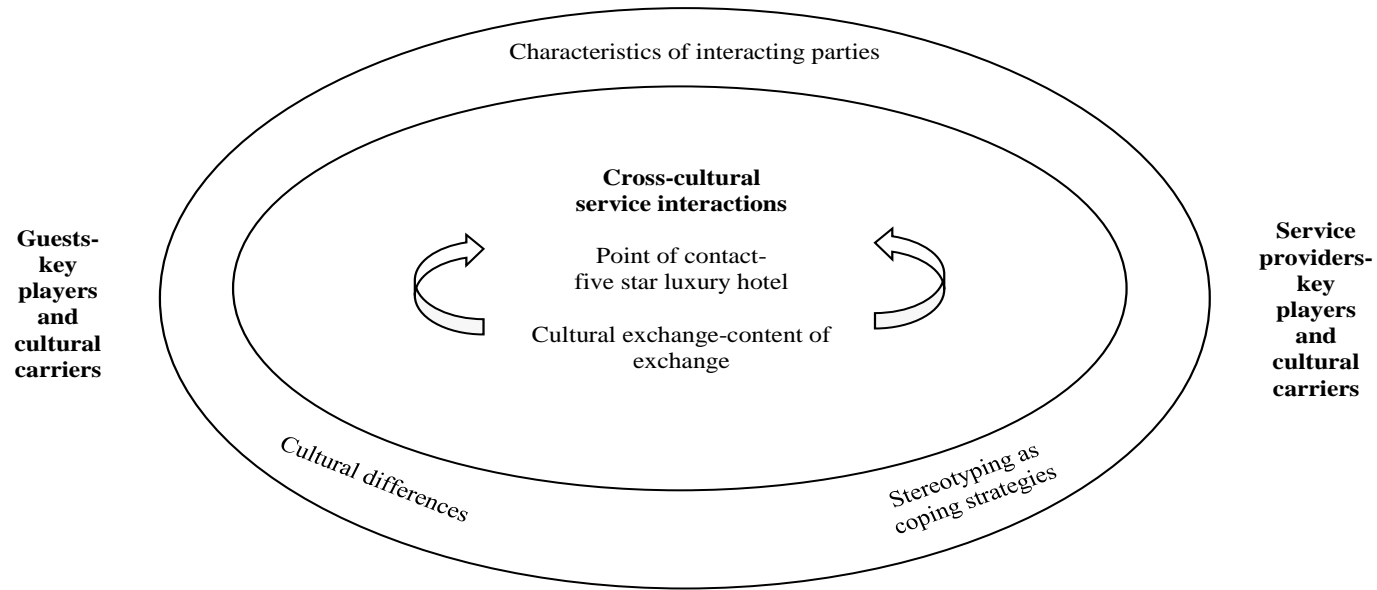
Adapted from Shenkar et al. (2008)

Table 3.3: Main themes, key themes and sub-themes for exploration of cross-cultural service interactions

Main themes	Key themes	Sub-themes
Characteristics of guests and service-providers	Personal characteristics: social class status	Subjective social class status Objective social class status
	Interpersonal Characteristics	Actors' goals Power Control
Culture	Cultural differences	Perceived cultural similarity and cultural dissimilarity Perceived cultural familiarity and cultural unfamiliarity Co-creation of value in service
Coping strategies	Stereotyping	Stereotyping: application and activation

3.4 SUMMARY

This chapter examined frameworks suitable for cross-cultural research and identified cultural friction paradigm as the most appropriate paradigm for this research. Details of the components of cultural friction paradigm were presented and a conceptual framework that was used to explore cross-cultural service interactions was provided. With the conceptual framework and research model developed, the thesis now continues with an explanation of the methodological stance and the methods and analytical techniques used to explore the research questions.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology and Methods

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the conceptual framework and the research model used to guide this thesis. This chapter describes the research methodology adopted for this research and provides the details of the methods used for data collection. In Section 4.1, the stance of the researcher and the underlying methodological approach are outlined. Section 4.2 provides details of the research context and the first stage of the data collection involving participant observation and elite interviews (with those considered influential or well informed). Section 4.3 details how the research participants were recruited. Section 4.4 covers the initial contact with participants and Section 4.5 covers the semi-structure in-depth interviews. Lastly, Section 4.6 presents the analytical framework (discussed in more depth in Chapter 5) and addresses issues concerning the credibility and ethics of this research.

4.1 RESEARCH STANCE

The research stance is determined by the nature of the research and the research questions (Marshall and Rossman, 2011; Perry, 1998). Chronologically, five distinct philosophies have influenced the study of culture. In the early 1900s, evolutionists focused on the anthropological evolution of societies (Morgan, 1907) and adopted a scientific approach using empirical methods to study culture objectively (Nanda and Warms, 2004). The neo-evolutionists (White, 1959), who believed cultural change could be explained over time by human behaviours (Orlove, 1980), also emphasised scientific methods to study culture objectively (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). The Boasians departed from scientific methods, believing that culture is a learned behaviour developed through social interactions, thus it could be studied subjectively (Boas, 1962; Scupin, 2000). Cultural materialists also

recognised the importance of non-scientific approaches to study culture (Harris, 1968; Buzney and Marcoux, 2012). Finally, functionalists focused on how cultural institutions (cultural groups, families-friends) influence an individual's social behaviours (Malinowski, 1969; Radcliffe-brown, 1965; Porth et al., 2012). Further, it was suggested that a subjective approach could provide tacit knowledge of how the cultural system within individuals dictates their social behaviours and influences their interaction behaviours (Goldschmidt, 1996; Shenk and Mattison, 2011). It has increasingly been advocated that culture should be assessed subjectively (Geertz, 2003; Buono et al., 1985; Matsumoto and Yoo, 2006). With this philosophy, culture is examined subjectively through ideological or psychological elements such as values, perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and expectations (Triandis, 1972; Rokeach, 1979). This functionalist philosophy underpins this thesis.

The two research questions in this thesis focus on the factors that influence cross-cultural service interactions and coping strategies employed in guest and service-provider cross-cultural service interactions. Addressing these questions requires *a priori* knowledge that leans towards a subjective approach. Moreover, *a priori* knowledge denotes the need to acquire first-hand information on the phenomenon under study. Thus, it is only the guests and service-providers involved who can provide the researcher with information about their cross-cultural interactions. Such an assumption represents an interpretivist way of thinking. Interpretivists assume that access to reality is possible through social construction via language and shared meanings (Myers, 2008).

In particular, constructivists, who sit within the family of interpretivists (Flicks, 2004; Somekh and Lewin, 2005), believe that social behaviours are socially constructed (Guba

and Lincoln, 2008; Leary, 2004; Gergen, 1991) and assume that events in life can be captured through meanings constructed by individuals (Glasersfeld, 1995). Subscribing to a constructivist's ontology, the researcher is able to gain meanings that are specific to cross-cultural service interactions through eligible guests and service-providers. Meanings are formed from knowledge construction through an appropriate research methodology. In social research, two common methodologies are quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative method embraces positivist assumptions while the qualitative method embraces interpretivist assumptions (McNeill and Chapman, 2005; Smith, 1998).

Positivists see sociology as the science of society and believe that social phenomena can only be measured objectively and numerically. Thus positivists use quantitative data and emphasise the testing of data to make statistical generalisations (Gilbert, 2008; Bryman and Bell, 2007; Veal, 2006). In contrast, interpretivists see sociology as a result of human actions, and that meanings can only be understood subjectively by the respective individual(s) (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Interpretivists emphasise the use of qualitative and textual data to understand social phenomena (Yates, 2004; Walle, 1997; Riley and Love, 2000). Specifically, Polkinghorne (2005) recommended using qualitative methods for the study of experiences since this enables the construction of meanings and the explanation of specific characteristics of experience from different individuals. Since this research is focused on cross-cultural service interactions and is about experiences and seeking to understand meanings subjectively in cross-cultural service interactions, such an approach was deemed appropriate.

Furthermore, according to their study, Helkkula et al. (2012) found that the experience of the co-creation of value in service interactions is subjective and, as such, it requires the individuals who are involved in that interaction to make sense of their experiences individually and collectively (Smith et al., 2009). Exploring for subjective experiences and individuals' sense making of their experiences also subscribes to the interpretivists' ontology (Smith et al., 2009). Therefore, interpretative research methods were adopted to illuminate how participants make sense of subjective experiences. Adopting such an approach means that this research acknowledges and recognises that individuals will have different views and interpretations of their cross-cultural service interactions.

Several research approaches exist within qualitative methodologies. Schutt (2014) suggested that different genres of research, such as descriptive, exploratory, explanatory or evaluative, should be considered for their specific suitability. The intention of the current research was to explore how people "get along" and cope in the setting of international tourism, specifically in a luxury hotel, and what meanings they give to their actions. As such, this research falls under the exploratory genre of research as the goal is to learn "what is going on here?" (Check and Schutt, 2011: 12) and to investigate the social phenomena without explicit expectations.

4.2   THE RESEARCH INQUIRY

This research adopted narrative inquiry and the critical incident technique as the key methods of data collection and analysis. Section 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 provide an overview of each of these before an overview of the overall research approach is provided in Section 4.3.

4.2.1 Narrative Inquiry

In the case of the exploratory genre, Creswell (2013) suggested that a narrative approach, which stresses the importance of focusing on and understanding the meaning of behaviour and experiences from an individual's perspective, is most suitable. The appropriateness of narratives, particularly the narrative inquiry approach for exploratory studies, is well documented [see White and Hede (2008) for the use of narrative inquiry to establish the way individuals experience art; Grealish and Ranse (2009), who used narrative inquiry to account for the learning experiences in clinical placements; and Connelly and Clandinin, who used narrative inquiry to construct the educational experiences of teachers (1990)].

Narrative inquiry is 'a research orientation that directs attention to narratives as a way to study an aspect of society … and is a means of finding meaning in the stories people use, tell, and even live' (Ospina and Dodge, 2005: 145). It is:

> *the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. The narrative inquiry … is to adopt a particular narrative view of experience as phenomena under study (Connelly and Clandinin 2006, p.477).*

Narrative inquiry assumes that people think narratively and store memorable experiences or incidents in the form of stories (Clandinin et al., 2007). Scholars have further suggested that people make sense of their experiences by telling stories (Woodside, 2010; Hsu et al., 2009; Martin and Woodside, 2011).

Narratives, or stories, are:

> *defined provisionally as discourse with a clear sequential order that connect events in a meaningful way for a definite audience and thus*

> *offer insights about the world and / or people's experiences in it*
> *(Hinchman and Hinchman, 1997: xvi).*

Individual narratives are about the individual, the people they interact with, the social spaces they inhabit, and the societies they live, in particular times and places (Riessman, 2008). Through narratives, people reveal aspects of their identity and ways they make sense of their social relationships and situations (Stalker, 2009). Thus, narratives allow the researcher to truly develop a sociological imagination (Laslett, 1999).

Narratives have three unique explicit dimensions,: temporal, meaningful, and social (Elliott, 2005). These reflect the nature of this research focus on cross-cultural service interactions between guests and service-providers. The temporal dimension in individual narratives demonstrates that the interrelations between individuals taking part in interactions are not permanent, the interactions offer different meanings to the individuals, and the interactions are located within specific social contexts for specific audiences (Elliott, 2005).

In turn, with established narratives, the narrative inquiry method enables researchers to interpret and make sense of participants' experiences by listening, collecting, and analysing their stories (Webster and Mertova, 2007; Helkkula and Pihlström, 2010). Thus, narratives become resources and information used to account for a particular experiential phenomenon (Polkinghorne, 1998; Mishler, 1986; Hyvärinen, 2008).

Therefore, collected narratives provide an opportunity to investigate complex and dynamic interrelationships. For example, Hede and Watne (2013) used narratives to humanise brewery brands and Georgakopoulou (2006) analysed narratives to reveal

complex interactional relationships. In addition, narratives have also been used to study complex relationships in tourism: narratives were used to study the formation of nostalgia in heritage tourism (Caton and Santos, 2007) and how tourists shape their tourism experiences (cf. Moscardo, 2010). The findings from these narrative inquiries have provided fresh and surprising understandings of tourism experiences and reinforced the dynamism of the tourism system. This is not often revealed through other methodological approaches.

Narrative inquiry is suitable for this research as it enables the participants to narrate and share their stories centred on their life experiences. They provide an emic, or insider's perspective of their experiences. By focusing on participants' narratives of experienced events, participants are invited to reflect on the possible meaning of their experiences and to co-construct meaning together with the researcher (Helkkula et al., 2012). Therefore, through the narratives, both the participants and the researcher are able to learn, interpret, and assign meanings specific to cross-cultural service interactions.

An insider's perspective was thought to provide a first-hand understanding of cross-cultural service interactions, as narrative inquiry has the ability to capture the importance of a specific context, such as place and setting, and enable the unfolding, exploring, and discovering of potential themes for new theories (Kalof et al., 2008; Carr, 1997). In this research, it was thought that narrative inquiry would allow tacit knowledge of cross-cultural service interactions. As the topic under investigation is exploratory in nature, it was also thought that narrative inquiry would further help unfold and identify potential themes associated with cross-cultural service interactions.

4.2.2   The Critical Incident Technique

In order to develop the narratives, this research employed the critical incident technique. This qualitative technique, introduced by Flanagan (1954), is well-established and has the advantage of gaining insights from individual's perspective via cognitive, affective and behavioural elements (FitzGerald et al., 2008; Chell, 2004; Gremler, 2004). For example it has been applied in tourism to better understand cruise passengers' overall satisfaction, perceived value, word-of-mouth, and repurchase intentions (Petrick et al., 2006), to identify positive and negative incidents during tourist visits to a destination (Pritchard and Havitz, 2006), and to identify incidents that were critical to hospitality so that hotels might improve their performance (Moscardo, 2006).

Applying critical incident technique in this research involved participants recalling and retelling their memorable positive or negative cross-cultural service interaction experiences. This would allow inferences to be drawn. Positive or negative incidents were deemed to be memorable if they affected guests or service-providers. Specifically, it was thought that critical incident technique would allow guests and service-providers to describe their memorable encounters in their own words and in a concrete manner. Thus, critical incident technique was used as a tool to elicit participants' narratives.

4.3 Overview of the Research Methods, Data Collection and Analysis

Figure 4.1 provides an overview of the research methods, data collection and analysis. As can be seen in Figure 4.1, the research, which was set within the context of a five star luxury hotel in Malaysia, was undertaken over four stages. In Stage 1, participant observation and elite interviews were conducted. In Stage 2, initial face-to-face contact

was made with the participants. In Stage 3, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted using critical incident technique and, in Stage 4, narrative analysis was performed. Following a description of, and justification for, the research being undertaken in a five star luxury hotel in Malaysia, and research participant selection and recruitment, the details of each of these stages is provided in the following sections.

Figure 4.1: Research methods, data collection and analysis
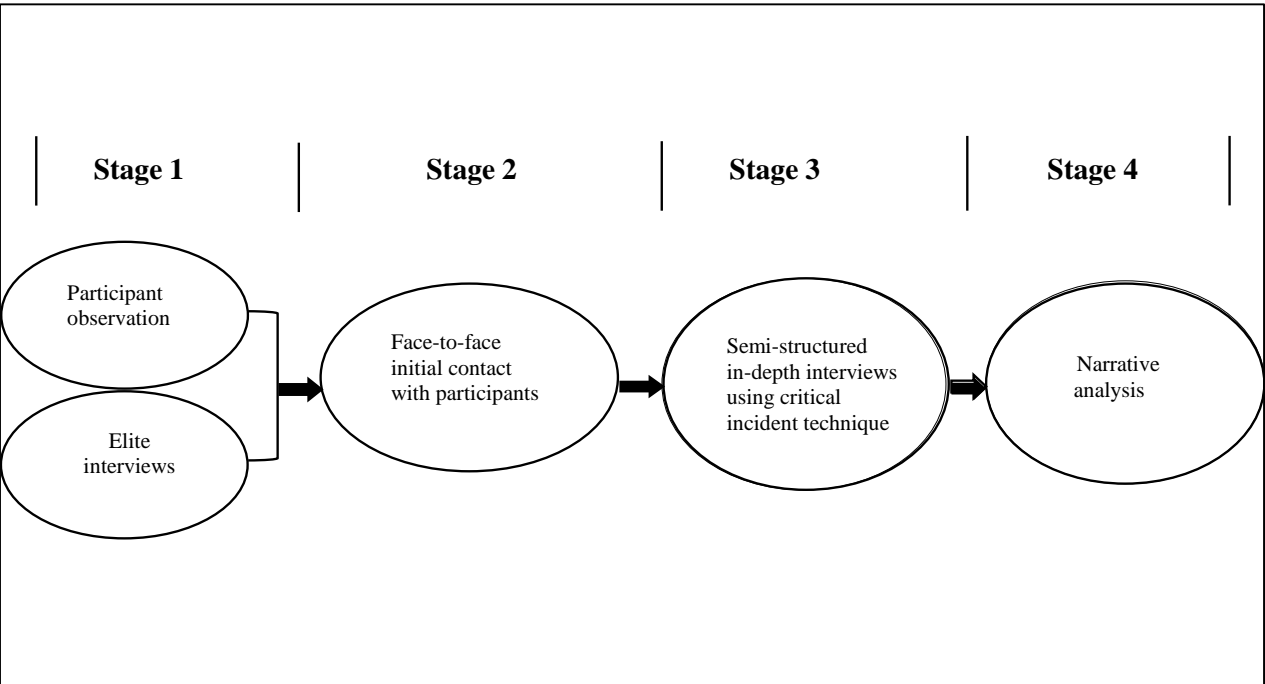
4.3.1 Research Context

The research context for this study was a five star hotel in the rapidly growing capital city of Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia. The five star hotel setting was chosen as service interactions are assumed to be prevalent and critical encounters for guests who desire a high level of service (Mattila, 1999a; Walls et al., 2011), particularly where there is a high level of contact between guests and frontline service-providers (Chase, 1977; Lovelock, 1983). In high contact service situations the impact of the service-provider on the guests' perceptions of their service experiences is likely to be high (McColl-Kennedy and White, 1997).

The five star hotel context was also chosen because service-providers in this context are said to be given greater autonomy than those in hotels with lesser star ratings to exercise control through empowerment to deal with service interactions (Hales and Klidas, 1998). Furthermore, five star luxury hotels highlight the income disparities between guests and service-providers (Sommer and Carrier, 2010). Given that Malaysia is host to a large number of Asian tourists, five star luxury hotels in Malaysia have experienced an increase in the number of Asian guests (Tourism Malaysia, 2013)

Research is often conducted in only one hotel or case hotel *per se* due to accessibility and the opportunity to gain insights into the various departments of the hotel (Dalci et al., 2010; Luchars and Hinkin, 1996). Other reasons include that a case hotel is ideal for longitudinal research spanning over several weeks to years to obtain research data (Akbaba, 2006; Haktanir and Harris, 2005), or that the case hotel has some 'uniqueness' that can provide rich and interesting data (Paryani et al., 2010).

For this study, the Malaysian five star hotel was chosen because it is among the first home-grown five star luxury hotels, and one of the most popular hotels in Malaysia. Due to its convenient location, resort theme park and premier shopping center, it is well-known for attracting tourists from neighboring Asean countries, such as Singapore and Thailand, to tourists from the Middle-East, China and Australia. The hotel's workforce is diverse, and includes employees from Indonesia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Bangladesh and from the various ethnic groups in Malaysia includes of Malays, Chinese and Indians. Due to its popularity and high occupancy of diverse guests, the hotel was thought to provide opportunities to research cross-cultural service interactions between guests and its service-providers.

The choice of Malaysia as a research site is that Malaysia has become a fierce tourism competitor to neighbouring countries, e.g. Singapore, Indonesia, and Hong Kong (World Economic Forum, 2015; Business Insider, 2015), but tourism research conducted on Malaysia is limited (Musa, 2012; Henderson, 2001). Malaysia was also chosen because it is a cultural melting pot owing to its geographical location, colonial history, and multicultural population (Tourism Malaysia, 2010). It is also where the researcher resides. Typically, tourists in this destination interact with a diverse range of cultures, including Malays, Chinese, Indians, Middle-Easterners, Europeans, Americans, Australasians and Asians (Tourism Malaysia, 2010). When compared with other Asian countries, such as India, Japan and Hong Kong, Malaysia has the highest power distance index score in the world (Hofstede and Bond, 1988; Johnson et al., 2005). Malaysia was, therefore, thought to be a fertile ground for studying cross-cultural related phenomena and a relevant context for this research, specifically around consideration of behaviours related to the interpersonal factor of power.

4.3.2 Research Participant Selection and Recruitment

As service interactions are dyadic (Surprenant and Solomon, 1987), efforts were made to ensure representation of the guest and service-provider cohorts. Similar to the term 'cohort' that is often used in education research to describe a group of teachers or students (McCarthy et al., 2005; Mather and Hanley, 1999), in this research, a group of guests and a group of service-providers were banded together or treated as a group and defined as guest cohorts or service-provider cohorts. Guests and service-providers were recruited individually and were considered as cohort members in the respective cohorts.

To ensure an equal representation of service-providers and guests in the research, 10 service-provider and 10 guest participants were thought to be a sufficient number to initially target. The rationale for an equal representation of service-provider and guest participants is to reflect consistencies which relate to credibility of the research (Ritchie and Lewis, 2014; Patton, 2002; Shenton, 2004), that is discussed in section 4.4. Another rationale relates to the adopted purposive sampling technique. According to Luborsky and Rubinstein's (1995: 8), "The goal here [on purposive sampling] is to provide for relatively equal numbers of different elements or people to enable exploration and description of the conditions and meanings occurring within each of the study conditions."

Purposive sampling involves selecting participants who are information-rich and can yield insights and in-depth understanding on the research topic (Patton, 2002; Patton, 2014; Palys, 2008; Ritchie and Lewis, 2014). Purposive sampling first involves establishing key criteria to ensure selected participants are qualified (Ritchie and Lewis,

2014). In this study, the criteria included having experience in cross-cultural service interactions, diversity in cultural background, and job positions/roles. With this, purposive sampling was used first to check that the research participants had the experience and knowledge deemed to provide insights into the research and that they were from diverse cultural backgrounds. In total, seven service-providers (nominated during elite interviews) and eight guests were identified using purposive sampling.

The snowball sampling technique was then used, as suggested by (Malhotra et al., 2008), to identify further participants. This was achieved by asking the initial informants (those selected through the purposive sampling) to identify or recommend subsequent informants who had the experience or possessed knowledge on the topic of investigation. In total, the seven service-providers and eight guests, who were initially recruited through the snowball sampling, recommended a further three service-providers and two guests for participation in the study

Based on the information gathered from the elite interviews and an analysis of data from the tourism industry, recruitment criteria were established to ensure that participants had the sufficient experience and, hence, were "qualified" to participate in the research. Service-providers were required to have a minimum of three years of work experience in a five star luxury hotel. For guests, they must have undertaken a minimum of three international trips per year and had stayed at least once in a five star luxury hotel on one of those trips. The minimum of three international trips per year is an average based on research on travel patterns of business (Global Business Travel Association, 2015) and for leisure (Statista, 2016) travellers.

Qualitative research, including that using narrative, focuses on deep explorations from a small number of informants in a particular context rather than on large number of participants (Bold, 2012). Constraint of resources and time often mean that trade-off between breadth (larger number of participants) and depth (smaller number of participants) need to be made, with researchers seeking to focus on studying specific experiences should aim to seek depth (Patton, 2014; Bryman and Bell, 2007). Based on the recruitment criteria, 14 of the identified potential participants (seven guests and seven service-providers) were deemed to qualify for participation and were willing to participate in the research. The sample size of 14 informants was within the recommended sample size for the qualitative research (Flick, 2009; Patton, 2002). Sample sizes need to be kept reasonably small in order to analyse the data deeply and to therefore yield rich detail (Ritchie and Lewis, 2014). In purposive sampling, sample sizes can also be kept small because the analytical techniques are generally thorough (Ritchie and Lewis, 2014).

Evidence of any phenomena need only to appear once in the analysis, there is a point of diminishing return, where saturation and variability is reached and a larger sample size might not contribute to new evidence (Guarte and Barrios, 2006; Guest et al., 2006; Ritchie and Lewis, 2014). It is possible for qualitative researchers to supplement a sample by adding members to it, or draw on a second sample within the scope of the same study under in sufficient evidence where saturation or variability is not reached (Ritchie and Lewis, 2014). In this research, however, it was thought that saturation and variability were reached as the data repetitively converged on similar themes.

The number also met Guest, Bunce and Johnson's (2006) recommendation to achieve saturation and variability for qualitative research. Several tourism studies, which similarly

aimed for richness in narrative texts, recruited and reported on a comparable number of research participants. This includes Wang and Mattila (Wang and Mattila, 2010) on service-providers coping with stress during service encounters; Caton and Santos (2007) on heritage tourism; Martin and Woodside (2011) on interpreting tourism experiences in Tokyo; Hsu, Dehuang and Woodside (2009) on self-reporting of urban tourism in China; and Holloway and Holloway (2011) on the interaction of "grey nomads" (retirees) with other tourists.

4.3.3 Stage 1: Participant Observations and Elite Interviews

In Stage 1, participant observation and elite interviews were used to gather preliminary information on cross-cultural service interactions between guests and service-providers.

Participant Observation

Participant observation is a field research method in which a researcher is present in a setting and takes part, to varying degrees, in the activities and interactions with a group of people, as a means of learning about their life and cultures (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2011). Through observation and sometimes interaction with the participants, discovery and generation of data assists to clarify a phenomenon (Guthrie, 2010; Patton, 2014). This method provides the unique advantage of being on the site where the actions take place, and provides first-hand experience.

For participant observation, the researcher first contacted the manager of the five star luxury hotel and gained permission to observe and interact with guests and service-providers. Upon discussions with the manager, it was agreed that the participant observation was to be conducted over stipulated times of four week period during the

month of July and August (year). This was to take advantage of influx of tourists from the Middle-East, China, and Singapore visiting Malaysia for the Annual Great August Sales. The participant observations typically took place over Thursday to Monday from 10 am to 3 pm as, according to the manager, the time and day has a high volume of guests checking-in. Observations were conducted, on average, for 15 hours per week over the four-week period.

The hotel lobby has a courtyard in the center, surrounded with floral and greens and marble seatings. The front-desk counter is about 10 feet on the right of the courtyard and next to the front-desk counter is concierge. The overt observations were carried out in the hotel lobby, around the front-desk and in the concierge area as these areas were the busiest and when service interactions were most likely to occur. Typically, the researcher sat in the courtyard to observe the service interactions. When there is a queue for check-in, guests and their counterparts such as family members or travelling companions sit in the courtyard and wait for to be served. This provided the researcher with opportunities to interact with the guests and observe interactions between guests and service providers. As the courtyard is close to the front-desk, the researcher would often speak to the service-provider upon the completion of a service interaction for clarification. In addition, the researcher stood around the concierge to observe and interact with the concierge and guests.

Participant observation can be structured (e.g. using a predetermined checklist with a specific focus), or unstructured (e.g. carrying a broad area of interest that is not predetermined but open-ended) (Marshall and Rossman, 2011). The former is appropriate at the end stage of data collection, when the researcher seeks to verify and confirm certain

themes. The latter is more suitable for the early stages of qualitative inquiry, as through unstructured observation, the researcher can discover recurring patterns of behaviours or relationships (McKechnie, 2008). Due to the exploratory nature of this research, an unstructured participant observation was adopted. It was thought that this approach would enable the researcher to discover and identify the salient and pertinent variables relevant to guest and service-provider cross-cultural service interactions. For example, when interacting with guests or service-providers, the researcher did not ask specific questions. Rather the questions are very general relating to overall interaction. Similarly, in observation, the researcher focus on the overall service interactions process and is open to any discovery.

Several observations were noted by the researcher. For example, there were two incidents where Middle-Eastern guests seemed to have encountered 'difficulties' with the service-provider during check-in. In both incidents, the Middle-Eastern guests were not fluent in English and service-provider did not understand their language. Observations were also made of guests from other cultures who were also not fluent in English but who did not seem to have 'difficulties' interacting with the service-providers. It was also observed that demanding guests tended to draw attention to themselves during check-in, but different service-providers seemed to have different ways of handling this situation. These observations later helped to craft the interview questions.

Elite Interviews

Following the participant observations, elite interviews were conducted to obtain hotel management perspectives on cross-cultural service interactions. Elite interviews are designed to understand an individual's perceptions of the research topic under study.

Participants are encouraged to reveal their notions of what is relevant and practical (Alam, 2005; Green and Thorogood, 2009; Collis and Hussey, 2009).

The elite are prominent individuals who are considered influential, or well informed in an organisation, and are selected for interviews based on their expertise in relation to the research interest (Marshall and Rossman, 2011; Flick, 2009). The elite interviews were conducted with two senior ranking managers who had extensive interactions with guests and had started their careers as service-providers in five star luxury hotels. The managers were interviewed separately. Each was briefed on the objective of the research and the research procedure. The interviews were semi-structured to allow for flexibility and to accommodate suggestions and views to be voiced.

The findings from the elite interviews were used to identify those factors that the managers thought contributed to positive and negative cross-cultural service interactions. These were then incorporated into the protocols for the interviews with the service-providers. In addition, the interviews provided an opportunity for the researchers to gather a list of service-providers who could potentially participate in the research.

4.3.4 Stage 2: Face-to-Face Initial Contact with Participants

Each of the 14 participants who met the recruitment criteria were subsequently contacted by the researcher through email or phone for a face-to-face initial contact. In initial face-to-face contact sessions, the objectives of the research were explained. Participants were also informed on matters of consent, confidentiality and anonymity. Letters of invitation to guest participants (Appendix 1) and service-providers (Appendix 2), together with a

list of interview questions (to be asked at a later date) for service-providers (Appendix 3) and for guests (Appendix 4) were provided.

This gave the invited participants an opportunity to review the research and its objectives and to understand the extent of their participation. Only one of the seven service-providers and one of the seven guests withdrew at this stage of the research, resulting in six service-providers and six guests, or a total of 12 informants, agreeing to participate.

The semi-structured in-depth interviews were held at mutually convenient dates, times, and venues. Each guest participant was given at least a month to prepare themselves for their interviews, allowing them the time to recall and record their past incidents of cross-cultural service interactions with service-providers.

Research Diaries

Due to the nature of their job, which granted them higher chances of experiencing cross-cultural service encounters with guests, service-providers participants were asked to maintain a research diary in the months leading up to their interviews, to help them keep track of their critical encounters with guests. They were able to record their own individual experiences (Holbrook, 2005; Markwell and Basche, 1998), which could also evoke positive and negative emotions (Hede and Hall, 2006). In turn, by studying the participants' self-recollection of their life stories in the form of research diaries, the researcher could use the material to illuminate and share the participants' experiences with others (Baron and Harris, 2008; Patterson et al., 2008).

As in situations where there could be many critical incidents, the research diaries were used to help the participants organise, structure and capture critical incidents, while at the same time enabling reflection and increasing comparability of their notes (Richards, 2005; Flick, 2009). It was also thought that by completing the research diaries prior to participating in semi-structured in-depth interviews, their memories would be refreshed for the purpose of providing details on specific incidents. The diaries, which were retained by the researcher after the semi-structured in-depth interviews, became important pieces of research documentation.

4.3.5 Stage 3: Semi-Structured In-Depth Interviews Using Critical Incident Technique

In Stage 3, the interview protocols for the semi-structured in-depth interviews with the guests and service-providers participants, which were developed initially around the key themes identified in the literature and conceptual framework, were refined (Appendix 6) following the elite interviews and participant observations. The interview protocols formed a conversational guide for what was to be asked in the interviews (Rubin and Rubin, 2005; Lodico et al., 2006).

The interview questions were open-ended and intended to encourage participants to share their experiences in cross-cultural service interactions. Thus, the interviews were constructed interactively by the interviewer and the informants (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004). Questions were asked relating to the interpersonal factors of actors' goal, power and control, as well as coping strategies associated with stereotyping. The open-ended nature of the interviews also provided the researcher with the flexibility to explore unanticipated, but related, topics that emerged from the discussion.

As suggested (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Babbie, 2013), the semi-structured in-depth interviews involved careful questioning and listening to collect specific knowledge about the research topic. In this research, the semi-structured in-depth interviews focused on gaining knowledge or meaning on cross-cultural service interactions through recollection of critical incidents relating to those interactions. The semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face and in English in locations convenient to the participants. The interviews were digitally recorded and notes were also taken to increase the accuracy of the data (Patton, 2002). On average, the interviews lasted 43 minutes. In total, this resulted in nearly six hours of audio recording.

4.3.6 Stage 4: Narrative Analysis

In Stage 4, narrative analysis was undertaken with the purpose of unfolding the ways guests and service-providers made sense of their cross-cultural service interactions at individual level. This would be used later for comparative analysis at cohort level. First, as suggested by Patton (2002) and also Rubin and Rubin (2005), the semi-structured in-depth interviews were transcribed verbatim. For this research, once the semi-structured in-depth interviews were completed, the audio files were transcribed within a month so that the discussion was still fresh in the researcher's mind. This also provided an opportunity for clarification and verification with the research participants (Gerrish and Lacey, 2010). The transcriptions were then loaded into NVIVO 9.2 software to aid analysis.

First Order Narratives and Second Order Narratives

In preparing for narrative analysis, Carr (1997) stated that it is important to make a conceptual distinction between types of narratives, namely "first" and "second" order narratives. First order narratives are also known as ontological narratives as they are constitutive of individual identities (Somers and Gibson, 1994; Stalker, 2009). In essence, they are stories or coherent accounts of key events that individuals tell about their own experiences (Elliott, 2005). For example, in tourism cross-cultural service interactional studies, Wang and Mattila (2010) used first order narratives from the service-providers to identify key themes for coping with emotional stress during service encounters. In this research, verbatim narratives were categorised as first order narratives. These are presented inside direct quotation marks in Chapter 7.

In contrast, second order narratives (also known as epistemological narratives) (cf. Stalker, 2009) are representational as they are collective of several individuals' accounts (Somers and Gibson, 1994) and are constructed by the researcher to make sense of the participants' experiences (Elliott, 2005). Second order narratives in this research were constructed by the researcher based on his interpretation of the guests' and the service-providers' cross-cultural service interaction experiences. These narratives reflect the researcher's view of the phenomenon under study. For example, Wang and Mattila (2010) used second order narratives interpreted from the service-providers' narratives to help them develop a stress-emotion-coping model. Specifically, the researcher developed second order narratives for each participant according to the selected key themes and the proposed components of the conceptual framework. Each second order narrative was written with reference to the participant's narrative account and field notes.

Categorisation versus Contextualisation

Once the first order and second order narratives were developed, the participants'
narratives were ready for meta-analysis. To undertake the meta-analysis for the developed
narratives, the researcher used Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber's (1998) model,
which offers different possibilities for reading, interpreting and analysing texts in
narratives. Lieblich et al.'s (1998) model first addresses the unit of analysis to decide how
the text in the narratives is to be treated, whether as a whole entity or dissected into parts
or categories. They suggest using either categorisation – where an utterance (or section)
of a complete text is abstracted into meaningful categories; or contextualisation – where
the total narrative is used as a whole. This processing of the text is illustrated in Figure
4.2.

Figure 4.2: Narrative analysis model
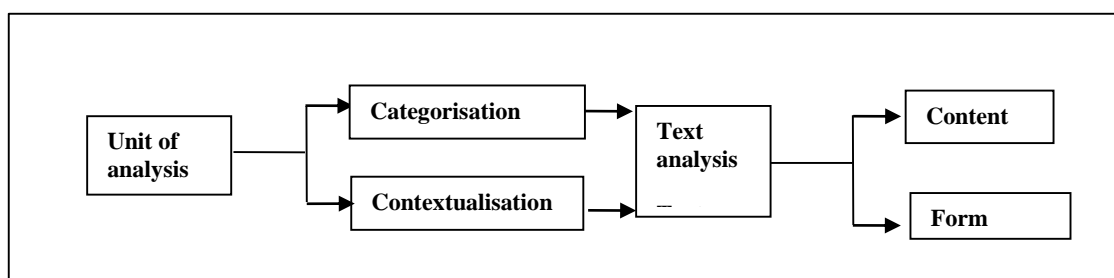
Source: Adapted from Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber's (1998)

The categorisation approach is recommended when the primary interest in a phenomenon
is shared by a group of individuals (Maxwell, 2005). The contextualisation approach is
preferred when a particular individual is of interest (cf. Gray, 2004; Lieblich et al., 1998).
Given that this research focus is on a group-shared phenomenon, the categorisation
approach was adopted for the narrative analysis.

Form versus Content

One of the aims of narrative analysis is to identify similarities and differences in the narratives to understand and make sense of them (Mishler, 1986). Narrative analysis also aims to connect events within a context to provide insights as a coherent whole (Maxwell, 2005). One way of examining the text in the narratives for similarities and differences is through the choice of either a form or content approach (see Figure 4.2). In the form approach, the focus is on the structure of the plot, the sequencing of events in relation to time, the feelings evoked, the style of the narrative, usage of words and metaphor (Lieblich et al., 1998). In this sense, the concentration is on the specific person as it seeks to elicit the person's identity through the narrative form rather than focus on the experience (Lieblich et al., 1998). In contrast, when a content approach is used, the focus is on the explicit content of a story; it addresses the "who, what, why and how" of an event from the narrator's standpoint (Lieblich et al., 1998). The purpose of concentrating on the content is to seek the meanings, traits, or motives, displayed by individuals in a story. The content approach was adopted in this research to extract meanings from the actions taken by participants in cross-cultural service interactions.

4.4 Rigour and Credibility

Whereas quantitative researchers address rigour through generalisability, validity and reliability (Bloor and Wood, 2006), qualitative researchers address rigour through multiple standards via *trustworthiness* within the parameters of qualitative ontology and epistemology (Morrow, 2005). Qualitative social researchers further embrace the concept of *bricoleur* or its rigour. The quality of the *bricoleur* is judged by the aesthetic and material tools deployed at hand to create the masterpiece (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008; Kincheloe and McLaren, 2008; Guba and Lincoln, 2008). The trustworthiness and rigour of qualitative research lies in the selection of the data sources that enhance an

understanding of a phenomenon (Polkinghorne, 2005). Embracing the concept of *bricoleur*, this research further addressed rigour at length through the following "trustworthiness" criteria:

Credibility refers to correctness in the description, conclusion, explanation, and interpretation of a study (Maxwell, 2005). Qualitative research does not provide "proof" or claim to have the "right" answer (Denscombe, 2007) as it recognises that there could be many possible answers to a social phenomenon. Thus, it is how the researcher arrives at the answer that is deemed important (Ballinger, 2006). One way to achieve credibility is through triangulation - ensuring that variety and multiple observations, theories, data sources and methods are used (Bryman and Bell, 2007). For this research, credibility was achieved through employing a variety of methods for the collection of the data and reporting, including narrative inquiry, critical incident technique, participant observation, elite interviews, the researcher's interview protocols and semi-structured in-depth interviews.

Transferability in qualitative research relates to the richness of the research findings as judged by the contextual uniqueness and the significance of the study (Morrow, 2005; Creswell and Miller, 2000). Transferability is what Geertz (1973: 7) termed as thick description or rich detail accounts of the phenomena being studied. Via narrative inquiry, this research was able to explore the complexities in cross-cultural service interactions and provide detailed accounts and rich descriptions of guest and service-provider experiences in those interactions.

Dependability is demonstrated through the provision of an explicit account of the methods, analysis, and the researcher's decision-making, leading to particular conclusions (Denscombe, 2007; Seale, 1999; Silverman, 2010; Shenton, 2004). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested using audits to establish dependability in research. In this research, the audit was operationalised through ensuring that the transcripts, research diaries, fieldwork notes, and data analysis records were reviewed at each stage of the analysis so that they would be reliable in the subsequent stages of the research.

Confirmability in qualitative research recognises that complete objectivity is impossible (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Wainwright and Sambrook, 2010; Given, 2008). Still, qualitative researchers can act in good faith and not allow overtly personal values to sway their findings (Bryman and Bell, 2007). To address confirmability, Denscombe (2007) suggested that researchers acknowledge their position by indicating their identity, values and beliefs, and they should avoid neglecting data that do not fit or align with rival explanations. This researcher addressed confirmability by indicating his point of view in the discussion, providing a section to discuss data that did not fit the topic under study (see Section 6.2.5.1: Additional Findings), and by presenting the relevant findings of others in the literature review and conclusions.

4.4.1 Ethical Considerations

The quality of any research can be revealed by its ethical considerations (Marshall and Rossman, 2006; Miller et al., 2012). In particular, if research involves negotiation and collaboration between a researcher and participants, relational ethics must be addressed (Huber and Clandinin, 2002; Grbich, 2004). This is to ensure that the relationship between the researcher and the participants is respectful and equal. Particularly, relational ethics

were demonstrated by explaining the purpose of the research, assuring privacy and anonymity, obtaining consent, and recognising participants' contributions and inputs. The research was approved by the Ethics Committee of Victoria University (Ethics approval reference no: HRETH 10/231).

4.8 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the researcher's stance, which involved a subjective approach to studying culture, interpretivist assumptions, a constructivist's ontology and a qualitative methodology. Narrative inquiry, which focuses on collecting stories based on participants' experience, was presented as the overarching methodological approach. With the research methodology described and the narrative analysis approach outlined, the thesis now proceeds to analyse the data and present the findings and discussion in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion

5.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, research methodologies were examined, arguing for a narrative inquiry approach in order to address the research questions. This chapter presents the stories from the guests and service-providers, following a narrative analysis at the individual level, and discusses those stories in relation to the literature. Section 5.1 presents the research participants' profiles. Section 5.2 then details the development of individual narrative excerpts and the coding process that was used to conduct the narrative analysis. In section 5.3, each participant's narrative analysis is presented, with a particular focus on the established key themes and sub-themes that are based on the factors influencing cross-cultural service interactions. These were summarised in Table 3.3. The individual level narratives in this chapter, were then used to undertake a comparative analysis at the guest of and service-provider levels in Chapter 6.

5.1 RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS' PROFILE

Table 5.1 presents a summary of research participant profiles. As can be seen, the participants came from diverse backgrounds in terms of demographic and cultural profiles. The research participants were diverse in terms of age, ranging from the late 20s to the late 50s and the final sample comprised an even number of male and female participants. Diversity was also reflected in the participants' occupations and their actor roles (guests or service-providers). The service-providers were from various departments, holding executive and frontline positions including hotel and banquet manager, front-desk, concierge and helpdesk attendant. Guest informants included leisure and business travellers and held a range of occupations, such as senior manager, senior sales executive and education advisor.

Table 5.1: Participant profiles

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Country of origin	Cultural background	Occupation	Actor's role	Level of education	Work experience (years) /	Trips per year (number)
Berlinda	Late 20s	Female	Indonesia	Indonesian	Senior Sales Executive	Guest (Business Traveller)	University Degree	Not applicable	15
John	Late 50s	Male	New Zealand	Scottish	Education Advisor	Guest (Business Traveller)	University Degree	Not applicable	3
Gunalan	Early 50s	Male	India	Indian	Manager Global Marketing	Guest (Leisure Traveller)	University Degree	Not applicable	8
Nata	Early 50s	Female	India	Indian	Head of Service Department	Guest (Leisure Traveller)	University Degree	Not applicable	5
Peng Yin	Early 40s	Male	China	Chinese	Senior Marketing Manager	Guest (Business Traveller)	Diploma	Not applicable	10
Nafal	Mid 20s	Male	Kuwait	Middle-Eastern	Student	Guests (Leisure Traveller)	University Degree	Not applicable	3
Amelia	Early 40s	Female	Malaysia	Chinese	Hotel Manager	Service Provider (Executive)	University Degree	9	Not applicable
Chong	Mid 30s	Male	Malaysia	Chinese	Hotel Concierge Attendant	Service Provider (Frontline)	High School Certificate	8	Not applicable
Hui Yee	Mid 30s	Male	Malaysia	Chinese	Hotel Banquet Manager	Service Provider (Executive)	University Degree	5	Not applicable
Johan	Mid 40s	Male	Malaysia	Malay	Hotel Front-Desk Attendant	Service Provider (Frontline)	High School Certificate	11	Not applicable
Teresa	Mid 30s	Female	Malaysia	Italian-Indian	Hotel Helpdesk Attendant	Service Provider (Frontline)	High School Certificate	6	Not applicable
Narul	Early 30s	Female	Indonesia	Indonesian	Hotel Marketing Manager	Service Provider (Executive)	University Degree	4	Not applicable

5.2 INDIVIDUAL NARRATIVE EXCERPTS AND CODING

The purpose of the narrative analysis is to identify the significance of the various key themes and sub-themes in relation to participants' service interaction experiences, and at the same time reference the narrative analysis to previous literature. For example, to explore for the sub-themes of power, narratives were reviewed for evidence of power, such as a loud tone of voice, complaining, ingratiation or whining (Levine and Boster, 2001; Fleischmann et al., 2005), and through nonverbal cues such as attire, physical appearance, interpersonal space, facial expressions, and body movements (Andersen, 1999; Afifi, 2007; Carney et al., 2005). To explore for the sub-themes of stereotyping activation and application, the researcher reviewed each of the individual participant's narratives for evidence of: 1) stereotyping attributions, such as rudeness, politeness, and shyness, as put forward by Bastian and Haslam (2006), Jarvis and Petty (1996), Pratto et al. (1994); and 2) for stereotype activations based on the two comparative implicit theories that participants could potentially exhibit.

The process of narrative analysis first involves developing individual participant narrative excerpts, followed by coding according to a format suggested from the literature (Saldana, 2012). The narrative excerpts are developed by gathering information from two sources:

- First order narratives taken directly from the narratives in the participants' stories from interviews, which are indicated by *italic* font and in quotation brackets.
- Second order narratives taken from the researcher's stories that include interpretation of the interviews with the respective individual participants and service-provider participants' research diaries. These are indicated by standard font without quotation brackets.

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In this research, each of the participant's narrative excerpts becomes emblematic of their cross-cultural service interaction experiences in relation to the various key themes and sub-themes. What results in the individual narrative excerpts is a combination of both the participant's voice and the researcher's voice.

The excerpts were then analysed and coded to identify passages of text that related to the key themes or the sub-themes. Those passages were coded with brackets and listed with the theme followed by **#** and a number to indicate the number of times that the key themes/sub-themes occurred. For example, a passage related to cultural differences was coded as "cultural differences" with '#' and a sequential number assigned to the theme. A higher sequential number indicated a greater number of occurrences.

Table 5.2 lists the complete set of codes that were used for the analysis. The codes were derived from the key themes and the sub-themes shown in Table 3.3. This approach to coding acts as a template to ensure that the analysis of each of the participant's narrative excerpts was done in a systematic manner.

Table 5.2: Coding used for cross-cultural service interactions key themes and sub-themes

Key themes	Coding of sub-themes
Characteristics of Guests –	Personal Characteristics of Guests Leisure Travellers Business Travellers
Characteristics of Service-providers –	Personal Characteristics of Service-providers Executive Frontline
Social Class Status –	Subjective Social Class Status Objective Social Class Status
Interpersonal Characteristics –	Actors' Goals Power Control
Cultural Differences –	Perceived Cultural Similarity Perceived Cultural Dissimilarity Perceived Cultural Familiarity Perceived Cultural Unfamiliarity
Co-Creation of Value in Service –	Co-Creation of Value in Service
Coping Strategies – Stereotyping –	Stereotyping Activation Stereotyping Application
Others - Emergent themes that influence cross-cultural service interactions that were not investigated in this research due to limitations of scope (e.g. language)	Others - Language

5.3 INDIVIDUAL GUEST PARTICIPANTS

5.3.1 Berlinda's Story

Pseudonym	Berlinda	
Actor's role	Guest	
Background	Country of origin	Indonesian
	Cultural background	Indonesian
Demographics	Gender	Female
	Age	Late 20s
	Level of education	University degree
	Occupation	Senior sales executive

5.3.1.1 Characteristics of Guest

When we met, I was surprised when Berlinda told me she was from Indonesia. Berlinda who has a fair complexion, shared that she is often mistaken for a Chinese woman from the northern part of China due to her fair appearance. Berlinda initially appeared to be quiet and she would listen to me carefully before responding with comprehensive responses. Berlinda gave me the impression that she is a good listener and probably a person who would be good in advising others (Personal Characteristics of Guests #1). Her characteristics further gave me the impression that when interacting with others, Berlinda would likely exhibit positive characteristics as found in the interpersonal octagon, including leading, guiding and advising (Birtchnell, 1994; Birtchnell, 1996).

Berlinda is in her late 20s. She joined her current company after completing her university degree. Her status reflects what was said about working individuals in their late 20s to 30s – that they are likely to be better educated, more affluent and more ethnically diverse (Sullivan and Heitmeyer, 2008; Huang and Petrick, 2010). As a senior sales executive, she travels internationally. As she often travels for work alone, she mentioned that safety was of concern, and that her company would normally arrange for her to stay in luxury hotel where they deemed she would have better security (Business Travellers #1). Therefore, she had experience with five star luxury hotels due to her work.

I asked Berlinda how she felt about taking part in service interactions. Berlinda provided insights into how the purpose of her trip influenced her pre-disposition to engage in with service-providers. She said:

> *... when I travel on a long trip into a foreign country, I just want to settle into my room as quickly as possible and get my things done ... (Actors' Goals #1).*

Berlinda went on to elaborate that normally she was on a tight work schedule and that her priority was on meeting that schedule. As a business traveller, Berlinda, tended not to see any value in striking up conversations with hotel service-providers, even though they may also be job-oriented and share common goals (Co-Creation of Value in Service #1). Later, it became apparent why Berlinda did not see any need or value in interacting with the hotel service-providers. She said:

> *... it's such a 'chore' [referring to front-desk check-in] ... I don't need those information [referring to local cultural information] as my local agent will be transporting me around ... (Co-Creation of Value in Service #2).*

Therefore, in Berlinda's case, goal congruity discouraged interactions. This finding is different to that in the literature. For example, (Shenkar et al., 2008) found that goal incongruity discouraged cross-cultural interactions.

Indeed, Berlinda's stories about her interactions with service-providers seemed to contradict other aspects that were suggested in previous literature. For example, researchers have argued that, generally, guests with a higher level of education are more likely to interact with the local hosts as they are motivated to learn and to experience new cultures (Richards, 1996; Richards, 2002), and are interested in local cultural products (Hughes, 1987). In Berlinda's case, she was not interested in the local cultures. There were times, however, when it was necessary and unavoidable for Berlinda to interact with service-providers. Berlinda mentioned:

> *… unless it is related to the rooms. I can be bit fussy … cause I usually insists to have my room to be in the corner so that its more quiet … (Power #1).*

From Berlinda's comments, it appears that she was willing to interact with service-providers if it helped her to get the room she desired. She seemed to place an emphasis on functionality rather than on experiences with regard to interactions with service-providers. Her comments also reminded me of what was discussed in the literature about travellers in their 20s to 30s who tend to be more individualistic and demanding (Wolburg and Pokrywczynski, 2001; Brooks, 2005). What she said further supported the view that compared with individual travellers in the same age group in other parts of the world, travellers in their late 20s to 30s in Asia are more pragmatic and have higher expectations about service requirements (Kueh and Voon, 2007).

Berlinda's frequent travel also required her to visit Middle Asian countries, such as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Berlinda's visits to these less touristy countries provided interesting insights into cross-cultural service interactions from a guest's perspective in those regions. She shared her experiences on an interesting encounter involving misidentification - because of her fair complexion by hotel service-providers in Almaty, the capital of Kazakhstan. She said that during an encounter at the front-desk check-in:

> *… they saw me and immediately spoke Russian to me, thinking I am a local from nearby region … I don't know they probably thought I was from northern China close to Kazakhstan… (Perceived Cultural Similarity #1).*

5.3.1.2 Cultural Differences

Berlinda explained that Kazakhstan receives large numbers of business travellers from the surrounding regions of Mongolia and north east China who tend to have very fair complexions. The service-providers in Kazakhstan would normally communicate with these business travellers in Russian. Berlinda's local agent explained to her that, although it appeared that the service-providers in Kazakhstan viewed these business travellers from the surrounding regions as culturally similar, their attitudes towards them were not amicable. She experienced such treatment herself with a service-provider in the Almaty hotel. She said:

> *... he looked fierce and cold ... not friendly at all. Worst still ... his*
> *tone of voice was rude and loud ... very intimidating ... (Power #2).*

5.3.1.3 Stereotyping

According to Berlinda, the experience created discomfort for her, as she felt helpless. It appears that the service-provider was exerting power through dominance, which supports previous literature (Levine and Boster, 2001; Fleischmann et al., 2005). Berlinda's negative cross-cultural service interaction experience due to misidentification under cultural similarity did not stop at Kazakhstan. She shared another negative cross-cultural service interaction experience in Uzbekistan. In a luxury hotel in the capital of Tashkent, Uzbekistan, Berlinda had an unpleasant incident involving the doorman. She said:

> *... I was carrying two luggage bags ... but the doorman did not help*
> *me. He just stood there with a false smile ... I guess because I looked*
> *local or Asian ... (Stereotyping Activation #1).*

Berlinda told me that she thought they were looking down on her because of her cultural background. Although she said "looking down" and did not use the word stereotype, what

she encountered seemed to me to be stereotyping, particularly when she described what happen next. As she was queuing up for hotel check-in, behind her was a guest who was a Western woman. When it was Berlinda's turn, she went up to the front-desk counter and, she recounts:

> *… they looked at me and ask right away "Where you are from?"… without asking for my passport. I told them I am from Indonesia and gave her my passport … you can tell she's not pleasant… (Stereotyping Activation #2).*

From Berlinda's stories, it sounded like she was a victim of cultural stereotyping. Her stories brought to mind what Operario and Fiske (2008) had said, that stereotyping information is stored and retrieved, and emerges for service-providers as soon as they think about tourists from other parts of the world (Moufakkir, 2011). It also reiterated that stereotyping is prone to be negative in service interactions (Reisinger, 2009). Berlinda's story further supported the suggestion that guests who feel judged are less satisfied than others (Wilkins et al., 2007) and may complain or spread negative word-of-mouth (Price and Arnould, 1999). In Berlinda's case, she was insulted and unhappy with the incident; she thinks they did not welcome her because she came from a third world country. The negative impact of the stereotyping deepened as Berlinda illustrated in the following with an intensified tone:

> *… I was upset when the lady [referring to the front-desk staff] in the counter, went to help the Western lady behind me … she have not even finish helping me yet … (Stereotyping Application #1)*

Berlinda mentioned that the service-provider's tone of voice was also different - she was more friendly and courteous to the Western female guest who was standing behind her in the queue. The stereotyping by the frontline service-providers reminded me of behaviours

associated with entity-theorists, who tend to make extreme judgements about others (Dweck et al., 1995), stereotype others (Levy et al., 1998), and tend to assume attributes are predictable (Levy et al., 1998). In this case, the service-provider probably assigned pre-existing negative attributes about Asian guests because Berlinda is Asian. In ending, I asked Berlinda how she coped with service interactions. She replied that she did not necessarily have to cope with service interactions but she said that, through her frequent travelling, she had learned how to better prepare herself when travelling to culturally dissimilar countries, saying:

> *… I always learn and get familiar with the basic terms in their language, such as greetings and thank you … I find this harvests good feelings … they really appreciate you making efforts to learn their language … (Perceived Cultural Unfamiliarity #1).*

It appeared that Berlinda was trying to reduce the impact of cultural dissimilarities by becoming familiar with the culture, supporting the notion of how perceived cultural familiarity can be acquired through knowledge and communication skills (Pulido, 2004; Ting-Toomey and Chung, 2012; Elfenbein and Ambady, 2003). This provided her with the confidence to deal with strangers during cross-cultural encounters (Beaupré and Hess, 2006).

5.3.2 John's Story

Pseudonym	John	
Actor's role	Guest	
Background	Country of origin	New Zealand
	Cultural background	Scottish
Demographics	Gender	Male
	Age	Late 50s
	Level of education	University degree
	Occupation	Education advisor

5.3.2.1 Characteristics of Guest

When I met John, who is a friendly and chatty person, I was impressed as he seemed to be someone who was concerned about the welfare of others (Personal Characteristics of Guests #1). He seemed to be interested in also interacting with others and related easily with others. This resonated with the characteristics of "closeness" in the interpersonal octagon (Birtchnell, 1996; Birtchnell, 1994). John, who was an Education advisor and often travelled to Malaysia for work, told me that his association with five star luxury hotels was because of his work and not through his own choice (Business Travellers #1).

5.3.2.2 Social Class Status

Since staying in five star luxury hotels was not his personal preference, John expressed that he was not comfortable or enthusiastic about some of the practices in such hotels. For example, one of the practices is the opening of car doors. It appears that New Zealanders prefer to open car doors themselves and having someone else opening the car door presents a social class issue. In John's experience in the five star luxury hotel in Malaysia, he mentioned that he found it 'strange' to have some Asian service-providers come running out from the hotel to open the car door for him. John commented:

> *... I know it is his job to open car doors ... but I feel very uncomfortable having the doorman opening the car door for me all the time. That's because it's a high class thing ... and I feel its suggesting class differences between me and the hotel staff, that he is lower class than me ... something like that ... (Subjective Social Class Status #1).*

It appeared that John was conscious about social class and he saw the act of opening car doors for another as implying differences in social class and insinuating the service-provider as powerless (Power #1) and as of lower social class. John, who at times

appeared to be humorous, also shared that he did not like hotel service-providers opening

the hotel doors for him, as he considered that this was pretentious. He commented:

> *... I just don't like it. I felt a bit awkward that they always open the doors for me. I know they think is nice but I'd like to open the door myself, 'cos that's just me ... (Subjective Social Class Status #2).*

He shared one funny incident when he purposely got to the hotel doors before the

doorman could get to it. Later though, he thought that the 'poor' doorman who was just

trying to do his job was probably standing there thinking, 'Who's that idiot? My job's

here is to open the door'. There seemed to be incongruence between the role of the

service-provider and guest (Broderick, 1998).

Even though John did not choose five star luxury hotels personally, he still shared some

of the expectations of business travellers. When asked what his expectations were of hotel

accommodation and what criteria was important, John replied:

> *... as I am not an adventurous person and my foreign language skills are limited, for me the most important criteria is the hotel location. That it has to be centrally located and near amenities. The location should also be safe. In addition, to me cleanliness is also very important ...*

John's expectations of, and criteria for, hotel accommodation reflect those suggested in

the literature for business travellers (Callan and Kyndt, 2001; Dolnicar, 2002). His criteria

of a central hotel location supports the findings of Weaver and Oh (1993), and in relation

to cleanliness, this was pointed out by Mccleary et al. (1993) and Lewis (1984). John's

criteria for safety, however, was a criteria emphasised for leisure travellers rather than for

business travellers (Clow et al., 1995; Marshall, 1993). I asked John about his willingness to participate in cross-cultural service interactions with service-providers. John answered:

> *… it depends on whether my trip is for work or for vacation. If I am travelling for work, time is limited and normally I am busy with tight schedules … however, if I am on vocation, particularly with family, we will want to experience the local culture and be more inclined to go out of the norm and experience something that is culturally different … (Actors' Goals #1).*

5.3.2.3 Co-Creation of Value in Service

John's comment indicates that his willingness to participate in cross-cultural service interactions is firstly dependent on his goals for the trip. In John's, there seemed to be two different sets of goals. His goals on business trips were very different from his goals for a vacation. Nonetheless, both sets of goals are in line with what was suggested in the literature. For example, John's goals for business trips were similar to those identified by other researchers for work oriented business travellers (Mattila, 1999a) and his vacation goals were similar to those identified for pleasure oriented leisure travellers (Krippendorf, 1999). In terms of his willingness to participate in cross-cultural service interactions with service-providers, he added:

> *… when it's a trip for work, I usually minimise interaction to the necessary … however, when I am on vacation, its total different, I will make efforts to talk to them and in fact use the opportunity to get to know the local interest … (Co-Creation of Value in Service #1).*

It appears that John saw value in engaging in service interactions with service-providers only when he was on vacation, as it seemed he was able to obtain information of local interest from them. In contrast, John did not see any value in engaging in service interactions with service-providers when he was on business trips. Further, John's

comment did not support the notion that actors who share similar goals are more motivated to interact (Ellingsworth, 1988), or the notion that a divergence in goals can demotivate individuals to interact with others (Amir, 1969). In John's case, his work-inspired goals during business trips were similar to those of service-providers, but the similarity in goals did not seem to encourage service interactions.

To better understand the role culture plays in influencing cross-cultural service interactions, I continued our interview focusing on John's cross-cultural service interaction experiences with service-providers. John said:

> *… for me when a person travelling to a foreign country, he is out of his comfort zone and faced with two challenges. One is the person has to deal with cultural barrier and the other, the language barrier, both can create misunderstandings … (Perceived Cultural Dissimilarity #1).*

It seemed that John's perceptions of the so-called foreign country was characterised with 'strangeness', a common description used in the literature to explain interaction in culturally dissimilar conditions (Neuliep and Ryan, 1998). Further, John's comment on what he considered to be barriers to interactions in a foreign country has also mentioned in previous literature (Brislin, 2000; Czinkota and Ronkainen, 2004). Subsequently, I asked John to elaborate on the language barrier issue. John commented:

> *… it could well be language that's the problem how these misunderstanding come about. They [referring to the service-providers] don't understand what is being said. I think it's either I'm not communicating it clearly or it's because they can't understand … (Perceived Cultural Dissimilarity #2).*

John seemed to emphasise the importance of language. The importance of language can be seen in his following comment:

> *... So it becomes important particularly from the service-provider to ensure that they understand what the guest is saying, and I think that becomes very important and you can't negate that because they are providing the service ... I'm not saying that the guest is always right because guests often aren't. But the onus has got to be on the service-provider on the first instance. But at the same time the guest has got to be aware and take ownership of the process ... (Others - Language #1)*

I wanted to clarify the issue of language and asked John to elaborate on his expectations of service-providers in terms of their language abilities. Recalling his personal characteristics of caring and concern about the welfare of others, he said:

> *... I don't expect them to speak perfect English. But to me it's more important is their attitude. If they cannot understand what I am saying in the beginning, they should make some kind of hand gestures, apologise and seek help right away and bring someone who can speak and understand English to assist ... (Perceived Cultural Dissimilarity #3).*

5.3.2.4 Cultural Differences

John's comment relating to the attitude of service-providers in handling language proficiency during interactions supports previous arguments about the importance of service-providers' attitude in the evaluation of service for business travellers (Barsky and Labagh, 1992; Gundersen et al., 1996; Dolnicar, 2002). I also asked John about cultural barriers in cross-cultural service interactions. He said he would normally prepare himself when visiting countries that are very different and thought that some guests often have unrealistic expectations that things would be the same as at home. According to John, the

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onus is on the guests. To experience the visiting country's culture, John said there is a need to understand a little bit of the culture before the trip. He elaborated by saying:

> *… so particularly for Westerners [referring to himself] going to culturally diverse countries, it's good to play a little safe by reading up. For example, I read up on Malaysian different ethnic groups. Basically it's a little easier if you know a bit about the country before you visit … (Perceived Cultural Familiarity #1).*

It occurred to me that John was attempting to overcome any anticipated cultural differences by making an effort to familiarise himself with the culture. This supports the notion of using cultural familiarisation to reduce cultural differences (Elfenbein and Ambady, 2003). John mentioned that one of the ways in which he familiarises himself with another culture was through reading. I asked him what others means he used to obtain cultural familiarisation. John said:

> *… before my trip I tend to go to government websites of the places I'm going to. So I know what to expect [culturally]. When my wife and I went to the Middle-East, we had a look at what the Dubai government was saying about the way Westerners should behave in Dubai. You know, this and that … can or cannot do. Like women travelling should have male support, and not advisable for women to travel alone … a lot of information … before I came to Malaysia for the first time, I went to the Malaysian Tourism sites. So I've got the information from reasonably reliable sources to know what it's like. I mean I would also ask travel agents what it is like … I even ask friends and relatives what they have experienced cause they have been there … so you get information from a number of sources … (Perceived Cultural Unfamiliarity #1).*

John's attempts to familiarise himself with the culture of the country he was visiting echo previous suggestions that cultural familiarity helps promote cultural understanding and helps reduce anxieties (Gudykunst, 1985). His means of acquiring cultural familiarity was described generally within the suggestion that cultural familiarity could be acquired

through knowledge and communication skills (Pulido, 2004; Ting-Toomey and Chung, 2012).

When we continued the interview focusing on positive and negative cross-cultural service interactions, John started to share one of his negative service interactions. This involved some negative treatment he received while checking into the hotel. As he had just disembarked from the plane after a nine hour flight, he was tired and was in a t-shirt and jeans. He felt that he was not treated with a warm welcome because of his attire. John said: *"…they were not friendly and was rude during check-in…"* (Power #1). He added:

> *… however … in the next morning, I was attending a meeting and was in suit and tie, when I went by the front desks, the same people who treated me rudely the day before was very friendly in greeting me, totally different attitude from before … (Power #2).*

John's experience in receiving different treatments from the service-providers, which he associated with his attire, reminded me of the arguments about power, as presented in the literature. First, it is argued that the issue of power is fundamental in social interaction (Russell, 1971[1938]), affecting how people are treated in those interactions (Guerrero et al., 2007). Second, that power is exerted nonverbally through attire (Andersen, 1999; Carney et al., 2005; Afifi, 2007). In John's case, power was displayed through him dressing in suit and tie on the following day, enabling him to receive completely different treatment from the same service-provider who had mistreated him the day before.

5.3.2.5 Interpersonal Characteristics

John continued to tell me about other negative service interactions. His recollection of negative service experiences rather than positive ones reminded me about the importance

of preventing negative interactions as they are more memorable than positive interactions (Berry et al., 2006). John proceeded to share how he would often 'prevent' negative service interactions occurring. His explained his strategy: *"… you'd be surprised … a friendly smile can help you deal with any situation with a stranger better …"* (Control #1).

John's strategy to prevent negative service interactions using a friendly smile supports the suggestion that control is often a central motive underlying human behaviour (Bruce and Thornton, 2004; Gecas, 1989; Gecas, 1982). It further supports the concept of self-efficacy, associated with control (Bitner et al., 1990). In John's case, his self-efficacy was positively associated with smiling. John also expected service-providers to use positive means in service interactions. He said:

> *… I don't expect much. I think smiling is important, even if they don't*
> *have good command of English, if they smile and are willing to at least*
> *try to help, that is all I am asking for … (Control #2).*

Without mentioning stereotyping, I asked John what his views were on service-providers from various cultural cohorts. With his jovial replies, he made no references to any cultural groups, nor did he make any comments that could be associated with stereotyping.

5.3.3 Gunalan's Story

Pseudonym	Gunalan	
Actor's role	Guest	
Background	Country of origin	India
	Cultural background	Indian
Demographics	Gender	Male
	Age	Early 50s
	Level of education	University degree
	Occupation	Global marketing manager

5.3.3.1 Characteristics of Guests

I managed to meet Gunalan, who work as a global marketing manager, on a vacation with his family (Leisure Travellers #1). Gunalan impressed me as an extrovert, as he was lively and full of confidence. He further gave the impression that he was very proud of his achievements (Personal Characteristics of Guests #1). Initially, he came across as boastful about his financial and job achievements, which reminded me of the negative characteristics of pomposity and boastfulness in the interpersonal octagon describing negative forms of relating (Birtchnell, 1996; Birtchnell, 1994). Gunalan gave me the impression that he would probably relate negatively to others in interactions because of these characteristics.

It was later into the interview that I understood why he had spent so much time highlighting his achievements. Gunalan was from Southern India, where, compared with those in the North, people were generally less "well to do" economically. This seemed to make him conscious of his cultural background and social status. Being a self-achiever, Gunalan, who now had a successful career, made a point of living well and wanted the best for his family. This included staying in five star luxury hotels. Gunalan remind me of descriptions in the literature of contemporary travellers who have unique characteristics (Feifer, 1985), generally they are wealthier, better educated and mature

(Maoz and Bekerman, 2010). Also, contemporary travellers are very individualistic (Torres, 2002) and put the self above all the other factors (Munt, 1994). They also have a penchant for luxury or boutique accommodation (Cetin and Walls, 2015).

I noticed that Gunalan also seemed to place emphasis on the importance of "dressing to impress". According to him, dressing well to impress others was a British colonial custom that had passed down through the centuries and still influenced him. He said:

> ... *In India, attire plays an important role, the impression with t-shirt is that it looks too casual ... if you want to get better attention in service ... you need to wear a proper long sleeved or minimum a short sleeved shirt ... (Power #1).*

Gunalan elaborated, saying that generally Indians gauge a person by what they wear. He thought it strange when a person wore a t-shirt; most Indians would automatically think that person was a foreigner. He further shared his belief in attire as a symbol of wealth in India, saying:

> ... *if you want better treatment, you need to dress well ... so that people know that you are rich ... that you got money ... (Objective Social Class Status #1)*

5.3.3.2 Interpersonal Characteristics

In addition, Gunalan's philosophy on the importance of dress extended beyond India. He further justified his emphasis on dress by recounting the bad treatment he received in Thailand. This treatment was not inflicted by hotel service-providers, however, but by Thai immigration officers. Gunalan said he was stopped by immigration officers and succumbed to inspections when he was dressed in a t-shirt. On another occasion, when he was not wearing a t-shirt, he was not stopped by Thai immigration officers. He

concluded that this was not coincidental but, rather, was due to his attire. Gunalan's encounters reminded me of the association of power with attire (Andersen, 1999; Carney et al., 2005; Afifi, 2007). In his case, t-shirts were not a symbol of power.

I proceeded to ask Gunalan about his willingness to participate in cross-cultural service interactions. Gunalan, who usually travelled with his family, said:

> *... we don't just stay in the hotel ... for us besides talking to people, shopping and food are always the highlights. We always try to taste different types of food and explore as many shopping centres as possible ... (Actors' Goals #1).*

Gunalan's comment indicates that for him and his family interaction in the hotel alone was not sufficient (Co-Creation of Value in Service #1). Gunalan and his family sought further cultural interactions, including interactions outside the hotel, beyond those with service-providers. In this sense, Gunalan's stories does not support the notion that service-providers often refuse to meet guests' need for interaction (Bettencourt and Gwinner, 1996; Hartline and Jones, 1996), which often causes guests to make complaints (Goodwin and Smith, 1990). Rather, it shows that it was the guest – Gunalan - who decided the choice of interaction, in this case outside of the hotel. It was also not evident in the data that asymmetry in goals between leisure travellers and the service-providers would discourage interaction with service-providers. This is contrary to implications in previous literature, that asymmetry in goals produces conflicts leading to negative interactional outcomes (Martin and Nakayama, 2011).

5.3.3.3 Cultural Differences

To find out more about Gunalan's experiences with cross-cultural service interactions, I asked him to share some of his service encounters. Gunalan, who has a Southern Indian cultural background said he had a negative service experience in Sri Lanka. Although Sri Lanka is a different island country located south of India, it has a lot of cultural similarities to Southern India. Gunalan also briefly mentioned the conflicts between the Southern Tamil rebels with the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka, which often made the two groups uneasy. This was the case in one of his encounter. He commented:

> *... they looked at my Indian passport and ask which part of India I am from ... and said so you are a Tamil ... and their tone is not friendly ... (Perceived Cultural Similarity #1).*

It seemed in Gunalan's case, that cross-cultural service interaction with culturally similar Sri Lankan service-providers was difficult, leading to an impression of negative service interactions. This does not support what was generally discussed in the literature about cultural similarity implying an affinity that would lead to congruency and positive interactions (Härtel and Fujimoto, 2000; Yoo and Sohn, 2003).

Gunalan shared another negative service interaction experience involving service-providers from India's neighboring country, Bangladesh. Although Bangladesh is culturally dissimilar to Southern India, the Bangladeshi are likely to be familiar with Southern India because of its proximity (Perceived Cultural Familiarity #1). Gunalan shared his check-in experience at a luxury hotel in Bangladesh:

> *... they [referring to the Bangladeshi service-providers] make you wait ... and said things like "Sir, I would love to help you but can you*

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*take a seat for 10 minutes please" ... they are not rude but you know
they are not sincere and you are at their mercy ... (Control #1).*

Gunalan also got the impression that they were not sincere from their firm tone of voice
and body language, such as 'rolling their eyes'. He thought they were being sarcastic to
him. Looking at what has been discussed in previous literature, Gunalan's experience
with the Bangladeshi service-providers supports the notion that cultural knowledge about
the person with whom one is interacting is used in the application of control (Gasset,
2003). In Gunalan's case, it is likely that the Bangladeshi service-providers took
advantage that the waiting time was reasonable within Southern Indian culture.

Gunalan's experience with the Bangladeshi service-providers seemed to further support
the notion that service-providers often use power to gain control (McElwain and Volling,
2002). This was evident in the use of a firm tone of voice and in deliberately making
Gunalan wait for service (Power #1). The incident also appears to support the notion that
taking control in the early stages of service interactions is a tactic employed by service-
providers to enhance their job performance (Karatepe and Uludag, 2008; Karatepe et al.,
2006). Service-providers think that by initiating a positive means of being polite, they
might reduce or prevent the occurrence of any potential conflicts (Nikolich and Sparks,
1995). In this case, the Bangladeshi service-providers were 'polite' and 'offered' to help
in advance, no matter how insincerely, so that Gunalan had no grounds for complaint.

5.3.3.4 Stereotyping

Without mentioning the word stereotyping, I asked Gunalan what he thought about
dealing with service-providers from various cultural cohorts. Gunalan seemed to focus
his mind on the negative service experiences he had with the Sri Lanka and Bangladeshi

service-providers and made negative stereotyping comments on the two cohorts (Stereotyping Application #1), as follows:

> *... to me the hotel staff in Sri Lanka are rude ... and I find the staff in Bangladesh are not helpful ... (Stereotyping Application #2).*

It became apparent from his stories that Gunalan was stereotyping because he first saw himself as a victim of stereotyping inflicted by the service-providers. Gunalan elaborated on the incident in Bangladesh, saying:

> *... because you see, in Bangladesh basically this particular hotel ... and they have a lot of Western hotel guests. So when you are in the hotel, the staff look at us differently. You can sense that they're thinking "oh you're not a Westerner and is one of those Asians, so I don't have to treat you that well". You can actually feel the difference in treatment ... (Stereotyping Activation #1).*

Gunalan believed that the Bangladeshi service-providers were biased and tended to give preferential treatment to Western guests. The incident affected him negatively in that he preferred to deal with non-Asian service-providers and avoid service-providers from Bangladesh if he could. Gunalan's experience of being the victim of stereotyping supports the idea that culture influences stereotyping under in-group (i.e. those with cultural-similarity) or out-group (i.e. those with cultural-dissimilarity) conditions (Fiske et al., 2002).

Contrary to the suggestion that cultural similarity implies congruency and affinity (Härtel and Fujimoto, 2000; Yoo and Sohn, 2003), or that cultural familiarity creates positive perceptions of interacting parties leading to positive interactions (Patterson and Mattila, 2008), this was not the case for Gunalan. He had been stereotyped negatively by service-

providers who were familiar with his culture. Gunalan's stereotyping, however, resonates with Mura and Tavakoli's (2014) findings. They argued that the fact that Malay Malaysians were familiar with Chinese Malaysian culture did not necessarily relate to favourable images or the positive stereotyping of the Chinese.

5.3.4 Nata's Story

Pseudonym	Nata	
Actor's role	Guest	
Background	Country of origin	India
	Cultural background	Indian
Demographics	Gender	Female
	Age	Early 50s
	Level of education	University degree
	Occupation	Head of service department

5.3.4.1 Characteristics of Guests

Nata, who is the head of service department, was the first guest participant that I interviewed. I met Nata in her orderly and decorous office and we formally exchanged greetings. Nata is North Indian, people who, according to her, are more formal, more traditional and wealthier than Southern Indians. I noticed the influence of her culture as she greeted me in a formal manner with both hands placed together palm-to-palm, rather than using the conventional Western style hand-shake.

When seated, Nata mentioned that she could only spend an hour in the interview. From the interview and from observations of her office, Nata gave me the impression that she was straightforward, organised and liked to maintain things in an orderly fashion (Personal Characteristics of Guests #1). She further gave the impression that she treasured personal space and privacy. In the course of our conversation she also seemed to want to

lead and control the conversation, which reminded me of the similar attributes of "distant" in relation to proximity, as mentioned in Birtchnell's (2014) interpersonal octagon.

When we started the interview, and once I introduced the topic of cross-cultural service interaction, Nata immediately reiterated the importance of cross-cultural service interactions. She argued that this affects the overall tourism experience, as also discussed in previous literature (Tsang and Ap, 2007; Brunner-Sperdin et al., 2012). When asked further about cross-cultural service interactions between guests and service-providers in five star luxury hotels, Nata responded:

> *… cross-cultural service interaction is particularly important in hotels because apart from the airport and the taxi, the hotel is where you first set foot in the new place or country you are visiting the first time … (Perceived Cultural Dissimilarity #1).*

> *… since me and my family are from a different country and probably not familiar with the culture of the visiting country, how the service-providers in the hotel interact and welcome us into the hotel in the first instance is very important … (Perceived Cultural Unfamiliarity #1).*

She further illustrated the importance of cross-cultural service interactions by adding that whether she would recommend a hotel to her colleagues, friends and relatives would depend partly on the interactions she had with the hotel service-providers. Nata's comment echoed what Parasuraman et al. (1988) suggested about the quality of personal interactions with service-providers as a critical component of the service quality evaluations made by leisure travellers. Her comment further supported previous studies that argued that customer satisfaction experiences in hotels were affected by the outcomes of positive or negative service interactions with service-providers (Lewis and McCann, 2004a). This influenced word-of-mouth, whether positive or negative (Mattila, 2001).

5.3.4.2 Interpersonal Characteristics

Nata enjoyed travelling with her family on holidays, but she preferred to travel to places that were safe. This resonates with suggestions that leisure travellers who are travelling with family (Leisure Travellers #1) prioritise family safety and interest (Clow et al., 1995; Marshall, 1993). When asked about goals for her trips, Nata said that her main goal was to spend time with family (Actors' Goals #1). Another goal was to meet and interact with the locals and get to know their culture. Nata commented:

> *… when we travel, having fun and enjoyment is important. I like to explore the country, culture and interact with the people … (Actors' Goals #2).*

Both of these goals have been observed by researchers in relation to leisure travellers in the 'above 50' age category, noting that family time and interacting with locals for cultural enrichment are main considerations (Horneman et al., 2002; Littrell et al., 2004). This thinking was also suggested in the literature relating to levels of education, arguing that travellers with a high level of education are more likely to prefer interacting with locals for cultural enrichment (Richards, 2002). In this sense, it is possible that Nata was willing to participate in service interaction as she saw the value of cultural enrichment through such interactions (Co-Creation of Value in Service #1).

Nata proceeded to share her interaction experiences with service-providers in cross-cultural service encounters, deemed important for leisure travellers (Clow et al., 1995; Knutson et al., 2009). Whether it was due to her job as the head of a service department or her character, Nata came across as having high expectations of service-providers in service interactions. For example, in recounting service interactions during check-in, Nata

mentioned that she expected service-providers to show basic courtesies, such as making eye contact when they were talking to her so that she knew they were paying careful attention to what she was saying (Control #1).

In this sense, contrary to suggestions that control is less important for Asians (Ji et al., 2000), control seemed to be very important to Nata. She also expected service-providers at the check-in counter to serve her drinks if there was a delay during check-in (Power #1). The way that Nata expressed her demands with a firm tone, reiterated how power was carried out by some guests in service interaction in luxury hotels (Sherman, 2005; Sherman, 2007). As Solomon et al. (1985) noted, successful service interactions are dependent on both guests and service-providers understanding expectations and showing congruence or agreement. In Nata's case, the service-providers might not understand or agree with her high expectations, and this might cause misunderstandings and dissatisfaction with the service experience (Bitner et al., 1997). She stated that since the hotel was five star, service-providers should be presentable when greeting guests. She said they,

> *… must be neat, tidy and clean … so that they come across they are well groomed … (Power #2).*

Nata placed particular stress on the custom of greeting hotel guests. She was influenced by the tradition of greeting others verbally as opposed to non-verbally, as emphasised in her culture. Exposure to the customary greetings of her upbringing had shaped Nata's expectations of service-providers in five star luxury hotels. She said:

> *… how the porter or the doorman greet you and welcome you to the hotel when you arrive is important. It's part of my expectation as*

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greeting someone using formal and proper title such as Mr or Ms is habitual and has a big effect on me due to my upbringing ... (Power #3).

5.3.4.3 Cultural Differences

Nata further shared the fact that she found it easier to interact with hotel service-providers who were culturally dissimilar to her (Cultural Dissimilarities #2). Nata illustrated this by sharing the positive cross-cultural service interaction experience she and her family had with British service-providers during her visit to London. She said:

> *... when we were in London for the first time, we were not familiar with many of the things and we were kind of lost. Of course, we did get information and instructions to certain tourist spots from the internet and also relatives and friends before we left but the information and the orientation we have it's not the same when we actually set foot there ... (Cultural Unfamiliarity #2).*
>
> *... so we had to consult the hotel service-providers (who are Westerners). They were very helpful and they even went to the point of telling us the directions verbally but also provided us with certain maps and routes ... (Cultural Dissimilarities #3).*

While Nata's positive interaction with Western service-providers who were culturally dissimilar is contrary to the notion that cultural dissimilarities can produce anxiety and conflict (Neuliep and Ryan, 1998), it should be noted that communication problems due to language barriers contribute to negative interaction outcomes within cultural dissimilarities (Brislin, 2000; Fasold, 1984; Mio et al., 2006). However, in Nata's case, I noticed that she was fluent in the English language; therefore, communication would not have been a problem in her encounter in London. This suggests that her proficiency in English could have mitigated the effect of cultural dissimilarity (Others-Language #1). Nata's story about a cross-cultural service interaction with Western service-providers in

London reiterated the fact that cultural differences influence service interactions (Weiermair and Fuchs, 2000; Wei et al., 1989) (Cultural Dissimilarities #4).

I went on to ask Nata how she would handle difficult service-providers and if she had employed certain coping strategies. She provided some very interesting answers. Nata stated that, in her opinion, there were no 'difficult' service-providers but rather service-providers with 'interesting' or 'amusing' characteristics. Perhaps due to her line of work, which was service related, she explained that service-providers who seemed 'difficult' probably lacked the appropriate training to handle guests. Her comment agrees with research arguing that what most frontline service-providers are concerned with is that they require hotel management to provide more training (Lam et al., 2001).

When referring to coping with difficult individuals in service interactions, Nata did not mention the employment of any coping strategies. In looking for information related to stereotyping, I asked what she thought about service-providers from various cultural cohorts, without mentioning the word stereotyping. Nata was careful with her answers. She did not make any comment related to stereotyping or any reference to any cultural groups. This gave me the impression that she was conscious of stereotyping and refrained from making any such comments. This could have been due to her professional position.

5.3.5 Peng Yin's Story

Pseudonym	Peng Yin	
Actor's role	Guest	
Background	Country of origin	Malaysia
	Cultural background	Chinese
Demographics	Gender	Male
	Age	Early 40s
	Level of education	Diploma
	Occupation	Senior marketing manager

5.3.5.1 Characteristics of Guests

After introducing himself when we met at his office, Peng Yin, who was a senior marketing manager, told me he travelled extensively due to the nature of his work. In particular, his job required him to travel frequently to countries in South East Asia, such as Vietnam, and occasionally to the unfamiliar territories of Africa and Middle Asia, such as Mongolia (Business Travellers #1). From his actions and speech, Peng Yin gave me the impression that he was a stern and serious person. He was very direct and at times came across as not very friendly (Personal Characteristics of Guests #1). In terms of relating to others, his characteristics resonated with the "neutral distant" segment of the interpersonal octagon, as I thought him likely to distant himself from others and show signs of needing personal space and privacy (Birtchnell, 1994; Birtchnell, 1996).

5.3.5.2 Co-Creation of Value in Service

I asked Peng Yin about his willingness to participate in cross-cultural service interactions with hotel service-providers. He replied unsmilingly:

> ... basically I'm a seasoned traveller, I know my way around. So in terms of service and all that, I'm not so particular about welcoming this and that ... or you come too often, shall I give you this or that, I show you where is this ... (Co-Creation of Value in Service #1).

Peng Yin further elaborated that even on occasions when the need for interaction with service-providers arose, he preferred to keep that interaction to a minimum. He said:

> *... only thing for service, if you want an iron to iron clothes, or maybe you forgot your toothbrush or some toiletries and you want some advice as to where to go ... I don't need them to show me where, I don't need pampering, I just need them to tell me ... that's all ... (Co-Creation of Value in Service #2).*

Peng Yin's comment resonated with Grönroos' (2008) suggestion concerning co-creation of value in service and the idea that interacting parties get involved in value co-creation in order to get something of value out of it. It appears Peng Yin did not see any value in engaging in the service interactions. In this case, Peng Yin did not any value contributions in term of knowledge, expertise or resources from the service-providers (Gummerus, 2013). Peng Yin's unwillingness to participate in service interactions reinforced the service-providers' co-creator role (Vargo and Akaka, 2009), that there is a need for cooperation from guests to co-create value in dyadic service encounters (Helkkula, 2011; Helkkula et al., 2012).

As Peng Yin continued to share his experiences of cross-cultural service interactions, another probable reason why he was unwilling to participate in cross-cultural service interactions became apparent. Peng Yin said:

> *... because I just want to come in, get the key, go to the room, just unpack and get ready for the next thing for my work ... (Actors' Goals #1).*

5.3.5.3 Cultural Differences

Peng Yin's comments support the descriptions of business travellers, that they tend to emphasise comfort and efficiency (Mattila, 1999a). It further supports the research

relating to business travellers' expectations of service-providers, which is focused on promptness rather than on their socialisation skills (Chu and Choi, 2000; Griffin et al., 1997). I asked Peng Yin to share more of his cross-cultural service interaction experiences with service-providers. He gave a steely look and moved on to talk about his service interaction experiences in Vietnam, saying:

> *… Vietnam is very different from Malaysia…(Perceived Cultural Dissimilarity #1) … it's hard to believe … but within Vietnam, North and the South Vietnamese is also very different even after 20 years … It's like you have two different systems in one country … (Perceived Cultural Dissimilarity #2).*

Peng Yin explained that he noticed the differences between communist North Vietnam and capitalist South Vietnam. When I asked what some of the differences were, Peng Yin described the differences in the context of service-providers in the North and South Vietnam. He said:

> *… you will notice … the hotel staff in the south [referring to South Vietnam] are friendlier and more open, the ones in the north [referring to North Vietnam] are rude and secluded … (Stereotyping Application #1).*

Peng Yin's comment echoed discussions in the literature that emphasised people's tendency to stereotype groups based on cultural backgrounds (Prentice and Miller, 2007) and interpret and attribute their behaviour and actions as dispositional rather than situational (Yzerbyt and Rogier, 2001). In Peng Yin's case, he saw the North and South Vietnamese as two distinct groups and the members of each group having distinctive cohort characteristics and behaviour. His views further support the previous literature suggestions that the perceptions of group distinctiveness shape an individual's interactional behaviours towards that group (Spears et al., 2004).

Peng Yin proceeded to elaborate on a service encounter experience that occurred in a luxury hotel restaurant in North Vietnam. He was alone and had ordered some food and asked for a coke. When the coke came, it was not cold. He asked to the service-provider, "Can I have some ice?" The service-provider came and she felt the bottle with her hand and said, "It's cold already", and just walked away. Peng Yin said:

> *… she [referring to the waitress] was very rude, very bad manners …*
> *didn't even give me a chance to reply … (Stereotyping Application #2).*

It seemed that this negative service experience affected Peng Yin, as he told me later that since then he had a bad impression of service-providers from North Vietnam. In this sense, his negative experience supports the literature suggestion that there is a strong tendency for people to stereotype others based on ethnic categories or sub-culture groups (Prentice and Miller, 2007).

Peng Yin continued to share his negative service experiences in North Vietnam and helped shed some light on the North Vietnamese service-providers' behaviours. According to him, he found out from fellow business travellers that North Vietnamese service-providers did not interact much because, apparently, they could be arrested for talking to a foreigner. He was told of an incident in which one Northern Vietnamese service-provider had spoken to two Russian women visitors and, after the brief conversation, he was questioned by the police and had to write a letter to explain what he told the Russian women.

Peng Yin's service experience in South Vietnam was very different to what he encountered in the North. He said:

> *… but in the south, when you go to the shop, they would talk to you, they would say "How are you, where you from, do you want this and do you want that" … (Perceived Cultural Dissimilarity #3).*

5.3.5.4 Stereotyping

According to Peng Yin, in his numerous visits to South Vietnam, the majority of his service encounters with the service-providers were positive. He described his overall perceptions of the South Vietnamese service-providers, saying:

> *… general I found they [referring to the service-providers in South Vietnam] are a bit more genuine and also they are definitely friendlier, of course this is also they wanted to make more money … (Stereotyping Activation #1).*

Peng Yin's story helped illustrate guest stereotyping of service-providers. Particularly, Peng Yin's negative stereotyping of North Vietnamese service-providers and positive stereotyping of South Vietnamese service-providers seemed to support arguments around common stereotyping attributes as proposed in the literature. For example, Peng Yin included rudeness, unfriendliness and control, as negative stereotyping attributes and politeness, intelligence and shyness as positive stereotyping attributes (Bastian and Haslam, 2006; Jarvis and Petty, 1996; Pratto et al., 1994). His stereotyping pattern also supports the suggestion that stereotyping can have positive and negative outcomes (Moufakkir, 2011). It does not however support the suggestion that stereotyping is prone to negative outcomes in service interactions (Čivre et al., 2013; Reisinger, 2009), as his valence stereotyping on the South Vietnamese service-providers were mostly positive.

I proceeded to ask Peng Yin about other cross-cultural service interaction experiences and he shared his encounter in Zambia, Africa. He first gave some background, explaining that there were many mainland Chinese people working in mining relating industries in Zambia, mostly as miners. According to Peng Yin, the Chinese labourers working in Zambia's mining industries usually had a low level of education and did not speak or understand English very well. He commented on an incident that he witnessed when a Chinese group were mistreated during check-in in a state run hotel in Zambia. He said:

> *… because they [referring to the Chinese workers] don't speak and understand English, the hotel staff talked to the Chinese rudely and give short instructions like, 'Stand here', 'Wait there' … (Stereotyping Application #3).*

According to Peng Yin, Zambians despised the Chinese workers for 'exploiting their mineral resources' from the country. When it came to Peng Yin, he said he was afraid initially that they would treat him just as they had the Chinese group before him. Although they gave him the same look because he is Chinese, when they heard him speak English, their attitude immediately changed to a more positive tone. He said:

> *… when it was my turn, they thought I was the same as the previous group of Chinese … but when I spoke English to them … they treat me different … (Others-Language #1).*

Despite Peng Yin stereotyping service-providers from North Vietnam, he himself was afraid of being a victim of stereotyping in his encounters in Zambia.

5.3.6　Nafal's Story

Pseudonym	Nafal	
Actor's role	Guest	
Background	Country of origin	Kuwait
	Cultural background	Middle-Eastern
Demographics	Gender	Male
	Age	Early 20s
	Level of education	University degree
	Occupation	Student

5.3.6.1 Characteristics of Guests

Nafal from Kuwait, was a student studying in Malaysia. He had travelled to Malaysia
once before and it was during that trip that he and his family decided that he should study
in Malaysia (Leisure Travellers #1). Nafal gave me the impression that he was bashful
and quiet, probably due to his lack of confidence in his proficiency in spoken English,
although he spoke English reasonably well. He impressed me as a person who would be
in the "lower distant" segment of the interpersonal octagon, being obedient and respectful
in relating to others (Birtchnell, 1994; Birtchnell, 1996).

5.3.6.2 Cultural Differences

Nafal admitted that he knew very little about Malaysia before his visit, other than the fact
that it was a Muslim country. He thought initially that Malaysians were all Muslims and
he himself is a Muslim (Perceived Cultural Familiarity #1).

Nafal soon found out that Malaysia was not only culturally different (Perceived Cultural
Dissimilarity #1) but also culturally unfamiliar and quite different to what he had thought.
Hi said:

> *… I did not know that there are different ethnic groups like the Malays,*
> *Chinese and Indians in Malaysia … I always thought Chinese are*

Buddhists but did not know that some Chinese in Malaysia are Christians and Muslims … (Perceived Cultural Unfamiliarity #1).

Despite finding some cultural unfamiliarity in Malaysia, Nafal said he and his family were relieved to find cultural similarity in food, particularly Muslim food (Perceived Cultural Similarity # 1). He explained that food was one of the main considerations in planning his trips, to ensure that he and his family had access to *halal* food (food permitted by the Muslim religion). Nafal's emphasis on food reminded me of what was suggested in the previous literature that culture plays an influencing role on food (Meigs, 1997).

I asked Nafal about his willingness to participate in cross-cultural service interactions with hotel service-providers. Nafal replied:

… personally, I don't like to interact and don't feel I need to … (Co-Creation of Value in Service #1).

Nafal's comment, in a sense, supports what some of the literature emphasised, that the concept of co-creation of value is very individualistic as some individuals just do not see or hold any value in interacting or appreciate the idea of participating in co-creation of value with service-providers (Payne et al., 2008; Gummerus, 2013; Grönroos and Voima, 2013). Nafal did not seem to perceive any value in co-creation during his service interactions (Veloutsou et al., 2005). His comment supports the suggestion that value in co-creation is perhaps an elusive concept in the service literature (Woodall, 2003).

I asked Nafal to share his cross-cultural service interaction experiences with service-providers. Nafal said that generally, he travelled with his family and most of the service interactions were handled by his elder sister, who was in her 40s. He also mentioned that

his sister was a curious person and loved to interact with the locals. I was surprised to learn from Nafal that check-in was handled by his sister, as the impression I had from the literature was that there were restrictions imposed on Middle-Eastern women (Moghadam, 2007). Nafal elaborated:

> *… Middle-East is big … although many countries have similar cultures … some are more strict than the others … Saudi Arabia is very strict on women speaking in public … but not so for Kuwait … (Perceived Cultural Similarity #1).*

Nafal's explanation gave me a better understanding of Middle-Eastern cultures and people. Generally, people tend to consider Middle-Easterners as one group and forget that the Middle-East consists of many countries and ethnicities. According to Nafal, the Middle-East region has many different customs. For example, countries like Kuwait are not as strict as countries like Saudi Arabia. In Saudi Arabia, women are restricted from speaking to any male service-providers but this is allowed in Kuwait. That it was why Malaysian male receptionists were 'surprised' when Nafal's sister handled the check-in and that she was enthusiastic about interacting with them. He said:

> *… they are shocked because they did not expect my sister [… from Kuwait] handle the check-in … you can tell the male service-provider not sure if he should deal with my sister … (Perceived Cultural Unfamiliarity #2).*

Nafal described his sister as educated in London and proficient in English and he added that she liked to take charge of things, including planning their family trips. He said:

> *… she did all the hotel reservation … that's why she always want to double check if the reservation is okay according to her plan … (Control #1).*

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Nafal's story concerning his sister's dealings with the front-desk staff reminded me of discussions in previous literature about how the demographic and interpersonal characteristics of guests affect service interactions with service-providers (Thrane, 2008; Karatepe et al., 2006). In this case, it was possible that Nafal's sister's personality and high level of education went against what was expected of her as a Middle-Eastern woman (Al-Makhamreh and Lewando-Hundt, 2008; Beerli and Martín, 2004). This could have affected the male service-provider's indecision about dealing with Middle-Eastern woman during check-in.

5.3.6.3 Others - Language

In addition, Nafal's sister seemed to gain control of her hotel reservation using her proficiency in the English language (Others-Language #1). This supports the arguments in the literature that control in cross-cultural interactions is gained through cross-cultural communication competence (Matveev and Nelson, 2004). In Nafal's sister's case, cross-cultural communication competence involved the mastery of English, which enabled her to communicate successfully with people from another culture (Spitzberg, 1997; Klyukanov, 2005). However, not everyone in Nafal's family was proficient in English and they did have problems with check-in. He shared an incident involving his uncle and cousins, who did not speak or understand English:

> *... they [referring to his uncle and cousins] wanted to request for an additional bed ...they had a hard time as the staff did not understanding what they want ... (Others-Language).*

It appeared that his cousins and his uncle had problems getting service because they did not speak English.

I then asked Nafal what he thought of service-providers and how he would describe them. Nafal replied:

> *… I was surprised to see many service-providers who are Malaysian. It's very different in Kuwait and also the Middle-East … we don't have local Middle-Easterners working in the hotel counters, they are usually all foreigners … (Perceived Cultural Dissimilarity #1).*

5.3.6.4 Social Class Status

Nafal provided me with a brief background of the general employment landscape in Kuwait and the Middle-East. According to him, hardly any Middle-Easterners work in hotels and restaurants, especially in operational positions, which are considered to be low level. It seemed that most of the workers in hotels and restaurants were foreigners from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and the Philippines. When asked about his experience with these foreigners in hotel service interactions, Nafal said:

> *… usually they [referring to the foreign hotel service-providers] will open the door for us … it's expected … (Subjective Social Class Status #1).*

Nafal's comments reminded me of studies which argue that in social interactions the interacting parties' status is defined by the individual's social class (Gray and Kish-Gephart, 2013; Berger et al., 1972). In addition, it is argued that two interacting parties in service interactions are seldom equal in class, whether socially or economically (Allen, 2004; Stryker and Macke, 1978). Instead, such interactions may be embedded with inequality, exploitation and unevenness (Wearing et al., 2010).

In concluding, Nafal helped me to understand the social class gap between the wealthy and poor in Kuwaiti society. He explained that while Kuwaiti men and women might

come across as all wearing the same attire - a traditional long-sleeved, floor length outfit called *dishdasha* for men and a long-sleeved, loose, floor length dress called *daraa* for women - the materials and prices were very different depending on economic status. He said that the wealthy might wear a *dishdasha* that cost USD 5000 compared with an ordinary *dishdasha* that cost USD 300 (Objective Social Class Status #1). The same could be said for women's *daraa,* with the wealthy wearing more expensive quality materials.

5.4 INDIVIDUAL SERVICE-PROVIDER PARTICIPANTS

5.4.1 Amelia's Story

Pseudonym	Amelia	
Actor's role	Service-provider	
Background	Country of origin	Malaysia
	Cultural background	Chinese
Demographics	Gender	Female
	Age	Early 40s
	Level of education	University degree
	Occupation	Premium club manager

5.4.1.1 Characteristics of Service-providers

Amelia was the first service-provider in a managerial position that I had interviewed. She gave me the impression that she was very friendly and liked to interact with others and related easily to them (Personal Characteristics of Service-providers #1). Her friendliness resonated with the idea of seeking "closeness" in interactions (Birtchnell, 1996). Amelia said:

> *… one of the reasons I enjoy my work and chose to work in hospitality is that I personally love and make it a goal to interact with people … (Actors' Goals #1).*

I thought that Amelia, who is in her 40s, sought a job in hospitality because it would offer her quality in life (Wong and Ko, 2009), and I had the impression that she had a high level of job satisfaction. This, I thought, might be a function of her enjoyment in interacting with people, rather than due to a focus on her pay. Her level of job satisfaction was contrary to the general findings that female employees in hospitality tend to experience job dissatisfaction due to their focus on the lack of promotion and/or low pay (Kim et al., 2009; Thrane, 2008). Amelia's enjoyment in interacting with people extended to her love of travelling with her husband. They had travelled extensively to Europe, Australia, New Zealand and Asia, and when travelling they made it one of their goals to meet and interact with the locals (Actors' Goals #2).

The fact that Amelia liked to have cross-cultural interactions could be associated with her level of education. The literature suggests that people with high levels of education are more likely to interact with locals when they travel (Richards, 2002). In addition, Amelia mentioned that she was a curious person and liked to find out about other cultures different from her own (Perceived Cultural Dissimilarity #1). As a result, she had been exposed to many cultures and customs. In turn, this had helped her in her job. As a premium club manager in the hotel, when interacting with guests, she was expected to be familiar with various cultures and customs (Perceived Cultural Familiarity #1) (Perceived Cultural Unfamiliarity #1), which probably motivated her and added to her interest in wanting to know about other cultures.

5.4.1.2 Social Class Status

In her position, Amelia had extensive dealings with wealthy guests. Through her, I gained an understanding of the certain behaviors of wealthy guests, which could be explained by

the asymmetry in social class status between them and those who provide service to them. For example, I understood from Amelia that some guests from the Middle-East were extremely rich (Objective Social Class Status #1) and booked several rooms at the same time for their families, even rooms for their maids. Some of them made room bookings for three weeks although they might stay for only two weeks while they travelled around Malaysia. Most of them brought their maids, who were from either the Philippines or Cambodia and mainly took care of the children or carried bags. In the hotel restaurants, the maids were seated at a separate table, not together with the children and the families, as they were considered to be in the lower social class status (Subjective Social Class Status #1). Amelia further explained the manner in which some of the wealthy guests from the Middle-East talked to the hotel service-providers, in a way similar to how they talked to their maids (Objective Social Class Status #2),

Amelia also mentioned, without specifying the guests' cultural background, that some other wealthy guests who are also regulars could be nasty if service-providers did not accommodate their needs. She said:

> *… they want to be treated like king and queen, or prince and princess.*
> *Yes, they like to be treated that way, and if you don't accommodate,*
> *they get nasty … (Power #1).*

It appeared that the guests' acts reflected the assertion of power, as suggested in the literature (Levine and Boster, 2001; Fleischmann et al., 2005). Some of these wealthy guests came with very high expectations. For example, as shared by Amelia, one wealthy guest, who was also a business traveller (Business Travellers #1), was informed about a complimentary cocktail evening in the business lounge when he made his reservation and he expected to have the cocktail ready for him when he arrived. There was a

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misunderstanding, since Malaysia is a Muslim country, where alcohol is not encouraged. The hotel's cocktail evening referred to cocktail food and not to an alcoholic drink. The guest was not amused and did not accept this explanation. He was firm and particular about his rights. To him it was about not getting what was expected. He even took pains to write a long and detailed complaint about the misunderstanding of the term cocktail. This behaviour echoes what has been detailed in the literature about business travellers, in that they are more likely to complain when their expectations of service delivery are not met (Knutson et al., 2009; Chu and Choi, 2000). In this case, the complaining behaviour was accentuated by cross-cultural interactions.

5.4.1.3 Cultural Differences

When asked about her experience with guests from different cultures in service interactions, Amelia held the opinion that often service interactions are more difficult with guests who are culturally similar (Perceived Cultural Similarity #1). She shared with me an incident that her subordinate, who is a Chinese Malaysian, reported to her about a demanding guest from neighbouring Singapore. She said:

> *... one of my subordinates told me that they (the Singaporean Chinese)*
> *think they are much more superior than us ... they are very demanding*
> *... (Power #2).*

She further shared her personal positive service interaction experiences, many of which were with Western guests from America and Australia (Perceived Cultural Dissimilarity #2).

I asked her what could have contributed to positive interactions with culturally dissimilar guests and how was she able to overcome challenges within such interactions. Amelia, a

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Malaysian with a Chinese cultural background, suggested that one way to overcome cultural dissimilarities (Perceived Cultural Dissimilarity #3) was to know or be familiar with the other culture (Perceived Cultural Familiarity #2). She said, by interacting with guests, asking questions, talking to them, one would be surprised by what could be learnt about another culture. Further, she was able to apply the cultural knowledge that she had learned with her interactions with guests. In this sense, Amelia was fulfilling her goal to interact with people (Actors' Goals #3) and it seemed that Amelia created value by engaging in service interactions with her guests and learning about their cultures (Co-Creation of Value in Service #1). Amelia provided a specific example of how she overcame obstacles relating to cultural dissimilarity, which involved some German guests. She said:

> *… Germans do not like to approach others and talk, rather they prefer others to approach them first. But when you approach and talk to them, you should keep a certain distance and not to be too close to them as they get offended because of the close proximity … (Perceived Cultural Dissimilarity #4).*

Amelia added that having learnt this, she now knows how to handle German guests and is able to interact better with them. In this sense, although Amelia's initial encounters with German guests were difficult, characterised by strangeness, anxiety and possible negative consequences (Neuliep and Ryan, 1998), through her efforts to learn about the German culture, Amelia was able to turn a situation of cultural dissimilarity into one of cultural familiarity with positive consequences (Perceived Cultural Familiarity #3).

5.4.1.4 Stereotyping

When ask how she dealt with difficult customers from certain cultural groups and whether she employed coping strategies to manage cross-cultural service interactions, Amelia

seemed to avoid a direct response. For example, Amelia did not describe the cultural

background of guests who had been difficult customers. I also noticed that Amelia was

non-judgemental about others based on their culture and she did not stereotype the guest

based on their cultural background. Rather, she used the term 'guest from an interesting

culture' when describing a difficult guest. Without mentioning the word stereotyping, I

asked Amelia about her perceptions of various cultural cohorts. Amelia replied:

> *… Westerners, and particularly the Americans, are very friendly. They*
> *are curious about your culture and usually take the time to talk to you*
> *to get to know more about the place and culture … (Stereotyping*
> *Application #1).*

It seemed that Amelia focused on the positive attributes of her Western guests, such as

their friendliness (Haslam et al., 2006). Her comment shows that her stereotyping of

American guests as a cohort (Stereotyping Application #2) was positive and reflected

positive service interactions. Amelia seemed uninhibited and open during her interactions

with Western guests, particularly with American guests. This attribute reflects that of an

incremental-theorist (Dweck et al., 1995), who is less likely to make negative inference

about others (Chiu et al., 1997). It could, however, be due to her executive position as a

manager (Executive #1), which meant that she refrained from negative stereotyping

activation (Stereotyping Activation #1), and application (Stereotyping Application #2).

5.4.2   Chong's Story

Pseudonym	Chong	
Actor's role	Service-provider	
Background	Country of origin	Malaysia
	Cultural background	Chinese
Demographics	Gender	Male
	Age	Mid 30s
	Level of education	High school certificate
	Occupation	Hotel concierge

5.4.2.1 Characteristics of Service-providers

Chong, who was a concierge with a frontline position, asked me to meet him in a fast food restaurant near the five star luxury hotel where he works, as he was not comfortable being interviewed in the hotel (Frontline #1). He explained that he thought authority (hotel management and the wealthy guests) might not be pleased if he was seen casually in the hotel. It was interesting that Chong included wealthy and powerful guests in reference to authority. This reminded me of the notion of power distance (Triandis et al., 1988; Hofstede, 2001), when people in the lower level of a hierarchy perceive inequality and power in the social system (Hofstede and Bond, 1988) and maintain a social distance away from the high level of that hierarchy.

5.4.2.2 Interpersonal Characteristics

Before gaining his consent to be interviewed, I had to alleviate his concerns about authority. I assured him that the research was not being conducted by the hotel and that his anonymity and privacy would be protected. Once we began the interview, I found Chong to be gentle, apprehensive, timid and non-aggressive (Personal Characteristics of Service-providers #1). These characteristics indicated that he was not a person who desired power and that he lacked courage and confidence when relating to others. This resonated with the seeking care and need of protection attributes in Birtchnell's (1994) interpersonal octagon.

Chong had been working as the hotel's concierge for eight years. He mentioned that he had never travelled outside of Malaysia and much of his knowledge about other cultures came from his work experience of interacting with guests. When asked about how he felt

about cross-cultural service interactions and his willingness to take part in them, Chong gave his service-provider's perspective. He said:

> *... cross-cultural interaction is part of my job. It is important to do my job well ... (Actors' Goals #1).*

For Chong, the value of engaging in service interactions is when satisfied guests provide positive feedback to management, which results in a positive appraisal (Co-Creation of Value in Service #1). He also added that, to ensure guests are satisfied, management had set certain standards. These standards included service-providers recognising the importance of playing a friendly and helpful role and creating a favourable impression when interacting with guests.

5.4.2.3 Cultural Differences

As indicated, Chong's favorable cross-cultural service interactions helped him achieve a positive management appraisal. While Chong further explained that, since interactions with guests were not by choice, he preferred to have service interactions that were effortless or not very demanding. However, he added that too many service interactions of this kind could eventually make his role routine and boring, which illustrates Pizam and Shani's (2009) argument about the cyclical and monotonous nature of frontline duty in hospitality. In Chong's opinion, effortless cross-cultural service interactions were likely to be positive and normally occurred with guests who were culturally dissimilar (Western guests) (Perceived Cultural Dissimilarity #1), not with culturally similar guests (Perceived Cultural Similarity # 1). He elaborated on this point. For example, Chong, who was a Chinese Malaysian, found it effortless to deal with Western guests, such as to those from Australia. He said:

> *... we don't expect them [Australians] to know about our Malaysian cultures and customs of 'kowtow'. I also don't have to treat them like 'big people'. Many of them are visiting us for the first time and their cultures are so different from ours ... (Perceived Cultural Dissimilarity #2).*

"Kowtow" refers to a traditional Chinese custom of requiring people in the low level of a hierarchy to act in an excessively subservient manner. The influence of this custom had spread and become part of Malaysian customs. The custom of *kowtow* required Chong to be subservient to authority, or in this case, wealthy guests, and not to have his own opinion. This is very similar to the requirements of low level people described in the power distance literature (Hofstede and Bond, 1988). Chong was also required to maintain a proper personal space and used a softer tone of voice, which required effort and could impose nervous stress (Hofstede, 2011).

It seemed that Chong felt it was less demanding to deal with culturally dissimilar guests from Australia because he had lower expectations of them in terms of placing emphasis on the custom of *kowtow*. Again, this supports the notion that differences in culture influence service behaviours (Weiermair, 2000; Tsang and Ap, 2007; Wei et al., 1989). Chong mentioned that although he had never been to Australia, he thought Australians did not travel much. As such, he did not expect them to know much about Malaysian customs and culture. In this sense, the Australian guests' lack of expectations relating to *kowtow* and Chong's low expectations of Australian guests led to positive interactions. This supports similar proposals in the literature about low expectations between interacting parties leading to positive interactions (Zhang et al., 2008). Further, the congruence of expectations supports previous findings in the literature, that the degree of expectations placed on interacting counterparts and whether counterparts meet those

expectations will determine the success of service interactions (Colton, 1987; Bitner et al., 1997).

Chong found it is more demanding to deal with culturally similar guests. Specifically he felt this to be true with Asian guests, who were culturally similar to him, because they were proud and expected him to *kowtow* (Perceived Cultural Similarity # 2). He illustrated this through an experience with a group of Chinese guests who were very demanding and wanted preferential treatment. He said:

> *…. while you are still talking with other guests, the mainland Chinese tourist groups will just cut in and with a loud voice say 'excuse me, excuse me' – they demand to be served first … (Power #1).*

5.4.2.4 Stereotyping

It seemed from Chong's stories, that the Chinese guests were asserting power during service interactions (Martin and Nakayama, 2011; Moon, 2010), with power manifested verbally (Levine and Boster, 2001; Fleischmann et al., 2005; Afifi, 2007). They were also taking advantage of public places to create the opportunity to exhibit power (Elden, 2001; Lopez, 2010). Furthermore, given that service-providers generally prefer service interactions that are effortless and the likelihood that culturally similar guests are more demanding, Chong and his colleagues seemed to have employed coping strategies involving stereotypical predispositions towards guests in certain cultural groups (Stereotyping Application #1). For example, Chong commented:

> *… we learn from others [colleagues] that have faced the same situation in dealing with visitors from China. And we know how to handle the situation … and ... the Chinese tourists are very different. The ones from Shanghai and Beijing are more well behaved whereas the ones from other parts of China are loud. The Chinese from Hong*

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> *Kong are more sophisticated but more demanding and they are more similar to the Chinese from Singapore ... (Stereotyping Application #2).*

The sharing of stereotype information as a coping strategy (seen between Chong and his colleagues) has been discussed in previous literature, where it was said that stereotypes are often shared with others (Kashima, 2000; Levine et al., 1993) and utilised in interactions to help explain the peculiar behaviours of counterparts (Crawford et al., 2002). As seen from his comment, Chong and his colleagues even went to the extent of differentiating between Chinese guests from Shanghai, Beijing and Hong Kong, which may be a way of more specifically rationalising the behaviours of Chinese guests.

Focusing on coping strategies, I wanted to find out more about patterns relating to stereotyping and asked Chong about his encounters with various cultural cohorts. Chong went on to talk once more about Chinese guests and he seemed to access a stereotypical predisposition about Chinese guests quickly, saying:

> *... Chinese guests in tour groups speak very loudly in the hotel lobby during hotel check-in. I think it's part of their culture ... (Stereotyping Activation #1).*

Previous literature has suggested that while predispositions may remain in a dormant condition, they can be readily surfaced upon activation during an interaction with a member of a stereotyped group (Kunda and Spencer, 2003). Chong's quick activation of a stereotype and his statement about loud speaking being part of Chinese culture reminded me of the personal attributes of those in the entity-theorist category, who assume that individuals are fixed and predictable (Dweck et al., 1995; Levy et al., 1998). Entity-theorists are said to make extreme judgements about others (Dweck et al., 1995) and are

prone to engage in stereotyping (Levy et al., 1998). Service-providers who have an entity-theorists' way of thinking would be likely to quickly recall and activate their predispostions to stereotype.

Chong mentioned several incidents of stereotyping. One example of stereotyping application subsequently lead to a negative outcome. Referring to culturally similar guests, Chong commented:

> *... I felt we are different. Due to their new wealth the Chinese are big spenders and they like to be lavish. They like to 'show-off' and are very demanding ... they think that all Chinese should be able to speak Mandarin ... but they themselves cannot even speak English ... (Stereotyping Application #3).*

From his comment and also notes from his research diary, Chong seemed to have developed an indifferent attitude towards Chinese guests. His assumption that Chinese guests not being able to speak or understand English had further prompted him to 'not be bothered with taking time to explain things' to the Chinese guests.

I noted in Chong's sharing of his experiences relating to stereotyping application that they were very different from his experiences related to cross-cultural service interactions. Chong seemed to find that cross-cultural service interactions with culturally dissimilar guests were likely to be positive, as opposed to negative with culturally similar guests. However, when it came to stereotyping, I found that Chong negatively stereotyped both culturally similar and culturally dissimilar guest cohorts (Stereotyping Application #4). For example, he commented negatively on culturally dissimilar Middle-Eastern guests, saying:

… language is an issue with them [Middle-Eastern guests]. They don't understand English very well and get upset easily. During check-in, we often need a translator to come and explain to them in order to verify things and calm them down … (Stereotyping Application #5).

Given his personal characteristics, which indicated that he would be high on the power distance scale, it might be possible that Chong's stereotyping was associated with power distance. Power distance suggests that the disparity (in socio-economic status) between guests and service-providers increases assertion of power distance between frontline service-providers and guests, which may leave frontline staff applying negative stereotypes (Magnini et al., 2012).

This is compounded further by the lower status of the frontline service-providers, who may be sensitive to status and are predisposed to provide a higher level of service to wealthy guests (Mattila, 1999c). In this sense, the disparity in socio-economic status intensified stereotyping (Sommer and Carrier, 2010). In Chong's case, the inequality between him and wealthy guests may have accentuated feelings of power distance, which then led to stereotyping.

5.4.3   Hui Yee's Story

Pseudonym	Hui Yee	
Actor's role	Service-provider	
Background	Country of origin	Malaysia
	Cultural background	Chinese
Demographics	Gender	Male
	Age	Mid 30s
	Level of education	University degree
	Occupation	Hotel banquet manager

5.4.3.1 Characteristics of Service-providers

Hui Yee was a hotel banquet manager who had just returned to Malaysia from a short vacation in China with his wife. After we shook hands and started talking, Hui Yee gave me the impression that he was polite, energetic and an affable person who was easy to talk to (Personal Characteristics of Service-providers #1) (Executive #1). His characteristics in relating to others were similar to those Birtchnell (1996) had described as located in the "upper close" position of the interpersonal octagon. Realising he was in his mid 30s and working in hospitality, I got the impression that Hui Yee had a positive work attitude, with the polite and energetic characteristics considered suitable for this type of work (Goldgehn, 2004; Eisner, 2005).

He also gave the impression that while he would score high on a power distance measure, he also sought closeness with his subordinates, as evidenced in the way he wanted to protect, help and care for them (Power #1). Hui Yee placed strong emphasis on team collaboration, which resonates with the identified work patterns of employees in his age group, according to the literature (Pendergast, 2010).

Hui Yee, who was a Chinese Malaysian, had been working in a five star luxury hotel in Shanghai for the past three years. It was through discussions about his job in Shanghai that I had the opportunity to understand interactions between Chinese Malaysians and Chinese from the mainland (Perceived Cultural Similarity #1). Hui Yee said:

> *... in my job, it is necessary that I interact with guests, so that I know what are their requirements ... the more I know about their requirements, the easier to do my job ... (Co-Creation of Value in Service #1).*

5.4.3.2 Cultural Differences

Hui Yee continued to share his service experiences, beginning with his initial encounters with Chinese guests. One of these experiences involved the Chinese language. Hui Yee, who only spoke the Chinese dialect of *Hokkien* (from Southern China), instead of Mandarin, said the Chinese guest asked him:

> *… how come you are Chinese (Mandarin) [but] you don't speak Chinese (Mandarin)? … (Perceived Cultural Similarity #1).*

Hui Yee was offended and felt uneasy dealing with Chinese guests after that incident. Further, he was of the opinion that it did not matter where you came from, if you were unable to speak Mandarin, then the Chinese would look down on you. It appeared that although Hui Yee was culturally similar to the Chinese guests, he was not culturally familiar with the Chinese guests in terms of language (Perceived Cultural Unfamiliarity #1), as suggested in literature that cultural familiarity can be acquired through knowledge and communication skills (Pulido, 2004; Ting-Toomey and Chung, 2012).

It seemed that Hui Yee's interactions in China under perceived cultural similarities were mostly negative. Hui Yee further explained that, although it was expected of him, he did not speak Mandarin, and because the Chinese in Shanghai do not speak the dialect of *Hokkien*, he had no choice but to converse with Chinese guests in English. However, he commented:

> *… Chinese guests are unhappy if you look Chinese but you choose to speak in English to them, they think you are trying to show off your ability to speak English … (Perceived Cultural Similarity #2).*

His comment reflected and supported that view that an individual's knowledge influences their expectations (Hopkins et al., 2009; Hopkins and Hopkins, 2002). The Chinese guests had knowledge of Mandarin and English and expected Hui Yee, with his Chinese cultural background, to speak Mandarin. Not meeting that expectation lead to role incongruence resulting in a negative outcome (Mohr and Bitner, 1991; Price et al., 1995a; Broderick, 1998).

With the conversation still focused on conversing in English in China, Hui Yee added that he found it odd that if a Westerner speaks English to Chinese guests, those Chinese guests would look up to the Westerner and admire them for being able to speak English (Perceived Cultural Dissimilarity #1) (Others - Language #1). Hui Yee believed that guests from mainland China tend to think English is more authentic when it is spoken by someone who looks Western. In his case, they seemed to doubt a Chinese Malaysian's authenticity in speaking English.

Hui Yee's experience with the English language reminded me of the notion, discussed in the literature, that an individual's social treatment by others is dependent on their spoken language (Fasold, 1984). For example, some Asians admire Western influences, better known as the phenomenon of *Asian xenophilia.* Such people would look up to those with the ability to speak English (Kwong, 1994; Zerrillo and Thomas, 2007). What Hui Lee suggested, however, was that Chinese guests have a tendency to only look up to people who speak English (Lan, 2003) and look Western. This has not been discussed in the literature.

Hui Yee's negative experiences with culturally similar Chinese guests were not limited to language alone. Hui Yee's stories reveal differences in cultural practices and customs between the Malaysian Chinese and Chinese from mainland, which also contributed to negative experiences (Perceived Cultural Dissimilarity #2). Hui Yee spoke about '*Gao Guan xi*', or the art of building business relationships in China. One way to '*Gao Guan xi*' is through doing another person a favour. For example, in his dealings with Chinese customers when arranging wedding banquets, if someone recommends a friend to Hui Yee, he is obligated to return that recommending person a favour. Hui Yee explained that the favour could be in the form of an expensive bottle of wine or a gift. However, Hui Yee had not been familiar with the custom of '*Gao Guan xi*' as it is not practised in Malaysia. He said:

> *... I did not know what 'Gao Guan xi' was initially ... and how important it is ... (Perceived Cultural Unfamiliarity #2).*

However, he became used to the practice of '*Gao Guan xi*' and found that it helped him get more customers (Perceived Cultural Familiarity #1). Hui Yee's familiarisation with this Chinese business practise came through a cross-cultural training program provided by management. He said:

> *... we went through cultural training on how to deal with Chinese guests ... we learned about 'Guan xi' or the importance of building relationships in the Chinese culture ... (Perceived Cultural unfamiliarity #3).*

He reiterated the benefits of the cross-cultural training program and the importance of understanding how Chinese society behaves with regard to customs and business practises (Perceived Cultural Familiarity #2). Hui Yee emphasised and recommended that

no matter where a service-providers came from, they should go through cross-cultural training before starting work in China.

Hui Yee's experience with the Chinese business practise of '*Gao Guan xi*' shows that cultural similarities do not necessarily mean that a person is familiar with all aspects of that culture. His experience supports the notion that the level of familiarity with an individual's culture during interaction is more important than cultural similarity (Elfenbein and Ambady, 2003). It also supports the argument that cultural familiarity can be acquired through knowledge and communication skills via training (Pulido, 2004). This can provide confidence in overcoming unfamiliar situations (Beaupré and Hess, 2006).

In addition, it appears that Hui Yee's experience under perceived cultural similarity did not support the similar-attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1997), or arguments in previous literature that suggest that positive interactions are more likely under cultural similarities due to the interacting parties sharing common ground (Härtel and Fujimoto, 2000), or sharing similar ethnicity (Harrison-Walker, 1995; Etgar and Fuchs, 2011). Hui Yee's negative service experiences with mainland Chinese guests echo the findings of Yeung and Leung's (2007) study of mainland Chinese guests and Hong Kong service-providers, which concluded that cultural similarity does not guarantee congruency and positive service experience.

5.4.3.3 Social Class Status

As we proceed to talk more about cross-cultural service interactions in five star luxury hotels, Hui Yee shared his understanding that the majority of guests were wealthy

mainland Chinese whom he called *xingui* (the new rich), a term used to reference the new

Chinese social class who had acquired wealth in modern China (Goodman, 2008). Hui

Yee stated that many of the *xingui* Chinese guests tended to show off their wealth with

expensive personal effects, such as clothes, accessories and cars (Objective Social Class

Status #1). This reminded me of prior literature relating to the emergence of the new rich

in China who, it was argued, have a tendency to exhibit an exaggerated consumption

lifestyle, owning expensive cars and houses (Pinches, 2005). Hui Yee commented:

> *… the new rich [referring to socially mobile Chinese guests] are*
> *different from the other Chinese. You can tell from their expensive*
> *attire … (Objective Social Class Status #2).*

Hui Yee thought that the new rich taste in attire, and the manner in which they carried

themselves or their social etiquette, was not appropriate. Hui Yee's inference about

wealthy Chinese guests echoes the notion that individuals are known to readily assess

others' social class (Argyle, 1994; Gorman, 2000), and predict social class status using

their own judgements (Berger et al., 1972; Bunderson and Reagans, 2011; Côté, 2011).

In addition, Hui Yee's comments on taste and social etiquette reminded me of "habitus"

- a term used to capture how individual social class differences manifest themselves in

society (Bourdieu, 1984). Habitus refers to the expected behaviours that influence the

perceptions and attitudes that members of a social class perceive as normal or appropriate

(Bourdieu and Thompson, 1991).

In this case, it is likely that Hui Yee believed that the habitus of the Chinese new rich in

social etiquette was not the same as that of other guests, such as Western guests. His focus

on habitus, seemed to highlight that social class inequality between guests and service-

providers is evident in luxury hotels (Sherman, 2007), but was contrary to the studies that

normally suggest the problem lies in service-providers lacking an ability to exhibit habitus (Ahmad, 2012; Hanser, 2012). These studies proposed that, for the sake of congruence, management train and mould service-providers from lower social classes to act out or exhibit upper class habitus to reflect that of their guests (Hanser, 2012). Hui Yee, however, suggested that it is the guests who lack habitus.

Sherman suggested (2007; 2005) that management expects service-providers, who are asymmetrical in social class to wealthy guests, to display habitus in order to meet the expectations of guests. To do this, they must use various strategies involving power and control to reconcile their dignity and address the asymmetries in social class (Sherman, 2007). It was found that, to normalise asymmetries, service-providers often assert power on guests who have just been promoted to the upper social class because of new wealth but who are not familiar with the upper class habitus (Sallaz, 2010). This was contradicted in Hui Yee's stories, as it was not the service-provider but the guests who asserted power:

> *… if they find a hair in their food, they will shout, so that the other people can hear. While they don't want any compensation, they certainly want to attract attention to show that they are different … (Power #1).*

Again, this suggests that, contrary to previous literature habitus (Sherman, 2005; Sallaz, 2010), it is the guests who lack habitus and they who use power to compensate for that lack.

As the interview time approached an hour, I asked Hui Yee about his general perceptions of individuals or cohorts from various cultures, again without mentioning the word stereotyping. He said:

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... I have encountered different types of Japanese guests ... not all behave the same way ... Most Japanese are known to be fast and efficient ... but they are also well mannered and politely request for things to be done ... (Stereotyping Activation #1).

It seemed as if Hui Yee was cautious in his assessments of Japanese guests, who are culturally dissimilar to him (Perceived Cultural Dissimilarity #3), and he chose to focus on the positive attributes of good manners and politeness (Haslam et al., 2006; Jarvis and Petty, 1996; Pratto et al., 1994). In this sense, Hui Yee's stereotyping was positive. He also commented on Korean guests, saying that they

... are shy ... maybe due to language [proficiency]. They seldom demand or bother us to do things ... (Stereotyping Application #1).

Although the comment sounded negative, as 'shy' and a lack of language proficiency have negative connotations, Hui Yee presented his opinions in a positive light, showing understanding and a willingness to accommodate Korean guests.

5.4.4   Johan's Story

Pseudonym	Johan	
Actor's role	Service-provider	
Background	Country of origin	Malaysia
	Cultural background	Malay
Demographics	Gender	Male
	Age	Mid 40s
	Level of education	High school certificate
	Occupation	Hotel front-desk personnel

5.4.4.1 Characteristics of Service-providers

I was not surprised after meeting and talking to Johan that he had been working in the hotel for 11 years. He had the longest working experience in hospitality among the

service-provider participants. My impression of Johan was that he was loyal and obedient, with similar characteristics to those described in the "lower distant" segment of Birtchnell's (1994) interpersonal octagon (Personal Characteristics of Service-providers #1). I was, however, surprised that Johan, who is a Malay Malaysian, greeted me in basic Mandarin. Although his Mandarin was not fluent, he seemed to want to make an impression that he knew the language. Johan's attempt to create this impression echoed findings in the literature suggesting that language is often used as a cue to seek commonness and to discern "in-group" and "out-group" members (Maass et al., 1989). In this case, I think Johan wanted to express his closeness to Chinese Malaysian and Chinese culture.

Johan had an interesting background. Although Johan is Malay by ethnicity, he grew up in a Chinese Malaysia village or *kampong*. He was strongly influenced by the Chinese culture and mentioned that most of his friends were Chinese Malaysian and it was through his friends that he had learned Mandarin. Chinese culture had a strong influence on Johan. He even sent his son to a Chinese elementary school. He commented:

> *... I want them [referring to his two kids] to study Mandarin and to know the Chinese culture. Sometimes we even celebrate the Chinese festival with the kids such as the Mooncake Festival ... (Perceived Cultural Familiarity #1).*

5.4.4.2 Cultural Differences

I sensed that even though he was a Malay, Johan made the effort to familiarise himself and his families with the Chinese Malaysian culture (Perceived Cultural Dissimilarities #1) (Perceived Cultural Familiarity #2). This reflects arguments in the literature that the

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concept of cultural familiarity creates trust and, in turn, trust provides confidence in dealing with others during cultural dissimilarity situations (Beaupré and Hess, 2006).

Johan told me that he did not have the opportunity to complete higher education and started working straight after finishing high school, so he could support himself and his family. With his many years in hospitality, and as a member of the five star luxury hotel front-desk personnel, Johan had encountered and interacted with guests from many different cultures (Frontline #1). I asked Johan about his willingness to participate in cross-cultural service interactions with guests. Johan's reply was similar to what most service-providers gave, that service interactions were obligations, not choices. Johan further elaborated:

> *... we are required to 'smile', be friendly and ensure guests are satisfied. When they are happy, they will not complain. That makes my manager very happy and this will be helpful in my job appraisal ... (Co-Creation of Value in Service #1).*

Johan associated service interactions with the evaluation of his job performance, and the perceived value of successful cross-cultural service interactions could be linked to monetary rewards. Further, it is a central part of his job to interact with guests (Actors' goals #1). It was interesting to find that management required service-providers such as Johan to smile when interacting with guests, as this supports the suggestion that smiling is a strategy used by service-providers to take control in the early stages of service interactions, in order to reduce potential conflicts (Nikolich and Sparks, 1995).

I noticed that most of the experiences Johan noted in his research diary were negative and were with guests from Asia. This supported Berry, Wall and Carbone's (2006) point that

negative service interaction experiences are more memorable. The first incident that Johan shared involved a Chinese Singaporean guest. Given the close proximity between Malaysia and Singapore, their historical backgrounds and the fact that a large population of Malaysians work and reside in Singapore, the two countries are very similar culturally (Perceived Cultural Similarity #1).

Apparently, the negative service experience involved the refusal of a Chinese Singaporean woman to pay a hotel service tax as the tax was not imposed in Singapore. Johan described the woman as a 'demanding' person (Stereotyping Application #1). He said that the woman shouted in a high tone, saying:

> … *"I demand to speak to your manager" before she even tell you the problem in hope to get things her way … (Control #1).*

Regarding the Chinese Singaporean guest, Johan appeared guarded and unforthcoming when dealing with her. He further acted cautiously in case of a possible complaint to the manager, which probably made him regard the incident negatively. Further, it seemed that the Singaporean guest attempted to gain control through assertive verbal behaviour (McElwain and Volling, 2002), as well as trying to achieve self-efficacy by attempting to get her counterpart to produce the desired or intended effective result (Bitner, 1990). On a lighter note, Johan mentioned that he actually felt bad for the Chinese Singaporean guest, saying that perhaps she just wanted to try her luck.

5.4.4.3 Interpersonal Characteristics

Johan shared more negative experiences relating to Singaporean guests, stating that Chinese Singaporeans were demanding, compared with Chinese Malaysian, wanting

things their way, and looking to be in control (Stereotyping Application #2). Despite being Malay, I sensed that Johan felt he was qualified to make comparisons between Chinese Malaysian and Chinese Singaporeans due to his familiarity with the Chinese Malaysian culture. Johan's comment about control resonates with the literature (Skinner, 1995). He argued that control was a pervasive personal feature of the Chinese Singaporean guest (Control #2). However, some studies have shown that different cultures exhibit different control patterns (Ji et al., 2000), with the general agreement that the sense of being in control is less important for Asians than for Westerners (Ji et al., 2000). This was not supported in Johan's story of the Chinese Singaporean guest.

Johan also shared his negative service experiences with Indian guests, stating that he thought they were demanding (Stereotyping Application #3). For example, he said, when Indian guests check-in in groups, they demand to have the same types of room as other group members. However, Indian guests tended to use ingratiation (Levine and Boster, 2001) in trying to persuade Johan to assign them the rooms they wanted. Johan said:

> *… they will continue to persuade you gentle to give them the similar types of rooms … despite knowing there is a queue … (Power #1).*

Unlike those who used a loud tone of voice to get attention, the Indian guests seemed to exhibit a different and gentler form of power.

Johan continued sharing negative service experiences involving assertions of power, this time with Middle-Eastern guests. In one case, he felt insulted when one Middle-Eastern woman made him carry a small plastic bag. It seemed the guest, who was empty handed,

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did not want to carry the small plastic bag herself, she just wanted to show off her power and be seen with someone carrying her bag (Power #2).

I realised that Johan tended to stereotype cohorts of guests with whom he had negative experiences. It seemed as though he used stereotyping as a coping strategy when dealing with particular cohorts (Stereotyping Application #4). For example, he stereotyped senior Middle-Eastern guests as lacking English language skills. He said:

> *... as most of the seniors from the Middle-East don't speak English ... I didn't expect the senior Middle-Eastern man to be able to understand English ... I was prepared to call one of our interpreters to help him in translation but to my surprise the man spoke good English and I was impressed ... (Stereotyping Application #5).*

I also noticed that besides stereotyping those guests who are culturally dissimilar to him, such as senior Middle-Eastern guests (Perceived Cultural Dissimilarity #2), Johan tended to stereotype those who were culturally similar or from cultures with which he was familiar (Perceived Cultural Similarity #2) (Perceived Cultural Familiarity #3). He commented negatively on mainland Chinese guests, as he was familiar with the Chinese Malaysian culture himself. He thought that most of the mainland Chinese guests were snobbish and acted as though they were very rich (Objective Social Class Status #1). Specifically, he commented:

> *... Chinese [referring to guests from mainland China] are loud and rude and like to show they have branded things ... like clothes and bags ... (Stereotyping Application #6).*

The literature suggest that the level of power distance represents inequality in societies (Hofstede and Bond, 1988), and power distance helps explain how people of different

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social status levels interact in society (Hofstede et al., 2010). Consequently, negative stereotyping could take place as a result of status sensitivity and feelings of being looked down upon. Johan's negative stereotyping of rich mainland Chinese guests seems a response to the level of power distance. Hofstede argued that Malaysia was a high power distance society (Hofstede, 1983), where inequality is more readily accepted and people know their "rightful place" in society (Hofstede, 1983). However, it did not seem that Johan readily accepted the sense of inequality created by the rich mainland Chinese guests.

5.4.4.4 Stereotyping

Johan compared mainland Chinese guests to Chinese Malaysian guests and he felt that, unlike the Malaysian Chinese, the mainland Chinese guests were rude and unfriendly (Stereotyping Application #7). He made further comparisons between the two and stated the mainland Chinese guests could not speak and understand English, making communication with them difficult (Stereotyping Application #8). Although Johan was a Malay Malaysian who was familiar with the Chinese cultural, he still made several negative stereotype comments about Chinese guests.

Johan's stereotyping of Chinese guests echoed the findings of Malay Malaysian Muslim tourists who, although they perceived China as a more familiar destination than Korea or Japan, still held more favourable images of Korean and Japanese people (Kim et al., 2015). Like Johan, the majority of Malay Malaysians held perceptions of familiarity towards China because of the large minority of Chinese Malaysians in their country (Mura and Tavakoli, 2014). However, it seemed that familiarity with a culture did not necessarily relate to favourable images or positive stereotyping (Mura and Tavakoli,

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2014). This suggests that people may apply positive or negative stereotypes based on their own ethnic identity as well as the (perceived) identity of others. As in Johan's case, Malay Malaysians may apply stereotypes of Chinese guests that Chinese or Indian Malaysians may not apply.

As the literature suggests, sterotype activation is not spontaneous but eventuates when participants are consciously aware of their predsipostions (Lepore and Brown, 1997). This was evident in Johan's stereotypying comment about Indian guest cohorts, in which he seemed to have carefully retrieved predispositions relating to those guests. He said:

> *… my colleagues told me that guests from India usually travel in large numbers and they love to shop - ending up having excess baggage - to me they also have poor time management that often results in late check-in and check-out … (Stereotyping Activation #1).*

Johan's comment also echoes arguments in previous literature which said that stereotypes are often shared with others (Kashima, 2000; Levine et al., 1993) and used to cope with interactions (Crawford et al., 2002).

Looking at his narratives, it seemed that Johan had several negative service experiences, which had led him to stereotype his guest cohorts negatively. Referring to the literature involving stereotyping and implicit theory, Johan's stereotyping reflected those in the entity-theorist category, which assume that the personal attributes of individuals are fixed and predictable (Dweck et al., 1995; Levy et al., 1998), creating the tendency to make extreme judgements about others (Dweck et al., 1995) and to engage in stereotyping (Levy et al., 1998). Given his frontline position, it gave me the impression that there could be an association between his job and his stereotyping.

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5.4.5 Teresa's Story

Pseudonym	Teresa	
Actor's role	Service-provider	
Background	Country of origin	Malaysia
	Cultural background	Indian
Demographics	Gender	Female
	Age	Early 30s
	Level of education	High school certificate
	Occupation	Hotel communication helpdesk personnel

5.4.5.1 Characteristics of Service-providers

Teresa insisted that we meet, in her words, on 'neutral ground' away from the hotel in which she worked. This neutral ground was a café in a shopping mall that Teresa frequented. Teresa, an Indian Malaysian had an interesting background. Her grandfather on her mother's side had some Italian blood but her father was an Indian Malaysian. Teresa, who was single, said she was a very independent person who lived on her own but visited her family regularly. She explained that she had been supporting herself since finishing her diploma in communication. After we had talked, Teresa gave me the impression that she was blunt, forthright and uninhibited. She was also dominant, strong and not overly concerned about pleasing everyone (Personal Characteristics of Service-providers #1). I was reminded of the characteristics listed in the "upper neutral" section of Birtchnell's (1994) octagon, with characteristics of dominance and boastful behaviour in relating to others during interactions(Birtchnell, 1994).

When I asked Teresa, who had worked for six years as a hotel communication helpdesk staff member (Frontline #1), about her roles and the department she worked in, she did not give the impression that she was enthusiastic or satisfied with her current position. Instead, she was quite negative, referring to the monotonous nature of her job and having

to deal with difficult customers. This often included having to deal with customer complaints. She also gave me the impression that she had been holding her current position for six years because there were no promotional opportunities. I sensed her job dissatisfaction and frustration. Her situation paralleled the general conclusions drawn about female employees in hospitality, who have less job satisfaction due to income and promotional disparity when compared with their male counterparts (Kim et al., 2009; Thrane, 2008). Female employees, particularly in Teresa's age group, tended to want more power and control at work, and viewed empowerment in their jobs as a priority (Solnet and Hood, 2008; Gursoy et al., 2008). In Teresa's case, wanting more power aligned with her dominant character when relating to others (Birtchnell, 2014; Birtchnell, 1996). (Power # 1).

Teresa reiterated the importance of empowerment in resolving customer issues at work, which supported arguments in the literature about those in the 30s age group having less respect for authority or higher management and choosing to use their own methods to resolve customers issues (Cairncross and Buultjens, 2007). Teresa believed that one way to facilitate empowerment was through training, which is also highlighted in the literature as a priority for those in their 30s seeking job satisfaction (Solnet and Hood, 2008; Gursoy et al., 2008). However, she felt that she had been by-passed for training programs due to her job position. Her complaint about the lack of training support aligns with the overall view of frontline employees in hospitality, as presented in previous literature (Lam et al., 2001).

As for the suggestion that those in their 30s have a tendency to value team collaboration and are strongly influence by their colleagues and peers in relation to work matters

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(Pendergast, 2010), I realised that Teresa would be the person most likely to take on a leadership role in influencing her colleagues. This remind me of the leader-member relationship in a cohort (Liao et al., 2009), which involved the formation of emotional bonds (Wang, 2008) and peer support through collective emotional labour to cope with stress (Korczynski, 2003; Shani et al., 2014). Furthermore, Teresa impressed on me that she would be the kind of leader that frontline employees would look to for approval and support in how they treat guests (Wayne et al., 1997).

5.4.5.2 Social Class Status

In our discussions and also from the notes in her research diary, Teresa tended to pay attention to inequality in social class status. She made comparisons between frontline service-providers working in Singapore, saying:

> *… the hotel staff [referring to frontline service-providers] in Singapore who have a similar job as me are wealthier as they are earning Singaporean dollars … (Objective Social Class Status #1).*

At the time of writing, the Singapore dollar was approximately 3.3 times higher than the Malaysian ringgit. Teresa also shared an incident related to inequality in social class status that was based on cultural stratification in her birth country of India, related to *jajmani* (Henderson, 2002). She said:

> *… I think Indians still emphasise status, even when they travel … they do not like to be served by a fellow Indian. I don't know, somehow they feel like it's an insult … (Subjective Social Class Status #1).*

5.4.5.3 Cultural Differences

Teresa expressed a level of self-consciousness as a Malaysian of Indian descent. This, in turn, would likely promote negative service interactions when she dealt with Indian guests. To avoid the embarrassment of rejection from Indian guests, she said that she tried to avoid serving them because she was cognisant of how these service interactions with culturally similar guests would likely be negative (Perceived Cultural Similarity #1).

Teresa also came across as vocal about her views on gender equality. In particularly, she mentioned male chauvinism several times in the interview. Many of her recounted interactions were related to the prejudice and mistreatment of Middle-Eastern women by their male counterparts. For the past 10 years, Malaysia has been a haven for Middle-Easterners to escape from the unbearable heat of the Middle-East in the month of August. Typically, in August, luxury hotels in Malaysia are full of Middle-Eastern men and women in *burqa* (black linen covering their whole body from head to feet) and some in *niqab* (veils covering all of the face apart from the eyes).

Teresa was also not used to seeing Middle-Eastern women having to stand aside and remain silent during hotel check-ins. She realised later that Middle-Eastern women are forbidden from speaking to male hotel employees, which is highlighted in the literature (Florian and Zernitsky-Shurka, 1987; Al-Makhamreh and Lewando-Hundt, 2008). In her opinion (and this was confirmed by other service-providers), Middle-Eastern women speak better English and can understand English better than their husbands. In a few cases, the Middle-Eastern men had to ask their wives to answer a question, as their command of English was not good. While Teresa thought it would be easier if the wives

interacted with staff directly, she realised this would be impossible as the Middle-Eastern culture would not allow it.

5.5.5.4 Interpersonal Characteristics

As Middle-Eastern guests prefer to deal with service-providers who are of the same gender (Khan et al., 2015), but Middle-Eastern women customarily remain silent during hotel check-ins, Teresa faced the awkward situation of having to deal with the Middle-Eastern husbands. This did not always result in a positive outcome. Teresa described one incident with an individual who was loud, demanding, and had limited proficiency in the English language (Stereotyping Application #1). She proceeded with the comment:

> *… there was a mixed up in allocation of his 'shanta' [luggage in Arabic], because he was not clear in his instruction … however, he was making a scene blaming us … (Power #2).*

5.4.5.5 Stereotyping

Teresa explained that it was due to miscommunication and the language barrier that the *shanta* or luggage was misplaced in the Middle-Eastern guest's maid's room rather than the guest's room, but she was taken back by the guest's behaviour. Teresa commented that she thought that Middle-East men in general were loud, especially when upset (Stereotyping Application #2). She also said that they get extremely upset very easily and make a scene at the front counter if their requests are not met (Stereotyping Activation #1).

In addition to her experiences related to male chauvinism, Teresa also thought that Middle-Eastern men were very forgetful. For example, she mentioned that they had the tendency to forget where they had placed their things. She commented that during the

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Middle-Eastern tourist season (in August), the hotel security department gets very busy. This is due to the reports from a number of Middle-Eastern men who have lost their things. Teresa recalled one incident when a Middle-Eastern man claimed:

> *... I lost my wallet, only your people have access to the room ... your people stole it! You must pay back ... (Power #3).*

The hotel service-provider in charge had to say, "Sir let us check your room first". After checking through the Middle-Eastern man's room with him, they found his wallet in one of his bags. Another incident involve a missing laptop - "Somebody stole my laptop!" Again, the hotel had to send the security staff to check the room; the laptop was misplaced behind the curtains. So, Teresa concludes that Middle-Eastern men are extremely forgetful, very suspicious and like to blame others (Stereotyping Application #3).

As we moved closer to the end of the interview, I realised Teresa had a tendency to focus on gender inequality. To ensure that we covered other themes, I proceeded to asked what she thought about guests from various cultural cohorts. I noticed in general, whether she was referring to culturally similar or dissimilar guests, Teresa's stereotyping comments were negative. With guests from the neighbouring country of Singapore (Perceived Cultural Similarity #2), Teresa commented:

> *... they [referring to Singaporeans] look down on Malaysians. They think they are better than Malaysians ... (Stereotyping Application #4).*

Indicating that she was familiar with the Chinese Malaysia culture, Teresa also commented on Chinese guests from Hong Kong (Perceived Cultural Familiarity #1), saying:

> *... unlike the Chinese Malaysians, Chinese from Hong Kong are very fussy and particular. I have Chinese guests from Hong Kong complaint about things not clean ... for example claiming the hotel limousine was not clean ... (Stereotyping Application #5).*

Of guests from France, who represented a small number of guests who frequented the hotel (Perceived Cultural Dissimilarity #2), she said: *... they are not very friendly ... and I think they are stuck up ...* (Stereotyping Application #6).

It appeared that Teresa's negative stereotyping comments had led to negative service experiences as she developed predispositions relating to certain cultural groups and tried to avoid dealing with them. Looking at the amount of negative stereotyping comments, there is a possibility that the pattern related to Teresa's position as frontline staff and to the concept of power distance (Triandis et al., 1988; Hofstede, 2001). As already, indicated, the level of power distance represents the inequality in societies, helping to explain interactional behaviours (Hofstede and Bond, 1988).

5.4.6 Narul's Story

Pseudonym	Narul	
Actor's role	Service-provider	
Background	Country of origin	Indonesia
	Cultural background	Indonesian
Demographics	Gender	Female
	Age	Early 30s
	Level of education	University degree
	Occupation	Hotel marketing manager

5.4.6.1 Characteristics of Service-providers

I met Narul for the interview in the hotel in which she worked. Narul had been in the hospitality industry for four years and had a degree in hotel management. She was from

Indonesia but loved working in Malaysia where she had completed her degree. Narul was in her early 30s and, according to the literature, seemed typical of her cohort - better educated and are more diverse ethnically (Sullivan and Heitmeyer, 2008; Huang and Petrick, 2010). We had introduced ourselves informally and Narul seemed soft spoken, subtle and polite (Personal Characteristics of Service-providers #1). She gave me the impression that in relating to others she would likely align with those in the "lower close" of Birtchnell's (1994) octagon, seeking care and protection. She would likely place emphasis on proximity and want to get close to people rather than prioritising power or dominance.

Since Narul was the service-provider participant with the least work experience (four years), I asked about her decision to join the hospitality industry. She said that she liked hospitality related work. Her answer supported the general notion about employees in their 30s who were working in hospitality; overall they are more energetic and have positive attitudes about their work (Goldgehn, 2004). In addition, Narul's characteristics seemed to fit suggestions about those in their 30s in hospitality, that they are more polite, more inquisitive and more respectful to guests (Eisner, 2005).

5.4.6.2 Co-Creation of Value in Service

My first question related to Narul's willingness to take part in cross-cultural service interactions with guests. I noticed that Narul, who works as a hotel marketing manager, came across as being careful and cautious when answering questions during the interview (Frontline #1). Mostly, her answers to questions about cross-cultural service interactions were positive. For example, Narul said:

... interacting with guests is important. It's also important that our guests are satisfied with our service ... that's why it's our duty to talk to them and make sure they are happy with us ... (Co-Creation of Value in Service #1).

I realised that Narul did not see service interaction with guests as an obligation. She saw value in such interactions as they could satisfy guests. It seemed that she made an effort to interact with guests to make them happy. This reminded me of the argument that service-providers who hold executive positions in hospitality tend to have higher expectations of their own work and that these expectations are congruent with the high expectations of guests who frequent luxury hotels (Griffin et al., 1997; Luk and Layton, 2002). The literature further states that customer satisfaction with service-providers would likely lead to positive service experience outcomes (Yuksel et al., 2010; Baker and Crompton, 2000). This probably explained why Narul's cross-cultural service interaction experiences were mostly positive and this seemed to be an important part of her work goals. (Actors' Goals #1).

5.4.6.3 Cultural Differences

As we proceeded to talk about cross-cultural service interactions with guests, Narul's continued to be careful in providing her answers. When asked to share experiences on cross-cultural service interactions with guests, Narul had the tendency to focus mostly on positive interactions, with reference to very few negative interactions. In addition, I noticed that many of the positive interactions were with culturally dissimilar guests. For example, Narul mentioned that was easy to interact with Australian guests who were culturally different to her (Cultural Differences #1). She said:

... Australian are different from us when on holiday ... they have less expectations and do not complain much. They seemed to be able to

switch to a 'holiday mode', and look at things differently ... (Perceived Cultural Dissimilarity #1).

She continued with another story about a positive service experience with Western guests, without specifying the nationality. She commented:

... unlike us, when Western guests go on holiday, they are more relaxed and will tell themselves, 'Okay, I am on holiday, I want to make things simple. I don't want to get stressed out' ... (Perceived Cultural Dissimilarity #2).

Narul's experiences with the two different cultural cohorts highlight the influence of culture on interaction behaviour, with cultural differences influencing various aspects of social behaviour, including service behaviours (Weiermair, 2000; Wei et al., 1989). Narul's service interaction with culturally dissimilar guests did not support the notion, evident in the literature, of cultural dissimilarities leading to strangeness, anxiety and conflict, resulting in negative experiences (Neuliep and Ryan, 1998; Ellingsworth, 1988).

Narul's positive service experience with culturally dissimilar Australian and Western guests supported the concept of positive interaction being dependent on the expectations of the interacting parties (Tsang and Ap, 2007; Reisinger et al., 2010). In this case, the two cohorts of culturally dissimilar guests had low expectations of service interactions. It also supports the notion that differences in cultures can create different expectations and perceptions about the role of guests and service-providers in cross-cultural service interactions (Zhang et al., 2008; Sharma et al., 2012). Although previous literature indicates that differences in culture are likely to make guests' expectations and their evaluation of service more critical and pronounced, resulting in the likelihood of negative

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outcomes (Turner et al., 2002; Mattila, 1999b; Winsted, 1997), Narul highlighted the opposite experience.

In the very few negative service experiences Narul had shared, she was very careful in how she illustrated her stories. I also realised that being an Indonesian herself, Narul tended to use fellow Indonesians as examples to illustrate negative interactions, rather than refer to guests from other cultures (Perceived Cultural Similarity #1). Perhaps this is her way of showing that she was not bias against any specific cultural cohorts.

Narul explained that it is generally expensive for Indonesians to travel to Malaysia for a holiday. She argued, therefore, that this was why Indonesian guests had higher expectations of good service because of the relative high price they had paid. For example, she explained that she once encountered a female Indonesian guest who was very polite and not demanding but would ask many questions about the food being served near the hotel. This included asking about the price, the kind of food and how the food was prepared; she wanted Narul to explain everything in detail. I noticed when making the comment, that Narul refrained from using any negative stereotypical words, such as "demanding" or "rude" in describing the guests. Rather, she seemed to justify what she considered to be a negative service experience by describing the guest as polite and not demanding.

5.4.6.4 Stereotyping

To ensure that we had covered the theme of stereotyping, I asked Narul to describe guests from various cultural cohorts. Again, she seemed to "filter" the negative descriptions and used only positive descriptions of guests, such as:

> *… I think Western guests are appreciative and polite … (Stereotyping Activation #1).*

Overall, Narul gave me the impression of tolerance and that she valued diversity and equality. This could be because of her job as a hotel marketing manager, or because she belonged to Generation Y, a cohort that has been identified with these qualities (Huang and Petrick, 2010; Pendergast, 2010).

5.5 SUMMARY

This chapter has presented the research participant profiles, followed by development of the coding process that was used to conduct the narrative analysis. Subsequently, individual narrative excerpts in the form of stories were presented as a result of the narrative analysis at the individual level. Each participant's narrative was presented with a particular focus on the key themes and sub-themes identified in Chapter 3. The findings of the analysis at this individual level were then used to undertake a comparative analysis at the cohort level of guests and service-providers. This analysis is presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: Comparative Analysis at the Cohort Level

6.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, through the use of coding, narrative analysis was undertaken on the guest and service-provider narrative excerpts at the individual level. This chapter presents a comparative analysis of the two cohorts in terms of their general characteristics and demographics (Section 6.1) and then their narratives (Section 6.2). The findings of the analysis at the cohort level are discussed and conclusions made in the following chapter.

6.1 GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS AND DEMOGRAPHICS

The general characteristics of the two cohorts appear to be similar to those of contemporary travellers and hospitality employees as described by Feifer (1985) and, Pizam and Shani (2009). The travelling patterns of the guest cohort reflect those of contemporary travellers, such as having the tendency to separate themselves from mass-package tourists and taking accommodation in luxury hotels (Walls et al., 2011; Mcintosh and Siggs, 2005; Cetin and Walls, 2015). The characteristics of the guest cohort is also similar to that described by Milne (1998) and, Maoz and Bekerman (2010) in that they are highly educated and more mature than guests of the past For the service-provider cohort, their job requirements are similar to those identified in the literature for existing employees in hospitality. It appears that the service-provider cohort constantly manoeuvre, as Pizam and Shani (2009) suggested, between "challenging" and "monotonous" situations. Their positions as frontline or executive staff, require them to interact with guests on a daily basis. As proposed, positive or negative interactions with guests can determine service-provider job performance and job satisfaction (Locke, 1976;

Yeh, 2013), therefore one way to analyse the service-provider cohort is to examine their interactional experiences with guests.

Table 6.1 presents the demographic profiles of the participants in the guest and service-provider cohorts, allowing for a demographic comparison between the two.

Table 6.1 Demographic profile summary of guest and service-provider cohorts

Guests				Service-providers			
Pseudonym	**Gender**	**Age**	**Level of education**	**Pseudonym**	**Gender**	**Age**	**Level of education**
Berlinda (Business traveller)	Female	Late 20s	University degree	Amelia (Executive)	Female	Early 40s	University degree
John (Business traveller)	Male	Late 50s	University degree	Hui Yee (Executive)	Male	Mid 30s	University degree
Peng Yin (Business traveller)	Male	Early 40s	Diploma	Narul (Executive)	Female	Early 30s	University degree
Gunalan (Leisure traveller)	Male	Early 50s	University degree	Chong (Frontline)	Male	Mid 30s	High school certificate
Nata (Leisure traveller)	Female	Early 50s	University degree	Johan (Frontline)	Male	Mid 40s	High school certificate
Nafal (Leisure traveller)	Male	Mid 20s	University degree	Teresa (Frontline)	Female	Mid 30s	High school certificate

Table 6.1 shows that the guest cohort were generally older than the service-provider cohort. The age gap could lead to different and competing expectations and perceptions of each other, thus affecting interactional behaviours (Knutson et al., 1993). As age is said to influence both guests and service-providers behaviours in tourism (Sarker et al., 2003; Shoemaker, 1989), it is possible that the differences in perceptions and expectations

due to age discouraged interactions. The literature suggests that, in general, senior guests exhibit a desire to learn about new cultures and interact with local hosts to gain personal and cultural enrichment (Horneman et al., 2002). While these characteristics might shape the senior guests' perceptions of interactions with local hosts, as well as their expectations of their service interactions (Hartline et al., 2003), the enthusiasm to interact with service-providers was found to be true only for the senior leisure travellers, but not for the senior business travellers.

On the other hand, the service-provider cohort, who was generally younger than their guest counterparts, might have different perceptions and expectations of their interactions with guests. According to the literature, young service-providers in hospitality are less sociable, emphasise individuality (Francese, 1993), want more power and control at work (Solnet and Hood, 2008; Gursoy et al., 2008), have less respect for authority and prefer to use their own initiative when dealing with customers (Cairncross and Buultjens, 2007). Most of these characteristics do not suggest positive interactions with senior leisure guests.

Education influences the behaviours of guest and service-providers in tourism is (Beerli and Martín, 2004; Andereck and Caldwell, 1994; Baum, 2007). However, although the literature generally suggests that guests with higher levels of education are more likely to be interested in interacting with their hosts to learn about their culture (Richards, 2002; Hughes, 1987), this was only partially found in this study. For example, in this study, only leisure travellers with a high level of education appeared to be motivated to interact with their service-providers to experience local cultures. Business travellers, despite

having a high level of education, did not appear to be willing to interact with the service-providers.

As for the service-provider cohort, evidence in the service-providers' narratives, both executive and frontline personnel, supports the notion that high/low levels of education correlate with higher/lower levels of job satisfaction (Vollmer and Kinney, 1955). For example, it was found that executive service-providers who had a high level of education had fewer negative service experiences with guests than the frontline service-providers. Frontline service-providers seemed to have less positive service experiences with guests, which could be due to low levels of education.

6.2   NARRATIVES COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

This section presents the comparative analysis of the narratives of the guest and service-provider cohorts, focusing on the key themes and sub-themes that are influencing factors on cross-cultural service interactions between guests and service-providers, as identified in Chapter 2. The aim of the analysis was to determine which factors influenced each of the cohorts in their cross-cultural service interactions. The comparative analysis was conducted based on the coding analysis performed on the first and second order narratives at the individual level, as discussed in the previous chapter. To guide the comparative analysis, the coding analysis results were summed up according to total number of occurrences and arranged according to key themes and sub-themes. While this analysis is based on a relatively small number of reported incidents, and cognisant that this research is qualitative in nature, the results provide a guide for identifying key themes. These are presented in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2: Summary of key themes and sub-themes from narrative analysis

Key themes	Sub-themes	Total occurrence in first and second order narratives
Social class status	*Subjective social class status*	*Total:5* *Guests-3* *Service-providers-2*
	Objective social class status	*Total:8* *Guests-2* *Service-providers-6*
Interpersonal characteristics	*Actors' goals*	*Total:12* *Guests-6* *Service-providers-6*
	Power	*Total:19* *Guests-9* *Service-providers-10*
	Control	*Total:7* *Guests-5* *Service-providers-2*
Cultural differences	*Perceived cultural similarity*	*Total:14* *Guests-4* *Service-providers-10*
	Perceived cultural dissimilarity	*Total:27* *Guests-11* *Service-providers-16*
	Perceived cultural familiarity	*Total:21* *Guests-3* *Service-providers-18*
	Perceived cultural unfamiliarity	*Total:10* *Guests-6* *Service-providers-4*
Co-creation of value in service	*Co-creation of value in service*	*Total:13* *Guests-8* *Service-providers-5*
Coping strategies	*Stereotyping activation*	*Total:10* *Guests-3* *Service-providers-7*
	Stereotyping application	*Total:28* *Guests-5* *Service-providers-23*
Others	*Others -language*	*Total:6* *Guests-5* *Service-providers-1*

6.2.1 Social Class Status

Researches suggest that social class status (Beerli and Martín, 2004), and asymmetry in social class status (Shenkar et al., 2008) influence the interactions of guests and service-providers. This was evident in the comparative analysis on social class status, which found asymmetry in the way interacting parties' social class status influenced guest and service-provider cohorts' interactional behaviours.

The reports on social class status by the two cohorts were similar to what has been proposed in the literature. This consists of subjective social class status, emphasising socio-psychological status based on subjective perceptions of class ranking vis-à-vis others (Côté, 2011); and objective social class status that emphasises socio-economic disparity based on income or occupation (Sayer, 2005; Gray and Kish-Gephart, 2013).

In total, thirteen reports relating to social class status were seen in the first and second order narratives of guests and service-providers cohorts, only five of which related to subjective social class status involving perceptions of the class ranking of others, while eight related to objective social class status, emphasising socio-economic disparity. In the former, guests reported on cases related to subjective social class status slightly more than service-providers. Furthermore, even though it was suggested that social class status can act as both a facilitator of, and barrier to, interactions, whereby it may bring particular individuals who have symmetrical social class status together, it may also keep individuals who have asymmetrical social class status apart (Stryker and Macke, 1978; Sheldon and Burke, 2000), only the latter seemed to occur in this research. Subjective social class status has the potential to keep individuals apart as seen in the narratives by John, a guest business traveller, who felt uncomfortable having the service-provider

opening the car door for him as the act was suggestive of a class difference between him and the service-provider.

In this case, guests who are conscious about subjective social class status or perceptions of the class ranking of others, avoided interacting with service-providers. Only one report in subjective social class status was related to culture. This concerned *jajmani,* or the ideology of the *sub-caste* system in India, which determines social position and the social treatment a person would receive (Henderson, 2002). With regard to subjective social status, Teresa, a frontline service-provider, commented that interactions could be discouraged when Indian guests placed too much emphasis on *jajmani* when they travelled.

In comparison to subjective social class status, objective social class status was more prominent among the service-provider cohort than for the guest cohort. Most of the reports from the service-providers on objective social class status concerned wealthy guests, such as with new rich Chinese guests. It seemed that service-providers sensed the gaps in wealth between them and the guests, associating the gap with negative perceptions, such as accusing the new rich of having a tendency to exhibit an exaggerated lifestyle. This was particularly seen in one of the Hui Yee's narrative, who commented that the new rich, with their expensive attires, from China were different from other Chinese guests. It appeared that the service-provider cohort was jealous or envious of the new rich (Fuller and Narasimhan, 2007), resulting in them being critical (Goodman, 2008), with the potential to led to negative interactions.

6.2.2 Interpersonal Characteristics

The comparative analysis on interpersonal characteristics focused on three interpersonal factors: actors' goals (Price et al., 1995b; Lewis and McCann, 2004a; Surprenant and Solomon, 1987), power (Halualani and Nakayama, 2010; Martin and Nakayama, 2011), and control (Ji et al., 2000; Langer and Saegert, 1977).

Actors' goals. In total, twelve reports related to actors' goals evenly spread between the two cohorts. Generally, the actors' goals were similar to what had been identified in the literature. For the guest cohort, two very different actors' goal orientations were found: comfort and pleasure, inspired in the case of leisure travellers and comfort and efficiency, inspired in the case of business travellers (Mattila, 1999a; Krippendorf, 1999). Additionally, even though it had not been mentioned in previous literature, this research found that actors' goals appeared to be associated with guests' willingness to interact with service-providers. This seemed to be related to the co-creation of value in service, (Section 6.2.4). For example, this is seen in quotes from business travellers who revealed they that were not willing to interact with service-providers due to their work inspired goals. This was illustrated in Berlinda's narrative, in which she just wanted to settle into the hotel room as quickly as possible and get things done when she travelled on long trips to foreign countries.

Furthermore, the service-provider cohort and leisure travellers in the guest cohort held opposing views with regard to participate in service interactions. Unlike business travellers, leisure travellers are willing to interact with service-providers, which could be due to their leisure inspired goals such as interacting with people and exploring new cultures as suggested by Nata.

On the other hand, as Goodwin and Smith (1990) suggested, in this study, the service-providers' goals were commercially motivated or economically inspired and task-oriented The service-providers' goals were usually functionally-motivated, that is, cross-cultural interactions with guests were an obligation. In turn, the goals seemed to have influenced service-provider cohort's attitudes, as in Chong's case, where he considered cross-cultural interaction as part of his duty.

Although service-providers' economically inspired and task-oriented goals seemed to create the perception that cross-cultural interactions with guests were an obligation, it was found that this perception could differ depending on the personal characteristics of the service-providers. For example, Amelia, from the service-providers cohort, said that one of the reasons why she enjoyed working in the field of hospitality was because she enjoyed personal interactions with people.

While in the context of this research, it seemed that the influence of personal characteristics prevailed over actors' goals in influencing service-providers' perceptions of cross-cultural service interactions with guests, there was no guarantee of a positive interactional outcome. This is because, while previous literature suggests that goal congruity encourages interactions as interacting parties who share similar goals are more motivated to interact (Ellingsworth, 1988), the data in the guest and service-provider cohorts presents a contrary position. The analysis indicates that even though the task-oriented goals of the business travellers were similar to those of the service-providers, they did not necessarily encourage positive interactions for business travellers, as

illustrated in a business traveller, Peng Yin's comment that upon arrival in the hotel he just wanted to get the key to the room and unpack for work.

In contrast, although it was suggested that divergence in goals would demotivate interacting parties toward interaction (Amir, 1969; Martin and Nakayama, 2011), analysis of leisure travellers' narratives showed that goal incongruity can in fact encourage interactions. This was highlighted in the comments of leisure travellers like Gunalan, who had divergent goals to service-providers where he and his family sought interactions with the locals within and outsides of the hotel.

Therefore, it was not evident in the data that asymmetry in goals between leisure travellers and the service-providers would discourage interactions. Comparatively, it seemed that business travellers' sought functional interactions and leisure travellers' sought cultural interactions, including those outside of the hotel.

Power. The comparative analysis on power focused on how power was displayed during service interactions and also whether it influenced these outcomes positively or negatively. In total, nineteen reports related to power were identifying the narratives across two cohorts. Compared with the other two interpersonal factors of actors' goals and control, power accounted for the highest number among the guest and service-provider cohorts. The issue of power appeared to be prominent for both guest and service-provider cohorts, as both had approximately the same number of reports related to it. In this sense, the research supports the statement that power is central in tourism, influencing interactional behaviours (MacLeod and Carrier, 2010).

Similar to the suggestion that power is the perception of authority or dominance (Elden, 2001; Lopez, 2010), both the guest and service-provider cohorts exhibited perceptions of authority or dominance using power. In relation to how power is displayed, it appeared that some in the service-provider cohort had a tendency to focus on verbal manifestations of power. This was through means already discussed in the literature, such as using a loud tone, bargaining, complaining, whining or ingratiation (Levine and Boster, 2001). As illustrated in Chong's narrative, a frontline service-provider, comment that the mainland Chinese tourists travelling in groups tended to jump the queue and demanded to be served before other guests.

Although it appears that guests had a tendency to dominate cross-cultural service exchanges by asserting power through loud tones, some service-providers reported the manifestation of power through more innocuous means, such Although that's good as through gentle persuasion. For example, Johan, a service-provider, said that some guests persistently persuaded him gently to give them similar types of rooms as their fellow travelers despite knowing that there was a queue.

In contrast, the guest cohort appeared to focus on power that was manifested nonverbally, in ways already mentioned in literature. This was evident in physical appearance, interpersonal space, facial expressions, and body movements (Burgoon and Saine, 1978; Afifi, 2007). Attire was a particular focus, as seen in John's comment that he was treated with better attitude when he was in suit and tie as compared with when he wore a t-shirt and jeans. For some guests, attire was a symbol of power. Gunalan, for example, commented how attire played an important role in cross-cultural service interactions

because, from Indian perspective for example, it influences how Indians are treated socially in India.

It seemed that, for both the guest and service-provider cohorts, power was a dominant interpersonal factor that negatively influenced cross-cultural service interactions. The negative influence of power during service interaction was highlighted by service-providers when guests used a loud tone to exert power in order to gain better service. As Hui Yee explained, when one group of guests found a hair in their food, they shouted so that other guests could hear them and see them asserting their power.

Control. Compared with actors' goals and power, only seven reports related to control were found among guests and service-providers. As suggested by Bitner (1990), control is addressed in this research through self-efficacy, or the expectation of how successful the participants themselves or their counterparts are in producing a desired outcome during service interactions. Particularly, the comparative analysis focused on how the guest and service-provider cohorts displayed their control during cross-cultural service interactions, and how it influenced those interactions positively or negatively.

Control was found to be prevalent in the guest cohort, with five out of seven reporting on this issue, compared with only two within the service-provider cohort. Specifically, some guests used positive means to achieve control, as suggested by Nikolich and Sparks (1995). For example, as explained by John, a smile was viewed as a positive means to achieve control and help one dealt in any situation with a stranger better to overcome potential friction.

In the above report from John, guest's pleasant facial expression was likely to lead to positive interaction. Although it has been argued that service-providers often perceive taking control as part of their job (Karatepe and Uludag, 2008; Karatepe et al., 2006), and that they usually take control in the early stages of service interactions by initiating a conversation with guests, and/or smiling, in the hope of reducing potential conflicts (Nikolich and Sparks, 1995), this was not supported in this research as it was not shown in the service-providers' behaviours. Guests, however, expected to see service-providers smiling, as indicated in John's comment from the guest cohort. John thought that smiling was important particularly when the service-providers' was not very conversant in English because it was sufficient for him if they smiled and were willing to at least try to help. Evidence of control through eye contact and speaking in a firm tone was also demonstrated in the case of Nata who would maintain eye contact when talking to the service-providers so that they paid careful attention to what she was saying.

A few service-providers commented on a number of situations in which guests from certain cultures sought to gain control of their service experience in negative ways. Particularly, "demand-ness" became an exemplar of negative means through which to achieve control. This supports the notion that control can also be gained through manifestation of social dominance (Lustig and Koester, 2006), exhibited through power or assertive verbal behaviours (McElwain and Volling, 2002). This was illustrated by Johan in an incident in which the guests demanded to speak to the manager before telling him what their problem was.

In this case, the use of the negative means of demand-ness and assertive verbal behaviours led to a negative service interaction, as the service-provider did not bother to provide

information or explanations for the guests that would have helped save the guest's time. Service-providers, not just guests, also used negative means to assume control. This is contrary to the idea that service-providers initiate friendly conversations to reduce potential conflict in service interactions (Nikolich and Sparks, 1995). Instead, the data showed that some service-providers made rude and belittling comments and made the guests wait to be served, as seen in Gunalan's narrative. Gunalan said that sometimes the service-providers made him wait and, even though they were not explicitly rude to him, Gunalan thought that they were insincere, and he was at their mercy.

The service-provider's use of negative means to achieve control made Gunalan feel intimidated and frustrated, thus creating a negative outcome for him. These two interactions that involved guests and service-providers who were non-Westerners from Asian cultural backgrounds, do not appear to support the notion that being in control is less important for Asians than for Westerners (Ji et al., 2000).

6.2.3   Cultural Differences

The comparative analysis on cultural differences focused on perceived cultural similarities and dissimilarities, as well as perceived cultural familiarity and unfamiliarity, to see how these influenced interactional behaviours in the guest and service-providers cohorts. Reisinger (2009) had suggested the use the "intercultural-ness" continuum (see Diagram 2.2), which indicates the degree of perceived cultural similarities and dissimilarities among the interacting parties to explain behaviours. Based on the "intercultural-ness" continuum, two situations with different cross-cultural interaction outcomes (Sutton, 1967) were observed between the guest and service-providers cohorts. These were:

- **Perceived cultural similarities** - the parties involved have very similar cultural backgrounds; or

- **Perceived cultural dissimilarities** - the parties involved have large and incompatible differences in cultural backgrounds.

In total, fourteen reports related to perceived cultural similarities were seen. Comparatively, the issue of perceived cultural similarities was more prominent with the service-provider cohorts, with ten reported cases. Arguments in the literature suggest that perceived cultural similarities imply commonness and attractiveness, leading to positive interaction consequences (Härtel and Fujimoto, 2000). However, this was not supported in the guest cohort. This could be seen in the comments from Berlinda, an Indonesia guest, who was misidentified as Chinese when interacting with service-providers in Kazakhstan, who immediately spoke to her in Russian, thinking that she was a local from northern China, which is close to Kazakhstan. It could also be seen in comments from Gunalan, a southern Indian guest when interacting with service-providers, from the neighbouring Sri Lanka, whose tone became unfriendly when they looked at this passport and realised that he was from southern India.

It seemed for these guests, cross-cultural service interactions were more difficult under perceived cultural similarities, which led them to describe their service experiences negatively. Thus, the findings disagrees with the arguments that perceived cultural similarity implies an affinity that would lead to congruency and positive interactions (Härtel and Fujimoto, 2000; Yoo and Sohn, 2003). Negative service interactions due to perceived cultural similarities were not confined to guests only, as similar negative

reports were also found in the service-provider cohort reports. For example, one report concerned a Chinese Malaysian service-provider interacting with culturally similar guests from the neighbouring country of Singapore. In Amelia's comment, one of her subordinates told her that Singaporean Chinese thought that they were much more superior than the Malaysian Chinese and were very demanding.

As a result, the Chinese Malaysian service-provider was guarded and unforthcoming when dealing with Chinese Singaporeans. It seemed that, although the Chinese Malaysian service-provider and Chinese Singaporean guest were thought to be culturally similar, the outcome of their service interactions was negative. Reports of negative service interaction under perceived cultural similarity were also found between a Chinese Malaysian service-provider and guests from mainland China, as in Hui Yee's case, the Chinese guests were unforgiving of his inability to speak Mandarin and thought that he was showing off his ability in English when conversing in that language with them.

It appeared that despite having some common ground, the data analysis indicated that perceived cultural similarities give rise to higher expectations and might provide more opportunities for negative interactions between guests and service-providers. It is likely that in situations associated with perceived cultural similarities, both guests and service-providers have higher expectations of their counterparts about knowledge, customs, and languages pertaining to their common culture. As seen in the quote from the service-provider who only spoke the Chinese dialect of *Hokkien*, he was looked down on by the mainland Chinese guest who expected him to speak Mandarin. In sum, in this research context, perceived cultural similarities had a negative influence on cross-cultural service interactions for both the guest and the service-provider cohorts.

A total of twenty seven reports related to perceived cultural dissimilarities were found. The issue of perceived cultural dissimilarities was prominent with both guest and service-provider cohorts as this showed the highest number of occurrences, compared with other influential factors listed in the key themes and sub-themes. Guests and service-providers had large and fairly even numbers of incidences related to perceived cultural dissimilarities.

Although the literature indicated that perceived cultural dissimilarities between interacting parties implied strangeness and anxiety that could lead to negative consequences in interactions (Neuliep and Ryan, 1998), this was not the case in this research. On the contrary, analysis from guest and service-provider cohorts indicated that perceived cultural dissimilarities (e.g. Eastern vs Western culture) contributed to positive cross-cultural service interactions. In situations associated with perceived cultural dissimilarities, both guests and service-providers were more accommodating and understanding of each other than in situations of perceived cultural similarities. Comments from some of the service-providers reflect such understandings. For example, Narul thought that the Australian who seemed to be able to switch to a 'holiday mode' were more relax when on holiday, had less expectations, and complained less.

Further, findings did not appear to support the impression that vast cultural differences can create interaction discomfort among interacting parties, and affect their expectations and evaluations of the interaction experiences (Paswan and Ganesh, 2005; Hall, 1976; Chen, 2002). Instead, in this research, perceived cultural dissimilarity encouraged positive interactions leading to positive service outcomes, as service-providers preferred to assist

Western guests. In particular, despite cultural dissimilarities, Australian guests were seen to be easier to deal with, having a more relaxed attitude and being less demanding. It seemed that within situations related to perceived cultural dissimilarities, guests and service-providers had lower cultural expectations of each other and were more forgiving if the other party was less knowledgeable about their cultures and customs, as seen in the comment by Chong, a frontline service-provider. Chong did not expect the Australians to know much about the Malaysian customs and cultures since many of them were visiting Malaysia for the first time.

In this case, the lower expectation placed on culturally dissimilar guests made service-providers more helpful in providing assistant, contributing to positive service interactions. Similarly, some in the guest cohort also had lower expectations of service-providers, which appeared to eventuate into positive service interactions, as seen in John's case. John did not expect the service-providers to speak perfect English and placed emphasis instead on their attitude and willingness to help rather than on their proficiency in English.

As indicated in literature, the level of expectations placed on an individual is dependent on the individual's culture (Hopkins et al., 2009; Hopkins and Hopkins, 2002) and it seemed that guests lowered their expectations of service-providers who were culturally dissimilar to them. As such, due to the low expectations, any deed conducted above the expectation was viewed positively. For example, the Indian guests did not expect the service-providers in London to assist them, as explained by Nata who consulted the service-providers in Western hotel for directions to the city and found them to be very helpful as they printed and provided the map for her.

Further, data seemed to indicate that perceived cultural dissimilarities encouraged the interacting parties to prepare themselves or take certain action to reduce unfamiliarity in cross-cultural service interactions. In this sense, cultural dissimilarities do not necessarily mean that the person is also unfamiliar with the so-called dissimilar culture. Rather, it served to suggest that perceived cultural familiarity or familiarising oneself with the dissimilar culture can help to provide confidence in dealing with strangers during encounters.

This was supported in both the guest and the service-provider cohorts. In total, thirty one reports related to overcoming perceived cultural unfamiliarity and achieve perceived cultural familiarity were found. Comparatively, perceived cultural familiarity was more prominent among the service-provider cohort, with eighteen reported cases. This seemed to suggest that some service-providers took the initiative to familiarise themselves with the culture of guests who were culturally dissimilar to them. It is possible that since they generally perceived interactions with culturally dissimilar guests as positive, this positivity encouraged them to want to interact and had contributed to their curiosity in getting to know the dissimilar culture.

While, the service-provider cohort had more opportunity to interact with culturally dissimilar people because of their job and therefore had the greater opportunity to familiarise themselves with dissimilar cultures, perceived cultural unfamiliarity was more prominent among the guest cohort, with six reported cases. The higher occurrence of perceived cultural unfamiliarity among guests could be related to the fact that guests had fewer opportunities to interact with culturally dissimilar service-providers.

Several means were undertaken to overcome perceived cultural unfamiliarity and to achieve familiarity. Service-providers who were curious about guests from dissimilar cultures were seen taking the initiative by finding information in order to learn about the guests' cultures or through speaking directly to the guests themselves. In a case, one Chinese Malaysian service-provider had learned about German culture, supporting the suggestion that cultural familiarity can be acquired through knowledge and communication skills (Pulido, 2004; Ting-Toomey and Chung, 2012). For example, Amelia, a service-provider, shared what she found out about Germans after speaking to some German guests. In general the Germans, she said, did not like to approach and talk to others, rather, they would prefer others to approach them first. But when one approached and talked to them, one should keep a certain distance and be not too close to them as they would be offended by close proximity.

By asking the guests directly about their culture, service-providers were able to obtain cultural knowledge and thus reduce cultural unfamiliarity. This helped them deal with future guests from that culture. One service-provider even indicated that he proactively acquired the understanding of dissimilar customs or cultural knowledge by voluntarily educating his children in that particular culture, as evidenced in Johan's case. Johan who is from a Malay cultural background enrolled his two kids to study Mandarin. The family further familiarized themselves with the Chinese culture by celebrating Chinese Mooncake Festival together

Not everyone, however, dealt with cultural unfamiliarity voluntarily. For example, some service-providers were instructed by hotel management to attend training to attain cultural familiarity, as indicated in Hui Yee's comment he went through cultural training on how

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to deal with Chinese guests in order to learn about 'Guan xi' within the importance of building relationships in the Chinese culture.

Like the service-providers who took the initiative to attain cultural familiarity, some guests also proactively acquired understanding of customs and cultural knowledge of the country they were visiting in order to avoid unfamiliarity. Berlinda, a business guest, said that she always learned the basic terms in their languages, such as greetings and "thank you", and found that the practise promoted good feelings as the service-providers appreciated her efforts in learning their languages.

Another way of acquiring cultural knowledge was through the Internet, as explained by John. As a business guest, he tended to go to government websites of the places he was visiting to get information in order to familiarise himself with the country. In addition, he would also ask travel agents, friends and relatives who had experience for information with the place he was visiting.

6.2.4 Co-Creation of Value in Service

The comparative analysis on co-creation of value in service focused on the perceived value that guests and service-providers associated with the willingness to participate in cross-cultural service interactions. Within the concept of co-creation of value in service, experience-seeking consumption requires individuals who hold their own values, to consider their involvement in participation, interaction and co-production with the service-providers (Edvardsson et al., 2011; Gummerus, 2013).

In total, thirteen reports related to co-creation of value in service were found, which indicates that this was of less importance than other factors, such as perceived cultural dissimilarity. In this sense, the small number of cases only partially supports the notion that the mature economies of Western countries and the Far East tend to emphasise experience-seeking that encourages co-creation of value in service (Lovelock and Gummesson, 2004; Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Pine and Gilmore, 1999). In this research, not all guests and service-providers, whether Westerners or Asians, emphasised co-creation of value in service.

The guest cohort reported a slightly higher number of cases related to co-creation of value in service, with 8 reports, but both cohorts seemed to have their own reasons in relation to a willingness to take part in cross-cultural service interactions. However, the notion that perceived value in co-creation of service is influenced by culture (Arnould et al., 2006; Xie et al., 2008) was not supported in the findings. Also the findings did not support the suggestion that perceived value in co-creation of service was associated with 'positive' experience from previous interactions (Holbrook, 2005; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982).

Instead, the comparative analysis indicated that the perceived value of taking part in service interactions was associated with the participants' goals, as mentioned in earlier discussion of actors' goal. This is not discussed in the literature, but in this research context it was more appropriate to analyses co-creation of value in service in relation to the goals of the participants. For example, from the service-provider cohort, with regard to perceived value of taking part in service interactions with guests related to their goals of fulfilling their job performance, Chong, a service-provider, commented that it was

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necessary that he interacted with guests so that he knew what their requirements were and this would, in turn, make it easier for him to do his job.

Some service-providers who held negative attitudes towards their goals were found to have perceived no value in interacting with guests. Others considered interactions with guests to be central to the evaluation of their job performance, and the perceived value might be linked to monetary rewards. For example, Johan, a service-provider, commented that he was required to 'smile', be friendly and ensured that his guests were satisfied. When the guests were happy, they would not complain and that made his manager happy which was helpful in his job appraisal.

Not all service-providers viewed interactions with guests negatively. Some service-providers such as Narul, who exhibited positive attitudes, thought that interaction with the guests was important. She also thought that it was the service-providers' duty to talk to the guests themselves and make sure that they were happy and satisfied with the service.

As for guests, the analysis found that their perceived value in engaging in cross-cultural service interactions was also dependent on their goals, associated with their trip. What this may suggest is that guests seemed to be willing to participate in service interactions only if interactions with service-providers aligned with their travel goals. In general, business travellers' goals were functional, as such, they were less likely to perceive any value in cross-cultural service interactions and were often reluctant to engage in service interactions, as indicated in Berlinda's comment that she considers interactions with

service-providers to be a 'chore' and do not see a need as she relies on her own local agent for information.

In occasions when business travellers did participate in service interactions, it was to achieve their functional goals, such as getting settled into a comfortable room. For example, Peng Yin shared that the only time he bothered to interact with the service-providers was when he wanted an iron, a toothbrush, or some toiletries, or an advice as to where to get food.

The findings from business travellers supported the idea that to get involved in value co-creation, the traveller needed to see that they would get something of value out of it (Grönroos, 2008). From the experiential perspective, the business travellers perceived little benefit in interacting with service-providers (i.e. knowledge, expertise or resources).

In contrast, some of the leisure travellers' goals were more experiential, similar to literature suggestion (Heinonen et al., 2010) and were more likely to align with the perception of value in service interactions with service-providers. This is in line with their goals of discovery and exploration of the local culture during the trip, which includes talking to the service-providers as shared by Nata.

6.2.5 Coping Strategies

The comparative analysis on coping strategies employed in cross-cultural service interactions focused on stereotyping. This was defined, in line with the literature, as the act of making strong and consistent inferences about individuals on the basis of their

group memberships, which could lead to intergroup bias (Spencer-Rodgers et al., 2007). Stereotyping was identified in the narratives of both guests and service-providers.

In total thirty eight report employing coping strategies related to stereotyping were found, suggesting that it was an important factor. However, unlike other factors, the reporting of stereotyping was spread unevenly between the guest and service-provider cohorts. Of the thirty eight reports related to stereotyping (consisting of ten stereotyping activations, and twenty eight stereotyping applications), thirty out of the thirty eight came from the service-provider cohorts.

The greater need for stereotyping as a coping strategy for the service-provider cohort could be due to the nature of their job, requiring them to interact frequently with guests. Or, as suggested in literature, it could also be due to the likelihood of stress, emotional charge or negative outcomes of interactions (Folkman et al., 1986; Carver et al., 1989), brought about by others, such as guests (Billings and Moos, 1981; O'Neill and Davis, 2011). Literature suggested coping strategies are deemed to be defence mechanisms to help manage stressful situations (Endler and Parker, 1990; Wang and Mattila, 2010). It was further suggested one cause of stressful or negative interactions related to the feeling that one of the interacting parties had loss the locus of control (Ross, 1995a). The research indicated the likelihood of service-providers using stereotyping to enable them to gain control and assert power in order to manage any friction that might eventuate in these interactions.

The dominant presence of stereotypes in the service-provider cohort seemed to support the notion that stereotypes often emerge for service-providers as soon as they start

thinking about tourists from other parts of the world (Moufakkir, 2011). Service-providers appear to have established stereotyping predisposition, which consisted of stories or events that had been stored in their memories and were available for retrieval (Operario and Fiske, 2008). These would provide the triggers for stereotyping (Macrae and Bodenhausen, 2000). This was illustrated in Johan, a service-provider's comment. This was illustrated in Johan's, a service-provider, comment. Johan said that his colleagues told him that guests from India usually travelled in large numbers and they loved to shop, and would thus end up with having excess baggage. He also thought that guests from India had poor time management that often resulted in late check-in and check-out.

It seemed that during stereotype activation, service-providers were careful to retrieve predisposition information on specific cultural groups. In this respect, the findings subscribe to the view that sterotype activation is not spontaneous but eventuates while participants are consciously aware of their predsipostions (Lepore and Brown, 1997).

In addition, the activation of stereotypes was seen to be related to the participant's view of human traits (Hong et al., 2001). That is, whether they held an entity-theorist or an incremental-theorist style of thinking, as suggested in literature (Chiu et al., 1997; Levy et al., 1998). In the former, the view assumes that human traits are fixed, which we attributed to the frequent activation of stereotypes. In the latter, the view assumes that human traits are dynamic, which we attributed to infrequent stereotype activation. For example, some of the service-providers who held frontline positions frequently activated predispositions to stereotype and reflected an entity-theorist style of thinking, asserting that human traits are fixed based on culture. For example, Chong said that Chinese guests

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in tour groups usually speak very loudly in the hotel lobby during hotel check-in and he thinks that it is part of their culture

It was also shown that stereotyping application were mostly negative in service-providers who held frontline positions., For example, Johan thought that Chinese guests from mainland China were loud, rude and liked to show off that they had branded clothes and bags; Chong thought that the Chinese guests from mainland China were big spenders due to their new wealth and they liked to be lavish; he also thought that language was an issue with the Middle-Eastern guests as they did not understand English very well and became upset easily.

All of the reports recounted above would likely be associated with negative service interactions. It seemed that stereotyping had given the service-providers an excuse to avoid having proper conversations with the guests or making efforts to assist the guests. In this sense, this supports the suggestion that even though stereotyping can have positive and negative outcomes (Moufakkir, 2011), stereotyping is prone to have negative outcomes in service interactions (Pizam and Ellis, 1999; Čivre et al., 2013; Reisinger, 2009).

In contrast, analysis found that some service-providers in executive positions, who did not deal with a large number of guests during the course of their working day, activated fewer stereotypes in their diaries and interview. This suggests that these service-providers, who showed the attributes of incremental-theorists, recalled stereotypes less frequently and may have been reluctant to activate a predisposition to stereotype. In this sense, the data supports the view that not everyone succumbs to stereotyping, as activation

is controllable (Banaji and Hardin, 1996; Devine, 2001; Moskowitz and Li, 2011; Sassenberg and Moskowitz, 2005). In the small number of incidences when they did stereotype, this was often done in a positive light, as shown in the comments from Amelia where she considered Westerners, and particularly the Americans to be very friendly. She also thought Westerners were curious about her culture and took time to talk to her in order know more about the place and culture. Narul, another service-provider in executive position also thought that Western guests were more appreciative and polite compared with Asian guests.

In this case, service-providers who were in executive positions would be more likely to promote positive service interactions since they would be more candid and open when interacting with Western guests. Another positive example was seen in Hui Yee's comment, he thought that Korean guests were shy due to their lacking in English language proficiency and thus seldom demanded or bothered him to do things. In this case, Hui Yee seemed sympathetic towards the Korean guests and therefore went to extra lengths to provide assistance to them.

As indicated, the service-providers who were in executive positions appeared to exhibit stereotyping patterns similar to those of incremental-theorists, who make fewer inferences on the attributes of others and are less likely to stereotype (Chiu et al., 1997). In addition, inferences made by these theorists about others are likely to be positive (Erdley and Dweck, 1993). The incremental-theorist's assumption that personal attributes of individuals are malleable (Dweck et al., 1995) was further confirmed in one report where the service-provider suggested that people from the same culture had different traits. For example, Hui Yee who held an executive job position commented, on the

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dynamic traits of Japanese guests, that he thought most Japanese are known to be fast and efficient and they are also well mannered and polite when requesting for things to be done.

The discussion above suggests that job roles may have an influence on stereotyping beliefs and behaviours and that service-providers who hold executive positions are likely to associate with incremental-theory while service-providers who hold frontline positions are more likely to associate with entity-theory. The service-providers sterotypying pattern based on their job roles are summed up in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3: Job roles and entity-theorists or incremental-theorists allocation of service-providers

Informant groups	Pseudonyms and age	Ethnicity	Actor's role	Job position	Negative stereotyping	Positive stereotyping
Entity theorists	Chong, Mid 30s	Chinese	Service-provider (Frontline)	Hotel Concierge	√	
	Johan, Mid 40s	Malay	Service-provider (Frontline)	Hotel Front-desk Personnel	√	
	Teresa, Mid 30s	Italian-Indian	Service-provider (Frontline)	Hotel Communication Helpdesk Personnel	√	
Incremental theorists	Hui Yee, Mid 30s	Chinese	Service-provider (Executive)	Hotel Banquet Manager		√
	Narul, Early 30s	Indonesian	Service-provider (Executive)	Hotel Marketing Manager		√
	Amelia, Early 40s	Chinese	Service-provider (Executive)	Hotel Premium Club Manager		√

Furthermore, analysing the stereotyping patterns in the service-provider cohort, it is possible that power distance further influenced how stereotypes were applied. Findings suggested that stereotype application was higher in cross-cultural interactions when the distance of power was greater. This was certainly the case with service-providers who worked in frontline positions, compared with those in executive positions.

As discussed previously, power distance represents the inequality in societies (Hofstede and Bond, 1988) and has been uses to explain how people on different levels of social status interact in society (Hofstede et al., 2010). In this context, service-providers in frontline positions represented the lower level of the hierarchy and were not equal to those at the high level or the wealthy. Such constraints and social rules created nervous stress in interactions (Hofstede, 2011). To cope with such stress, those in the lower level of the hierarchy maintained a social distance away from those in the high level, often through negative stereotyping application. However, it seemed that staff in managerial positions perceived less distance between themselves and guests and reported more positive service interactions.

In addition, when stereotyping did occur in relation to power distance, the level of power distance was further influenced by cultural background of the interacting parties. For example, it was found that negative stereotyping occurred less often between Asian service-providers and guests who were culturally dissimilar. Even though the level of power distance was high between wealthy Middle-Eastern guests and Asian service-providers, negative stereotyping activation did not occur. This was illustrated in Johan's, a frontline service-provider, comment: he didn't expect a senior Middle-Eastern man to be able to understand English and was prepared to call one of the interpreters to help him in translation; but to his surprise, the senior Middle-Eastern man spoke good English.

The likelihood of negative stereotyping was high when the level of power distance was high in situations of cultural similarity, such as between wealthy Asian guests and Asian service-providers. This was reaffirmed in Gunalan's, a leisure traveller, comment on

service-providers in hotels in Bangladesh which received a lot of guests from the Western countries. Gunalan thought that the staffs in these hotels gave preferential treatment to the Western guests and sensed that the staffs looked at him differently and did not treat him well because he was Asian and not a Westerner.

In this sense, the data contradicts the arguments of Ho (1993), who noted that in-group sentiments strongly influenced the interactional behaviours of Asians (collectivists) who perceived cultural similarities as an integral factor for positive interactions (Triandis et al., 1988; Hofstede 2001).

The distinctiveness principle assists in explaining this behaviour (Brewer and Harasty, 1996). The data appears to support what was suggested in the distinctiveness principle that under conditions of cultural similarity, where a large common collective identity is shared, lies a motivation for establishing or maintaining a sense of differentiation away from the larger collective identity (Brewer, 1991; Brewer & Gardner, 1996). In this research, it seemed that differentiation was more evident when there was a difference in socio-economic status between guests and service-providers. While some hotel guests appeared to distance themselves from the service-providers with the same ethnic backgrounds, the service-providers were attuned to this. Indeed, they themselves applied stereotypes to these guests as they expected them to behave in a certain manner. Hence, under these conditions a vicious cycle of stereotyping appears to emerge.

The many occurrences of stereotyping seemed to support the suggestion that there is a strong tendency for people who do not have professional knowledge on a subject, to stereotype others based on racial, or ethnic categories (Prentice and Miller, 2007).

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Further, stereotypes appear to become "intelligence" information shared between service-providers and their colleagues and used as tools to assist in coping with interactions (Kashima, 2000; Levine et al., 1993). This was seen in Chong's, a frontline service-provider, comment that he learned from fellow colleagues who had faced similar situation in dealing with visitors from China. He knew the differences among the tourists from mainland China, and thought that the ones from Shanghai and Beijing were better behaved whereas the ones from other parts of China were loud. He also thought that Chinese from Hong Kong were more sophisticated but more demanding and they were more similar to the Chinese from Singapore.

This resonates with Rothbart and Taylor's (1992) caution that not everyone's naïve beliefs and knowledge about individuals in different social groups are accurate. Inaccuracy potentially produces negative effects on the social relationships between the interacting parties (Yzerbyt and Rogier, 2001), and stereotyping others based on cultural groups by guest and service-provider cohorts seemed to have mainly produced negative service interactions.

6.2.5.1 Additional Findings

Additionally, as cross-cultural service interactions involved interacting parties speaking in different languages, the research identified an emergent theme of language that could provide a new topic and new opportunity for future investigation. On several occasions, it was demonstrated that language proficiency, particularly the ability to speak English well, played a role in influencing cross-cultural service interactions. This has not been discussed in the literature in the tourism context, although it is discussed in service literature (Holmqvist and Grönroos, 2012). The literature suggests that most cultural

groups have their own languages with unique features that allow those who speak it to share and enjoy specific experiences (Eastman, 2014), and comprehending the language of another culture results in positive interaction outcomes (Neuliep, 2006). In addition, it is argued, language is used to seek commonness to discern in-group and out-group members (Maass et al., 1989). However, these suggestions were not supported in this research. Rather, the research found that it was the lack of proficiency in the third language - the English language - and not the interacting parties' own language that was the problem. For example, between the Malaysian service-providers and Middle-Eastern guests, it was the proficiency in English rather than the language of the guests or service hosts that influenced service interaction.

As social treatment of others is said to be based on attitude towards the language spoken by that individual (Fasold, 1984), the proficiency of English seemed to have influenced cross-cultural service interactions. Particularly, in the guest cohort, the issue of proficiency in the English language was more prominent for business travellers than for leisure travellers. For the business travellers, the lack in proficiency in the English language from service-providers could contribute to negative service interactions, as highlighted in a comment by a guest. John said that it was important to ensure the service-provider understood English and what the guest was saying, and the onus was on the management because they were the service provider.

Findings indicated that some business travellers looked down on service-providers for having a poor command of the English language. This could be attributed to nature of their trip, as business travellers tend to emphasise efficiency and, as such, their expectations of service-providers' competence and English language proficiency would

be high. Service-providers also emphasised proficiency in English. Some had mastered the English language themselves and therefore expected guests to be proficient. The following comment from Nafal who recalls a negative service interaction when his uncle, a senior Middle-Eastern guest was not able to communicate in English to the Malaysian service-provider, had a hard times requesting for an additional bed as the staff did not understand what they were saying.

In another example, it appeared that the level of proficiency in the English language determined the kind of treatment received from the service-providers, as evinced in Peng Yin's, a guest, comment that the service-providers thought he was the same as the previous group of Chinese who did not speak English. But when he spoke English to them, they treated him differently.

6.3 SUMMARY

This chapter provided the comparative analysis of the guests and service-providers at the cohort level. Section 6.1 presented the finding that the characteristics of the guest cohort were similar to those of contemporary travellers, and the characteristics of the service-provider cohort were similar to those of existing employees in hospitality. The suggestion that the older age groups encouraged interaction was only partially supported in the leisure traveller group but was not supported among business travellers. For the level of education, the research only partially supported the belief that higher education encourages interactions – that only encourages leisure travellers with higher education to interact but not the business travellers with higher education. The comparative analysis presented in Section 6.2 focused on the key themes and sub-themes and highlighted several findings. This included the indication that cross-cultural service interactions were

more positive within situations of cultural similarity, for both guest and service-provider cohorts. As for coping strategies, stereotyping was more prominently applied by the service-provider cohort and within that cohort, frontline service-providers had a tendency to apply negative stereotyping. With the research for this these now completed and discussed, the next chapter brings the thesis to a close.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.0 INTRODUCTION

The thesis had highlighted the importance of cross-cultural service interactions in tourism and noted that cross-cultural service interactions are complex phenomena influenced by several factors. Literature review identified that both personal and interpersonal characteristics of guests and service-providers and cultural differences were factors influencing cross-cultural service interactions. It was also identified that stereotyping was employed as a coping strategy for both guests and service-providers when they engaged in cross-cultural service interactions. The cultural friction paradigm was introduced as a suitable paradigm to explore the complexities in cross-cultural service interactions between guests and service-providers within the context of international tourism and the thesis outlined the research methodology and data collection methods. The findings and a discussion of the individual narratives were presented and a comparative analysis at the cohort level was discussed in previous chapter. This chapter presents the conclusions drawn from the study.

7.1 OVERALL SUMMARY

As indicated earlier, reports of negative service interactions between guests and service-providers contribute to revenue losses in tourism. This was the impetus for this study. The literature indicates that cross-cultural service interactions are complicated by both personal and interpersonal factors of the interacting parties, which contribute to unpredictability in behaviours. Cross-cultural service interactions are further complicated by the use of stereotyping as a coping strategy. These two issues prompted the study's aim: to explore for the complexities in cross-cultural service interactions between guests

and service-providers in a five star luxury hotel. The research was guided by two research questions:

RQ1) How does the interplay of personal and interpersonal factors, culture and the co-creation of service influence cross-cultural service interactions between guests and service-providers?

RQ2) How do the cultures and beliefs of guests and service-providers influence their application of stereotyping in cross-cultural service interactions?

This research recognised that cross-cultural service interactions between guests and service-providers would be set within the context of two competing dichotomies. Guests and service-providers have different interests and have the tendency to blame others and often hold their counterparts responsible for negative service interaction outcomes. Thus, exploring cross-cultural service interactions from the perspective of guests and service-providers, both as cohorts and at the individual level, can assist in obtaining a holistic understanding and perspective of their interactions. As cross-cultural service interactions are complex, a dynamic paradigm and research model was needed to help explain the complexities and address the shortcomings in the research of cross-cultural service interactions. The present study aimed to address these gaps by identifying a dynamic paradigm to guide this research and a research approach that included both guest and service-provider perspectives.

The review of the literature revealed that personal characteristics influence cross-cultural service interactions and that these can be examined through demographic characteristics

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of gender, age, level of education and social class status. Interpersonal characteristics can be examined through actors' goals, power and control; and cultural differences can be examined through cultural similarity/dissimilarity, cultural familiarity/unfamiliarity and co-creation of value in service. This set of influencing factors calls for participants to use a number of coping strategies in their cross-cultural service interactions. In this research, stereotyping involving activation and application was proposed as a key coping strategy used by both guests and service-providers. Based on the literature review, the influencing factors were identified to help develop the themes. These aided the investigation and were incorporated into the research model.

Several cultural paradigms were reviewed for this thesis. From these reviews, the cultural friction paradigm (Shenkar et al., 2008) was deemed to the most appropriate for this study because it recognises complexity, realistically concedes socio-economic asymmetry and recognises the importance of including the perspectives of both the interacting parties. The components of the cultural friction paradigm that include: key players, the cultural carriers, point of contact and cultural exchange, were then used to develop the conceptual framework. Together with that characteristics of guests and service-providers and cultural differences, they were used to form the key themes and sub-themes incorporated into the research model.

This research focused on the meanings in the interactional relationships and adopted a methodological stance with an interpretivist's assumptions, a constructivist's ontology and a qualitative methodology. Data collection included participant observation, elite interviews and semi-structured in-depth interviews. Narrative inquiry, which focuses on collecting stories based on participants' experience, was the overarching approach and

was used in conjunction with the critical incident technique, which enabled participants to recall their critical interactional experience. The interview data were transcribed verbatim and loaded into the NVIVO 9.2 for analysis.

In total, 12 participants were recruited through purposive sampling and snowball sampling. To gain a realistic understanding of cross-cultural service interactions, service-providers were recruited from various hotel departments and from executive and frontline positions. The guest informants included both leisure and business travellers who held a range of occupations.

Narrative analysis focuses on the categorisation and narrative content. First and second order narratives were used to analyse the data, which then formed a coherent account of the participants' cross-cultural service interaction experiences. Narrative analysis was conducted at the individual level in order to determine the significance of the various key themes and sub-themes in relation to each participant's cross-cultural service experiences. Material was also analysed in the context of the previous literature to identify any alignment and divergence. Findings from the individual level were then used to undertake a comparative analysis at the guest and service-provider cohort levels. This comparative analysis focused on those factors that influenced cross-cultural service interactions, to determine which factors had major or minor influences on guest and service-provider cohorts in cross-cultural service interactions. To do this, the researcher looked at the total number of occurrences of each factor and how each affected service interaction positively or negatively. The findings from the comparative analysis together with the overall findings from the thesis are presented in the following section.

7.2 KEY FINDINGS

7.2.1 Characteristics of Guests and Service-Providers

In this research, the characteristics of guests and service-providers were examined through personal (i.e. demographic), interpersonal characteristics (i.e. actors' goals, power and control), and social class status (i.e. subjective social class status and objective social class status). As for the demographic characteristic of age, although the literature suggested that senior guests, in general, exhibit characteristics of meeting other people and interacting with local hosts to gain personal and cultural enrichment, this was only partially supported by this research, as it applied to senior leisure travellers but not to senior business travellers. Service-providers in this study were generally younger than guests. This age gap could have led to competing expectations and perceptions of each other, affecting positive interactional behaviours between the two cohorts. However, this was only partially supported as the service-providers who are younger in age than the guests have both positive and negative interactions with the guests.

The claim that a higher level of education encourages interactions between guests and service hosts was only partially supported in this research. Leisure travellers who had high levels of education encouraged interactions but business travellers with similar educational levels did not. This suggests that level of education is not a main determinant on service interactions.

The characteristics of guests and service-providers were examined through interpersonal factors focusing on the constructs of actors' goals, power and control. The findings supported the suggestion that actors' goals influence the perceived purpose of service

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interactions (Truong and King, 2009). It was found that service-providers' goals were functionally motivated and mainly job-oriented and that they regarded service interactions with guests as obligations, rather than choices. The goals for leisure travellers were hedonistically-oriented and for business travellers, comfort-oriented.

The literature suggests that goal congruity encourages interactions and that interacting parties who share similar goals are more motivated to interact. This was contrary to the findings in this research. The study found that business travellers who had somewhat similar goals to service-providers, cared more about efficiency and were not enthusiastic about engaging in interactions with their service-providers. This may suggest that although the two have somewhat similar goals but the way they achieve their goals are different. Only the service-providers' and not the business travellers', achievement of goals are related to engagement in cross-cultural service interactions. In addition, contrary to the idea that goal incongruity discourages interactions as divergence in goals would demotivate interaction, this study found that leisure travellers, whose goals were dissimilar to those of the service-providers, wanted to interact.

As for power, as suggested by (Elden, 2001), it was demonstrated, that individuals in the study used elements of a five star luxury hotel setting, such as the public spaces to exercise power. In addition, guests tended to display their power through nonverbal forms, such as through their attire and their facial expressions. On the other hand, service-providers tended to emphasise power through verbal forms, such as through a loud tone and complaining, which might suggest that service-providers viewed the issue of power as more confrontational compared with guests.

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The findings of the research suggest the likelihood of participants asserting power and gaining control seemed to be culturally dependent, as participants referred to their counterparts within particular cultural cohorts when they recounted their experiences of power assertion. The findings of this study support Weiermair and Fuchs's (2000) view that when cultural differences between the parties were less apparent, power was more likely to be asserted in order to gain control over the situation and to dominate the interaction. For example, issues surrounding power were evident in the interactions between Chinese Malaysians and mainland Chinese, as well as between Singaporeans and Malaysians. This may well suggest that when cultures are psychologically closer, the interacting parties may become insecure or competitive, which motivates them to exert power and gain control.

Control in this study was seen as a means for guests and service-providers to achieve certain outcomes. Taking control seen by service-providers as being part of their job, which supports the view of Whyte (1977). Negative and positive means were used to gain control. Contrary to suggestions that guests normally use negative means such as dominance and assertive verbal tones, guests in this study sometimes used positive means to control the cross-cultural service interaction. This included being friendly, smiling and showing politeness. Control within this context also seemed to be culturally dependent. Contrary to (Weiermair, 2000) suggestion, this study found that the need to gain control was prominent under perceived cultural similarities situations rather than under perceived cultural dissimilarities situations. For example, negative experiences of control were reported between Singaporean guests and Malaysian service-providers. This is not consistent with the notion that control is less important to Asians in comparison to Westerners (Sastry and Ross, 1998).

In addition, under situations involve asymmetry in social class status, it was found that objective social class status due to socio-economics was more predominant compared with subjective social class status. Particularly, objective social class status was common between guests and service-providers from eastern cultures, such as between mainland Chinese guests and Chinese Malaysian service-providers. This finding is not consistent with the conventional view that socio-economic asymmetry predominantly occurs between Western guests who are wealthy and Eastern service-providers who are poor (Wearing et al., 2010). On the other hand, this appears to support what Pinches (2005) had mentioned about the emergent of the new rich in Asia, and what du Cros and Jingya (2013) had mentioned that the rising income disparity between Asian guests and Asian service-providers due to emerging economic growth, is altering social behaviours in Asia. In this sense, economic growth has not only contributed to rising income disparity between Asian guests and Asian service-providers but has created social gaps between them. This suggests that there is a need to address social class status between Asian guests and Asian service-providers

7.2.2 Cultural Differences

Cultural differences were examined through perceived cultural dissimilarities and similarities. The findings of the study found that perceived cultural dissimilarities (e.g. Eastern vs Western culture) contributed to positive outcomes in guest and the service-provider cross-cultural service interactions. This was apparent between Malaysian service-providers interacting with Australian guests. It seemed that in situations of perceived cultural dissimilarities, both parties were more accommodating and understanding of each other, as they did not have the same expectations of the other party as they did in perceived cultural similarities situations. In addition, the findings of this

study suggest that the expectation of guests were not limited to service competency, but included culturally related expectations. It was also likely that under perceived cultural dissimilarity, feeling culturally unfamiliar encouraged guests to prepare themselves proactively to acquire cultural knowledge about the host country.

In this sense, the findings do not support the similarity hypothesis that more positive interactions eventuate between interacting parties under perceived cultural similarities situations (Adler & Graham, 1989), nor the suggestion that the smaller the perceived cultural distance, the greater the likelihood of positive interaction outcomes (Volet & Ang, 1998). Instead, perceived cultural similarities gave rise to higher expectations, leading to negative service interaction outcomes. For example, negative service interactions were reported between Chinese Malaysian service-providers and mainland Chinese guests. In this case, although the two participants' ethnicity are the same, their cultural experiences can be very different. It seems likely that in situations of perceived cultural similarities, both parties have higher cultural expectations of their counterparts with regard to their common cultures and there is a lack of motivation to obtain knowledge relating to the common culture.

Furthermore, co-creation of value in service was examined through the perceived value that guests and service-providers held in relation to taking part in cross-cultural service interactions. Contrary to the suggestion that the perceived value depended on the positive experience that one would receive from that interaction, the findings of this study found that the perceived value for taking part in interactions related to participants' goals. For service-providers, the perceived value for taking part in service interactions with guests related to their job performance goals. Guests (only leisure travellers), whose goals were

often experiential, were likely to perceive value in engaging in cross-cultural service interactions with service-providers. In general, business travellers' goals were functional, thus they were less likely to perceive any value in cross-cultural service interactions and were often reluctant to engage in such interactions. The notion that guests are co-creators of value implies that they contribute positively to service (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). This was not fully supported in this research, as there were many reports from the service-providers that guests (both leisure and business) contributed negatively to service interactions.

7.2.3 Coping Strategies

The findings of the study indicate that coping strategies are also an influencing factor shaping cross-cultural service interactions, as service-providers used stereotyping to cope with cross-cultural service interactions in order to influence service outcomes. Different stereotyping patterns were also demonstrated. For example, it seemed that service-providers exercised stereotyping application on their counterparts through ethnicity (in culturally similar and culturally familiar situations) and through nationality (in culturally dissimilar and culturally unfamiliar situations).

Nonetheless, the findings on stereotyping did not align with suggestions of the likelihood of positive interactions with stereotyping application under culturally similar situations and negative interaction with stereotyping application under culturally dissimilar situations. For example, the findings of this study did not support the claim that Asians perceived cultural similarities as integral factors for positive interactions (Ho, 1993), or that Asians tended to place the group above the self to seek harmony, and aimed for social connectedness rather than differentiating. Therefore, other researchers argue, they would be less likely to stereotype fellow Asians who are culturally similar. On the contrary, this

study supports the distinctiveness principle (Brewer, 1991) that challenges similarities and connectedness and states that under culturally similar situations, where a large common collective identity is shared, there is a motivation for establishing or maintaining a sense of differentiation away from the larger collective identity. In this context, it was seen that Chinese Malaysian service-providers differentiated themselves from the mainland Chinese and Singaporean Chinese through stereotyping.

Furthermore, the study discovered a potential association with implicit theories (Levy, 1999), from examining the stereotyping activation and application patterns against the participants' profiles. The activation of stereotyping seemed to be related to the participant's view of human traits, that is, whether they held an entity-theorist (assumes that human traits are fixed) or an incremental-theorist (assumes that human traits are malleable) style of thinking. It seemed that service-providers who held a lower job position made extreme or negative judgements about others and were prone to practise stereotyping application resulting in negative outcomes. This suggests that this group readily acts on their predispositions and their stereotyping activation and application, resulting in negative outcomes that fit the entity-theorist descriptions.

In contrast, service-providers who held high job positions, such as management, made fewer inferences about the attributes of others. When they did, they made positive judgements about others, resulting in positive outcomes that fit the incremental-theorist's way of thinking. However, this could also lead to suggestions that participants in this group might be reluctant to activate their stereotyping predispositions, or were reluctant to share negative stereotypes with the researcher because of their positions. There is also

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the possibility that they might have given politically correct or socially desirable responses.

The study also found that stereotypes are used not merely as conversational materials but also action as "intelligence" information that is shared among the service-providers and their colleagues. This is similar to suggestions that stereotyping is often shared with others and used to aid social explanations. Service-providers seemed to see stereotyping as an effective means of explaining the behaviours of certain groups and were found to have organised their stereotyping intelligence based on past experiences and discussions with colleagues. Further, service-providers and colleagues collectively reinforced stereotyping as useful information to cope effectively with cross-cultural service interactions, not just as individuals, but as a collaborative group.

7.2.4 Emergent Theme - Others

Finally, in addition to findings that helped respond to the research questions, the research identified another aspect that did not necessarily fit into this particular research. This was categorised as 'language'. For example, it was found that language proficiency was used to display power. In this study, it seemed that proficiency in spoken English (which was not the native language for most of the participants) created a positive first impression in cross-cultural service interactions. In the research context, some guest participants in their recurring narratives suggested that they expected their service-providers to be able to converse in the English language. Likewise, service-providers also judged guests through their ability to converse in English. Consequently, "English as a third language" could be an emergent theme, providing an opportunity for future investigation.

7.3   Key Conclusions and Contributions to Knowledge

Based on what was not known before the research and what has been found as a result of this research, three key conclusions can be drawn from the study. These are presented in Table 7.1. As seen in Table 7.1, this study contributes to knowledge through the determination of how personal, interpersonal characteristics and cultural differences complicate cross-cultural service interactions. For example, although it is overlooked in literature, the factor of objective social class status was found in this research to be dominant, affecting service interactions. Additionally, asymmetry in objective social class influenced service interactions. This was seen in the case of stereotyping of guests by frontline service-providers due to high power distance created by the asymmetry in objective social class status.

In addition, under cultural differences, it was found that cultural similarity was likely to lead to negative service interaction and cultural dissimilarity to positive service interaction; cultural familiarity was likely to lead to negative service interaction and cultural unfamiliarity to positive service interaction. This is contrary to arguments in the literature. It was also found that business travellers were less likely to perceive value in co-creation of service and were thus less willing to participate in service interactions; whereas leisure travellers were more likely to perceive value in co-creation of service and thus were more willing to participate in service interactions. This also contradicted previous suggestions. What this implies is that there is a need to consider multiple and interplaying influencing factors related to personal, interpersonal characteristics and cultural differences in order to explain the complexities in cross-cultural service interactions.

Table 7.1: Key conclusions of the study

Key conclusions	Knowledge contribution	Managerial implications	Limitations from the study	Future research
Cross-cultural service interactions between guests and service-providers are complicated by personal, interpersonal characteristics and cultural difference factors.	-Need to consider multiple and interplaying influencing factors related to personal, interpersonal characteristics and cultural differences. -Under personal characteristics factor, objective social class status is dominant and affects service interactions. -Under cultural differences, cultural similarity is likely lead to negative service interaction and cultural dissimilarity is likely lead to positive service interaction. -Cultural familiarity is likely lead to negative service interaction and cultural unfamiliarity is likely lead to positive service interaction. -Business travellers are less likely to perceive value in co-creation of service and thus less willing to participate in service interactions. -Leisure travellers are more likely to perceive value in co-creation of service and are thus more willing to participate in service interactions. -Cultural friction paradigm is adequate and dynamic to explain the complexities in cross-cultural service interactions in a B2C context.	-Management should be aware that personal and interpersonal characteristics of guests and service-providers, and cultural difference factors influence cross-cultural service interactions. -Management should not assume that cultural similarity and cultural familiarity would automatically lead to easiness and positivity in cross-cultural service interactions. -Management should also understand that guests might not always see value in co-creation of service and might not be willing to take part in service interactions with service-providers.	-Under personal characteristics, only demographic factors of gender, age and level of education were considered. -Under interpersonal characteristics, only actors' goals, power and control were considered. -Only guests and service-providers were interviewed but no other key players, such as managers of the service-providers or friends and family of guests. -The context was limited to a five star luxury hotel only.	-Consider other demographic factors such as marital status and income level, to see if they influence cross-cultural service interactions between guests and service-providers. -Consider other interpersonal factors, such as affections, closeness, anxieties, and risks, to see if they influence cross-cultural service interactions between guests and service-providers. -Consider a comprehensive approach that includes the views of the various key players who are not directly involved in the interactions, such as family members and travel partners, or managers of the service-providers, -Extended to other situations where cross-cultural service interactions might take place. For example, in different accommodation settings, such as backpacker hostels.

Table 7.1: Key conclusions of the study

Key conclusions	Knowledge contribution	Managerial implications	Limitations from the study	Future research
Stereotyping is employed as a coping strategy by service-providers in cross-cultural service interactions between guests and service-providers.	-Service-providers in frontline positions are likely to be entity-theorists and tend to negatively stereotype guests who are culturally similar. -Service-providers in executive positions are likely to be incremental-theorists and tend to stereotype guests positively. -Service-providers in frontline positions are likely to have high power distance with guests and tend to stereotype guests negatively. -Service-providers in executive positions are likely to have low power distance with guests and tend to stereotype guests positively.	-Management should be made aware of the existence of stereotyping among their staff, specifically among service-providers in lower job positions who tend to stereotype culturally similar guests negatively. -Service-providers in the entity-theorists groups should receive specific education on the subject of stereotyping -Management could strategise to move the entity-theorists into the incremental-theorists group through promotion based on the delivery of positive cross-cultural service interactions.	-Only two typologies of service-providers were considered: frontline and executive. -Streotypying by service-providers was only discussed in the international tourism context. -Not all cultures were examined under streotypying by service-providers, as stereotypying seemed to occur with guests from the few countries mentioned, such as Singapore, China, India, Japan, Korea, Middle-East, Australia and the US.	-Inclusion of service–providers from various departments and hierarchy levels can provide further insight into understanding stereotyping by service-providers. -Conduct research to see if streotypying by service-providers occurs in the domestic tourism context. -Conduct research to see if streotypying by service-providers occurs with guests from other countries beside those mentioned in the study. -Conduct research to see possible relationship between power distance and implicit theory in stereotypying.
There are similarities and differences in the perspectives of guests and service-providers on recounting their cross-cultural service interactional experiences.	-It is important to include both perspectives of guests and service-providers in order to understand service interactions holistically. -Among others, similarities were found between the two cohorts, showing the likelihood of positive service interactions under cultural dissimilarity and negative service interactions under cultural similarity. - Among others, differences were found between the two, with stereotypes used predominatly by service-providers and not the guests.	-By examining both guests and service-providers, a balanced view is provided that gives guests and service-providers an opportunity to hear from their counterparts. It also gives tourism employers a chance to listen to their employees' experiences and allow tourism employers to implement appropriate cross-cultural interaction strategies to reduce negative service outcomes.	This study was conducted on an individual level with only one representative member of the guest and service-provider dyad, rather than both representative members.	-Future research on cross-cultural interactions in tourism could thus focus on the generating of paired dyadic data by using an 'observation-based' paired dyadic approach, such as through videoing to observe the interactions *in situ*. This would extend the current research and provide insights into how cultural friction manifests itself in the actors in cross-cultural service interactions in tourism.

The adoption of the cultural friction paradigm helped to explain the complexities in cross-cultural service interactions in a B2C context. In this sense, this study has extended the cultural friction paradigm, beyond its B2B business management context to a B2C context in international tourism. The study further concluded that the cultural friction paradigm, with its emphasis on qualitative methodologies, was able to reveal complexities in cross-cultural interactions between guests and service-providers that may not have been revealed through a quantitative approach. Specifically, the cultural friction paradigm, with the applicability of its components of key players, cultural carriers, point of contact and cultural exchange, helped draw out understandings of the need for coping strategies, such as stereotyping, to deal with cross-cultural service interactions.

Another key conclusion was that there were not only similarities but also differences in the perspectives of the guests and service-providers on recounting their cross-cultural service interactional experiences. The findings show that the guests' accounts and the service-providers' account of cross-cultural service interactions were not always aligned. For example, the issue of stereotyping was predominant for the service-providers but not the guests. This suggest that it is important to include both perspectives of guests and service-providers in order to understand service interactions holistically. This is particulalrly important to understanding complex phenomena that are dyadic in nature.

In this sense, the study's research, which included both guest and service-provider perspectives, reinforced the importance of including both interacting parties' perspectives in studying dyadic nature interactions. For example, the inclusion of the service-providers enabled their side of the story to be revealed, bringing an understanding of the service interaction phenomena from their side, which did not necessary align with the guests'

stories. Additionally, the approach also helped to reiterate the two-way interactive dimension of co-creation in service interactions, that both parties share some responsibility in shaping interactional outcomes. Therefore, this research contributes to the body of knowledge in understanding cross-cultural interactions with consideration given to guests and service-providers in the research approach. These are summarised as follows:

- **Inclusion of two perspectives**. By obtaining information from both interacting parties, tacit knowledge enabled an understanding of complex phenomena.

- **Qualitative insights**. The study focused on extracting meanings from people who are directly involved in creating the phenomena of cross-cultural service interactions through semi-structured in-depth interviews, providing rich insights into the phenomena.

- **Influencing factors**. The inclusion of factors such as personal, cultural differences and stereotyping, which influence interactions, can help researchers to realise and understand complexities in interactional phenomena.

7.4 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The study highlights a number of implications for tourism and hospitality practitioners. There is a need for management to optimise service interactions as they are often the "moment-of-truth" in interactions (Brunner-Sperdin et al., 2012) and affect service satisfaction. Practitioners can learn more about the personal and interpersonal characteristics of guests and service-providers, and acknowledge that cultural differences and stereotyping can influence service interactions. This knowledge can be used in training. Establishments can highlight the negative impact of interpersonal factors and

address how they are displayed by service-providers themselves (whether they are aware of them or not) and how this can affect the outcome of the interactions.

Management should not assume that cultural similarity implies cultural familiarity leading to positive cross-cultural service interactions. They should make the effort to highlight the minor, however important, differences within cultural similarities and cultural familiarities that are often taken for granted. They could assist service-providers in ameliorating any potentially negative effects by providing cross-cultural sensitivity training that promotes better understanding of the culture and customs of guests frequenting the hotel. Currently, cultural training is often only provided to service-providers who are in managerial positions in some hotels, but it should be provided to all service-providers – even those at the entry level.

In tandem, establishments could ensure greater cultural diversity within the composition of their employees in order to encourage the sharing of cultures and to foster effective interactions under cultural differences. Practitioners could develop general strategies based on positive experiences about cultural norms, expectations, and behaviours for specific cultural groups to reduce the negative influence of cultural differences on interactions. These positive strategies can prepare the service-providers before they interact with guests from various cultures. Management should also understand that some guests might not be willing to take part in service interactions, which could contribute to emotional stress for the service-providers.

Practitioners should be aware of the existence of stereotyping among service-providers in lower job positions who tend to predispose to stereotype culturally similar guests. This

can result in negative interactions. Management should realise the need to raise awareness of the adverse implications of stereotyping and its relationship to customer satisfaction. Service-providers in the entity-theorists groups should receive specific education on the subject of stereotypying. In addition, management could strategise to move the entity-theorists into the incremental-theorists group through promotion based on the delivery of positive cross-cultural service interactions. Further, as stereotyping intelligence is often shared among the service-providers, management should educate them about seeing guests as individuals rather than as members of a certain cultural group.

7.5 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Both the limitations and findings of this research provide opportunities for future research. One limitation lies within the area of personal characteristics, as only demographic factors of gender, age and level of education were considered. Inclusion of other demographic factors, which might influence size of travel party and specific purpose of leisure trips (e.g. family, honeymoon), could provide additional insights. Another limitation lies within the area of interpersonal characteristics, whereby only actors' goals, power and control were considered in the present study. Future research could look into other interpersonal factors, to explore for whether they influence cross-cultural service interactions between guests and service-providers. Another limitation in the research is that not all cultures were examined under streotypying by service-providers. In this study, stereotypying seemed to occur with guests from a few selected countries: Singapore, China, India, Japan, Korea, the Middle-East, Australia and the US. This does not mean that others countries or cultures are exempted from stereotypying; it could be that guests from countries not mentioned in this study did not frequent the five stars luxury hotels in the context of this study.

Further, this study has provided insights into the perceptions of cross-cultural interactions from two independent points of view. It was conducted on an individual level in the context of international tourism in which the two respective parties of an assumed dyadic relationship took part in, and were representative members of, the guest and service-provider dyad. Future research could focus on generating paired dyadic data that can further explicate the dyadic interaction patterns substantiated in some research as suggested by Watne and Brennan (2011; 2009). This include the use of an observation-based paired dyadic approach through videoing to observe the interactions *in situ*. This would extend the current research and provide insights into how cultural friction manifests itself in actors in cross-cultural service interactions in tourism.

Limitations in qualitative methods mean that findings cannot be used to make statistical generalisations, as they are specific to the context of this research only. Undertaking a larger number of interviews would have provided more examples and wider coverage surrounding the themes relating to the complexity in cross-cultural service interactions between guests and service-providers. Further, by using narrative inquiry, limitations of the research include possible repetitive in the stories (Peterson and McCabe, 1994; Fivush, 1991), and as indicated by some scholars such as Crossley (2003) and Bleakley (2005), a possible loss of emotional impact in the narrative discourse. Acknowledging these limitations, the researcher tried to minimise the impact of these by being aware of his participation and influence in the narrations. While the use of critical incident technique was an effective means for developing the narratives, those narratives could only be related to a five star luxury hotel where this particular research took place. While this may be one of the limitations, it provides opportunities for future research into other

situations where cross-cultural service interactions might take place. For example, this study could be extended to different accommodation settings, such as backpacker hostels, various forms of guided tours, or tourist attractions.

Different typologies of guests and service-providers may produce different types of cross-cultural interactions, goals, and power and control needs. For example, a young inexperienced traveller at a back-packer hostel may have very different goals in a cross-cultural interaction compared with an experienced business traveller in a five star luxury hotel. Different guests in guided tours may be in varying states of mind during their holiday, which could lead to different attitudes towards cross-cultural interaction. They might regard the hotel as a place to relax and unwind, while preferring to engage deeply with a foreign culture through a guided tour.

Adopting a research approach that considers the views of the various key players who are not directly involved in the interactions, such as family members and travel partners, or managers of the service-providers, would provide a comprehensive view of cross-cultural service interactions in the context of international tourism. Similarly, studies conducted on institutions, organisations, groups or cohorts would also be of value in uncovering the complexities of cross-cultural service interactions.

7.6 FINAL REMARKS

Cross-cultural service interactions between guests and service-providers in the five star luxury hotel in the context of international tourism represent a complex phenomenon. This study extended the cultural friction paradigm from a B2B context in business management to a B2C context in international tourism, demonstrating that this dynamic approach provides a useful framework to understand the complexities in cross-cultural

service interactions in an international tourism context. Together with the cultural friction paradigm, the qualitative methods, including narrative inquiry and critical incident technique, revealed many of the complexities within cross-cultural service interactions. The personal and interpersonal characteristics of guests and service-providers, as well as their cultural differences, are salient factors influencing cross-cultural interactions and this study has provided considerable information about these characteristics and the dynamics of such interactions. It has also shed light on how stereotyping is employed as a coping strategy in this context and how it further influences and shapes service interaction outcomes.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Invitation to Guests to Participate in
Cross-Cultural
Service Interactions Research

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN CROSS-CULTURAL SERVICE INTERACTIONS RESEARCH

Date:

INFORMATION TO INTERESTED PARTICIPANTS:

We would like to invite you to be part of a study that explores **cross-cultural service interactions between hotel guests and hotel service-providers from different cultures.**

My name is Jason Cheok and I am currently pursuing my PhD with Victoria University Australia here in Sunway University Campus under the supervision of Professor Anne-Marie Hede and Dr Torgeir Aleti Watne of Victoria University, Australia. The objective of my research is to understand the experience of cross-cultural service interactions encountered in five star luxury hotels from the perspectives of guests and hotel service-providers. In particular, my study seeks to understand cross-cultural interactions and find out what factors or components influence interaction outcomes. My aim is to learn from your positive and negative experiences in cross-cultural service interactions and hope to make recommendations on how to improve cross-cultural interactions and achieve better cross-cultural service interaction outcomes.

My target participants are hotel guests who meet the following criteria:

- Individuals who have travelled internationally at least three times a year and have stayed in a five star luxury hotel as guests and have had experience in dealing with hotel service-providers from different cultural backgrounds.

You provide an excellent opportunity for the research due to your years of experience staying in a five star luxury hotel. Your experience and past encounters with hotel service-providers from a wide spectrum of backgrounds make you the best candidate in providing valuable input for this research. Please be assured that all information provided will be kept confidential and your name will not be revealed but a pseudonym name will be used instead.

The research requires you to keep records of positive and negative service experiences with hotel service-providers you have encountered in a five star luxury hotel that you deem memorable or critical. It also involves an hour of in-depth interview with you on the topic of cross-cultural interactions between guests and hotel service-providers on an agreeable date and venue. The process is summarised briefly as below:

- Researcher meets up with the participant 1 ½ months before the interview to provide an introduction on the research

- Questions (or protocols) related to the cross-cultural service interactions will be provided in the introduction

- The researcher will arrange the interview based on an agreeable date and venue

- Participants to sign a consent form agreeing to participate in the research

- During the interview, the participant will need to provide information on his/her background and share cross-cultural interaction experiences

- Participant will need to answer questions relating to cross-cultural interactions given in the introduction

- Participant can ask and verify any questions pertaining to the interview

Your support and contribution in enriching the body of knowledge on cross-cultural interactions are greatly appreciated. I would be glad to answer any questions that you have with regard to the research and I look forward to your participation! If you are interested in participating, kindly contact me at 017-879-1448 or email me at cheokbc@sunway.edu.my

Sincerely,

_____
Jason Cheok
Senior Lecturer
Victoria University
Sunway University College
03-7491-8622 Ext 8338
HP: 017-879-1448
Email: cheokbc@sunway.edu.my.

Any queries about participation in this project may be directed to the researcher Jason Cheok, HP: 017-879-1448, office phone: 03-7491-8622 Ext 8338 or to the principal supervisor Professor Anne-Marie Hede (613) 9919 4148, email anne-marie.hede@vu.edu.au. If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics & Biosafety Coordinator, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC 8001, (613) 9919 4148, or the principal supervisor Professor Anne-Marie Hede at anne-marie.hede@vu.edu.au, (613) 9919 4715 or the co-supervisor Dr Torgeir Aleti Watne at Torgeir.Watne@vu.edu.au (613) 9919-5367.

Appendix 2

Invitation to Service-providers
to Participate in
Cross-Cultural Service
Interactions Research

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN CROSS-CULTURAL SERVICE INTERACTIONS RESEARCH

Date:

INFORMATION TO INTERESTED PARTICIPANTS:

We would like to invite you to be part of a study that explores **cross-cultural service interactions between hotel guests and hotel service-providers from different cultures.**

My name is Jason Cheok and I am currently pursuing my PhD with Victoria University Australia here in Sunway University Campus under the supervision of Associate Professor Anne-Marie Hede and Dr Torgeir Aleti Watne of Victoria University, Australia. The objective of my research is to understand the experience of cross-cultural service interactions encountered in five star luxury hotels from the perspectives of guests and hotel service-providers. In particular, my study seeks to understand cross-cultural interactions and find out what factors or components influence interaction outcomes. My aim is to learn from your positive and negative experiences in cross-cultural service interactions and hope to make recommendations on how to improve cross-cultural interactions and achieve better cross-cultural service interaction outcomes.

My target participants are hotel service-providers who meet the following criteria:

- Managers who have worked in a five star luxury hotel for a minimum of three years and have the experience of managing hotel service-providers in dealing with guests from diverse cultural backgrounds such as guests from the Middle East, Europe, Asia, Australia, New Zealand, North America and South America.
- Hotel employees (service-providers) who have worked in a five star luxury hotel for a minimum of three years and have the experience in dealing with guests from diverse cultural backgrounds such as guests from the Middle East, Europe, Asia, Australia, New Zealand, North America and South America.

You provide an excellent opportunity for the research due to your years of service or experience working in a five star luxury hotel. Your experience and past encounters with hotel guests from a wide spectrum of backgrounds make you the best candidate in providing valuable input for this research. Please be assured that all information provided will be kept confidential and your name will not be revealed but a pseudonym name will be used instead.

The research requires you to keep records of positive and negative service experiences with hotel guests you have encountered in a five star luxury hotel that you deem memorable or critical. It also involves an hour of in-depth interview with you on the topic of cross-cultural interactions between

guests and hotel service-providers on an agreeable date and venue. The process is summarised briefly as below:

- Researcher meets up with the participant 1 ½ months before the interview to provide an introduction on the research
- Questions (or protocols) related to the cross-cultural service interactions will be provided in the introduction
- Participant is provided a diary for 3 months to record service interactions experiences with hotel guests from the past, present or future until the interview
- Researcher will conduct interview with participant approximately 3 months after the introduction based on an agreeable date and venue
- Participants to sign a consent form agreeing to participate in the research
- During the interview, the participant will need to provide information on his/her background and share cross-cultural interaction experiences
- Participant will need to answer questions relating to cross-cultural interactions given in the introduction
- Participant can ask and verify any questions pertaining to the interview

Your support and contribution in enriching the body of knowledge on cross-cultural interactions are greatly appreciated. I would be glad to answer any questions that you have with regard to the research and I look forward to your participation! If you are interested in participating, kindly contact me at 017-879-1448 or email me at cheokbc@sunway.edu.my

Sincerely,

_____
Jason Cheok
Senior Lecturer
Victoria University
Sunway University College
03-7491-8622 Ext 8338
HP: 017-879-1448
Email: cheokbc@sunway.edu.my.

Any queries about participation in this project may be directed to the researcher Jason Cheok, HP: 017-879-1448, office phone: 03-7491-8622 Ext 8338 or to the principal supervisor Professor Anne-Marie Hede (613) 9919 4148, email anne-marie.hede@vu.edu.au. If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics & Biosafety Coordinator, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC 8001, (613) 9919 4148, or the principal supervisor Professor Anne-Marie Hede at anne-marie.hede@vu.edu.au, (613) 9919 4715 or the co-supervisor Dr Torgeir Aleti Watne at Torgeir.Watne@vu.edu.au (613) 9919-5367.

Appendix 3

Research Interview Questions
for Hotel Service-providers

RESEARCH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR HOTEL SERVICE-PROVIDERS

Date:

INFORMATION TO SERVICE-PROVIDER PARTICIPANTS:

Thank you for your interest in participating and attending this introduction for the study on cross-cultural service interactions between hotel guests and hotel service-providers.

The research asks you to:

a) Record some memorable positive or negative cross-cultural interactions you have had with guests in the past or present based on your reflections. The memorable or critical incidences can be recorded in a note book diary or alternatively in Office Word documents. You will be given 3 months to complete the records. It is important to describe to the best of your knowledge, the details of the cross-cultural interactions including description of the person, venue, duration, and positive or negative outcomes.

b) Take part in a one-hour in-depth interview upon completion of the diary with your good self, using the following questions as a guide for the interview conversation. Please prepare the information for the interview.

   Question Guide:

1) Background or profile of the participant including age, gender, cultural background, service department and working experience.
2) What is your job role in the hotel?
3) To understand the importance of cross-cultural interactions, how common are cross-cultural interactions between service-providers and guests?
4) What are the benefits of cross-cultural interactions for hotel service-providers? For example, what can a service-provider gain from cross-cultural interactions with guests?
5) What were your positive service experiences with guests? Describe the guests and what were your opinions of them? What did they do in the interactions?
6) What were your negative service experiences with guests? Describe the guests and what were your opinions of them? What did they do in the interactions?
7) What are the obstacles of cross-cultural interactions for you as hotel guests? For example, what are some difficulties that hinder cross-cultural service interactions? Is communication a problem?

8) What are the factors or components that facilitate cross-cultural interactions for service-providers? For example, did they speak the same language as you? Were you familiar with the guests' culture?
9) What has the hotel or organisation done to assist you in better managing cross-cultural interactions?
10) Can you suggest what an individual should do to improve cross-cultural interactions?
11) Can you suggest what the hotel or organisation can do to improve cross-cultural interactions?

Your support and contribution in enriching the body of knowledge on cross-cultural interaction are greatly appreciated. I would be glad to answer any questions that you have with regard to the research.

Sincerely,

_____

Jason Cheok
Senior Lecturer
Victoria University
Sunway University College
03-7491-8622 Ext 8338
HP: 017-879-1448
Email: cheokbc@sunway.edu.my.

Any queries about participation in this project may be directed to the researcher Jason Cheok, HP: 017-879-1448, office phone: 03-7491-8622 Ext 8338 or to the principal supervisor Professor Anne-Marie Hede (613) 9919 4148, email anne-marie.hede@vu.edu.au. If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics & Biosafety Coordinator, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC 8001, (613) 9919 4148, or the principal supervisor Professor Anne-Marie Hede at anne-marie.hede@vu.edu.au, (613) 9919 4715 or the co-supervisor Dr Torgeir Aleti Watne at Torgeir.Watne@vu.edu.au (613) 9919-5367.

Appendix 4

Research Interview Questions
for Guests

RESEARCH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR HOTEL GUESTS

Date:

INFORMATION TO GUESTS PARTICIPANTS:

Thank you for your interest in participating and attending this introduction for the study on cross-cultural service interactions between hotel guests and hotel service-providers.

The research involves you:

c) To record some memorable positive or negative cross-cultural interactions you have had with hotel service-providers in the past or present based on your reflection. You will be given 30 days to complete the records. It is important to describe to the best of your knowledge, the details of the cross-cultural interaction including description of the person, venue, duration, and the positive or negative outcomes.

d) Take part in a one-hour in-depth interview upon completion of the diary with your good self, using the following questions as a guide for the interview conversation. Please prepare the information for the interview.

Question Guide:

1) Background or profile of the participant including age, gender, cultural background, service department and working experience.
2) What was the purpose for your trips?
3) To understand the importance of cross-cultural interactions, how common are cross-cultural interactions between service-providers and guests?
4) What are the benefits of cross-cultural interactions for you as guests? For example, what do you gain from cross-cultural interactions with hotel service-providers?
5) What were your positive service experiences with hotel service-providers? Describe the hotel service-providers; what were your opinions of them? What did they do in the interactions?
6) What were your negative service experiences with hotel service-providers? Describe the hotel service-providers; what were your opinions of them? What did they do in the interactions?
7) What are the obstacles of cross-cultural interactions for you as hotel guests? For example, what are some difficulties that hinder cross-cultural service interactions? Is communication a problem?
8) What are the factors or components that facilitate cross-cultural interactions between you and hotel service-providers? For example, did they speak the same language as you or you were familiar with the service-providers' culture?

9) What did you do to prepare yourself better in managing cross-cultural interactions?
10) Can you suggest what an individual should do to improve their cross-cultural interactions?
11) Can you suggest what the hotel or organisation can do to help improve service-providers cross-cultural interactions?

Your support and contribution in enriching the body of knowledge on cross-cultural interaction are greatly appreciated. I would be glad to answer any questions that you have with regard to the research.

Sincerely,

_____

Jason Cheok
Senior Lecturer
Victoria University
Sunway University College
03-7491-8622 Ext 8338
HP: 017-879-1448
Email: cheokbc@sunway.edu.my.

Any queries about participation in this project may be directed to the researcher Jason Cheok, HP: 017-879-1448, office phone: 03-7491-8622 Ext 8338 or to the principal supervisor Professor Anne-Marie Hede (613) 9919 4148, email anne-marie.hede@vu.edu.au. If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics & Biosafety Coordinator, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC 8001, (613) 9919 4148, or the principal supervisor Professor Anne-Marie Hede at anne-marie.hede@vu.edu.au, (613) 9919 4715 or the co-supervisor Dr Torgeir Aleti Watne at Torgeir.Watne@vu.edu.au (613) 9919-5367.

Appendix 5

Consent Form for Participants
Involved in Research

CONSENT FORM
FOR PARTICIPANTS
INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:

We would like to invite you to be part of a study in the research **-** *Cross-Cultural Interaction between Guests and Hotel Service-providers in Five Star Luxury Hotels*.

The objective of the research is to understand experiences of cross-cultural service interactions in five star luxury hotels from the perspectives of guests and hotel service-providers. The study seeks to understand cross-cultural interactions and find out what factors or components influence interaction outcomes. We aim to learn from your experience the contributing factors in positive and negative cross-cultural service interactions and hope to be able to make recommendations on how to enhance cross-cultural interactions and achieve better cross-cultural interaction outcomes.

Please take note that the research involves your taking part in a one-hour, face-to-face, in-depth interview that will be audio-recorded and the researcher will be taking notes during the interview to ensure your ideas are captured accurately. In the interview, you will be asked to provide your background and answer questions pertaining to cross-cultural service interactions in relation to your positive and negative cross-cultural service experiences in hotels.

Please rest assure that all your comments in the interviews will remain confidential and your name will be anonymous and will not be mentioned in any of the publications or reports. In addition, if you feel uncomfortable at any one stage, please do not hesitate to inform us that you would like to withdraw from the study. Your support and contribution in enriching the body of knowledge on cross-cultural interaction are greatly appreciated and we would be glad to answer any questions that you have with regard to the research.

Kindly acknowledge your consent to participate in the research by acknowledging the section below if you are in agreement with the procedure.

CERTIFICATION BY SUBJECT

I, _____
certify that I am at least 18 years old* and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the study:

"Cross-Cultural Interactions between Guests and Hotel Service-providers in a five star Luxury Hotel" being conducted at the Victoria University Program in Sunway Campus by Jason Cheok.

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed below to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by Jason Cheok and that I freely consent to participate in the below mentioned procedures:

- Researcher will provide an introduction

- Participant is to take part in an one-hour, face-to-face interview

- Participant will need to provide information on his/her background

- Participant will share positive and negative cross-cultural interaction experiences

- Participant answers questions pertaining to cross-cultural interactions

- Participant can ask and verify any questions pertaining to the interview

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way. I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

_____
Signed:

Date:

Any queries about participation in this project may be directed to the researcher Jason Cheok, HP: 017-879-1448, office phone: 03-7491-8622 Ext 8338 or to the principal supervisor Professor Anne-Marie Hede (613) 9919 4148, email anne-marie.hede@vu.edu.au. If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics & Biosafety Coordinator, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC 8001, (613) 9919 4148, or the principal supervisor Professor Anne-Marie Hede at anne-marie.hede@vu.edu.au, (613) 9919 4715 or the co-supervisor Dr Torgeir Aleti Watne at Torgeir.Watne@vu.edu.au (613) 9919-5367.

Appendix 6

Researcher's Interview Protocol
(Questions for the Interviews)

Researcher's Interview Protocol (Questions for the Interviews)

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY | **A NEW SCHOOL OF THOUGHT**

Cross-Cultural Service Interactions between Guests and Hotel Service-providers in a Five Star Luxury Hotel

Interviewed by: _____
Interviewee: _____ Title: _____
Organisation: _____
Department: _____
Date and Time: _____ Venue: _____

Start of Interview:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview.

My name is Jason Cheok and I am currently pursuing my PhD with Victoria University, Australia here at the Sunway University Campus. My thesis is to examine cross-cultural service interactions between hotel guests and hotel service-providers. My aim is to understand cross-cultural service interaction experiences and their outcome from the perspectives of the guests and hotel service-providers.

To facilitate our interview, with your consent, I would like to tape-record our conversations today. Please be assured that all information including this document, any notes or diary and the recorded tape will be kept confidential. Please note that it is not the intention of this study to cause any harm and that this interview is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable. This interview is planned for an hour. There are several questions that I would like to cover. However, I hope you understand that if time is running short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead to complete the other questions. Please do not hesitate to have me rephrase or explain a term that you may not be familiar.
Protocol Introduction:

You have been selected for this interview today because you have been identified as someone who has cross-cultural interaction encounters with guests or service-providers in a five star luxury hotel. My research study is to understand cross-cultural interactions and find out what factors or components influence the interaction outcomes. My aim is to learn from your experiences and hope to make recommendations on how to handle difficulties encountered during cross-cultural interactions in order to achieve better cross-cultural interaction outcomes.

Section 1: Demographics of Interviewee
How long have you been …………………………….
Your present position is ………………………………
Your cultural background is………………………….
You would describe your ethnicity as ……………….
Your age is ………………………………………………..
How long have you been in your current job………………..

Section 2: Cultural Differences (Perceived cultural similarities-dissimilarities; cultural familiarity-unfamiliarity)

1. Briefly describe your role (guests/ service-providers) that enables you to encounter cross-cultural interaction experiences.

2. The person you interacted with, what was his/her cultural background?
3. In that cross-cultural interaction encounter, how knowledgeable or familiar were you with the culture of the other individual?
4. If you were knowledgeable about his/her culture, where did you get the knowledge?
5. How did being familiar with the other culture help with the interaction?
6. Would you consider your own culture as being similar or very different from the culture of the individual you were interacting with?
7. Do you recall any positive memorable or incidences of cross-cultural interaction with guests/service-providers? (Encourage guest interviewee to refer to his/her own notes if they have. For service-provider interviewees they can refer to their diary).
8. What in your opinion contributed to the positive interactions?
9. Do you recall any negative memorable or incident of cross-cultural interactions with guests/service-providers?
10. What, in your opinion, contributed to the negative interactions?

Section 3: Personal Behavioural Factors – Actors' Goals

1. Can you tell me a little bit about your interests or goals?
   a) Ask service-providers what their goals are for the current job, alternatively what goals are required of them.
   b) Ask guests what their goal is for their trip- leisure or business related?
2. How important are these goals? How do you feel if these goals are not met?
3. What is your expectation of the individuals you are interacting with in helping you to achieve your goals? Did they facilitate you in meeting your goals? Do you see them as sharing the same goals with you?

Section 4: Personal Behavioural Factors – Power

1. Can you describe the individuals you interacted with? What was your impression of them? Can you comment on the way they communicated (based on their tone of voice, communication style) and their physical appearance (based on attire)?
2. Your conversation with that individual, were you able to understand his/her verbal and non- verbal communication? What made you understand or not able to understand his/her communication?
3. Were you familiar with their communication style such as words, tone of voice and nonverbal gesture? What language did they use? Were they similar or different from your culture?
4. In your culture, how would you interpret the communication style demonstrated by the other individual? Would it be considered as normal, acceptable, demanding or intimidating?

Section 5: Personal Behavioural Factors – Control

1. Can you illustrate more on the interactions with the individuals of another culture you had interacted with?
2. Did you sense that he/she was trying to get things done in their own way? In other words, did they try to take control of the situation?
3. What was your reaction to people who liked to take control of situation? What about yourself, do you think it is important to take control of a situation?
4. How do you think an individual can have a better control of a situation or an interaction? Is it through knowledge? Do you think that the more they know or the more information they have, it would grant them the control?

5. In your culture, how would you interpret control? Is it commonly practiced in your culture that control is an important element of success?

Section 6: Interacting Parties' Status

1. What is your opinion of the social status of the individuals you interacted with? Is the status very different from yours?
2. What was your impression of their social behaviour in relation to their social status?
3. What is your opinion of the economic status of the individuals you interacted with?
4. Based on their economic status, can you comment on their general behaviour?

Section 7: Co-creation of Value in Service

1. What benefits do you see in engaging yourself in a cross-cultural service interaction?
2. What discourages you from engaging in a cross-cultural service interaction?
3. Given a choice, can you comment on your willingness to take part in cross-cultural service interaction?
4. Would you recommend that the hotel should have more cross-cultural service interactions?

Section 8: Cross-Cultural Interaction Outcome

1. How would you describe the cross-cultural interaction experience that you had? Was it a difficult encounter (negative) or an easy and pleasant (positive) encounter?
2. What do you think contributed to the encounter that made it a difficult or easy and pleasant encounter?
3. Would you rate the cross-cultural interaction outcome as positive or negative?
4. What do you think are some important factors that would contribute to a positive or negative cross-cultural interaction outcome?
5. In your opinion, what can be done to improve cross-cultural interactions?

Section 9: Coping Strategies

1. How do you handle cross-cultural interactions that you perceive will be challenging, for example, the other person is from a different culture? Can you describe the person in the interaction and the incident?
2. How would you 'group' or 'categorise' your counterparts? Were they similar to other groups of persons you have interacted with?
3. Do the people in the same 'group' behave in the same way? What are their behaviours?
4. Can you describe the behaviour? Were they negative or positive behaviours?
5. How do you handle cross-cultural interactions with people who are challenging (for example rude or demanding)? Can you describe them and elaborate on the incident?
6. Why do you use the method (if any) … to deal with cross-cultural interactions?

Section 10: Other comments and observations

Ask participants if they have any questions with regard to the research and interview. Verify unclear information and solicit suggestions that would be helpful to the research.

End of Interview

I would like to thank you very much for taking part in this interview and like to express my appreciation by giving you this pen from Victoria University as a memento. Please do not hesitate to contact me at any time if you have any questions or any comments.