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Communication Across Cultures? An Intercultural Approach to Customer Service in the Hotel Industry: A Study with Globally Branded Hotels in the United Kingdom

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Abstract

In a professional and business-social context such as that of global hotel brands in the United Kingdom, intercultural communication, contacts and relationships are found at the heart of daily operations and of customer service. A large part of the clientele base of hotels in the United Kingdom is formed by individuals who belong to different cultural groups that travel in the country either for leisure or business. At the same time, the global workforce which is recruited in the hotel industry in the United Kingdom is a reality here to stay. Global travelling and labor work mobility are phenomena which have been generated by changes which occur on a socio-economic, cultural and political level due to the phenomenon of globalization. The hotel industry is therefore well acquainted with the essence of different cultures either to be accommodated within hotel premises, as in the case of external customers, or of diversity management where different cultures are recruited in the hotel industry, as in the case of internal customers.

This thesis derives from research conducted on eight different global hotel brands in the United Kingdom in particular, with reference to three, four and five star categories. The research aimed to answer the question of how hotels are organized in order to address issues of intercultural communication during customer service and if intercultural barriers arise during the intercultural interaction of hotel staff and global customers. So as to understand how global hotel brands operate the research carried out focused in three main areas relating to each hotel: organizational culture, customer service–customer care and intercultural issues. The study utilized qualitative interviews with hotel management staff and non-management staff from different cultural backgrounds, public space observations between customers and staff during check-in and checkout in the reception area and during dining at the café-bar and restaurant. Thematic analysis was also applied to the official web page of each hotel and to job advertisements to enhance the findings from the interviews and the observations. For the process of analysis of the data interpretive (hermeneutic) phenomenology of Martin Heidegger has been applied.

Generally, it was found that hotel staff quite often feel perplexed by how to deal with and how to overcome, for instance, language barriers and religious issues and how to interpret non verbal behaviors or matters on food culture relating to the intercultural aspect of

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customer service. In addition, it was interesting to find that attention to excellent customer service on the part of hotel staff is a top organizational value and customer care is a priority. Despite that, the participating hotel brands appear to have not yet, realized how intercultural barriers can affect the daily operation of the hotel, the job performance and the psychology of hotel staff. Employees indicated that they were keen to receive diversity training, provided by their organizations, so as to learn about different cultural needs and expand their intercultural skills. The notion of diversity training in global hotel brands is based on the sense that one of the multiple aims of diversity management as a practice and policy in the workplace of hotels is the better understanding of intercultural differences. Therefore global hotel brands can consider diversity training as a practice which will benefit their hotel staff and clientele base at the same time. This can have a distinctive organizational advantage for organizational affairs in the hotel industry, with potential to influence the effectiveness and performance of hotels.

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Acknowledgments

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Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature _____

Printed name _____Eirini Daskalaki_____

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Australian NHMRC: Australian National Health and Medical Research Council

BSA: British Sociological Association

EC: European Commission

ELF: English as Lingua Franca

HRM: Human Resource Management

HS: Hotel Staff

IBM: International Business Machines

IC: Intercultural Communication

ICC: Intercultural Communication Competence

ICSEs: Intercultural Service Encounters

ILA: Individual Learning Account

JA: Job Advertisement

OBS: Observation

OECD: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

SDS: Skills Development Scotland

SRA: Social Research Association

TA: Thematic Analysis

WTTC: World Travel and Tourism Council

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Rationale and significance of the study

'With rapid increase in international travel and migration in recent years, there is a rise in the number and importance of intercultural service encounters, which involve interactions between customers and employees from different cultures' (Teng, 2011, Etgar and Fuchs, 2011, Wang and Mattila, 2010). 'Intercultural service encounters (ICSEs) involve customers and service employees from different cultures' (Stauss and Mang, 1999). In particular, hotels as working environments are distinguished by their cultural multiplicity, which can take variable forms. The presence of intercultural communication in the hotel industry in the United Kingdom has been intensified in two ways: as a result of the influx of a diversified workforce and global customers into the country. Thus, intercultural communication forms a significant part of the daily routine of employees during customer service. 'Despite such increasing importance of intercultural service encounters, prior research mostly explores the influence of customer perceptions and reactions' (Liu, Furrer and Sudharshan 2001, Zhang, Beatty and Walsh, 2008) 'but generally ignores the impact of cultural differences on the interaction between customers and employees from diverse cultural backgrounds'. 'A few studies have investigated intercultural service encounters from the employees' perspective; for example, the role of intercultural sensitivity of service employees' (Sizoo, 2006, Sizoo et al., 2005) 'and emotional stress and coping strategies used by them in intercultural service encounters' (Wang and Mattila, 2010).

'However, generally they do not incorporate the employees' perspective' (Mattila, 1999b, Mattila, 1999a) 'and thus provide only a limited view of socio-psychological process underlying intercultural service encounters'. This thesis aims to fill the gap as to which are the particular intercultural challenges that hotel staff encounters and how hotel staff feel about it. It is clearly explored then the hotel's staff perspective in the study and the normative standards that a job in the hotel industry may involve from an intercultural perspective. It is expected that, in the 21st century, members of staff who come into contact with a great number of customers from all over the world should possess those skills and attitudes which signify global and intercultural awareness. This is largely because, when

people from different cultural groups interact together, cross-cultural differences may exist because of differences in values, beliefs, spoken language, non verbal communication, dietary habits, religious issues and cultural assumptions, meaning that intercultural interaction can be either smooth or problematic. 'Researchers have begun to pay more attention to culture's influence on the service encounter' (Furrer, Liu and Sudharshan, 2000).

> The hotel industry is facing increased multicultural diversity in terms of ownership, work force, and tourists staying in hotel properties. This diversity will necessitate many changes in the hotel industry, including changes in the education of future managers in the hotel industry, and in training given to employees (Gamio and Sneed, 1992, p. 13). Global expansion of hospitality operations has increasingly become a strategic development for many firms. The rapid global development has created a demand from the hospitality industry for competent and qualified global managers (Chon and Yu, 2012, p. 364).

This thesis derives from research conducted on eight different global hotel brands in the United Kingdom (across Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Manchester) in particular, with reference to three, four and five star categories. In total, twelve hotels participated in the study. Global hotel brands were purposively chosen because they expand their commercial activities all over the world. They therefore have the appropriate means and power to infuse in their organizational philosophy practices and policies which take into account external changes which occur on a socio-economic, cultural and political level. A culturally diversified workforce and global customers are outcomes of economic globalization. At the same time, as the internal environment of hotels faces changes from the external one, changes need to occur in the recruitment of hotel staff simply because global customers and their needs are part of these changes. 'Many researchers now argue that communication between persons of different cultures or intercultural communication is imperative for successful performance in the contemporary business world' (Chaney and Martin, 2007; French, 2007; Stone, 2006; Ferraro, 2005; Guirdham, 1999, in Gannon, 2008, p. 8). Within the normative character of this study it is highlighted the need for further professional training aiming at the expansion of hotel's staff intercultural skills. According to Mariger and Miller (1999), 'in the environment of contemporary global business, the majority of tourism business requires human resources to be educated' (in Valachis, 2003, p. 2). Moreover, Partlow and Gregorie (1994) 'argue that due to the complexity of the tourism industry in relation to continuous tourism management needs, it is imperative that

industry executives develop their knowledge skills' (in Valachis, 2003, p. 2). 'The development of value-adding skills of human resources contributes to the success of the tourism or hospitality business' (Baum, 1995).

1.2 The conceptualization of culture for the purposes of the thesis

In order to understand the essence of culture and how it can affect situations and phenomena which occur in a social and organizational setting, it is necessary to define how culture is considered throughout the thesis. It can be argued that culture is perceived as a non static and developing situation which has the potential to influence and interact with socio-economic and political phenomena, therefore the working environment of hotels does not remain unaffected due to the high amount of global labor which is recruited and due to the influx of global customers.

> Many hospitality organizations find it challenging to cater to global travelers with various cultural backgrounds. In particular, the cultural nuances in language, customs, and norms imply different rules and expectations related to customer-provider interactions (Chen, Cheung and Law, 2012; Heo, Jogaratnam and Buchanan, 2004; Stauss and Mang, 1999; Mattila, 2000). Such differences often result in discomfort felt by both parties in the dyadic interaction (Sharma, Tam and Kim, 2009; 2012).

My understanding of culture is based on the evaluation of culture as perceived by Friedman (1994) and Clifford (1988):

> 'Culture… consists in transforming difference into essence. Culture… generates an essentialization of the world'… (Friedman, 1994, pp. 206–207) or, as Clifford, (1998, p. 235) assert, 'a powerful structure of feeling continues to see culture, wherever it is found, as a coherent body that lives and dies… It changes and develops like a living organism'.

The concept of culture arguably exists in the socio-economic and political phenomena because culture and society, although regarded as two separate units, are closely interrelated. As culture is an influential means, it is found not only in people's lives within the social context but also in the organizational context meaning their professional life. Within the organizational context there is a need to examine culture not as a biological/physical characteristic but as an intrinsic value and equal quality which exists in all different ethnic groups. Fostering cultural diversity in the hotel working environment is

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largely connected with possible organizational changes in terms of policies and practices that apply to the embracement of diversity. From there and onwards, organizations need to consider how diversity management an extension of cultural diversity is used in a productive way, based on the principle that employees are offered the opportunity in their work environment to utilize their talents and abilities at maximum. It is undeniable that the world is becoming heterogenized. Society is becoming even more unstable, unpredictable and changeable and this is why organizations change and require organizational changes. There is, then, a need on the part of global hotels to work on the idea of culture as a concrete value and progressive mechanism which brings balance between the internal environment of the organization and the external environment, meaning the changes which occur in society.

> Prior research shows that customers from different cultures have significantly different attitudes toward service employees and expectations from them, and this affects the ways they interact with service employees and evaluate service performance (Mattila, 1999; Raajpoot 2004; Stauss and Mang, 1999). On the other hand, many culturally diverse customers perceive discrimination inherent in some service employees' behavior, leading to perceptions of inequitable service and lower satisfaction levels (Barker and Härtel 2004). Others argue that some ethnic customers are less experienced and have communication difficulties, prompting them to blame the service employee for poor service (Bendapudi and Berry, 1997).

From the one side it is seen that customers due to different values, norms and behaviors that they hold can be liable for a successful or disappointing ICSE, and from the other side service staff can be responsible in the case that their intercultural communication skills are not good enough so as to create these impressions to global customers. Therefore, in light of the above, culture is understood throughout this thesis as the clash of different languages, behaviors, beliefs and practices of external customers from different cultural groups accommodating themselves in the hotel industry in the United Kingdom between hotel staff.

1.3 Research questions

The study was designed so as to answer the three following research questions:

- Do intercultural issues matter during customer service?

- Which are the intercultural challenges that hotel staff face during customer service?
- To what extent are hotel staff characterized for intercultural skills?

1.4 Research design

The research was designed in such a way so as to answer clearly the above research questions through the appropriate research methods.

Semi-structured interviews: The structure of each interview was divided in three different parts. The first part investigated the organizational culture of each hotel brand i.e. their values, the vision, mission and the different nationalities of internal and external customers. Furthermore it was investigated how the participating hotel brands cooperate with travel agencies and hotel operators. The second part focused on the essence of customer service and customer care, skills and attitudes that hotel staff should include in their behavior during customer service, their grooming standards and appearance. The third and last part of each interview looked at intercultural issues and communication. It examined the knowledge of international languages of employees, how they respond to intercultural barriers that may arise in an intercultural interaction, how they interpret non-verbal cues and how motivated they are to expand their knowledge on intercultural issues which would benefit them to understand better the cultural references of their customers. In addition to this, the interviews explored whether or not hotels prepare and encourage their employees through relevant opportunities to expand their intercultural knowledge, skills and enhance their intercultural awareness.

Public space observations: The aim of public space observations was bilateral: to identify to what extent hotel's staff actions and claims in the interviews correspond, and also to discover if there was any presence of intercultural elements either on the interactions of hotel staff with global customers, on the items and on the space of each hotel. Public space observations were carried out in the premises of hotels in the areas of reception, café-bar and restaurant.

Thematic analysis: Thematic analysis was applied on the official website of each hotel brand and on job advertisements so as to detect any element which insinuate intercultural skills on the part of hotel staff and the importance of intercultural communication.

1.5 Overview of the thesis

In this section, an account will be given as to how the thesis has been structured and organized and what each chapter includes. Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 comprise the theoretical background and the relevant literature review, upon which the study is based. These three chapters lay out what will be challenged and contradicted in the chapters to follow. Chapter 2 provides an anthropological overview of the essence of culture, using theories which derive from social and cultural anthropology. 'Social anthropologists concentrate on social relations such as family, kinship, political organization, economic organization, religion, law and social control – in short what is called social structure' (Dash, 2004, p. 5). On the other hand, 'cultural anthropology is concerned with the scientific study of all aspects of the world's culture. It studies human behavior that is learned, shared and typical of a particular human group, known as culture' (Dash, 2004, p. 4). The socio-cultural system approach to culture and the different schools of thought which relate to it are presented, as well as the ideational system approach to culture as an opposition to the above theories. Within this context of socio-cultural theories, the opportunity is given to interrelate their presence in an organizational setting and identify what their existence could possibly mean for organizational issues.

Chapter 3 examines the socio-economic, cultural and political phenomena of globalization, interculturalism and multiculturalism and asserts that their presence cannot leave unaffected the work environment of the global hotel industry in the United Kingdom. 'Globalization and aggressive foreign direct investment, combined with domestic restructuring, have dramatically changed the workforce of many companies' (Zakaria, 2000, p. 493). The chapter explores how globalization is becoming involved in the organizational affairs of the hotel industry and also looks at relevant theories. Multiculturalism and interculturalism are also discussed within the context of globalization and in isolation as self-defined topics, where some principal qualities of these two

phenomena are considered. Notably, it is pointed out that, from a multicultural era, it is about time to initiate a conversation about an intercultural era. The chapter therefore considers how the United Kingdom perceives the essence of interculturalism via the Home Office and how the European Commission reflects on it as well. In this frame of reference it is analyzed whether or not interculturalism has been successfully integrated on a social level and consequently on an individual citizen's level.

In chapter 4, attention is drawn to hospitality and the theoretical framework is supplied around it, which shows that, still, there is no explicit image of the purposes that the hospitality industry serves. This characteristic of hospitality makes it complex to understand the structure and motives of hospitality, possibly resulting in the inefficiency of the sector in dealing with contemporary issues and recognizing the need to respond to socio-economic and cultural changes. Consequently, the daily operation of hotels at the service encounter is affected. The essence of customer service and the anticipated behavior of hotel staff at the service encounter are also described. Role theory and the appropriate display of emotions on the part of hotel staff is analyzed in relation to intercultural service encounters. The purposes that emotional labor serves and what a job in hospitality entails are outlined.

In chapter 5 relevant cross-cultural studies on intercultural communication are presented as well as key intercultural representatives. Their contribution is analyzed alongside some central points of their theories and studies, pointing out their strengths and weaknesses. Discussion follows on intercultural communication competence and it is proposed that intercultural communication competence and linguistic competency could be regarded as part of the global skills that hotel staff should possess.

Having considered the literature review in the previous chapters and its contribution to contemporary and relevant issues related to culture, globalization, multiculturalism, intercultural communication, competence, hospitality and their relationships to the hotel industry, we move from the theoretical content of the chapters to applied content. Chapter 6 is very critical and fundamental as it presents the methodology of the study. For the purposes of this study, qualitative research methods have been used: qualitative/semi-structured interviews, public space observations and thematic analysis and interpretive (hermeneutic) phenomenology – has been applied. I then explain and analyze why these

qualitative methods and methodology are the most suitable for this kind of study. In addition to the conceptual information which this chapter supplies, the design of the study, the obstacles, the ethical issues and the personality of the researcher are discussed to explore the practical side of the research. Relating to the practical side of the research, I explain how I analyzed my data step by step so as to provide an accurate image of my actions. Relevant tables are supplied which show how I worked on my material. Based on the very detailed and descriptive work that I conducted with my data, chapters 7, 8 and 9 present the results of the study.

In chapter 7, the intercultural characteristics of the hotel industry are presented, which verifies that intercultural elements are more than well established in internal affairs, internal customers of hotels and external customers. Relevant quotes from qualitative interviews, segments from public space observations and thematic analysis follow. It is explained that the presence of a culturally diversified workforce in recruitment has facilitated the daily operation of hotel activities and the specific purposes that their employment serves at the service encounter and in workplace–business affairs which enhance the competitiveness of each hotel group. The notion of diversity management, its origin and purposes are also analyzed. The legal and economic rationale are discussed, including the principles and aims upon which each rationale is based. How diversity management in the hotel industry is underpinned is examined and the extent to which there is equal involvement in the decision making and organizational practices and policies of both rationales. Invisible diversity on different cultural groups of customers are analyzed in conjunction with their particular intercultural needs. The different roles that non verbal communication plays to overcome intercultural barriers and achieve understanding between hotel staff and global customers are discussed and it is suggested that intercultural difficulties do exist and customer service can become challenging, not always achieving the professionalism and excellence in customer service that the hotel sector strives for, according to the statements of hotel staff. Food culture and the different cultural needs of global customers are also considered. The need for diversity training and language support is highlighted on the part of hotel staff as an attempt to enhance their intercultural understanding, knowledge and awareness.

Chapter 8 considers the role of international languages in customer service, clarifying this through appropriate segments of qualitative interviews and thematic analysis. The

prominent presence of customers from different cultural groups in the hotel industry and the difficulties that intercultural interaction may entail because of language barriers are analyzed. The presence of monolingual and multilingual hotel staff and the need for language support on the part of hotel staff has already been discussed in chapter 7. Here, the significant contribution of diversified workforce with their intercultural skills is underlined. However, in this chapter, particular attention is attached to how different hotel brands contradict themselves on international language issues and the necessity of knowledge of international languages on the part of hotel staff is highlighted. In addition, it is elaborated how the incorporation of international languages in the hotel industry in terms of training and development is regarded as fundamental, not only because it will facilitate intercultural interaction between hotel staff and global customers but also because it will boost the global competitiveness of each hotel brand.

Chapter 9 outlines the commercial activities of the hotel industry and relevant material from qualitative interviews, public space observations and thematic analysis are presented in support of this. The business relations that hotel brands establish with third parties such as online travel agencies and tour operators are also described, showing that hotels as business organizations make use of different sources to achieve maximum financial profit. The use of social media is also depicted as aiming for the maintenance of a positive image of each hotel brand in the industry and also at customer satisfaction and customer retention. The importance of customer service and customer care, which hotel staff hold as a top organizational value, is stressed and, within this context, each hotel brand forms a desirable customer service demeanor and skills that hotel staff should possess. The different kinds of customer service values that hotel staff should display at the service encounter to create a positive customer service experience are portrayed and, in this framework, the aesthetic values which can be found in hotel staff's demeanor and in interior design are further investigated. 'The emergence of aesthetic skills reflects the growing importance of aesthetic labour in interactive services. That is employers' increasing desire that employees should have the "right" appearance in that they "look good" and "sound right" in the service encounter in retail and hospitality' (Nickson, Warhurst and Dutton, 2005, p. 195). The importance of and attention to grooming standards is described and the impact of culture on emotional representations.

Finally, chapter 10 presents the conclusion, where the contribution of the study is considered. It is emphasized that hotels include all these characteristics and criteria to be classified as multicultural and learning organizations. Within this framework it is presented which possible features and skills of management and non management hotel staff are required and how this could contribute to the broader intercultural skills that hotel staff could be accomplished in. Suggestions for future research and limitations of the study are also discussed.

Chapter 2: Theorizing about culture under an anthropological and socio-cultural context

2.1 Introduction

The concept of culture incorporates a long history in humanity, passing a variety of stages by formulating and establishing its existence through a series of events, actions and theories. A great number of theorists, mainly anthropologists, sociologists, philosophers and psychologists, have attempted to define culture under diverse conditions, eras and contexts and this has led to a plethora of definitions and understandings of what may synthesize culture. 'Even if one wanted to, it would be impossible to trash the culture concept because it is so deeply rooted in the history of ideas and in the discipline of anthropology' (Moore, 1997, p. 373). Even though anthropology and sociology are categorized as two different disciplines, there are common features between them. 'Anthropologists and sociologists are both interested in the issues of gender, ethnicity, social class, and popular or mass culture in the modern world and other social issues' (Kottak, 2000, p. 13). Inkeles (1964, p. 54) has indicated that 'sociology may take society as a unit of analysis and discover how the institutions that compose it are related to one another'. This can be very useful for the examination of culture in interrelationship to socio-economic, cultural and political phenomena which are examined across the thesis, such as: intercultural communication, globalization, cultural diversity, diversity management and diversity training in global hotel brands. Different anthropological theories on culture would be portrayed and analyzed and this also supports my argument that culture is a complex and multidimensional concept.

However, a one sided approach to culture will not be attempted as to which specific anthropological theory best describes the notion and purposes of it. A number of traditional anthropological theorists will be represented, such as those of Edward Tylor (1958), who defined culture in a broad sense, Franz Boas (1966), who underlined the interactive relationship between culture and the individual and Alfred Kroeber (1952), who discussed the role of patterns and systems involved in the production of culture. In addition, the

arguments of Talcott Parsons and Alfred Kroeber (1958) about the separation of cultural and social systems are explored. Theories which consider culture as a socio-cultural or ideational system are also reviewed. Under the framework of a socio-cultural system, culture is viewed as an integrated whole to society. On the other hand, in an ideational system, culture is separated from society, meaning that cultural and social systems are separate but interconnected. Within the body of socio-cultural theories, the theory of functionalism and structural functionalism is described with particular reference to the theories of Bronislaw Malinowski and Alfred Radcliffe-Brown. Malinowski (1944) elaborated on the functional character of culture and how culture is the basic means through which the biological needs of human beings can be satisfied. Radcliffe-Brown (1952) acknowledged the social and interactive character of culture within the social structure. Moreover, the appropriateness and relevance of these two theories in an organizational setting are investigated so as to understand the possible socio-cultural practices which can exist in an organization.

Under the framework of an ideational system, the positions of the cognitive school of culture are investigated. Goodenough (1957) underlined the normative character of culture, including what it is acceptable and what is not, which consequently facilitates the inclusion of an individual to the social setting to which she or he belongs. The structuralist school of culture by Lévi-Strauss (1963) defends the unconscious and symbolic character of social phenomena. After this, it follows the symbolic school of culture by Clifford Geertz (1973), who points out the interpretive character of culture and the attributes that culture is transmitted and communicated from individual to individual through symbols. Again, the suitability of the above theories within the organizational and managerial setting is explored and compared.

2.2 An anthropological insight into culture

'An early definition of culture was ascribed to Edward Tylor, considered the founding father of British anthropology' (Moore, 1997, p. 17). 'Culture or Civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man, as a member of

society' (Tylor, 1958, p. 1). Tylor defines culture quite broadly as a good which entails social elements and values which find their expression in society and underlines that the intellectual components of culture can potentially be adopted by human beings. However, Tylor does not recognize culture as an idea and good is not accepted passively by people. In particular, he suggested that 'the processes of culture are similar for all people, regardless of where or when they lived, because human minds are similar' (Tylor, 1958, p. 159). It is true that culture has a very broad and varied nature as it can be found in personal/interpersonal relationships, in lifestyle, in marriage, in religion, in education, in employment, in dressing code, in ways of thinking and so on.

I would disagree, though, with Tylor's statement that the processes of culture and human minds are similar. 'Being a social system, every culture has its distinctive structure and mechanism' (Bunge, 1999, p. 219). As culture is learned, shared and acquired by a variety of social systems such as family, school, church and other social formal institutions, it is quite distinctive for every society. At the same time, not all human minds are alike because people's experiences, lifestyles and upbringings differ. It should also be noted that not all human minds are healthy so we cannot generalize about the human conditions of each individual, let alone generalize about culture. According to Matsumoto and Juang (2008, p. 385), 'culture exerts considerable influence in the social arena. However, we have all learned particular ways of behaving, perceiving and working based on our own cultural upbringings and milieus'. Tylor's definition implies the social character of culture: as culture is developed through social interaction, it is shared, learned and can be acquired. Human beings as citizens and social subjects have the power and capacities to form the structure of society and its constitutions and give shape to them based on their cultural influences; this is what makes each culture distinguishable in comparison to other cultures.

Another anthropological perspective on culture, highlighting its integrative character, has been given by Franz Boas (1966). 'Anthropology's primary task was to provide a penetrating analysis of a unique culture describing its form, the dynamic reactions of the individual to the culture and of the culture to the individual' (Boas, 1966, pp. 310–311). Boas identifies the interactive relationship of culture with the individual and vice versa. He outlines the universality of laws which synthesize the existence of culture. 'The frequent occurrence of similar phenomena in cultural areas that have no historical contract… shows that the human mind develops everywhere according to the same laws' (Boas, 1966, p.

637). By outlining the universality of laws, Boas is in the same line as Tylor's perspective on culture; that the stages of formation of culture are the same for all cultures and for all people.

As argued by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010, p. 84), cultural relativism was popularized by Franz Boas (1858–1942). In broad terms, cultural relativism entails egalitarian principles, which helps us to investigate each culture under the same conditions and standards, stating that all cultures are equal. 'Cultural relativism refers to the differences in peoples as the results of historical, social and geographic conditions and that all populations have complete and equally developed cultures' (Jandt, 2007, p. 427). Boas applied a more holistic approach towards culture and, arguably, his positions offer more chances for interpretation and synthesis of contemporary phenomena. For instance, phenomena such as cultural diversity, discrimination and labor mobility, which are directly affected by current socio-economic and political situations such as globalization and capitalism, can be understood better when infused and examined with the appropriate cultural–social knowledge. Knowledge is a social and historical product which flows in society in diverse forms through systems, ideologies, paradigms and theories. By the adoption of universal theories which promote unbiased principles and attitudes such as those of cultural relativism, the possibilities of creating liberal and fair societies are higher.

Boas separated culture from race; this aspect signifies that culture is not biologically acquired. On the other hand, race has a biological/genetic character. Johnson (1982, p. 5) has remarked for Boas that 'he has established what anthropologists now regard as commonplace: that culture cannot be equated to or directly derived from race and nor can it be judged on an ethnocentric yardstick'. Any kind of differences between different cultural groups should not be justified by racial differences as different ethnic groups may share the same aspects of culture, such as cultural practices and cultural values which do not originally derive from the same culture because people belong to different ethnic groups. A cultural relativist approach can be applied when examining matters related to race, especially in a working environment. Such an approach can contribute to the management of diversity and of equal opportunities in such a way that both the needs of employees on a professional and personal level and the needs of the organization are met effectively; meaning that both parties are satisfied that they will be treated with respect and fairness on issues related to work matters.

Another insight into culture derives from Kroeber, who outlined the components and prototypes of culture. 'Patterns are those arrangements or systems of internal relationship which give to any culture its coherence or plan, and keep it from being a mere accumulation of random bits' (Kroeber, 1948, p. 131). He explains that 'these patterns… or configurations or Gestalts are what seem to me to be most productive to distinguish or formulate in culture' (Kroeber, 1952, p. 5). For Kroeber, specific patterns give form and shape to culture. These kinds of patterns have to be constructive, beneficial and able to participate in the composure of culture. Such patterns include philosophy, literature and performing arts, psychology, religion, history, architecture, physics and chemistry. Anthropology was viewed by Kroeber as an amalgam of humanities, social science and physics. 'Anthropology alone tries to deal with culture as such, both through total descriptions and through conceptualization, ''theoretically''. Associated with understanding of culture are knowledge of its past (prehistory); of the most autonomous spatial sector of culture, namely language; and even of the racial physics and bodies of men who have produced culture (physical anthropology)' (Kroeber, 1963, p. 161). Cultural knowledge is a production of history and science, meaning that culture is socially learned, shared, acquired and verbally transmitted. These aspects of culture are quite close to Edward Tylor's position, which underlines that culture can be learned through social interaction. Culture and society are two separate concepts as regards their functions, according to Kroeber and Parsons (1958).

> We suggest that it is useful to define the concept of culture… more narrowly… restricting its reference to transmitted and created content and patterns of values, ideas and other symbolic meaningful systems… on the other hand, we suggest that the term society… be used to designate the specifically relational system of interaction among individuals and collectivities (Kroeber and Parsons, 1958, pp. 582–583).

Despite the fact that society and culture are considered as different entities, it should not be disregarded that they are entities which coexist and interact – we cannot envisage society without a culture and culture without a society. Culture sets the base of values, beliefs and attitudes which are developed and cultivated in the social context. Thomas (1996, p. 112) has claimed that 'culture is a universal orientation system very typical of a society, organization or a group'. It is underpinned, then, that culture can affect and predetermine the nature of phenomena which take place in the social context. Kroeber and Parsons perhaps suggest that not all the phenomena have a cultural or social side; but even if this is

the case it seems to be an inconsistency on their part under which grounds phenomena taking place in a specific social context do not have social dimension(s). It is true that not all the phenomena can be cultural. However, the fact that social actions and social phenomena which occur in society are caused and created by human beings does not mean that their social character can be disregarded. Social actions do not happen without the contribution of human beings involved in social processes.

2.3 Culture as a socio-cultural system: different school of thoughts from an anthropological perspective and organizational suitability

Geert acknowledges that 'cutting the culture concept to down to size… [into] a narrowed, specialized, and… theoretically more powerful concept has been a major theme in modern anthropological theorizing' (Keesing, 1974, p. 73). The fact that the term culture has become extremely polysemantic is because a great number of sociologists and anthropologists representing different schools of thoughts have attempted to define and analyze culture and society from different backgrounds and theoretical standpoints which see greater or lesser differences between them. A significant distinction among those theorists relates to whether social and cultural systems are examined separately and the extent to which they are interconnected; or whether culture is part of the greater social system, meaning that they are inseparable. Keesing (1974) designated the above two theories as the ideational system and socio-cultural system. This section examines different schools of thoughts which support the notion that, in a socio-cultural system, culture is a component of the social system, manifested in behavior and products of behavior. This means that cultural and social systems are not reviewed separately but each is viewed as an extension of the other.

2.3.1 Functionalism

One of the central themes in Malinowski's theory is the functional nature of culture. 'Function cannot be defined in any other way than the satisfaction of a need by an activity in which human beings cooperate, use artifacts and consume goods' (Malinowski, 1944b, p. 39). 'Culture consists of the body of commodities and instruments as well as customs and

bodily or mental habits which work directly or indirectly for the satisfaction of human needs' (Malinowski, 1937, p. 625). For Malinowski, culture is conceived as a medium which serves biological, physiological and psychological human needs. Culture is instrumental and operational, which facilitates the functioning of human beings by satisfying their needs and consequently the social structure. Since human needs are fulfilled, the social system is performing effectively because individuals feel complete on a personal level and this enables them to keep in regulation with the social order. 'Culture is an integral unit in which the various elements are interdependent' (Malinowski, 1944, p. 150). Society is not differentiated as a separate part of culture because the needs of individuals take place in a social context.

Nonetheless, I would suggest that Malinowski's arguments are rather unsophisticated in stressing that the importance of culture is found in the satisfaction of basic human needs and that the social order is maintained for this reason. Malinowski's theory feels outdated because it represents culture as a simplistic idea. Under these terms, it cannot therefore be investigated or interrelated with contemporary complex phenomena such as globalization, interculturalism and cultural diversity. Given that the aim of socio-cultural theories is to examine culture as an integrated whole not separate from society, it is necessary to understand how culture can be valuable and useful; not only by considering its function towards biological needs. Society is flourishing when diverse human needs work with each other mutually and constructively rather than when one kind of human need benefits. It is also problematic for organizations to consider their functions and successes on the basis of the basic human needs of employees. For instance, Argyris (1964, p. 36) 'asks what would happen if people who aspire for psychological success populated organizations'. I would also ask, in this argument, how effective and efficient an organization can be towards the unpredictable circumstances of socio-economic and political change. Organizations need to be multifunctional, flexible and adjustable. For this to be achieved, however, it is necessary for them to have established a structure which permits them to cater to the interests of employees, organizations and society.

2.3.2 Structural functionalism school of culture

Radcliffe-Brown's theory starts with a major contribution and distinction, differentiating the characteristics of social structure and culture. According to Radcliffe-Brown, social structures are not composed by a theoretical and intangible nature but are rather specific and real. On the other hand, culture is regarded as a more conceptual idea and less specific in nature. Radcliffe-Brown (1952b) notes that:

> We do not observe a "culture", since that word denotes not any concrete reality, but an abstraction, and as it is commonly used a vague abstraction. But direct observation does reveal to us that… human beings are connected by a complex network of social relations. I use the term ''social structure'' to denote this network of social relations. I use the term ''social structure'' to denote this network of actually existing relations (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952b, p. 190).

Social structure is an observable and formative creation. It interacts and exchanges information with human beings who are accountable for their social roles. Radcliffe-Brown (1940, p. 3) includes under social structure the differentiation of individuals and classes by social role. On an organizational and managerial level, structural functionalism theory enables us to understand how organizations generate socio-cultural events, procedures and myths in which certain values and beliefs are intended to bond employees. 'Researchers recognize that organizations are themselves culture-producing phenomena' (Louis, 1980; Siehl and Martin, 1981; Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Tichy, 1982; Martin and Powers, 1983). As organizations are defined as social and cultural products, their relationships and interactions with other systems found in society, such as economic, political, technological and commercial ones which exist in the external environment, cannot be ignored.

If changes occur in these other systems, these will also affect socio-cultural systems because they are all interrelated. This means that the internal environment of an organization can potentially be influenced by those changes which occur in the broader social spectrum. Consequently, since the social structure is influenced by changes, effects on the organizational functions of the broad organizational structure of organizations would result. Changes to the systems of society also demand changes in organizations. Structural functionalism theory can be useful for organizational analysis on issues regarding organizational change, organizational development and organizational learning.

2.4 Culture as an ideational system: different school of thoughts from an anthropological perspective and organizational suitability

'As an ideational system, cultural and social realms are distinct but interrelated' (Keesing, 1974). Society and culture are viewed separately and not as a whole. However, the social system might influence the cultural one and vice versa.

2.4.1 Cognitive school of culture

Culture is considered as a learning system and a system of beliefs which indicate to human beings how they have to perform in society, as well as what is permitted and what is not. This consequently forms their philosophy of life and is a way of thinking and acting. Goodenough (1957) perceives culture as:

> Whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members. Culture is not a material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behavior or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things. It is the form of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them (Goodenough, 1957, p. 167).

In this way, Goodenough regards culture as a mental activity where the cognitive elements produce specific cognitive skills, including knowledge, intuition, comprehension and use of language. The function of culture as a learned behavior which can be acquired even with intuition without the contribution of reasoning is therefore stressed. Allaire and Firsirotu (1984, p. 203) have emphasized 'the importance of such a concept of culture in two different bodies of research in the management and organizational field: organizational climate and organizational learning'. Here I would stress the importance of how organizational learning is used to communicate organizational behaviors in the work environment. Organizations undergo cognitive practices which facilitate them to communicate shared organizational values, beliefs and goals; therefore organizational culture. The purpose behind the logic of organizational learning is the need for organizations to achieve consistency and homogeny in employees' minds but it also takes place as an action when new behaviors have to be integrated in employee behavior because new processes have to be included in the organizational structure. Arrow (1979, p. 58) proposes that 'the notion of organizational code as ways of looking at the world which are

part of the organization's capital and learned by its members, and which imposes a uniformity requirement on the behavior of participants'.

2.4.2 Structuralist school of culture

Lévi-Strauss (1963, p. 3) notes that 'social anthropology is devoted to the study of institutions considered as systems of representations. He adds that those institutions are cultural expressions that are usually unexamined by their users; in that narrow but fundamental sense, anthropology examines the unconscious foundations of social life'. 'Anthropology draws its originality from the unconscious nature of collective phenomena' (Lévi-Strauss, 1963, p. 18). Lévi-Strauss talks about 'systems and the unconscious nature of social phenomena, so he attaches a mental and intangible sense to the conception of culture. He proposed that the realities of the social world are constituted through language and therefore have the same architecture as language' (Polkinghorne, 2004, p. 54). Cultures as systems are characterized by their linguistic structure. This denotes that culture and language are viewed as communication systems. Turner (1977) explains how Lévi-Strauss structures solve problems: 'the structures that Lévi-Strauss discusses typically solve problems with symbols, ideas or categories, problems with the application of these symbols, ideas and categories in the social world, and problems with the implications of the applications' (Turner, 1977, p. 117).

From an organizational perspective, Lévi-Strauss's cultural theory is quite limited so as to understand organizations. By focusing on the unconscious processes, any attempt to understand organizational phenomena such as organizational effectiveness, performance, structure and change is rendered impractical. This is because, as a theory, it disregards the notion that the phenomena or situations which occur in an organizational setting have a realistic nature or; put differently, we cannot separate those phenomena from social reality and how they can interrelate to it. In addition, by relying to a great degree on the unconscious, the interpretations which derive from it might not be valid as they entail the danger of being oversubjective as a result of the lack of rationale required for accurate outcomes. 'Structuralism and the psychodynamic models separate the experience of the phenomena from the underlying reality that gives rise to particular forms of social arrangements' (Rossi, 1974). Lévi-Strauss's theory might be useful to understand organizational emotions or motivations.

2.4.3 Symbolic school of culture

Geertz (1973, p. 145) envisages culture as 'the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their action; social structure is the form that action takes, the actually existing network of social relations'. Geertz (1973) describes culture as:

> '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 to life' (Geertz, 1973, p. 89).

Culture exists as a system of meanings, interpretations and experiences through which human beings interrelate and understand themselves in relation to their social actions, which occur in the broader social structure. Cultural and social arrangements are regarded as different notions of the social spectrum. However, they can be found in the same situations. Organizations which utilize the symbolic school of culture for an organizational examination believe that culture is a configuration of symbols. Through symbols, meanings are transmitted on an organizational level and, through the use of language, those symbols can build a discourse of interpretation, analysis and understanding. A clear connection is apparent between symbolic anthropology and interpretive phenomenology. The above fields focus on the live experiences of humans so as to understand human behavior and actions which occur in society. 'This kind of symbolic approach to culture requires interpretation (Manning, 1979), reading (Turner, 1983) or deciphering (Van Maanen, 1973) in order to be understood'. On the whole, symbolic theory offers the opportunity for understanding how organizational issues can be related to the social structure and this characteristic makes it more realistic and functional compared to the cognitive theory of Goodenough, who regards culture as an intellectual activity based on individual perception. Neither does it rely on unconscious processes, as suggested by Lévi-Strauss. Symbolic theory stresses the importance of organizations being socially made and socially interactive.

2.5 Conclusion

It can be concluded that culture is a multifaceted concept. The great number of different anthropological theories which examine the notion of culture from different perspectives indicates that different meanings and approaches accrue from each anthropological theory. Whether culture is viewed as a socio-cultural or ideational system, the relationship and interaction between culture and society cannot be ignored. For this reason, cultural theories can exist within organizations and, in addition, the cultural side of organizations is depicted. Organizations therefore have to pay particular attention to the essence of culture and should be in a position to understand how culture can affect their organization's operation and performance on a daily basis. In the thesis, an intercultural approach to culture is taken, based on the fact that culture and society are interrelated units. However, when changes occur in society, the internal environment of global hotel organizations cannot be unaffected. This helps us to understand that specific socio-economic, cultural and political phenomena, − multiculturalism, interculturalism and globalization − which take place in society have the capacity to influence and suggest changes to the functions of global hotels. The global workforce and global customers are predominant features in the global hotel industry in the United Kingdom. In the next chapter, the aforementioned phenomena are discussed in detail and the justification for applying an intercultural approach to customer service in the hotel industry begins to be made.

Chapter 3: Globalization and the genesis of intercultural communication

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, attention is granted to the specific socio-economic, cultural and political phenomena of interculturalism, multiculturalism and globalization, which can affect the practices and policies of the global hotel industry in the United Kingdom. The reasoning behind examining these particular phenomena and how they interrelate underlies the fact that globalization has influenced and altered the lives of people around the world; the hotel industry as a working environment cannot therefore remain unaffected. 'The term globalization has been extensively used recently to describe the state of the hospitality industry' (Lowe, 1997; Samenfink, 1998; Mok and Noriega, 1999). The expansion of hotel brands on a global level, the recruitment of a global workforce and the accommodation of global customers in the hotel industry are outcomes of the phenomenon of globalization. Giddens (1996) commented:

> Globalization is not just an ''out there phenomenon''. It refers not only to the emergence of the large-scale world systems, but to transformations in the very texture of everyday life. It is an ''in here'' phenomenon, affecting even intimacies of personal identity…Globalization invades local contexts of action but does not destroy them; on the contrary new forms of local cultural identity and self-expression are causally bound up with globalizing processes (Giddens, 1996, pp. 367–368).

Under these circumstances it is understood that, as a result of globalization, organizations, particularly hotels, should adapt to the new socio-economic, cultural and political conditions which relate to the diversity of their labor workforce and to the influx of global customers. Globalization as a process is evolving within society and its social systems. Hotels as service organizations are components of this social context and it is therefore expected that they are able to respond effectively to the consequences and changes that globalization brings within the hotel working environment. This is rendered mandatory within hotel organizations because, in relation to intercultural contacts, intercultural communication, global customers and the global workforce are closely related to issues of customer service. Hotel staff have to be equipped with attitudes, knowledge and skills to

enable them to respond successfully and efficiently to the changes that globalization has brought to their working environments.

The perspectives of pro-globalization, anti-globalization and alter-globalization are analyzed, as well as how they have contributed to the emergence of three different theories relating to globalization: the globalists, sceptics/traditionalists and transformationalists. These different theories and standpoints make clear that there are no definite answers as to how globalization is interpreted but emphasize that its effects can be multiple. Furthermore, the impact of globalization in the hotel industry is discussed. How interculturalism and multiculturalism as concepts made their presence felt in the academic world is elaborated upon and how the word multiculturalism was generated and replaced with other synonym terms such as multiethnicity and cultural pluralism is also described. It is argued as well that, initially, multiculturalism was viewed predominantly as an issue with political dimensions. However, here, it is explained that multiculturalism is a multidimensional phenomenon which, in order to be understood, can be viewed in relation to other social, cultural, economic and political phenomena.

Why the European Commission and the Home Office department in the United Kingdom have not managed to adequately address how interculturalism can be incorporated into people's lives, minds and hearts both on a personal and professional level is explored. It is stressed that initiating dialogue is not a sufficient criterion enabling human beings to think and act interculturally. The interconnection of culture and communication is discussed, as well as the presence of intercultural communication in the hotel industry and the need to 'culturalize' hotel staff.

3.2 Context of globalization and theories

There are many debates and disagreements between authors as to when globalization began. Scholte (1996, p. 16) has stated that 'globalization is a historical phenomenon. This does not mean that globalization has a chronological starting point in time which can be dated and constructed as part of a more general periodization'. Nonetheless, Leyshon (1997, p. 133) suggested that 'some theorists date its beginning after World War II while others argue it is as old as capitalism itself' (Hirst and Thomson, 1996, p. 2). Robertson (1992, p.

8) determined that 'the concept of globalization was not recognized as academically significant until the early or possibly the mid-1980s but thereafter its use has become well globalized'. The lack of a common starting point as to which era globalization started underlines the density of the topic. Still, it is not a self-defined topic with a definite philosophy and orientation because it depends from which aspect it is investigated. Rosenau (2004, p. 10) explained that 'it is unreasonable to expect a single unified theory of globalization will ever be developed and indeed, to date none has come even close in this respect'.

Theorists express their scepticism as to whether or not globalization is a real situation or just a 'veil' to validate opportunistic actions in economics and politics. Calhoun (2002, p. 192) has noted that 'globalization is a catch-all term for the expansion of diverse forms of economic, political and cultural activity beyond national borders'. Daniels, (2001) argued that 'globalization is a contested term relating to the transformation of spatial relations that involves a change in the relationship between space, economy and society'. Globalization has made its presence very intense in recent years, not only because it is a multidimensional and challenging topic but also because it has the power to spread rapidly in different spectrums of society: social, economic, political, cultural, educational and technological.

It controls what constitutes society; therefore social subjects – human beings – are potentially affected by a range of changes that the current wave of globalization can bring at a personal and professional level. This occurs because, as discussed in the previous chapter, social and cultural systems are separate but interrelated. Globalization as a socio-economic, cultural and political situation has generated different viewpoints by taking into consideration the positive and negative impacts of globalization in society. The 'pro-globalization', 'anti-globalization' and 'alter-globalization' versions are represented in this section. The 'pro-globalization' standpoint represents the advocates of globalization who perceive that globalization can contribute to the prosperity and development of society under economic terms, thus taking a positive approach towards globalization. This perspective holds that 'the spread of market economics, competition, free trade and Western democracy – that is to say globalization as currently practised are important progressive trends' (Murray, 2006, p. 12). On the other hand, the 'anti-globalization' perspective focuses mainly on the negative aspects of globalization which have generated

two different worlds: the developed and the developing. It stresses the importance of the notion that 'globalization has created unfairness and maintains poverty to under deprived societies'. Under this view, globalization is seen as 'increasing not decreasing the unevenness of development and perpetuating inequality in ways that are not necessarily reversible' (Murray, 2006, p. 12). Lastly, the 'alter-globalization' perspective argues that globalization can be beneficial or detrimental depending on how human beings make decisions, which can incorporate the positive aspects of globalization or lead to negative results. It represents a medium position towards globalization. 'Under this mentality the nature of globalization is not predetermined and does not follow a given evolutionary path. Rather, it is a consequence of human actions and particular political choices' (Murray, 2006, p. 13).

As mentioned above, the common date chronologically for the entrance of globalization into academic circles has been the mid-1980s and, similarly, the notion of globalization started to represent a more substantial and approachable understanding as an ideology. As a result, three different theories have emerged: developed by the globalists, sceptics/traditionalists and transformationalists. Each theory perceives globalization in a different way. The three different theories indicate not only that there is no agreement as to what globalization represents but also underline its fluidity and challenging nature. Held et al. (1999, p. 2) point out that 'there is a substantial disagreement as to how globalization is best conceptualised, how one should think about its causal dynamics, and how one should characterise its structural consequences, if any'.

3.2.1 Globalists

In particular, globalists' supporters have embraced the idea of the capitalist economy. Globalists argue that 'the state has all but disappeared, and we have already entered a virtually borderless world, and that globalization, by which is meant invariably capitalist globalization, is irreversible and nearing completion' (Rossi, 2007, p. 95). In this sense, globalization is regarded as a normal sequence of events towards which all nation–states, formal government institutions and private sector organizations work, encouraging capitalism and its relevant practices. Under these terms it seems that globalization is a reality here to stay, which can make the global market and our epoch more competitive, antagonistic and opportunistic. The globalist viewpoint has been described as 'a first truly

global civilization, facilitating the spread not only of neoliberal consumerism, but also of liberal democracy and new forms of global governance' (Gill, 1995; Luard, 1990; Strange, 1996). It is therefore necessary to question whether the standpoints of globalists are in favor of and benefit all the different social classes and groups of people in society or just cater for individuals who have the power to form and sustain practices and policies close to their financial and political interests.

3.2.2 Sceptics/traditionalists

Sceptics' supporters are even doubtful of the existence of globalization itself. As Ojeili and Hayden (2006, p. 15) have suggested, 'some traditionalists may view globalization as not really happening at all − for instance. Some claim that, in economic terms, what we are witnessing is increased regionalization or interconnectedness'. Whatever this phenomenon is, whether globalization, regionalization or interconnectedness, there is no doubt that it has affected all the faces of society. It is therefore unorthodox to doubt its existence as a phenomenon. 'Global sceptics view globalization not as a reality, but as a strategy to expand capitalism, which is why sometimes violent protests against globalisation erupt from time to time' (Codrington, 2005, p. 715). The fact, though, that sceptics recognize that globalization is an economic strategy undermines their argument that it is not a real phenomenon since, as an economic strategy, it is constantly expanding. Still, it is socially constructed by human beings who are politically and economically involved in the production and maintenance of capitalistic markets supported by official federations and alliances.

Returning to the point of which term best describes this process, the most suitable term for describing the capacity and intensity of this condition is globalization; not only because of its historical status but because it reflects the expansion, influence and alteration of dynamics and structures of the global order, often not with the use of the same methods across the world but under ideologies and the spread of ideas, agreements and diplomacy. According to O'Neill (2002, p. 108) 'globalization is described as one of the most powerful words in human history, rivalling words, such as religion, capitalism, war and poverty in terms of description of world events, concern for the human condition and impact on ways of thinking'. This is why globalization is not a new phenomenon; however, it has a long history, which means that, as different terms have passed different stages and

forms, these have parallelized with globalization. Colonialism, post-colonialism, neoliberalism and capitalism are interchangeable words for describing globalization. The sceptics' thesis relating to globalization, apart from declaring that capitalism contributes to the profit of some countries against others, does not appear to add anything new compared to the views of globalists. It is apparent that sceptics and globalists do have their differences but it appears that sceptics have built their argumentation over the theoretical base of globalists, so their reasoning attacks the sayings of globalists without building on new arguments.

3.2.3 Transformationalists

The last representatives are the transformationalists who correspond to a medium thesis of what globalization is. Arguably, they are between the two extremes of globalists and sceptics. Castells (1996) and Giddens (1990) have stated that 'scholars in this group argue often in very different ways that globalization is real and is restructuring society profoundly'. Here, the interrelationship of globalization with society and the dynamism of globalization to alter the form of society are apparent, because globalization is a real phenomenon. 'Transformationalists see globalization as a dynamic and open process that is subject to influence and change' (Giddens, 2006, p. 62). The chances of introducing political, economic, cultural and social changes are more likely to occur under the transformationalist view as they see that there can be a reshape in government systems. 'Transformationalist theory is no longer concerned primarily with the existence of economic globalization, but rather with the way to respond to global change' (Giddens, 2000).

3.2.4 Influence of globalization on hospitality

It is thus useful to examine how globalization has affected hospitality and consequently the hotel industry in the United Kingdom. The economic benefits of globalization seem to have positive effects in the hospitality industry. 'As an integral part of international service import and export business, the international travel and tourism industry has been the direct beneficiary of the globalized world economy because travel restrictions have been removed to facilitate business and leisure travel by most countries in the world' (Hoad, 2003). These economic benefits have facilitated the experience of travelling abroad

generally and have intensified the presence of global customers which potentially accommodate themselves in hotel premises. Globalization, though, apart from the economic benefits which have been generated in terms of global arrivals in the country, has resulted in changes in the recruitment of global workforces. 'The globalization of markets, increased diversity of the workforce, and the use of Third World nationals by transnational organizations have made issues of training important in the remainder of this decade' (Bhagat and Prien, 1996, p. 216). 'Migrants have historically formed a significant part of the tourism industry workforce' (Baum, 2006; in Janta et al., 2011, p. 1322; Choi, Woods and Murrman, 2000; William and Halls, 2000). 'It has been argued that this ongoing relationship between migration, migrant labor and tourism employment continues partly because a mobile international workforce offers a solution to labor shortages where the local workforce is not willing to engage in low pay, low status and seasonal employment' (Choi et al., 2000; in Janta et al., 2011, p. 1323; Williams and Hall, 2000). The fact that globalization has intensified cultural diversity in the workforce and the presence of global customers in the hotel industry in the United Kingdom makes clear that importance need to be attached to the intercultural service encounters that exist in the interaction of hotel staff and customers of different cultural backgrounds. For this to be attained hotel organizations need to value the different cultural needs, behaviors, beliefs, values and practices of global customers. There is a demand that hotel staff are supplied with relevant intercultural knowledge, skills and motivation so as to be able to deal efficiently in an intercultural interaction during customer service.

3.3 Chronological periods of interculturalism and multiculturalism: an account of criticisms

Intercultural communication and multiculturalism made their presence felt chronologically and academically at approximately the same time. 'The Oxford English Dictionary has the first entry of ''intercultural contacts'' in a 1937 article in the journal Theology and a second one from 1955 from the Scientific American' (Piller, 2011, p. 28). The OED provides a sentence from the *Times* of Montreal in June, 1959 which describes Montreal as 'This multi-cultural, multi-lingual society' (Stratton and Ang, 1994, p. 128). It is apparent that the presence of different cultures and languages represents a specific criterion for the

categorization of a society as multicultural. Again, the following definition of the adjective 'multicultural' as 'of or relating to a society consisting of a number of cultural groups, especially in which the distinctive cultural identity of each group is maintained' (Piller, 2011, p. 24) is relevant. Given this definition of multiculturalism, different cultural groups of people which inhabit and interact in a specific society have the freedom to maintain their cultural identity. Nonetheless, it could be alleged that this does not depend on the part of individuals alone, as they may wish to maintain their cultural identities living in a multicultural society, but there is a need on the part of society to facilitate this process.

Although it seems as though multiculturalism is a recent linguistic idiom, as a phenomenon it is not new in history; rather, it could be proposed that it has replaced the term multiethnicity. According to Glazer, 'multiculturalism is the heir of multiethnicism and of 'cultural pluralism' the recognition of the inherent value of other cultures' (Bauer, 2000, p. 79). Linguistically, both multiculturalism and multiethnicism do not carry different semantic meanings. However, ethnicity is different from culture and does not change. Ethnicity is predominantly defined as differences in the biological and external characteristics of human beings (race) which hardly change. On the other hand, because culture is dynamic and holistic, it does change and adapts to new situations. As culture does not remain static, it is not recommended to use the term multiethnic societies interchangeably with the term multicultural societies, as ethnicity is not a quality which changes.

Multiculturalism is not exclusively a cultural phenomenon as culture is not examined as a self-defined topic but rather as multidimensional phenomena which are influenced by culture are expected to be multidimensional as well. As Turner (1993, p. 411) has noted, 'multiculturalism is a code word that tends to become a form of identity politics in which the concept of culture becomes merged with that of ethnic identity'. It emerges that multiculturalism has a double identity depending on the terms under which it is used. On one hand, using multiculturalism indicates that all cultures are equal and well respected; Kroeber and Kroeber (2004, p. 11) have highlighted that 'every human culture is unique and equally precious'. On the contrary, when multiculturalism is used in a political sense whereby culture and ethnicity are inseparable, there is a risk of exploiting the goodness of the equality that multiculturalism stands for so as to serve opportunistic and legislative objectives. For instance, this aspect of multiculturalism can be seen in employment

opportunities – the recruitment of people from different cultural backgrounds is being carried out more as a governmental and legal imperative rather than because it is the right thing to do.

From a multicultural era, though, is it about time to move and initiate a conversation about interculturalism instead of multiculturalism? Both multiculturalism and interculturalism involve similarities and differences. I would argue, though, that interculturalism is a step above multiculturalism because it offers a deeper understanding of cultural differences by applying intercultural practices.

> Interculturalism presents a new set of policies and programmes. It seeks to replace multiculturalism and provide a new paradigm for thinking about race and diversity. Multiculturalism may have had some success in the past but it has simply not adapted to the new age of globalisation and super diversity. Interculturalism is about changing mindsets by creating new opportunities across cultures to support intercultural activity and it's about thinking, planning and acting interculturally. Perhaps, more importantly still, it is about envisioning the world as we want it to be, rather than be determined by our and separate past histories (Ted Cantle, 2012).

Below, how the EC (2008) perceives interculturalism is presented:

> 'The European Commission still largely understands interculturalism to be about dialogue between different cultural groups proposing that this type of dialogue will enable European citizens to acquire the knowledge and aptitudes to enable them to deal with a more open and more complex environment' (European Commission, 2008).

It is true that intercultural dialogue is a fundamental principle for defining interculturalism; nevertheless, it is not an adequate action for ensuring that cultural inequalities, unfairness, discrimination and prejudice in social and work life can be tackled efficiently. An important dimension which is underlined in the European Commission's vision of interculturalism is the fact that interculturalism, as well as knowledge and information, involves skills and requires learned behaviors which need to be incorporated in people's lives. In the United Kingdom, the vision of interculturalism has quite the same theoretical basis as stipulated in the Cantle report (Home Office, 2001), which placed 'significant emphasis on the need for greater contact between different cultural groups'. It does not therefore differ to a great extent from that of the European Commission (2008). It is specified that 'interculturalism promotes community cohesion, based upon a greater

knowledge of, contact between and respect for the various cultures that now make Great Britain such a rich and diverse nation' (Home Office, 2001, p. 10).

Arguably, the nation can benefit from the social unity that interculturalism can bring, based again on knowledge and contact with different cultures as has been seen already in the statement of the EC. Nevertheless, I would argue that as a meaning it focuses strongly on the sovereignty that the United Kingdom as nation–state can gain by accepting in its national population the integration of different cultural groups. I am defending this because it is implied that interculturalism in the United Kingdom benefits the prosperity of society by becoming a 'rich and diverse nation', as stated. Diversity and, in particular, cultural diversity contributes to the wellbeing of the United Kingdom because it is defined under economic terms which can make the country more competitive.

Both accounts of interculturalism under the framework of the European Commission and of the United Kingdom do not go into more detail as to how interculturalism can acquire an essence in people's lives, how it can be achieved and how people become aware of it. Interculturalism is not all about intercultural dialogue, understanding and respect. These are just some of the objectives that derive from interculturalism and potentially can lead to the social inclusion of different cultural groups in all the different social spectrums of life. The main challenge is how interculturalism can become part of people's lives on a daily basis and it should be considered which kind of means and social systems will enable this to become a reality. A greater need to actively place interculturalism in social interaction has been identified. Gilchrist (2004, p. 13) has commented that 'simply encouraging people from different groups to undertake joint activities [of the kind suggested by UK and European versions of interculturalism]… may not necessarily tackle real and perceived inequalities in the quality of life'. 'Perhaps the most common criticism levelled is that by emphasizing intercultural contact, communication or surface level dialogue, structural issues of racism, poverty and power cannot be addressed' (Lafleche, 2007, p. 3).

Reflecting on the above criticisms, it can be asserted that interculturalism remains a vague topic which has not yet become part of citizens' lives. In addition, one of the reasons is arguably the fact that interculturalism has not been defined sufficiently on the part of the EC and the United Kingdom to form a concrete idea of its clear rationale and objectives. Accordingly, this could lead us to think that interculturalism and attempts at integration,

social inclusion and equal opportunities, just to imagine a few of the objectives of interculturalism, have not been managed adequately and efficiently on the part of the nation–state, meaning that citizens are incapable of dealing with its essence.

3.4 Common features of culture and communication

At this stage, it is necessary to explore the connection of culture with communication. It has been argued by Chen and Starosta (1998) that 'cultures are present in people's minds producing a vital association between communication and culture'. Chen and Starosta (1998, pp. 26–27) talk about four basic characteristics of culture: 'culture is holistic, learned, dynamic and pervasive'. I would argue that communication also entails these four elements in its structure; both are social in nature and this is where my reasoning will start to unfold. Culture can be examined in relation to social systems, where its social and holistic nature is revealed or, as has been discussed in a different part of the thesis, cultural and social systems are separate but still interrelated. 'Culture is a unique meaning and information system, shared by a group transmitted across generations that allows the group to meet basic needs of survival, pursue happiness and well-being and derive meaning from life' (Matsumoto and Juang, 2008, p. 12). The way that these facets and processes are transmitted and become part of society is through communication and knowledge which is passed from generation to generation, from history to history. This is how people learn and become aware of their culture. It is apparent that culture and communication are social behaviors. It is therefore insinuated that they can be learned through specific social systems such as family and school. Since culture can be learned and taught, the role of communication becomes clearer and its functionality related to culture.

Berelson and Steiner (1964, p. 254) have pointed out that 'communication: the transmission of information, ideas, emotions, skills by the use of symbols, words, pictures, figures, graphs is the act or process of transmission that is usually called communication'. Communication consists of symbols which are the main means for the production of a message for the sharing of information and exchange of ideas. Symbols are also important in the concept of culture as it is through written and oral symbols that people produce communication and communicate culture. 'Language is a systematic means of

communicating ideas and feelings by the use of conventional symbols' (Schein, 1984). Both in culture and communication, symbols do play a significant role – whether for verbal or non verbal communication, symbols exist in variable forms: oral, written, visual and haptics.

Culture and communication are dynamic. 'Culture is seen as a process, evolving with time, dynamic, and changing in nature' (Lim, 1995, p. 17). Communication is a dynamic process. Samovar, Porter and McDaniel, (2009, p. 16) have emphasized that 'communication is an ongoing activity and an unending process; it is not static'. However, some researchers view culture as static rather than dynamic. 'Culture is viewed as static focusing on a specific point in time relying on the idea that it is classifiable based on two or more variables such as a set of values and norms' (Hampden-Turner, 1990). Nevertheless, if we are to accept that culture is static we cannot explain and understand the conditions under which social phenomena make their presence felt. It would therefore be useful to examine and regard culture as dynamic rather than static because the changes which occur at socio-economic, political and technological level have been provoked for specific reasons and in relation to other social phenomena. In this way, it is underlined that the nature of culture is complex and, because changes occur constantly, cultures do not remain the same but become enriched. For instance, interculturalism occurs as an outcome of economic and cultural globalization, which means that different cultures come into contact with each other and become engaged in a series of activities in daily life.

Communication is also dynamic in relation to both verbal and non verbal communication. Communication is an active action because on a verbal level it demands a sender and a receiver for the transmission of the message. At non verbal level, communicators communicate actively without using verbal or written symbols. 'The term non verbal communication is commonly used to describe all human communication events that transcend spoken or written words' (Knapp and Hall, 2010, p. 24). This does not signify, though, that non verbal communication cannot be used in conjunction with verbal communication as, quite often, verbal communication is accompanied by non verbal cues such as facial expressions, eye contact, touching, hand gestures and posture. 'Communication without words' is how DeVito (1989, p. 3) defines non verbal communication. 'This includes how we look, how we move, how we sound, and how we

smell. Touching, eye contact, and the use of space and time are also facets of non verbal communication' (Brislin and Yoshida, 1993, p. 274).

Lastly, culture is pervasive as it forms and influences the structure and the way that society operates. As stated by Newman (2008, p. 32), 'the most pervasive element of society is culture which consists of the language, values, beliefs, rules, behaviors and physical artefacts of a society and he suggests thinking of it as a society's personality'. For human beings, culture is a way of thinking, acting, judging, accepting and rejecting behaviors as appropriate and inappropriate. Communication is also pervasive. In particular, non verbal communication can be cultural as well as personal. As DePaulo (1992, p. 203) has declared, 'perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of non verbal behavior is that it is only rarely totally unregulated. In social interactions people tend to exert a conscious or unconscious control over their nonverbal expressions'. 'These attempts to regulate non verbal expressions may not always be successful but they are pervasive' (DePaulo, 1992). These common elements between culture and communication contribute to the understanding of how intercultural communication can be present within the hotel working environment during customer service.

3.5 Intercultural communication in the hotel industry

Arguably, intercultural interaction forms a significant part of the daily duties of hotel staff at the service encounter simply because customers belonging to a number of different cultures use hotel services. As cultures differ, cultural values and practices also differ on the part of customers. As Pucik and Katz (1986) have observed, 'culture provides the framework for social interactions; the social rules and customer expectations that are related to service encounters are likely to vary from culture to culture'. 'Very little research has examined the influence of culture on service perceptions' (Malhorta et al., 1994) and 'our understanding of how customers from different countries evaluate service encounters is very limited' (Winsted, 1997). The fact that there is very limited research and information relating to how culture or intercultural elements can influence the customer service experience in the hotel industry implies that some intercultural issues during customer service might be neglected. 'The focus of intercultural communication entails the

investigation of those elements of culture that most influence interaction when members of two or more cultures come together in an interpersonal setting' (Samovar and Porter, 2002, p. 6). The argument that intercultural communication in the hotel industry is intense is justified by two phenomena in the hotel work environment. The first phenomenon is based on the fact that a great number of different customers who belong to different cultural groups utilize hotel accommodation facilities because they are travelling either for leisure or business purposes. Global customers are a fact. The second phenomenon focuses on the intense presence of people living and working in different countries from their own. Therefore, labor force mobility in the United Kingdom has made organizations more diverse because employees from different nationalities are recruited. Arguably, intercultural contacts in the hotel work environment have intensified because of the recruitment of global workers. According to Kim and Hubbard (2007, p. 228), 'the discipline of intercultural communication has much to contribute to our understanding of immigrants and the process of immigration'.

 It is apparent that economic and cultural globalization have mixed and are not viewed separately to the phenomena of labor force mobility and global travelling. 'As the world is shrinking through globalization, more and more people live and work in foreign countries thus they continually come into contact with the people coming from very diversified cultural origins, involving language, norms, lifestyle' (Zakaria, 2000; Montagliani and Giacalone, 1998, p. 1/9). How we discuss intercultural communication with colleagues from different cultures and sharing the same linguistic code can, however, be disputed, meaning that they speak the same language in their working environment. For instance, it is expected that employees working in hotels in the United Kingdom should speak in English; however, intercultural communication does not focus only on differences in linguistic codes which are linked with communication.

Intercultural communication is greatly connected with the essence of culture and its components, such as different religious beliefs, dietary habits, daily practices and non verbal behaviors. 'That cultures define communication in diverse ways demonstrates that communication is an element of culture' (Krippendorff, 1993). Evidently, we cannot initiate a conversation about communication without considering culture and its fundamentals; neither can we separate culture from communication as has been discussed in a different section of this chapter. Working in an intercultural environment such as a

hotel, employees need to be able to understand different cultural characteristics so as to communicate effectively with their colleagues and global customers. Accordingly, this defines harmonic working relations with colleagues and can promote teamwork. At the same time, being able to communicate effectively on a professional level in terms of customer service signifies that the customer service experience can be enhanced and employees accomplish their duties. Ambady and Skowronski (2008) have highlighted that 'first impressions often have a strong impact on any given social interaction and can affect subsequent interactions'. It is observed that intercultural communication can be linked with professionalism. Ting-Toomey (1999, p. 5) has recognized that 'in order to communicate effectively with dissimilar others, every global citizen needs to learn the fundamental concepts and skills of mindful intercultural communication'.

'Prior research shows that customers from different cultures have significantly different attitudes toward service employees and expectations from them, and this affects the ways they interact with service employees and evaluate service performance' (Mattila 1999; Raajpoot 2004; Stauss and Mang, 1999). 'Cross-cultural contact is associated with several problems such as misattributions, communication gaps, stereotyping, ethnocentrism, prejudice, discrimination, and cultural distance' (Stening, 1979). The need for effective communication in the hotel work environment presupposes that employees incorporate in their behavior and thinking a significant understanding of why there is a need to understand that potential cultural differences matter at work. It is necessary though that hotel staff demonstrate practically at the service encounter that they can be effective communicators during intercultural interaction. This assumes that, to be an effective intercultural communicator, citizens need to be 'culturalized'; especially employees in the hotel industry. For this to be attained, hotel staff have to be sensitive and interested in the essence of culture, its components and different cultural practices in relation to customers' needs. There is the demand for relevant support in the form of training or seminars on the part of each hotel organization aiming at the enhancing of employee's job performance towards intercultural service encounters. Rodriguez (2002) explains that:

> The term culturing, is equally important for understanding culture, it can be defined as our proclivity to construct new and different meanings, understandings and practices so as to reckon with the world's infinite ambiguity and quantum nature that constantly destabilize extant meanings, understandings and practices (Rodriguez, 2002).

Borrowing the meaning of culture that Rodriguez has ascribed to it can be a basis for the hotel industry as to how the term 'culturalization' can be conceived in a professional context. The need for employees to be culturalized can be seen as a response to globalization. Piller (2011, p. 19) has underlined that 'the discourse of intercultural communication is itself an aspect of globalization, and, at the same time, it is a response to globalization'.

3.6 Conclusion

Having examined the interrelationship of globalization with interculturalism, multiculturalism and intercultural communication in the hotel industry, it is becoming clear that hotel organizations need to be in the same line with socio-economic, cultural and political situations which affect the daily routine of hotel staff and consequently hotel operation in general. Global customers and global workforces in the global hotel industry in the United Kingdom are the two major phenomena which confirm that the hospitality sector has been affected by the changes of economic and cultural globalization. As a result, hotels need to find efficient and professional solutions as to how they can deal with these changes that the current wave of globalization has caused. In order to respond successfully to those changes, hotels need to understand the importance of supplying their hotel staff with practices and skills which signify intercultural awareness and start building on the intercultural skills of their employees. The next chapter focuses mainly on issues which relate to the theoretical context of hospitality, hotels and customer service. The concept and components of intercultural communication competence generally and within the hotel industry in particular are also discussed in detail.

Chapter 4: Hospitality and customer service

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter it is discussed that hotels are classified as business and social organizations; as business organizations because they promote sales products and services so as to gain financial profit and as social organizations because a lot of interaction is entailed at the service encounter. The different meanings and dimensions of hospitality are presented and it is outlined that these different approaches which exist within the context of hospitality underline that it is an industry which has still not been defined clearly. Taylor and Edgar (1999, p. 24) suggest three principal purposes of hospitality research as follows: 'to uncover and make sense of existing patterns of behavior and phenomena within the hospitality industry' – essentially a positivist approach, 'to identify new and better ways of managing within the hospitality industry' – a normative approach and 'to enable the hospitality faculty to educate future practitioners'. By examining the presence of intercultural communication and its relevant features within the hotel industry, the opportunity is presented to redefine hospitality and improve its potential. The traditional and contemporary meanings of hospitality are described and it is suggested that the current image of hospitality is an amalgamation of both meanings.

It is proposed that, in order to better understand hotels as organizations and their functions in society, the system approach could be used, which views organizations as open systems interacting with other socio-economic, cultural and political systems of society. Arguably, the most appropriate term when discussing issues related to products and services around the hotel industry is customer. The essence of customer service in hospitality is presented and it is also pointed out that there is a particular 'code' of behavior and demeanor that employees in hospitality are required to display during customer service. Therefore it is explained how role theory plays a significant part in the appropriate display of emotions and behaviors that service employees have to embrace in customer service. 'Frontline workers are expected to display certain emotions (e.g., happiness) and suppress others (e.g., anger) in their daily interactions with customers to comply with their job requirements and

organizational expectations' (Groth, Hennig-Thurau and Walsh, 2009, p. 958) Within role theory it is argued that intercultural service encounters cannot be accommodated properly on the part of staff because they do not have the right to deviate from the 'set of rules' or practices that hotel organizations wish to implement. Finally, the notion of emotional labor introduced by Hochschild (1983) where the strategies of surface and deep acting are also analyzed. The benefits that hotel organizations gain by employing emotional labor are anticipated on the psychology of service employees.

4.2 Conceptual framework of hotels as organizations and the hospitality sector

Hotels as organizations belong to the broader category of the hospitality industry. 'Organizations are composed of people who use tools, techniques and knowledge to produce goods or services that are valued by members or customers' (Pasmore, 1988). I would also add, on the above definition, that organizations use the skills of their employees to promote, sell and serve their products and services. British law defines a hotel or inn 'as a place where a bona fide traveler can receive food and shelter provided s/he is in a position to pay for it and it is in a fit condition to receive it' (Andrews, 2007, p. 36). 'The diversity of the hospitality sector relates to the difficulty in developing a straightforward definition' (Ninemeier and Perdue, 2005). 'The hospitality industry is often associated with the tourism industry but most people relate it to hotels and restaurants' (Powers and Barrows, 2006). Hotels are organizations which entail a monetary exchange between customers using hotel facilities and hotel staff who are working on the provision of those services. This monetary dimension in the description of hotels contributes to the attachment of more specific characteristics towards their operation.

Hotels are business organizations which sell their services so as to achieve financial profit. They are therefore interested in the quality of their services so as to gain customer satisfaction and retention. As well as business organizations, hotels could be classified as social organizations because they involve a lot of social interaction between hotel staff and global and local customers. It is necessary to underline that the essence of hospitality has changed to a great extent in relation to what hospitality used to be in the past, how it was

expressed by hosts and the contemporary meaning of hospitality as it is performed by hosts. Ben Jelloun (1999) ascribes a folklore sense to the content of hospitality.

> As a ritual which follows specific steps: an action (a welcome), an attitude (the opening of oneself to the face of another […] and the opening of one's door and the offering of the space of one's house to a stranger), and a principle disinterestedness. In this sense, hospitality is regarded as an offered good from the host to the guest based on altruism, benevolent dispositions, generous feelings and congenial environment (Ben Jelloun, 1999, pp. 1–2).

However, a more industrial and contemporary meaning of what hospitality stands for has evolved into 'a harmonious mixture of tangible and intangible components − food, beverages, beds, ambience and behavior of staff' (Cassee, 1983, p. xiv). Pfeiffer (1983) gives a quite similar definition to that of Cassee, attaching, though, a monetary significance which outlines the business or, to put it differently, the profit making motives of hospitality. 'Hospitality consists of offering food, beverage and lodging, or, in other words, of offering the basic needs for the person away from home' (Pfeiffer, 1983, p. 191). Pfeiffer's definition of hospitality does not include any element of atmosphere or of 'performance' of feelings and demeanor that staff might be required to adopt in the name of being hospitable, warm and kind but is based on a more functional meaning.

Hepple, Kipps and Thomson (1990) have identified four characteristics of hospitality in its modern sense.

> Firstly, it is conferred by a host on a guest who is away from home, secondly it is interactive, involving the coming together of a provider and receiver, thirdly, it is comprised of a blend of tangible and intangible factors and fourthly, the host provides for the guest's security, psychological and physiological comfort (Hepple, Kipps and Thomson, 1990).

In Hepple's, Kipp's and Thomson's description of hospitality, the interactive dimension which can take the form of relationship building between employees and customers is pointed out. In addition, hospitality is conceived as a notion which necessitates a duty of care and protection on the part of hosts to guests. Pizam and Shani (2009) highlighted 'the distinction between hospitality and hospitableness, arguing that the latter refers to authentic kindness and generosity while the former refers to the creation of experiences'. Commercial hospitality is intended as a combination of politeness and thoughtfulness towards customers at the creation of a positive customer service experience. Arguably, hotels expect their hotel staff to display attitudes and behaviors which create relationships

and engagement between staff and customers so as to reward customers with a pleasant customer service experience. Brotherton (1999) commented on hospitality that:

> The nature of, and motives for providing hospitality have changed over time and broadly reflect the evolution of different societies and their particular imperatives, thus the form of, and motives for providing, hospitality have been subject to a variety of religious, political, social and economic influences across both time and space (Brotherton, 1999, p. 167).

This environment within which hospitality is surrounded by different meanings and qualities explains how the socio-economic, cultural and political changes which occur in society have affected the structure, processes and functions of hotels. It is worth considering that the different processes that hospitality has undergone over time have not differentiated to a great extent the content of traditional and commercial hospitality as two separate kinds of hospitalities. It is suggested that the traditional meaning of hospitality has blended with the contemporary–commercial one. This indicates that hotels as business and social organizations have to be in the same line with the socio-cultural, economic, political and technological changes which potentially influence the operation of hotels in certain ways. 'Tourism and hospitality companies operating in an international environment need to learn about their culturally diverse workforce and how to manage it' (Reisinger and Dimanche, 2012, p. 40). 'Hotel managers in current practice are recognizing that a critical operational success factor is to fulfill the multifaceted needs of their hotel guests' (Geller, 1985).

At this point, it could be inferred that hotels could be examined under the general system theory, which refers to the open and closed systems. 'Open systems refer to systems that interact with other systems or the outside environment, whereas closed systems refer to systems having relatively little interaction with other systems or the outside environment' (Katz and Kahn, 1966). It is suggested that hotels should be viewed as open systems because they interact with all the different kinds of systems which exist in the external environment. Cultural, social, economic and political systems cannot leave unaffected the internal environment of hotels as every change which occurs in each system will affect their operation. 'Organizations like organisms are open to their environment and must achieve an appropriate relationship with that environment if they are to survive' (Morgan, 2006, p. 38). It is implied that organizations as hotels need to adopt open and adaptable relationships with the external environment, which is surrounded by quick changes;

consequently they have the power to affect their structure, processes and policies. 'Organizations as open systems are portrayed as adapting continually to change in their environments' (Lynch, 1983, p. 141). There is a need for hotel organizations to adopt in their corpus those practices which will enable them to respond to the potential changes which influence their internal parts. It is necessary to attain this so as to enhance their performance, competitiveness and organizational effectiveness. 'Improving fit between the environment and the internal structure of an organization therefore increases effectiveness and performance in transforming inputs to outputs' (Maula, 2006, p. 33).

4.3 Customers and services in the hotel industry

It is important to make a distinction between the terms guest and customer and clarify which should be used in discussion of the hotel industry. Clearly, services are sold in the hotel industry as customers are expected to pay the monetary value of those facilities which are sold in hotels so as to experience and savor those services. Thus, the proposal for the appropriate term in this thesis is customer rather than guest, because hotels belong to the sector of commercial hospitality where monetary transactions take place. Shostack (1982) remarked that:

> The difference between goods and services is more than semantic. Goods are tangible objects that exist in both time and space; services consist solely of acts or processes and exist in time only. Services are rendered, goods are possessed. Services cannot be possessed; they can only be experienced, created or participated (Shostack, 1982, p. 51).

Hotels as service organizations have to fulfill a purpose of existence as they cannot exist in the market if customers do not buy their services. 'Customer service is the process of satisfying the customer, relative to a product or service, in whatever way the customer defines his or her need and having that service delivered with efficiency, compassion and sensitivity' (Gibson-Odgers, 2011, p. 6). Hotel staff are highly familiar with the essence of customer service in different forms and, arguably, hotels aim to incorporate this so called 'pleasant or positive customer experience' into the traditional meaning of being hospitable by engaging and entertaining customers. It is insinuated that customer service is not an accomplishment of meaningless acts but involves competence, care, sensitivity, passion

and understanding on the part of employees so as to deliver the desired customer service experience assigned by each hotel organization. This is why there are different qualities of customer service such as good, excellent, superior and bad.

Taking into account that there are different scales of rating the quality of customer service, employees are required to demonstrate certain types of positive behavior so as to enhance the customer service experience. Sherman (2007) commented that 'the ideal luxury hospitality experience may involve service beyond that of a mother and require instead the services of an "idealized mother"'. With this in mind it needs to be identified what kind of displays are required from hotel staff and which impression management techniques hotel organizations put into practice so as to encounter their organizational objectives.

4.4 Role theory and intercultural service encounters in customer service

> 'Your troubles should be masked with a smile…once an unhappy or dissatisfied customer walks out the door, they are gone forever!' - from a customer service handbook (Steinberg and Figart, 1999).

For the achievement of excellent customer service, customer satisfaction and retention positive displays and behaviors have to be performed from service employees so as to meet the above goals. Roles, actions and emotions are features which form the customer service experience.

> Role theory is based on a dramaturgical metaphor. The study of a role− a cluster of social cues that guide and direct an individual's behavior in a given setting− is the study of the conduct associated with certain socially defined positions rather than of the particular individuals who occupy these positions. It is the study of the degree to which a particular part is acted appropriately (role enactment) as determined by the reactions of fellow actors and observers (the audience) (Solomon et al., 1985, p. 6).

'Whereas some authors use the term *role* to refer to characteristic behaviors (Biddle, 1979; Burt, 1982), others use it to designate social parts to be played (Winship and Mandel, 1983), and still others offer definitions that focus on scripts for social conduct' (Bates and Harvey, 1975; Zurcher, 1983). All the aforesaid forms of role can apply in the hotel work environment which is related to the provision of customer service depending on the behavior and attitude of hotel staff. Hotel staff are required to incorporate in their customer

service a serial of specific standardized behaviors and attitudes both verbally and non verbally as indicated by their organization aiming at customer satisfaction.

The roles that hotel staff have to integrate on a daily basis in customer service derive from the power that characterizes hotel organizations as brands; simply because as social and business organizations they have to fulfill particular objectives. Hotel staff are requested to endorse particular social behaviors and attitudes within a specific social environment and in these circumstances they have to follow scripts. For example, Schank and Abelson (1977, p. 41) define a script as 'a predetermined, stereotyped sequence of actions that defines a well-known situation'. 'Scripts are important tools in standardizing service experiences and in managing the expectations of consumers and employees alike' (Leidner, 1993). Since in these scripts hotel staff are called to include in their behaviors specific roles which are defined by their organization it can be claimed that hotel staff are not allowed nor have the freedom to personalize to a great extent the customer service as they have to comply with the guidelines of their organization. 'Role theory concerns one of the most important characteristics of social behavior− the fact that human beings behave in ways that are different and predictable depending on their respective social identities and the situation' (Bidle, 1986, p. 68).

Within learned roles, behaviors and attitudes that hotel staff adopt in customer service it is worth considering from an intercultural aspect how the expectations of customers from different cultural groups can be fulfilled and how explicit are the roles that employees perform in an intercultural context. 'Different cultural backgrounds between the service provider and the customer add complexity to the service interaction' (Wang and Mattila, 2010, p. 328). As role theory (Solomon et al., 1985) suggests, 'customers and employees from different cultures have different role expectations and different service scripts stored in memory. These dissimilar cultural backgrounds easily create misunderstandings, resulting in dissatisfied customers, frustrated service employees, and ultimately the loss of business' (Cushner and Brislin, 1996; Mohr and Bitner, 1991). It is seen that possible different cultural expectations between customers from different cultures and employees can affect negatively the customer service experience and the psychology of employees. Due to the different roles that hotel staff have to embrace, customization of the needs of customers form different cultural groups is impeded cause of the standardized behaviors and attitudes that they have to adhere to by being unable to differentiate customer needs. In

addition to this, employees will find it more challenging to identify how intercultural service encounters can be accommodated efficiently and professionally because they do not possess the knowledge and skills towards this since they are getting used to working under these circumstances.

4.5 The use of emotional labor in customer service

Service interactions can be either long or short between hotel staff and customers most known as service encounters. Shostack, (1985, p. 243) has defined the service encounter as 'these exchanges which reflect a period of time during which a consumer directly interacts with a service'. Service encounters are also referred to as 'moments of truth' or 'critical incidents' (Albrecht and Zemke, 1985). Service employees use their interpersonal and personal skills during customer service. In the case of hotels, hotel staff are the key agents with whom customers are coming into contact on the first instance, therefore, organizations wish to make the very best impression on their customers by utilizing hotel' staff's specific emotional behavior and attitude. It would be explored then how it helps the presence of specific emotions on the part of employees to the achievement of organizational objectives and how hotels form and control staff's emotions. 'The financial value of service employees' emotional labor for service industry in general and for the hospitality firms in particular is unanimously accepted' (Fox, 2001; in Shani et al., 2014, p. 151; Pugh, 2001). Arlie Hochschild established the term 'emotional labor' and apart from this she made significant contribution to the tactics of *surface acting* and *deep acting,* by further elaborating them. The main distinction between surface and deep acting lies on the degree of the psychological effort that performers are required to made and on the purposes of the act.

> Feelings do not erupt spontaneously or automatically in either deep acting or surface acting. In both cases the actor has learned to intervene-either in creating the inner shape of a feeling or in shaping the outward appearance of one (Hochschild, 1983, p. 86). Though both forms of acting are internally false and both involve effort they represent different intentions (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993). When engaging in *deep acting,* an actor attempts to modify feelings to match the required displays. The intent, then, is to seem authentic to the audience; thus deep acting has been called "faking in good faith" (Rafaeli and Sutton, 1987, p. 32). In *surface acting,* the alternative strategy, employees modify their displays without shaping inner feelings. Doing this

entails experience emotional dissonance, or the tension felt when expressions
and feelings diverse (Hochschild, 1983).

Fineman (1996) 'suggests that there are two key approaches to emotional labor taken by employers. Some organizations appear to be trying to mould employees to conform to rigid, scripted emotional rules, while others may rely primarily on the employee's existing emotional skills'. As Frosh and Summerfield (1986, p. 116) point out, 'this sort of explicit training is usually carried out by larger organizations with well-developed personnel or HRM procedures'. It could be supported that global hotel brands stand higher chances to provide to their hotel staff this kind of training as they dispose the financial and human resources through which they can realize this. Price (1994) agrees with the above and supports that 'there is a link between the size of a hospitality organization and its adoption of formal personnel policies generally, supporting the idea that smaller businesses are less likely to offer formal training programmes'. It could be argued as well that there can exist either a formal training on emotional skills in the form of a session, or simply through verbal communication from senior staff in hierarchy to lower staff during tasking.

Within this context it is worth considering what the repercussions are for service employees who experience these emotional demands. 'Emotional labor has been traditionally viewed as a source of negative psychological outcomes such as low job satisfaction, job stress, emotional exhaustion, depression, and self-alienation' (Constanti and Gibbsm, 2005; Johnson and Spector, 2007; Morris and Feldman, 1997; Sandiford and Seymour, 2002; Shani and Pizam, 2009). 'These factors can lead to substance abuse (Hochschild, 1983), as well as to the appearance of physical symptoms and general ill health' (Schaubroeck and Jones, 2000, in Shani, et al., 2014, p. 151). When service employees are told by their organization how to feel and how to express themselves at their job role it is normal for them to feel confused, physically and mentally exhausted. This situation can affect not only their professional life but also their private one and can render service staff to feel emotionally inadequate and unsure as to how they have to feel and behave in situations different from work.

Considering that emotional demands can have harmful effects on service employees it is worth investigating why the hotel industry is regarded as a low industry to work for. 'Hospitality may involve helping guests to have a good time by engaging them in activities and small talk' (Guerrier and Adid, 2000; Crick, 2000; Tracey, 2000; Constanti and Gibbs,

2005). 'Hospitality service employees may be expected to act as if they enjoy their jobs and even as if they are not really working but 'are paid to play' (Crick, 2000, in Crick and Spencer, 2011, p. 264). These terms make clear that a job in hospitality might be perceived as lightweight and undemanding, not requiring specific abilities, knowledge and expertise on the part of service staff. Sadly, this is the current image which dominates the hospitality industry, possibly because not much academic research has been carried out which supports the opposite view; that working in customer service not only involves entertainment of customers, completion of tasks, acting, smiling and happy disposition on the part of employees but indeed requires the 'right' attitude, demeanor and specific competencies from staff. Such work involves a combination of social, personal, interpersonal, technical and business skills. Korczynski (2002) and (Pizam and Shami, 2009) have noted that 'hospitality work is complex, challenging and somewhat contradictory but seems to incorporate both the pleasures and pains of service work' 'with even the demanding aspects being perceived as opportunities to demonstrate skill and create memorable experiences for customers' (in Crick and Spencer, 2011, p. 465).

4.6 Conclusion

Having defined in this chapter what is hospitality and customer service there has been the opportunity to explore why there is a certain code of behavior that service employees have to follow and why this is necessary to exist in the service sector. The fact that service employees in general and hotel staff in particular have to incorporate during customer service a number of 'theatrical enactments' and adhere to scripts so as to enhance the customer service experience reveals a rather negative image for hospitality. I am defending this because behind the employment of emotional labor and relevant training provided to service staff towards this, the financial aims of each organization are fulfilled, and that is what business organizations such as hotels do. However, it can be supported that behind this standardization of behaviors and 'theatrical performances' the encouragement of creativity, infusion of knowledge and expansion of service staff skills are set aside by their organizations simply because there is already a certain structure around the emotions and the general behavior that should be exhibited during customer service. This is why it becomes challenging for hotel staff to identify and accommodate intercultural service

encounters because they are not used to neither have they been taught or trained by their organizations to be able to respond to situations which are complex in nature and require a certain repertoire of skills and knowledge.

Chapter 5: Intercultural theories and intercultural competence in the hotel industry

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter an account is given of cross-cultural studies in intercultural communication, including the main figures of the field such as Edward Hall (1952), Geert Hofstede (1970), Fons Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1977) and House et al. (2004) with the GLOBE Project. Criticism and disagreements relevant to the above theories are also portrayed, indicating the limitations and boundaries of those theories. In addition to this, what intercultural communication competence is and which particular qualities and behaviors it is composed of are explained. The dimensions and components of ICC by Chen and Starosta (1996) are presented, as well as the Arasaratnam and Doerfel (2005) and the Hammer, Gudykunst and Wiseman (1978) studies regarding the qualities and skills of ICC. Within this discussion, the importance of linguistic competency within hospitality is shown, as well as how ICC should be perceived in the hotel industry in the United Kingdom.

5.2 Cross-cultural studies on intercultural communication

'Critical intercultural communication scholarship deals primarily with larger structural forces in reconceptualising the dynamic, heterogeneous and complex nature of culture and in reconsidering the past and future of intercultural relations' (Asante, Miike and Yin, 2013, p. 2). 'Critical interculturalists are therefore committed to more contextualized, historically situated and politicized scholarship about culture and communication' (Miike, 2010b). This outline applies in the thesis as culture and communication are not examined in isolation from socio-economic, cultural and political phenomena; society and culture are separate but interrelated systems. Intercultural communication is seen as an outcome of the changes which occur on a global and local level. Arguably, the interest in intercultural communication appeared as a result of the expansion of global organizations. Adler (1986)

informed us that 'organizations were required to send employees and their families abroad, which required training on various cultural backgrounds'. In fact, organizations perceived the need for their employees to be able to communicate effectively and adjust themselves to the host culture not only because of working issues but also as a consequence of personal and interpersonal ones. 'With a few exceptions, intercultural training in multinational corporate contexts began to gain footing and momentum in the 1980s in Europe, the United States and Japan' (Jackson, 2014, p. 374).

5.2.1 Edward T. Hall

'Edward T. Hall, often referred to as the originator of the field of intercultural communication, was hired by the United States Foreign Service Institute in 1955' (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1990). 'Hall created training programs for Foreign Service officers who serve overseas as American diplomats that included the concept of implicit culture and focused on the intersection of culture and communication' (Peace Corps, 1999, p. 136). Hall (1959; 1976) distinguished between high and low context communication and cultures. In high context communication, communicators rely relatively more on the context of a message and less on the words themselves. Regarding high context cultures Hall (1976, p. 79) maintained that 'most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message'. Interaction–communication in high context cultures therefore has potential to be complicated given the involvement of personal feelings on the part of the speaker and the inclusion of non verbal cues. On the other hand, 'in low-context communication meaning relies more on the actual context of the message and less on when, how and by whom it is expressed' (Shaules, 2007, p. 28). The communication is straightforward, based on the semantic meaning of words and not veiled by non verbal cues. In his book Silent Language Hall (1959, p. 169) proposed that 'culture is communication and communication is culture'.

5.2.2 Geert Hofstede

'Geert Hofstede, in his book Cultural Consequences, analyzed that national cultures can be understood by taking into account specific cultural dimensions' (Liu, Volcic and Gallois, 2011, p. 100):

- individualism–collectivism,

- masculinity–femininity,

- high–low power distance,

- uncertainty avoidance,

- long term orientation

5.2.3 Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) suggested specific dimensions of cultural diversity in business:

- universalism versus particularism,
- individualism versus communitarianism,
- neutral versus affective,
- specific versus diffuse,
- achievement versus ascription,
- sequential versus synchronic,
- internal versus external control

'The universalist approach is roughly as follows: what is good and right can be defined and always applies. In particularist cultures, far greater attention is given to the obligations of relationships and unique circumstances' (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997, p. 8). The second dimension underlines that 'individualism refers to the culture that emphasizes the interests of self or of his/her own immediate family. In contrast communitarianism, a synonym for collectivism as used by Hofstede, emphasizes group consensus in decision making' (Vance and Paik, 2014, p. 59). The third dimension focuses on how different cultures decide as to whether or not they wish to display their feelings. 'People in affective or emotional cultures are not hesitant to reveal their innermost feelings whereas people in neutral cultures tend to control their emotions carefully and maintain their emotions' (Vance and Paik, 2014, p. 59). The fourth dimension refers to how people perceive public and private space and whether or not there are boundaries. 'In specific cultures, people clearly separate public space from private. On the other hand, in diffuse cultures the

distinction between public and private space is unclear and blurry' (Vance and Paik, 2014, p. 58).

The fifth dimension differentiates cultures as to whether their current status is a result of individual personal achievements or hereditary and based on personal relationships. 'Achievement means that you are judged on what you have recently accomplished and on your record. Ascription means that status is attributed to you, by birth, kinship, gender or age, but also by your connections and your educational record' (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997, p. 9). The sixth dimension deals with how cultures perceive time. 'If the view of time is sequential, a series of passing events, or whether it is synchronic, with past, present and future all interrelated so that ideas about the future and memories of the past both shape present action' (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997, p. 120). The last dimension refers to how cultures relate to nature. 'Internal-oriented cultures may show a more dominant attitude, focus on their own functions and groups, and be uncomfortable in change situations. External-oriented cultures are more flexible and willing to compromise, valuing harmony and focusing on their colleagues being more comfortable with change' (Binder, 2012, p. 32).

5.2.4 GLOBE project

As well as the cross-cultural studies of Hofstede and Trompenaars-Hampden, the GLOBE project was invented by Robert House, a researcher from Pennsylvania University. 'The GLOBE research program is the only cultural study which makes an allowance to significant regional differentiations' (Heidtmann, 2011, p. 52). 'Thus, House differentiates between the former East and West Germany as well as the English- and French-speaking parts of Canada' (House, Javidan and Dorfman, 2001, p. 491). This could be regarded as all-inclusive, which is highly pluralistic in nature based on methodological consistency. Its primary strength according to House et al. (2004, p. 24) is that 'GLOBE has not made assumptions about how to best measure cultural phenomena but used multiple measurement methods to empirically test which methods are most meaningful'. As Bik (2010) has remarked:

'The GLOBE project is the most sophisticated project to date involving over 150 researchers in 62 countries, has incorporated 30 years of cumulative experience after the

landmark work of Hofstede and is specifically designed to measure cultural differences'
(Bik, 2010, p. 79).

Nine cultural dimensions have derived from the GLOBE project (House et al., 2004, p. 30):

- power distance,

- uncertainty avoidance,

- assertiveness,

- institutional collectivism,

- in group collectivism,

- future orientation,

- performance orientation,

- humane orientation,

- gender egalitarianism

At first glance, the cultural dimensions of the GLOBE project seem quite similar to the
work of Hofstede; however, the GLOBE project based its study on a clear rationale from
the start: to explore leadership and organizational cultures across the globe using
methodological approaches which will enable understanding of the possibilities of different
features worldwide.

5.3 Criticism of cross-cultural studies

The work of both Hofstede and Trompenaars-Hampden refers to how cultural differences
have the potential to influence ways of doing business in an intercultural environment. The
cultural dimensions that they have suggested are based on the dimensions of national
cultures. Arguably, though, there are traces of generalization in both cultural frameworks.
For instance, every human being is unique and can communicate by borrowing cultural
elements of the culture from which she or he comes but also is greatly dependent on her or
his personal style of communication. To claim though that people from particular cultures

tend to behave either professionally or personally in certain ways because of their origins seems a rather simplified argument. If organizations generate diversity training sessions based on the dominant characteristics of national cultures, there is a danger of employees becoming overattached to these characteristics and ignoring the notion that human nature is not always cultural. However, although I do support diversity sessions, it should be made clear to trainees that some behaviors might be interpreted as cultural but not all, meaning that it is not recommended to initiate generic diversity sessions based on the cultural dimensions created by Hofstede and Trompenaars-Hampden.

'One of the main limitations of Hofstede's study is generally considered to be that it was based on IBM questionnaires that were designed to measure something other than cultural differences and that subsequently was reinterpreted to reflect cultural dimensions' (Bik, 2010, p. 75). In his criticism of Hofstede's work, McSweeny argues 'that nations are not the proper units of analysis as cultures are not necessarily bounded by borders' (McSweeney, 2002). 'Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (1997) bring up another important criticism of Hofstede's work. Are cultural categories linear and exclusive? Hamden-Turner and Trompenaars (1997) do not feel that if you are an individualist you cannot be a collectivist'. Nations are not divided only by differences. In stressing the importance of the existence of cultural differences between nations, there is a risk that employees who receive diversity training pay attention to boundaries and become prejudiced against their host cultures or against colleagues from different cultures. Also, if organizations base their diversity training on categorizations and schemata as described above, it might be confusing for employees if they do not remember the characteristics of each category or mix them up.

 Arguably, some cultural dimensions might be regarded as offensive for citizens who originate from particular cultures. In addition, what happens in the case of citizens who hold dual citizenship–nationality? Which criteria – of the first or second nationality – would he or she be evaluated as an individual? The dispositions and feelings of human beings may fluctuate for personal or health reasons; this might affect professional behavior in meetings between colleagues of different cultures. If behavior in an intercultural meeting is opposed to that expected from the relevant categorizations, does this mean that a person is less cultural or embraces opposite characteristics of his or her culture?

Rothlauf (2006, p. 46) challenges the work of Trompenaars and Hampden Turner because 'it is unclear how they identified their seven dimensions of culture. Some of the critics believe that the dimensions were just assembled from culture models of other authors'. 'Furthermore, Trompenaars and Hampden Turner (1997, pp. 212–220) dedicate a whole chapter in their book to the cultural diversity of South Africa but meanwhile there are no research results from the Southern countries of the African continent available. In addition, the authors offer only sample questions and research results for their theory of cultural dilemmas' (Heidtmann, 2011, p. 52). It is apparent that, as well as concerns about the theoretical and argumentative part of the research of Hofstede and Trompenaars-Turner which builds the framework of their reasoning, methodological issues exist as to how they conducted their research. As there is no transparency as to how they gathered their data, the validity of the information provided may be questioned as well. The GLOBE research project is also not without criticism. Graen (2006, pp. 97–98) 'is of the opinion that respondents might have answered the GLOBE questionnaires in such a way that a desirable picture of their home country is created for outsiders'. However, House (House et al., 2006, pp. 104–110) argued that 'the GLOBE intention was detecting the status quo of behavior as well as the ideals aspired by a society'.

5.4 Discussion: Intercultural communication competence

'Conceptualizing intercultural communication requires the incorporation of culture into communication theory, a task which has been approached in a number of ways' (Gudykunst et al., 2005). Cultural elements are involved in intercultural communication interaction, however; ICC combines a number of different qualities. To communicate in a competent way involves a combination of social, interpersonal, cultural, cognitive and behavioral characteristics.

> Competency captures skills and dispositions beyond cognitive ability such as self-awareness, self-regulation and social skills; while some of these may also be found in personality taxonomies, competencies are fundamentally behavioral and unlike personality and intelligence, may be learned through training and development (McClelland, 1998).

But what is intercultural communication competence and who is an interculturally competent communicator?

> 'The ability to negotiate cultural meanings and to execute appropriately effective communication behaviors that recognize the interactants multiple identities in a specific environment' (Chen and Starosta, 1998, pp. 358–359).

It has been argued that 'communication competence is not an individual attribute but rather a characteristic of the association between individuals' (Lustig and Koester, 2006). ICC is not an innate ability but a learned one and this applies to the basic characteristics of culture and communication, which have been characterized as learned and taught behaviors. If intercultural speakers do not desire to communicate effectively, meaning that they do not wish to apply to themselves through learning the specific characteristics and behaviors which synthesize ICC, there cannot be any discussion about ICC during intercultural interaction. Individuals should be motivated about being interculturally competent because they have to incorporate specific skills and behaviors which characterize ICC. Arasaratnam and Doerfel's (2005) study suggested that 'five particular qualities are associated with ICC':

- empathy,
- intercultural experience/training,
- motivation,
- global attitude,
- ability to listen well in conversation

The behavioral nature of ICC cannot be ignored. 'The two key principles for competent communication are appropriateness and effectiveness, according to Chen and Starosta' (1998). 'Effectiveness means that individuals can realize personal goals or outcomes' (Wiseman, 2002). Effectiveness relates to the personal understanding of each communicator as to what is expected to be achieved from the side of both communicators. 'Appropriateness requires that communication takes place that is grounded in an understanding of the context and reflects expected norms as defined by cultural insiders' (Ting-Toomey, 1999). In order to have appropriate communication, the communicators need to be aware of the customs, norms and ethics of the different culture, which requires some cultural knowledge of it. This does not signify that merely cultural knowledge of

different cultures per se is an adequate measure to categorize someone as an interculturally competent communicator. According to Bennett (2009):

> 'Teaching culture (e.g. the institutional, historical and political aspects of culture) is not enough, and that the development of intercultural competence requires the teaching of subjective culture, in which the focus turns to exploring alternative worldviews and cultural self-awareness' (Bennett, 2009).

'Another is that teaching intercultural competence requires the development of critical cultural awareness' (Talkington, Lengel and Byram, 2004). As a result, if this cultural knowledge is appropriate, it would be effective–successful as both parts will have achieved their aims to communicate efficiently and understand each other. They would have communicated under a mutual cultural code which attaches importance to the recognition and esteem of the different attitudes and rules which may exist in each different cultural group. ICC should be viewed as a cultural support which will enable communicators to build cultural bridges across intercultural differences.

Dimensions of Intercultural Communication Competence	Components of Intercultural Communication Competence
Personal Attributes	Self-disclosure, self-awareness, self-concept, self-relaxation
Communication Skills	Message skills, social skills, flexibility, interaction management
Psychological Adaptation	Frustration, stress, alienation, ambiguity
Cultural Awareness	Social values, social customs, social norms, social systems

Table 1: The dimensions and components of intercultural communication competence, Chen, and Starosta (1996).

Chen and Starosta's (1996) framework of ICC focuses on the personal, interpersonal, psychological and cultural characteristics of the individual by stressing the importance of every component being accompanied by specific skills. This again proves the behavioral nature of intercultural competence.

> 'ICC can be explained not as communication competence in dealing with a
> specific culture but as the cognitive, affective and operational adaptability of
> an individual's internal system in all intercultural communication contexts'
> (Kim and Korzenny, 1991, p. 259).

ICC offers flexibility to the communicator and a sense of confidence on a personal and professional level. Hammer, Gudykunst and Wiseman (1978, p. 390) have proposed that intercultural communication competence comprises the following four skills:

- to enter into meaningful dialogue with others,
- to initiate interaction with a stranger,
- to effectively deal with communication misunderstandings between self and others,
- to effectively deal with different communication styles.

5.4.1 Linguistic competency within ICC

Authors conclude that 'linguistic competency while important is not synonymous with effective communication' (Hammer, Gudykunst and Wiseman, 1978, p. 391). The above authors focus mainly on the personal and communication attributes of which the intercultural competent communicator should be disposed. I would disagree though with the above position, which supports the exclusion of linguistic competency in the intercultural competent framework of Hammer, Gudykunst and Wiseman (1978). It is true that linguistic competency and being able to speak an international language apart from the mother tongue does not necessarily signify intercultural competency because, as has been pointed out, ICC is a combination of social, interpersonal, cultural, cognitive and behavioral characteristics. Nonetheless, I would argue that it does not exclude it either. Firstly, neither the Chen and Starosta (1996) framework of ICC which has been illustrated above nor Hammer, Gudykunst and Wiseman (1978) or any other author who has proposed specific skills, qualities and behaviors as to what ICC is comprised of suggests examining each element in isolation. However, examination of all the features together and holistically is recommended.

The question which arises then is why linguistic competency is not considered valuable to be incorporated as a component or attribute of ICC. Secondly, in a professional context in many jobs and in the hospitality sector in particular, knowledge of international languages is regarded as desirable predominantly within the European context. 'In the European hospitality industry, for instance, fluency in several languages is the norm' (Enz, 2010, p. 972). It is common knowledge that first impressions do matter, especially in the area of customer service in the hotel industry. 'Hotel managers and staff must be able to

communicate using foreign languages when required. Fluency in foreign languages makes customers satisfied' (Kosar and Lazovic, 2013, p. 91). It is perceived that linguistic competency within the hotel industry is regarded as necessary as it is linked with customer satisfaction upon customer service and obviously enhances the customer service experience.

5.4.2 ICC in the hotel industry

As intercultural competence is a skill and attitude which can be taught and learned, a systematic approach is needed in order to develop it. It is suggested then that ICC within the hotel industry can be developed through diversity training, including for managerial and non managerial employees. Already intercultural training is considered as a popular means across different disciplines. 'Intercultural training has been informed by a number of fields including: cultural anthropology, cross-cultural psychology, sociolinguistics, multicultural education, intercultural communication and international business management' (Bennett, Bennett and Landis, 2004, p. 1). Thinking about intercultural competence in the hotel industry as a skill offers the opportunity to reconsider and define the kinds of skills required in hospitality.

> 'Hospitality work is widely characterized in both the popular press and in research-based academic sources as dominated by a low skills profile' (Wood, 1997) or, as Shaw and Williams (1994, p. 142), 'rather brutally and, probably, unfairly put it, uneducated, unmotivated, untrained, unskilled and unproductive'.

It is apparent that opinions on the quality of skills required in the hospitality industry are divided, presenting a rather discouraging image that the hospitality sector offers jobs composed of low skills and meaning that it is not worth investing in the qualities of hotel staff or expanding their skills. This image of hospitality is perhaps explained by the low wages in the industry, the unsociable shifts and working hours of employees and the recruitment of many students. Still, Baum (1996) questions 'the validity of claims that hospitality is a work area of low skills. His argument is based on the cultural assumptions that lie behind employment in westernized, international hospitality work, whereby technical skills are defined in terms of a relatively seamless progression from domestic and consumer life into the hospitality workplace'. Arguably, any discussion of intercultural communication, ICC and diversity training in the hotel industry aims at the improvement

of the skills of hotel staff and the introduction of intercultural practices upon recruitment in the global hotel industry.

5.5 Conclusion

Having examined some of the main aspects of the hospitality sector and customer service in the hotel industry, in the previous chapter it is suggested here that ICC could be part of the work life of hotel staff as part of their global citizenship identity. Both IC and ICC are outcomes of globalization and at the same time the expansion of hotel groups in the global market is an outcome of globalization. Hotel practices and policies should be in the same line as the changes which occur in the socio-economic and political environment. This is proved by the presence of IC in the hotel environment and the inclusion of ICC. Even though ICC has been defined precisely in terms of which skills, attitudes and behaviors compose an effective and efficient intercultural interaction, ICC is not an aptitude which must be accepted passively by individuals; rather it has to be accompanied by critical cultural knowledge. Indeed, discussion about ICC in the hotel work environment could be a first step so as to contradict the claims and allegations that the hospitality is a sector which involves low skills. IC and ICC can alter the image of hospitality and stress the importance of space for improvement both for hotel staff and the customer service experience. The next chapter gives details and clarifies the qualitative research which has been utilized, discussing a variety of data collection instruments and analysis approaches within a qualitative research methodology which contribute to the identification of how hotel staff in global hotel groups deal with issues of intercultural communication and how they organize themselves.

Chapter 6: Methodology

6.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the logic under which specific qualitative methods were employed and the type of methodology chosen for the study. Madison (1988) supported the notion that 'method focuses the researcher on exact knowledge and procedure whereas methodology uses good judgment and responsible principles rather than rules to guide the research process'. The chapter starts by detailing the significance of combining a variety of data collection instruments: semi-structured interviews, public space observations and thematic analysis. Within this context it is explained how interpretive (hermeneutic) phenomenology has been utilized. The theoretical framework of applying hermeneutic phenomenology as a methodological approach is represented as the most appropriate, making use of the experiences of hotel staff and how they perceive specific situations and phenomena in their work environment. Justification is provided for why only branded hotel groups participated in the study, while what the term branding denotes and how this is related to the essence of customer service are also outlined. Relevant tables which give details of different global hotel brands, hotels which participated in the study and hotel staff interviewed have been created. An account of all the different actions employed to recruit interviewees and of the procedural part of interviews is also supplied to give an idea of what occurred before and during the interview time. It is explained why qualitative interviews/semi-structured interviews were utilized – the different kind of questions used, the role of probing and of open-ended questions and the reasons for transcribing interviews are detailed for this purpose.

The rationale for using public space observations in the areas of reception, café-bar and restaurants in the hotel environment is provided along with information which indicates that public space observation is acceptable when potential participants cannot be informed about its being carried out. Arguments related to deception against the use of non participant observations are also presented and how public space observations complemented qualitative interviewees, contributing to the trustworthiness and validity of the data, is outlined. There are many theoretical debates and criticism around the

discussion of non participant observations and, arguably, the lack of information and knowledge regarding its utility as a research method has created a prejudice against its use. Under these circumstances, it is sustained that it is fundamental on the part of the researcher to be highly familiar with the ethical issues which arise upon conducting non participant observation. The contribution of the ethics committee of the University of Glasgow at the time of seeking ethical approval for conducting the research is also described, as well as how obstacles were overcome related to issues of public space observations. It is highlighted that the personality of the researcher plays a vital role in this process; notably her sensitivity and thoughtfulness for carrying out ethical research and decision making. The different feelings which emerge when difficulties exist upon conducting organizational research are also discussed. Lastly, features of thematic analysis are exhibited, including how these are involved in the data analysis process in conjunction with semi-structured interviews and public space observations. In this section, some more practical and procedural information follows as to how the data were organized and analyzed. How coding occurred, and the construction of relevant tables, shows the development of themes and thematic analysis on semi-structured interviews and on public space observations.

6.2 A variety of data collection instruments and analysis approaches within a qualitative research methodology

For this research project, a combination of data collection instruments and analysis approaches has been used: semi-structured interviews, public space observations and thematic analysis by using interpretive (hermeneutic) phenomenology. The combination of data collection instruments became possible to be attained because of the autonomy that interpretive phenomenology offers to the research and to the researcher. 'The flexibility of phenomenological research and the adaptability of its methods to ever widening arcs of inquiry is one of its greatest strengths' (Garza, 2007, p. 338). Phenomenology entails the subjectivism of the researcher. 'Although some would criticize the subjectivity that is inherent in interpretive work, no research is free of the biases, assumptions, and personality of the researcher' (Sword, 1999). It is thus considered as crucial when conducting ethical social research to provide an accurate account not only of which research methods were

chosen for acquiring reliable data, but to reflect on how the research methods used fit the context of the chosen methodology and the study in general. 'Every decision taken by the researcher should be a reasoned one, reflect the theoretical framework of the methodology employed and be made explicit to others' (Koch, 1996).

'The fundamental aim of phenomenological philosophy is to develop a greater understanding of individuals' experiences through the consciousness of the experiencer' (Giorgi, 2009). Semi-structured interviews offered the advantage of live interaction between me and the interviewee and the description of reality according to employees' personal experiences in the hotel industry. The fact that interviewees had the opportunity to describe their personal views related to the issues investigated in conjunction with their live experiences and incidents encountered in their working environments provided me with real and valid data. This does not mean though that the experiences with which interviewees supplied me with were taken for granted, denoting rather that the face to face interaction gave me the chance to address more open questions to the interviewees. 'Common to all phenomenological approaches is a desire to understand humans from within their own subjective experiences' (Todres and Holloway, 2010). For this reason, I had to consider how I would achieve understanding and how I could use those experiences as data. Qualitative interviews represented the ground to be used for further testimony of the interviewees' statements.

Public space observations were employed, aiming to search not only how the interviewees' statements could be complemented, but also making possible identification of gaps and further issues that interviewees were either unwilling to disclose information about – however, this was sometimes not possible because of the sensitivity of the issues. Thus, in cases in which interviewees did not wish to elaborate on issues possibly regarded as 'forbidden' to talk about, public space observations made possible obtaining of such data without the contribution of interviews. The application of public space observations attached a sense of independence and flexibility to the study by adhering to the principles of conducting ethical research. Rather than rigid adherence to a specific research design, Popay, Rogers and Williams (1998) argue that '… the hallmark of good qualitative methodology is its variability, rather than its standardization'.

Thematic analysis as a research method contributed to the objectivity and translucency of the data and the research in general. Data sourced on the official website of each hotel brand for the purposes of thematic analysis were already in existence. My involvement focused on the analysis and interpretation of these data, derived by searching common categories and themes identified in advance during qualitative interviews and public space observations. Popay, Rogers and Williams (1998, p. 347) have noted that 'one criterion of good qualitative research is the provision of sufficient detail to enable the reader to interpret the meaning and context of what is being researched and exposes the experience as a process'. Thematic analysis was the means through which it became possible to present and induce that the categories and themes discovered combined not only a subjective meaning but also a realistic one.

Interpretive (hermeneutic) phenomenology is based not only on the interpretations of the live experiences of people and how these experiences are perceived by them but it goes a step further; it aims to make those interpretations-meanings important within a specific context. 'Hermeneutic phenomenology prefers not to formalize an analytical method so that the context of the phenomenon itself can dictate how the data are analyzed' (Langdridge 2007). The cooperation of the researcher and her participants is profound as there is the need for each participant to be understood as a unique being who can contribute with his or her experiences in a distinguished way in the study. 'Interpretive phenomenological inquiry seeks to elucidate or make explicit our understanding of human behaviors and actions' (Allen and Jensen, 1990, p. 244). Successful interpretation of meanings greatly depends on the amount of different data from different sources, consequently justifying the use of a variety of data collection instruments and analysis approaches.

6.3 Interpretive (hermeneutic) phenomenology as methodological approach

'Phenomenology is an inductive qualitative research tradition rooted in the 20th century philosophical traditions of Edmund Husserl (descriptive) and Martin Heidegger (interpretive) (Reiners, 2012, p. 1). 'It is considered a philosophical discipline and a research method' (Geannellos, 1998; LeVasseur, 2003; Lopez and Willis, 2004, in Wojnar

and Swanson, 2007, p. 172). In this study the data have been gathered, produced and analyzed based on interpretive phenomenology. 'Benner (1994), Draucker (1999), Koch (1995), and Parse (1999) suggested that interpretive phenomenology is most useful as a framework for examining contextual features of a lived experience as generated from a blend of meanings and understandings articulated by the researcher and participants' (in Wojnar and Swanson, 2007, p. 177). 'As an approach within sociology, phenomenology seeks to reveal how human awareness is implicated in the production of social action, social situations and social worlds' (Natanson, 1970). Hotel organizations belong both to the category of social and business organizations, as explained in the previous chapter. Whether defined as social or business organizations, there is a close interrelationship between hotels and society; examining daily practices involved in the operation of hotels therefore enables us to further understand how society functions and which roles human beings are called to become engaged with at a professional level. This can be achieved by understanding how employees act and perform in their working environments.

Hotels produce and sustain the essence of social capital whether defined as social or business organizations. Coleman (1988, p. 598) identifies social capital as 'a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of actors whether personal or corporate actors within the structure'. Cohen and Prusak (2001, p. 4) acknowledge that 'social capital makes an organization, or any cooperative group, more than a collection of individuals intent on achieving their own private purposes'. Through the use of interpretive (hermeneutic) phenomenology, it became possible to explain why specific experiences and phenomena are important as such, intensifying the meanings and understandings attached to the relevant experiences of employees. Interpretation of the phenomena expressed by hotel staff indicates that they are constructed of numerous realities; this is where themes appear. 'Heidegger asserted that human existence is a more fundamental notion than human consciousness and human knowledge. His philosophy makes it clear that the essence of human understanding is hermeneutic, that is, our understanding of the everyday world is derived from our interpretation of it' (Dahlberg, Drew and Nystrom, 2008, in Reiners, 2012, p. 2). 'Heidegger believed that understanding is a basic form of human existence in that understanding is not a way we know the world, but rather the way we are' (Polkinghorne, 1983, in Laverty, 2003, p. 8). A significant role in the hermeneutic process was played by the research methods used which allowed me as a researcher to discover and

reach those experiences which accordingly supplied me with the relevant information in form of data.

Looking into the work lives of hotel staff through qualitative interviews and public space observations enabled identification of which issues matter more and are regarded as more important on the part of hotels and which issues matter less. 'Reality is not something ''out there'', but rather something that is local and specifically constructed. Realities are not more or less, rather they are simply more or less informed' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). The specific elements that surround the reality of how social interactions are constructed on issues of customer service, cultural diversity, language issues, aesthetic labor and grooming standards reveal how social actions, etiquettes and protocols take shape in a working hotel environment. These social actions divulge the desirable policies and behaviors with which hotel staff are obliged to comply and operate within a working hotel environment. 'There is a transaction between the individual and the world as they constitute and are constituted by each other' (Munhall, 1989). It is therefore necessary to understand the content of the experiences of hotel staff and the reasons which constitute those experiences. Hotel staff hold two identities; one which classifies them simply as human beings, and another which categorizes them as employees.

'Heidegger focused on 'Dasein', that is translated as the mode of being human' or 'the situated meaning of a human in the world'' (Laverty, 2003, p. 7). Interviewees were not examined simply as human beings but were viewed as human beings under the identity of employees working in the hotel industry. So, by understanding what is involved in being an employee in the hotel industry and their particular responsibilities on a professional level, how society functions can be understood. This can be linked with my argument that society and the hotel industry are interrelated; within the hotel industry, specific social models and practices are formulated and sustained and can potentially find expression at a social level as well. It is apparent that phenomena generally speaking have a reason and reasoning; organized, arranged and maintained by human beings. If we achieve an understanding of phenomena which belong to specific social and organizational settings as hotels, we can identify how the reality constructed in the internal environment of hotels as working environments can be interrelated with the external environment which constitutes social reality.

For instance, the fact that we are living in a world which becomes increasingly globalized, where intercultural communication and relationships have intensified and the mobility of the labor workforce has increased these phenomena ask questions about the role of organizations in employees' lives, both personal and professional. As the above phenomena have entered the work lives of hotel staff and their organizations, harmonization should be developed between these phenomena, which have the power to influence the reality of each organization. 'Through language and interpretations, I created meanings about the hotel working environment and its interrelationship with customer service, diversity issues, language issues, aesthetic labor and grooming standards. 'Language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs. Understanding occurs in interpreting' (Gadamer, 1960; 1998, p. 389).

In the hermeneutic process, the researcher has to go back and forwards to undertake analysis. Allen (1995) stressed 'the importance of reading and writing as core to the production of meaning in hermeneutic strategy'. Reading, writing, personal reflections, feelings and field notes assisted initially with the understanding of data and later with analysis. The hermeneutic process did not contribute solely to interpretation of texts and words and unveiling of meanings but also helped to seek the right resolutions and interpretations and thus ensure the trustworthiness of the data. 'In hermeneutic phenomenological research an ability to follow the decision trail relating to theoretical, methodological and analytic process is an important indicator of trustworthiness' (Koch, 1994). 'The basic tenet of the hermeneutic interpretive school of thought is that researchers cannot remove themselves from the meanings extracted from the text. The researcher becomes a part of the phenomenon. Consequently, preconceived ideas or opinions are not bracketed' (Polit and Beck, 2005, in Reiners, 2012, p. 2).

It is evident that, because my responsibility as a researcher was to provide an accurate and valid description of the issues investigated, the interpretations had to be truthful and clear so as to avoid preconceptions. 'Qualitative research continues to be regarded by some as ''a soft option'' lacking scientific rigor and open to possible bias or even fraud' (Chapple and Rogers, 1998). 'The unclear process by which qualitative researchers arrive at interpretations and lack of detail about the process of analysis have been criticized' (Pollock, 1991; Clarke, 1998; Crist and Tanner, 2003). By being as accurate and consistent as possible in my organization, presentation and interpretation of data, I have conducted

research of high quality based on rich data through the use of a variety of data collection instruments and analysis approaches within a qualitative research methodology.

6.4 Why sample only branded hotel groups for organizational research?

A clear selection took place of globally branded hotel groups or, to put it differently, hotels which belong to the elite of the social and economic scale participated in the study. The decision to enter the arena of global hospitality enclosed the rationale that global hotel brands entail those criteria, capacities and philosophies in terms of human and financial capital which can ensure not only a pleasant and high quality customer service experience but also a 'rich' working environment for hotel staff. I use the term 'rich' metaphorically here, implying the opportunities and the prosperity that hotel staff can gain upon entering the hotel industry so as to develop themselves further in terms of professionalism and skills. This is what is denoted on the part of hotel organizations: according to the statements of interviewees, hotels' brand web profiles and job advertisements in terms of education, training and knowledge opportunities will be supplied to employees during employment. The term 'brand' has multiple connotations. 'At one end of the spectrum, brand constitutes a name, a logo, a symbol and identity, or a trademark. At the other end, brand embraces all tangible and intangible attributes that the business stands for' (Prasad and Dev, 2000). For customers, the symbol of a hotel organization contributes to easier recognition of the brand compared to others.

Simoes and Dibb (2001) argue that 'branding plays a special role in service companies because strong brands increase customers' trust of the invisible, enabling them to better visualize and understand the intangible and reduce customers' perceived financial, social or safety risk'. Global hotel brands therefore aim to create a perception or impression for their customers or potential customers that what is popular and global entails the best value for them. This can be achieved with the power possessed by global hotel brands by building the image of ideal and perfect accommodation which provides superb facilities for customers and a stimulating working environment for employees. By investigating the working environment of each hotel through the contribution of the experiences of hotel staff, I gained a 'genuine' account of how hotels respond to issues related to customer service and the role of intercultural communication. Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 2) have

noted that 'qualitative research is multimethod in focus involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them'.

6.5 Hotel brands and interviews with hotel staff

The two broad categories of hotels examined were business–leisure and luxury hotels. In total, eight global hotel brands participated across twelve different hotels, as can be seen in Table 2.

First hotel brand: 4 star hotel Glasgow, 4 star hotel Manchester	**Second hotel brand:** 4 star hotel Edinburgh, 3 star hotel Aberdeen	**Third hotel brand:** 4 star hotel Glasgow, 5 star hotel Glasgow, 5 star hotel Edinburgh
Fourth hotel brand: 3 star hotel Edinburgh	**Fifth hotel brand**: 5 star hotel Edinburgh	**Sixth hotel brand:** 4 star hotel Glasgow
Seventh hotel brand: 4 star hotel Glasgow	**Eighth hotel brand:** 4 star hotel Glasgow	

Table 2: Eight global hotel brands across twelve different hotels

Interviewees worked in various departments of each hotel, including general management, human resources, operations, food and beverage, guest relations, concierge, housekeeping and front office, and one director of sales and marketing was also interviewed. Ten employees were of British origin and the nationalities of the remainder were identified as follows: one Irish, two Indians, one British–Pakistani, one Hungarian and one Greek. Details of each manager interviewed can be seen in Table 3.

HS1: Director of Sales and Marketing, 4 star hotel *(British)*	**HS2:** Operations Manager, 4 star hotel *(Indian)*	**HS3:** General Manager, 4 star hotel *(British)*
HS4: Food and Beverage Manager, 5 star hotel *(British–Pakistani)*	**HS5:** Human Resource Manager, 4 star hotel *(British)*	**HS6:** Front Office Supervisor, 3 star hotel *(British)*
HS7: Human Resource Manager, 4 star hotel *(British)*	**HS8:** Assistant Concierge Manager, 5 star hotel *(British)*	**HS9:** Front Office Supervisor , 3 star hotel *(Hungarian)*
HS10: Senior Supervisor, Food and Beverage, 3 star hotel *(Greek)*	**HS11:** Guests Relations and Housekeeping Manager, 4 star hotel *(British)*	**HS12:** Assistant General Manager, 4 star hotel *(British)*
HS13: Meetings Host Guest, 4 star hotel *(British)*	**HS14:** Food and Beverage Manager, 3 star hotel *(Indian)*	**HS15:** Senior Supervisor, Food and Beverage, 5 star hotel *(Irish)*
HS16: Guests Relations Manager, 4 star hotel *(British)*		

Table 3: Participants in semi-structured interviews

'Kvale defines the qualitative research interview as; an interview, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena' (Kvale, 1983, p. 174). The selection of interviewees followed the protocol which applies to the context of interpretive (hermeneutic) phenomenology. 'The aim in participant selection in phenomenological and hermeneutic research is to select participants who have lived experience that is the focus of the study, who are willing to talk about their experience, and who are diverse enough from one another to enhance possibilities of rich and unique stories of the particular experience' (Polkinghorne, 1983; van Manen, 1997, in Laverty, 2003, p. 18). Having the opportunity to conduct interviews within the premises of each hotel with hotel managers from different departments was already a starting point for a qualitative organizational research study. The decision to undertake interviews with hotel management staff was not taken at random; indeed, it served four purposes.

First, all the interviewees were the right people to participate in the study because they possessed expertise in and experience of the hotel industry related to the issues investigated. They come into contact with a range of customers so their knowledge of customer service is broad. Morse et al. (2002, p. 18) have outlined that 'the sample must be appropriate, consisting of participants who best represent or have knowledge of the research topic'. Second, being a manager denotes a level of professionalism – some managers revealed to me that they started to work in hotels from their very early years in low positions and, over the years, stepped up. They had an average of seven to thirty years' experience in the hotel industry, so their knowledge and insight could be considered quite valid.

Third, the diversity which characterizes this study is because interviewees were working in different departments; a unique element because they approached issues in different ways according to their areas of expertise. Fourth, because it was already challenging to gain access to hotels, I had to come into direct contact from the start with the manager of each department to seek approval. I thus had a higher chance of being allowed to carry out research in each hotel by communicating first the purpose of my study to managers rather than anybody else lower in the hierarchy. Generally, by interviewing staff from several departments, I gained a variety of different experiences and stimulation which helped me to build further the content of the interviews. Each individual used the knowledge of his or

her specialties and, quite often, different incidents were described which conveyed common themes or brought to the surface new ones harmonically connected to others and to the relevance of the study.

6.6 Communicative actions to gain access to hotels aiming at interviewing hotel staff

For all the interviews, a specific etiquette was followed in terms of how hotels were approached and how communication gradually evolved. There were three ways of dealing with each potential hotel able to participate in the study. Initially, I did some research on the internet using links for each hotel organization from each department in which I was interested; sometimes I could find appropriate information (an email address of the HR or guest relations department) to direct me to who to contact next. In my initial email, I stated the nature of my work in simple and non complicated language and, in most cases, underlined the departments in which I was interested: food and beverage, human resources and guest relations.

A second way of approaching management was by visiting the hotel and directing myself to the reception, where I asked to contact the appropriate person able to facilitate me by bringing me into contact with the right hotel staff to be interviewed. In most cases, the receptionists provided me with employees' business cards so that I could contact later the specific person in question, who could possibly suggest some of his/her colleagues to be interviewed. As my first communicative action did not have the desired results, meaning that I did not always receive responses to my emails or hotel staff responded to my emails negatively, I decided to visit each hotel personally.

The last method of approach involved sourcing information from the web from different sources. For instance, TripAdvisor was a very useful source as managers from food and beverage, guest relations and general management departments usually respond to the positive or negative comments of customers about their stays in hotels. In some cases, managers' email addresses were supplied, so this information was available to me; in cases where these were not shown, I could guess them, as both employee email addresses and

hotels' general email addresses had the same structure. The second and the last method of approaching interviewees undoubtedly proved to be the most productive and successful.

6.7 Content of interview emails, informed consent, plain statement of language and location of interviews

Content of interview emails: An email was sent to each manager explaining my identity, what I am doing, how much time the interview would last and issues about anonymity and confidentiality. The emails were short and specific and, in order to gain attention and interest, I included a transcript of some of the interview questions (Appendix B). In this way, potential interviewees could develop an idea of and understand better the topics of the interview. This was also an excellent opportunity for them to have a look at the questions and be prepared to answer rather than wondering what they would be asked during the interview. Another reason for doing so was that this kind of preparation and familiarity with some of the questions in advance helped interviewees psychologically, up to a certain point, not to feel stressed and anxious about the content of the interview. This does not mean that by supplying the participants with a selection of the interview questions their stress or doubts would automatically be alleviated, but at least they were supplied with a general idea of what to anticipate during the interview.

Furthermore, because hotels constitute a busy industry in which the business can change by the hour, managers do not have much free time during the day. I therefore suggested to them in emails that, in cases where they were not free because of their workloads, they could propose another colleague for the interview. This input in the email was designed to increase the chances of having enough participants. There was a case with a general manager who was not free for an interview; despite this, he sourced me the housekeeping and guest relations manager to be interviewed. Overall, I had to use a combination of different tactics to recruit interviewees. The whole procedure was more challenging because some hotels provided me with only one member of staff to be interviewed, which meant that I had to source more hotels and then start the process of identifying more participants again.

Informed consent (Appendix D) and plain statement of language forms (Appendix E): I noticed at the very start of my study that, when I included the informed consent and the plain statement of language forms with my emails, I was denied access to the hotels. A general manager of a four star hotel in Glasgow politely declined to be interviewed with the explanation that 'we are very wary with third parties who want to carry out research in our premises'. Another general manager from Edinburgh revealed to me that there is a lot of interest from researchers or, in general, from people who belong to the academic community, to carry out research in their hotels but their organizational policy does not allow them to do so. Informed consent and plain statement of language forms are documents constituted by the ethics committee.

However, their role has been questioned in broader academic research, as discussed below. Wax (1982) 'argues for the inappropriateness of requiring informed consent in ethnographic enquiry', while Capron (1982) 'defends the requirement'. Although I did not provide any written informed consent and plain statement of languages forms in my emails, I had another alternative so I was still in line with the ethical guidelines. I always asked the interviewees prior to any interview orally if they wished to read the plain statement of language form and if they still agreed to go ahead with the interview. At the same time, if they did not wish to have a look at the plain statement of language form, I still made clear to them that everything would be confidential and anonymous. In no way, then, were interviewees deceived. As Rogelberg (2008, p. 40) cited, 'while obtaining signed informed consent is important for research involving many risks, it may not be necessary in all situations, especially when participants can behaviorally refuse to participate'. In addition, the kind of research that I am representing did not entail any serious physical dangers towards the participants; neither did my participants belong to any kind of vulnerable group. They were both physically and mentally capable enough to refuse to be interviewed with or without an informed consent form.

Location of interviews: All the interviews took place within each hotel where interviewees worked because it was convenient for the participants. Typically, the interviews took place either before they started their work for the day, in the middle of their work or after finishing their work. I gave the initiative to my interviewees to meet at the time and day most suitable to their timetables. The fact that each interview took place in the hotel environment was beneficial for me as a researcher as well, because I familiarized myself with the hotel's surroundings; this could be useful at a later stage for further exploration

during my public space observations. Moreover, it was interesting to meet other members of hotel staff who were not interviewed, as they contributed to the research by interacting with me prior to the start of each interview. For instance, I had to interact with the receptionist upon arrival for the interview at the reception area and to interact with the waitress during the waiting time; quite often, staff also acknowledged me either verbally or nonverbally with eye contact or smiles. These experiences, moments, images and impressions contributed to building and developing the study, whether the participants had a direct or an indirect involvement. Whether with a verbal or non verbal interaction, I obtained a significant insight into how the hotel industry functions and how customer service is delivered and interpreted in employee behaviors. Generally, I could see the positive and the negative aspects of the industry in terms of how it functioned.

6.8 Qualitative interviews

'There is a growing tendency for semi-structured and unstructured interviewing to be referred to collectively as in-depth interviews or as qualitative interviews' (Bryman, 2008, p. 438). Kvale (1983, p. 176) outlines that 'qualitative research interviews have a low degree of structure imposed by the interviewer; a preponderance of open questions; and a focus on specific situations and action sequences in the world of the interview rather than abstractions and general opinions'. Qualitative interviewing was valuable for adding new questions depending where the conversation was led by the interviewee. Often, the expertise of each interviewee defined the input of questions to be added to the interview. For instance, a food and beverage manager was more appropriate to answer questions on the food culture and food preferences of different cultural groups than a human resource manager or concierge manager. As a result, the expertise of the manager often defined the questions added at the interviews. Vito, Kunselman and Tewksbury (2014) underline that:

> The semi-structured interview does put a priority on obtaining answers to a set of questions the researcher predetermines to be important, but getting these answers is done in a way that allows the interviewee to feel that they are actually talking with, not responding to, someone who is interested in them and their experience (Vito, Kunselman and Tewksbury, 2014, p. 207).

Every interview was divided into three different sections: the first section was more introductory so as to identify the organizational culture and the general values of the hotel. This helped me to identify some of the principles of the organization. I felt that these introductory questions helped to build an equal and respectful relationship between me and the participants. The second section focused on what customer service is, what kind of customer service skills are required from hotel staff, to which cultural groups the customers belong and the level of staff cultural diversification. The third section related to intercultural issues and possible cultural differences/needs of different cultural groups of customers. In the third section, the presence of interculturalism was investigated, including the multilingual skills of hotel staff, possible misunderstandings, how hotel staff feel about different cultures and how or if their organizations support them professionally with training in intercultural issues. Interviewees were asked what would motivate them to broaden their horizons on intercultural issues and how they would feel about the introduction of international languages. Patton (1990) described six kinds of question: 'experience/behavior questions, opinion/values questions, knowledge, sensory and background/demographic questions'. The three different sections around which interviews were organized were experience/behavior, opinion/values and knowledge questions.

 Across the interviews, questions were inserted which were directed by the flow of the conversation; whatever was regarded as interesting and valuable for the research was therefore explored in more depth. Even though the interviews were semi-structured, this does not suggest that a sequence was not followed. The order of the sections did not change and this was very important for the flow of the interview. I perceived that interviewees felt more comfortable and familiar when answering questions in the first and second sections rather than the third, which was related to intercultural issues and intercultural communication. It would therefore not have been wise to include the intercultural section at the start of each interview because some interviewees had difficulty and were less fluent in answering questions related to intercultural issues.

Semi-structured interviews gave the 'freedom' to paraphrase the interview questions so as to facilitate interviewee responses, to alter the sequence of questions for the purposes of the conversation and to add or omit questions. It should be noted that the usefulness of semi-structured interviews, especially for paraphrasing, enabled the interviewee to comprehend better the content of the question in case she or he was not aware of a specific

term. 'The interviewer can paraphrase what he or she thought the interviewee meant by a comment and ask whether he/she got it right. In this way interviewers can check and recheck their understanding of the interviewee's statements' (Altricher et al., 2013, p. 127). I noticed that some of the hotel staff had difficulty in understanding the term 'organizational culture', so this could be paraphrased as follows: 'which are the values and the beliefs of your organization?' 'The opportunities to change the words but not the meaning of questions provided by a semi-structured interview schedule acknowledges that not every word has the same meaning to every respondent and not every respondent uses the same vocabulary' (Treece and Treece, 1986).

Semi-structured or qualitative interviews were valuable for a deeper investigation of the issues, giving the opportunity to complement, contradict, enrich or fill the gaps derived from the responses of interviewees. In general, this was achievable because of the opportunity that semi-structured interviews give through the use of probing. As the nature of qualitative research is exploratory, standardization of the questions would possibly impede the progress of the study; however, through probing, it was possible to understand better and to interrelate the responses of interviewees. 'Probing can be invaluable for ensuring reliability of the data as it allows for the clarification of interesting and relevant issues raised by the respondents' (Hutchinson and Skodol-Wilson, 1992). 'Probing can elicit valuable and complete information' (Gordon, 1975; Austin, 1981; Bailey, 1987). In this way, probing not only contributed to deeper investigation in each question but also to the truthfulness of interviewee statements and to transparency. At times, it seemed as if interviewees would present facts just for the sake of saying something, meaning that they wanted to sound nice and to show that everything works perfectly in their organization. For instance, asking questions related to physical appearance was a sensitive issue; at the start, interviewees would reject the idea that they were recruiting.

However, this could be elucidated by means of additional questions: open questions were the means through which it could be achieved. 'Questions should be asked in a truly open ended fashion so people can respond with their own words. Those open ended responses are the heart of qualitative data and they emerge from asking open ended questions' (Patton, 2014, p. 446). According to Shelly and Rosenblatt (2009, p. 156), 'open ended questions encourage spontaneous and unstructured responses. Such questions are useful when you want to understand a larger process or draw out the interviewee's opinions,

attitudes or suggestions'. The contribution of open-ended questions was so effective because they also facilitated the process of including the different kinds of questions mentioned above: experience/behavior, opinion/values and knowledge questions.

6.9 Transcription of interviews

Ochs (1979, p. 44) has argued that 'transcriptions are the researchers' data and that transcription is a theoretical process reflecting theoretical goals and definitions'. 'The process of transcription, while it may seen as time-consuming, frustrating, and at times boring, can be an excellent way to start familiarizing yourself with the data' (Riessman, 1993, in Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 17). The interpretation and analysis of my interviews were greatly dependent on transcriptions generated after the audio recording of each interview.

> In basic research that employs language as data, current accepted practices involve audio- or videotaping communicative interaction (perhaps with the addition of concurrent observational notes or pre- or post-session research memos) followed by verbatim transcription and analysis, which includes some form of coding process, to make sense of the data (Psathas and Anderson, 1990).

The audio recording of each interview helped not only with the actual production of the transcripts but also contributed to the creation of field notes on interviews; i.e. portraits of interviewees, communicative actions of interviews and obstacles in gaining access to hotels for interview purposes. 'Transcription is also considered to be a representational process' (Bucholtz, 2000; Green, Franquiz and Dixon, 1997). The dynamic characteristics of transcripts, as illustrated below by Green, Franquiz and Dixon (1997), indicate that the transcripts not only focus on linguistics but also on paralinguistic feelings and power relations.

> It encompasses what is represented in the transcript (e.g., talk, time, nonverbal actions, speaker/hearer relationships, physical orientation, multiple languages, translations); who is representing whom, in what ways, for what purpose, and with what outcome; and how analysts position themselves and their participants in their representations of form, content, and action (Green, Franquiz and Dixon, 1997, p. 173).

In this way, transcription displays a variety of functions, not restricted to the reflection of the pragmatic content which concerned the interviewee responses and how they related to the research questions; transcripts also developed a contextual framework around interviews and interviewees. 'Talk makes available a range of implications and inferences concerning the speaker's interests, knowledge, thoughts and feelings, [and] efforts at accomplishing particular social actions' (Edwards, 1991, p. 525). Transcripts, along with field notes, gave an idiosyncratic meaning to each interview which was considered during the interpretation and analysis of interviews. 'Some accounts of transcription take research recordings to be data' (Coates and Thornborrow, 1999; Mondada, 2007), whereas 'others view transcripts as data' (Johnson, 2000; Ochs, 1979). The process of transcription stands for the practical medium through which written texts are generated. In their literal sense, transcripts are composed of written symbols which need to be interpreted and analyzed so as to acquire the form of data. As has been mentioned already within the context of interpretive (hermeneutic) phenomenology the ultimate aim is to produce meaning and achieve understanding; it could be argued that the transcription of verbal data moves towards this aim before the researcher reaches the stage of data analysis. During the process of transcription words which construct sentences are put together so as to generate meanings which convey a particular understanding. As it has been acknowledged by Bird (2005) and Lapadat and Lindsay, (1999) transcription of verbal data composes a part of data analysis.

> 'Some researchers even argue it should be seen as ''a key phase of data analysis within interpretative qualitative methodology''' (Bird, 2005, p. 227), 'and recognized as an interpretative act, where meanings are created, rather than simply a mechanical one of putting spoken sounds on paper' (Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999).

Kvale (1996, p. 166) notes that 'attempts at verbatim interview transcriptions produce hybrids, artificial constructs that are adequate to neither the lived oral conversation nor the formal style of written texts'. Kvale underlines that the researcher runs the risk of being inaccurate, subjective or unable to underpin the reality of the face to face interaction with participants. In my case, though, I can refute these arguments as I kept written field notes after the completion of each face to face interview with my participants, reflecting on how they progressed. Thus, a detailed account of positive and negative impressions was given including the possible feelings which were present and the atmosphere during the interview time between me and my participants. Not everything which was tape recorded was worth

being interpreted and analyzed so there was a selection of what was considered as important and less important. 'Rather than being a problem to overcome, selectivity needs also to be understood as a practical and theoretical necessity' (Cook, 1990; Duranti, 1997).

'Kvale also criticizes researchers employing transcription for insufficient checking of transcript reliability and validity, and failing to adequately describe their transcription process' (Lapadat and Lindsay, 1998, p. 9). It is true that the transcription process, until it takes its final form, can be quite time consuming for researchers depending on the length of the interview. I transcribed each interview personally and usually started the transcription on the same day after the end of each interview or the day after. The sooner that I started the transcription, the better, as everything was so alive in my mind that it did not made the procedure of transcription very hard. The average time of transcription was dependent on the length of the interview; usually, the process of transcription lasted from two and half to three and half hours. Involving listening to the tape recorded conversations again and again, every transcript was composed in a Microsoft Office Word document.

6.10 Portraits of interviewees

Each interview entailed something unique, not only because the accounts of beliefs, experiences and incidents with which interviewees provided me varied, but because every interviewee had a different personality. People differ because of their idiosyncratic characteristics, meaning that different approaches were taken on the part of interviewees and different feelings appeared to be involved in each interview. For instance, I have traced through my interviews some diverse interviewee characters: some who appeared serious, some relaxed, some insecure, some seemingly self-important and others humorous.

Friendliness, kindness and feeling welcome were prominent elements in the interviews; these features created a positive atmosphere and were also very close to the old meanings of hospitality and of making the guest feel welcome. Through the interviews there was a sense of 'professionalism' in how participants behaved, talked and presented their responses.   Every single interview had a distinctive contribution to the research regardless of the quality and intensity of the interview. Before I transcribed each interview, I created portraits of each interviewee. I described how the interviews evolved, incidents which

occurred before I conducted the interview, how I felt and how I perceived that my participants felt during the interview and in general whatever was interesting enough to outline.

On the whole, I felt that the majority of interviewees felt delighted during the interview in the sense that there did not appear to be any negative feelings or any signs of discomfort during the interviews. Often, after the end of each interview, participants shared off the record conversations related to how the hotel industry works under different conditions and how happy they are, while some were very helpful by suggesting that I include other hotel brands in my study. It was at this stage when the snowball effect became involved as interviewees informed me that they would speak to their colleagues to see if they would be interested in being interviewed as well. As argued by Noy (2008, p. 330), 'snowball sampling is arguably the most widely employed method of sampling in qualitative research in various disciplines across the social sciences'. Another important aspect that the snowballing tactic reveals is the barriers that exist in research because of the function or formation of specific social groups. Moyser and Wagstaffe (1987) have stated that 'occasionally, snowball sampling is also used to access groups that do not suffer from stigmas and marginalization, but to the contrary, enjoy the status of social elites' (in Noy, 2008, p. 331). This kind of social elitism may also explain why I encountered so many obstacles and so much reluctance on the part of hotels to participate in my research. Nine portraits of different interviewees follow, as well as some comments about the interview and the interviewee.

'I was waiting for Amy at the reception and in five minutes she arrived. She suggested going to the bar where it would be more quiet. We had a seat there and she asked me if I would like to drink something. I ordered some water and then the interview started. Amy was very well organized; she had brought with her a copy of the interview questions and she had written a few notes under each question. It was the first time that an interviewee had done so and it was a sign for me that she was serious and she was interested in a good outcome from our meeting. She also apologized to me for the fact that she had to change the date and the time for our interview. She was very kind and welcoming, which created a warm atmosphere as she was approachable. At the start there seemed to be some stress on her part but then it disappeared. A few times she had a look at her answers on the sheet but she did not really stick to it; that was very positive because her answers were elaborate – she did not seem to try to withhold information and she was happy with our conversation. I think also that her thirteen years of experience, her passion for her job, her honesty

and her professionalism account for the success of the interview. I found the whole interview as a lesson for me as "teaching material", as quite a few times she referred to the motto and beliefs that they have to follow on every issue that they have to deal with' *(Amy, Housekeeping and Guest Relations Manager, 4 star hotel, Glasgow).*

'After a month and a half I revisited this 5 star hotel in Edinburgh and I spoke with the assistant concierge manager, Andrew. I went directly to him as his face was familiar from the last time and explained to him that the HR manager seemed very busy for an interview and that that was the reason that she had not got back to me so far. He asked me about my project, what the questions were and how much time the interview would take. He replied to me that he would be happy to give me an interview right then if I had time. Andrew was in his late fifties, tall, a bit overweight and nicely dressed in his uniform: waistcoat, tie, shirt, trousers and a long jacket in grey colors. He looked very elegant. As a character I would describe him as very vibrant and cheerful; someone who enjoys speaking about his work and about the brand name of the hotel where he has been working for ten years. He seemed really very passionate and proud. Personally I really enjoyed our interview as we both felt very comfortable and the atmosphere was just perfect – it was not a scheduled interview but, despite that, everything went perfectly. The interview took place in a nice and quiet location in a corner with two chairs, a table and a floor lamp. At times, members of staff from this area passed and smiled to me; they were very friendly. He could answer all the questions with ease, which could also be accounted for by his experience and he had very good product knowledge (he has been working for about forty years in the hotel industry). What was also very striking during our interview was his input of many incidents and personal stories from his years in the industry related to the issues investigated. At the end of the interview, Andrew gave me his business card to contact him if I needed any further information and I said to him that I would be interested if he could find me one more person to talk with. He was really very helpful and kind' *(Andrew, Assistant Concierge Manager, 5 star hotel, Edinburgh).*

'When I first came in contact with this five star category hotel in Glasgow I spoke on the phone with the HR administrator. I explained to her what I was doing and on what my project is thus she gave me her email address so as to send her my interview questions and then she would decide which member of staff would be the right to talk to me. I sent her a first email with my interview questions and the availability of my dates but she never get back to me, I sent also a second one but again I did not receive any response. Thus I decided not to waste more time as I was guessing that possibly research like that was not allowed in their premises but on the other hand I never received an official response. Through web research I found the email address of the food and beverage manager and I contacted with him explaining the purpose of my project. He was happy to help no problem at all thus we arranged a date for the interview. Also he had asked me to send him the

questions in advance so as to review them. I went to the receptionist for my appointment and Irfan arrived soon. We left from the reception area and we went to the bar in a quiet place. He was handsome dressed in his black suit, striped black and red tie and black shoes. He was looking very professional. He asked me if I would like to order something so I asked for some water. He was a bit nervous he said me that he spoke with the Director of the HR and she actually told him that he was not allowed to do this and or any kind of interview. In addition to this he informed me that he was free for only half an hour. So from the one hand I got the feeling that he was a bit anxious about with the fact that there is the policy of not providing information for projects and from the other hand he was busy. He explained to me that they are having a tasting menu for the evening so this is why he was on the phone. He had very good knowledge of the industry and he did not try to withhold information. He was smiling and he answered the questions with an ease but I felt that he was a bit difficult and hard in some parts of the interview in the sense that he tried to contradict me. Despite that he was friendly, kind and he had good sense of humor as he started feeling more relaxed' *(Ifran, Food and Beverage Manager, 5 star hotel, Glasgow).*

'After fifteen minutes Cynthia the Human Resource Manager arrived in the reception where I was waiting for her. She welcomed me with a smile and a firm handshake. She apologized for keeping me waiting and I replied to her that everything was fine and she did not have to worry about it. We took the lift to the upper levels and she told me that she is available for 25 minutes as the CEO of the hotel came for an unexpected visit I recognized that she was concerned about that and she was in a hurry. I explained to her that if she wanted we could cancel the interview but she said no she had time. We sat in a very quiet small part of the hotel where soft drinks are served. I was asked if I wish to drink something so I ordered a cup of tea. After explaining to Cynthia a few things about the project we started the interview. She was sitting cross-legged and she made a few hand movements when she did not use her hands she was keeping her hands crossed. As the discussion was progressing we were feeling both more relaxed. She was adequate in her responses but a bit reserved as to the amount of information that she would like to disclose' *(Cynthia, Human Resource Manager, 4 star hotel Glasgow).*

'The participation of this five star hotel of Edinburgh was a pleasant surprise. After two attempts of coming in contact by emails with two members of staff to see if someone would possibly be interested to participate I did not receive any response. It was a bit of a disappointment to see that actually organizations which offer five star customer service experience do not make an effort to reply to an email which could state clearly that due to heavy work schedule there is not time for them. I send a new email to a third member of staff the food and beverage supervisor and she was happy to meet me. Having recommended her a few possible dates then we agreed on the date and time that suited both of us'.

'When I arrived at the hotel the female receptionist welcomed me in. She escorted me at the bar area where Eleanor is working. I had a seat there and the waitress asked me kindly what I would like to order thus I ordered a soft drink. Eleanor came and suggested we move to another room where it was more quiet so we could speak more comfortably. The first impression that she gave me it was that she is very approachable and friendly. She was dressed in her grey suit and her top was ivory color, black shoes and no makeup. The interview was going very well. She was careful in answering and in her responses she tried to be as descriptive as she could be. She had been with this organization for only eight months and it was more than obvious that she loved her job and she is keen on progressing with her career. When we finished with the interview she said me she wondered if she has answered all the questions. The atmosphere was very pleasant and warm. Also she offered me a walk in the hotel and she showed me the restaurant which was busy that afternoon. She offered me a visit to the meetings and events room which was very classic, elegant and had a sense of history. She was very professional and she was talking me during the tour about the organization and mainly for the bar and the restaurants' *(Eleanor, Food and Beverage Supervisor, 5 star hotel, Edinburgh).*

'I had arranged an interview with Helen, the director of sales & marketing of this four star hotel in Glasgow and during our communication she had informed me that she could source me one more person to talk with. She was very friendly and approachable. When I arrived that morning at the hotel for the interview I spoke with the receptionist to let her know about my appointment. I was sitting in the lobby area. After ten minutes Helen arrived and she welcomed me with a smile. She had a seat and she asked to see my questions so as to decide who else would be the right person to talk to me as well. She decided that she would call the operations manager so as to have a joint interview; some of the questions would be answered from her and some from the operations manager Anik'.

'Myself and Helen went first at the café of the hotel and we ordered our drinks. After a while Anik arrived smiling, he ordered as well and we have a seat for the interview to start. Helen was in her early fifties wearing a black dress, a bolero in black and white and high heels. Anik in his early forties was dressed in his black uniform: black suit, black shoes, white shirt and stripey black and white tie. He was very handsome and well-groomed. It was a joint interview meaning that both interviewees were adding to the answers of each other so more or less all the answers have been answered by both parties and this was very interesting and something that happened for the first time. This made the conversation more productive and from their viewpoints it was obvious that they share the same organizational values. Both Helen and Anik were looking and behaving professionally. Helen had a modulated and silvery voice which was accompanied by her knowledge, confidence and experience. Anik had an appealing and fruity tone of voice and quite distinctive. He

was little more relaxed, he laughed a few times and he had humor. Everything during the interview went smoothly in a friendly and warm atmosphere' *(Helen, Director of Sales and Marketing and Anik, Operations Manager, 4 star hotel Glasgow).*

'Always the communication with the members of staff in this three star hotel in Aberdeen was very clear, straightforward and my presence was always welcome. I had already an interview from the front office supervisor Irina and she had informed me that she could arrange an interview with Nikifor the duty manager for another time. Thus I emailed her again after a few days to find out if I could obtain a few more interviews. She emailed me that she had spoken with Nikifor and Kunal the food and beverage manager and both of them were happy to talk to me after the finishing of their shifts. When I arrived at the hotel I went to the reception and I had a quick chat with Irina and she let me know that both Nikifor and Kunal had been in meetings today but they would be free after the end of their shifts. I was sitting on the sofa at the reception as I was waiting for Kunal. Irina had let me know that in ten minutes he would be free. When he arrived he gave me a firm handshake and he suggested a seat at the restaurant as it was more quiet and remote. Kunal was the food and beverage manager of the hotel. He was in his middle 30s, tall, good looking, Asian and dressed in a pinstripe grey suit, pink shirt and grey tie. He was nice and polite. He showed an interest and he asked me about my project and how many people I have interviewed so far and how many hotels have participated. He was a pleasant person. At the start I got the impression that he was a bit anxious when I asked him if he agreed to tape recording the interview but after a few questions he was at ease in replying to the questions and he seemed to enjoy it. His answers and descriptions were very vivid and I would say that they contained sense of humor. When the interview finished he asked me if I have taken interviews from members of staff who are from different cultures. He spoke with great pride for his organization, that it really encourages diversity and the presence of people from other cultures, how important is to work as a team, he gave me an insight of the job responsibilities that other of his colleagues have' *(Kunal, Food and Beverage Manager, 3 star hotel Aberdeen).*

'Nikifor was the senior supervisor of the hotel. Initially he gave me a few more details about his career, in which countries he has worked and how happy he is working for the current organization. He was in his mid 30s dressed in a black shirt, black trouser and Bordeaux color tie. He was friendly and approachable and this helped so as to break the ice. He showed an interest about my project, I said him that it has been proved very difficult for me to gain access in hotels and then he informed me that he has done a master in research so he knows more or less how things work. He was quiet, his voice was soft and his responses very well organized and contained some statistics as well. His responses had calmness and a confidence. He was not in a hurry to reply he was very well focused and attentive to the questions and this can explain also that not any of his responses were

not irrelevant. He was very professional, he had very good product knowledge and in general he was well aware of the market and of the different cultural groups of their clientele base' (***Nikifor, Senior Supervisor, 3 star hotel Aberdeen).***

6.11 Public space observations

'Participant and nonparticipant observations are integral components of qualitative research and are used widely in the fields of education, sociology, and anthropology. Each presents unique ethical issues in regard to consent, privacy, and deception' (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2005; Haverkamp, 2005). What happens, though, when observation in public spaces is carried out? Arguably, because everyone has the right of seeing, hearing and commenting on other people's actions which take place in a public space, it would not be regarded as unethical for a researcher to carry out this kind of research in a specific area. A public space constitutes an open and free area in which everyone is found on their own initiative so the fact that people's behavior, verbal and non verbal, is visible to everyone should not concern individuals. This is what happens in public spaces such as hotel restaurants and bars – all individuals, whether customers or staff, interact together. Accomplishing covert observation in a private area is quite different from accomplishing observation in a public area. Authors quite often use the term covert observation when referring to non participant observation. Shils (1982[1959]) firmly defends the performing of covert research in public areas as follows:

> Observation which takes place in public or in settings in which the participants conventionally or knowingly accept the responsibility for the public character of their actions and expressions … is different from observation which seeks to enter the private sphere unknown to the actor. …The open sphere – the sphere in which the individual has committed himself to publicity – is a legitimate object of observation, as it is of interviewing (Shils, 1982[1959], p. 132).

It could therefore be argued that the researcher, as an individual, has every right to be found in public spaces as mentioned above either as a customer or a researcher. The researcher as a human being has the same rights as any other human being. Therefore, the researcher's actions are justifiable in a public space as much as the actions of the rest of the customers. 'Covert observation is usually regarded as acceptable if undertaken in a public

place… it is implicit in sanctioning unconsented observation of individuals in a public place that they are aware that any of their actions will be visible to anyone simultaneously present' (Australian NHMRC, 1999).

6.11.1 Justification of using public space observations in hotels

Nine public space observations in the areas of reception, café-bar and restaurant were employed, meaning that nine different hotels were chosen to be observed during morning and afternoon hours of customer service. Each hotel was visited twice and each observation lasted between two and two and a half hours. During the observation time, I kept written notes on the kind of customer service, demeanor and skills required from hotel staff during customer service, what appears to matter for customer service and any intercultural elements that might be present. The daily routine of hotel serving staff was then described (Appendix C).

> 'Non-participant observation is used both to capture the reality of a dynamic situation without affecting it with intrusive research intervention, and because it is believed that any such intrusion would actually affect the situation being observed' (Kirby et al., 2000, pp. 358–359).

My decision to use observation in public spaces was highly based on the functionality of it as a research method for two main reasons: first, it was functional because I did not need permission from any hotel organization to access their premises – it had proved very hard to obtain authorization from each hotel to gain access for interviews. Only when interviewees from each hotel agreed to be interviewed, could I include this hotel in my public space observations. 'Sometimes we do observational studies in public settings, such as parks and restaurants and it is impractical to inform all people in these settings that research is being conducted' (Kalof, Dan and Dietz, 2008). Secondly, methodological issues of validity and credibility were addressed more successfully and efficiently. 'Every researcher knows or should know that the experience of being observed is likely to affect the behavior of the person who is being observed; the Hawthorne experiments are a familiar staple of basic textbooks' (Olson et al., 2004).

> 'The Hawthorne effect is named after this study because it demonstrates that people will probably change their behavior if they are aware of being watched – so an accurate picture of their normal behavior is not obtained' (Kirby et al., 2000, p. 349).

By applying public space observations, there was a higher chance of seeing hotel staff acting genuinely in their work environments. Other advantages related to the application of public space observation concerned the elimination of stress on the part of employees. If employees knew that they were being observed during their work they might have felt stressed and anxious. In addition, the possibility of hotel staff being familiar with the notion of observation in research was quite low. Without doubt, genuine data could be obtained as the behavior of hotel staff would not alter under observation.

6.11.2 Arguments of deception and of health and safety against the use of public space observations

The ethicality of disguised or covert observational techniques has long been controversial, as evidenced by the ''deception debate'' (Bulmer, 1980; Humphreys, 1970; Roth, 1962; Galliher, 1973). I would argue that, in my case, there is no space for any arguments of deception as to how I dealt with public space observations. My interaction with hotel staff was limited as I did not form any relationships with hotel staff so as to gain any particular information. The only time that I had to interact with hotel staff was at the moment of ordering a soft drink and paying the bill. I did not hold conversations with hotel staff as I did not try to acquire information. In this way, I was quite independent as I had not established relationships with employees neither did I approach them. Moreover, by using public space observations, I did not have to persuade hotel staff to give their consent to participate in the study during their working time. Asking them to do so during their work could be disruptive, confusing and uncomfortable for them as they need to focus on their tasks rather than being concerned about being observed or feeling that they have to participate in the observation.

Hence, prior to my decision to undertake public space observation, I had to take into account the environmental and psychological conditions which would potentially put at risk not only the process of research itself but also negatively affect the participants, customers, myself and the University of Glasgow. In considering the above, I created at least those favorable circumstances which ensured that during the observation time there would not be any incidents or problems which would impede the research – rather, it would run smoothly. This is why the observations also took place during mornings and afternoons, not at night. In addition, because the study was with global hotel brands , the

chances of encountering any violent incidents were quite low because the customers in these premises usually do not wish to drink large amounts of alcohol and let their behavior get out of control. Issues related to health and safety have been well considered and no danger was identified which could concern the safety of the participants, customers or me as a researcher. In this respect, I have respected and complied with the stipulations of the BSA (2002, p. 2), which underlines that 'sociologists have a responsibility to ensure that the physical, social and psychological well-being of research participants is not adversely affected by the research'.

6.11.3 How public space observations complemented qualitative interviews

With the contribution of public space observations, interviews could be enhanced as the statements of interviewees could be compared with the field notes derived from the public space observations. In this way, I managed to triangulate my data through the use of different research methods: public space observations and qualitative interviews made it possible to capture the reality of customer service in working time. 'The benefits of triangulation include increasing confidence in research data, creating innovative ways of understanding a phenomenon, revealing unique findings, and providing a clearer understanding of the problem' (Thurmond, 2001, p. 254). For example, interviewees had already denoted that grooming standards are important at work. Even though grooming standards and aesthetic labor denote different characteristics and situations, there was the motivation to explore further whether grooming standards were interrelated with aestheticism not only of human beings, namely hotel staff, but also in the hotel environment in general, including objects. Also, some interviewees confessed that they are in favor of hiring employees who fit with the image of their organization (i.e. tattooed people versus non tattooed). It could be interpreted that there is a preference over potential employees who have or do not have specific facial or corporeal characteristics in their appearance. Further exploration of how aesthetic characteristics dominate in the hotel industry could be achieved with the contribution of public space observation.

In addition, questioning interviewees about the presence or not of aesthetic labor during recruitment was a fairly sensitive issue which borders on discrimination and there was potential that interviewees would like to withhold information. For these reasons, public

space observations made possible the revelation of some customer service aspects that interviews could not reveal. Furthermore, public space observations gave a broader image of the hotel industry, adding new elements in interviewees' accounts which contributed to the discovery of new aspects. Arguably, interviewees sometimes like to embellish the truth and what people say and what they do are different from reality. This contributed to the credibility of the data in particular so as to identify not only the kinds of customer service skills required but also to test the reliability of the responses of interviewees and even to broaden this area. Already, hotel staff had given a broad account of excellent customer service. Yet, this could be enriched and taken further from my own perspective by reporting what I see and what I sense during observation. As Silverman (2009, p. 233) pertinently notes, 'unfortunately, we have all become a little reluctant to use our eyes as well as our ears during observational work'. This is, though, what all observation is about; the researcher is called to portray the reality of the environment being investigated.

6.12 Awareness of ethical issues related to public space observations

Data collection and ethical issues are closely interrelated in research, aiming to ensure reliability, integrity and consistency of work carried out in the field. 'Regardless of the type of approach used in collecting and analyzing qualitative data the reliability and validity of the process must always be a primary consideration' (Rogelberg, 2008, p. 177). This statement supports my argument that public space observations ensured and confirmed the trustworthiness and consistency of data. On the other hand, I had to consider or to express it differently and had to make myself aware of the ethical issues, concerns and arguments that public space observation or non participant observation entails. Researchers have expressed a range of opinions concerning the ethics and morality of conducting covert research; what Mitchell (1993, pp. 23–35) calls 'the debate over secrecy'. 'Covert research has been heavily criticized on ethical grounds; in some discussions of ethical principles in research, it is treated as one of the principal issues' (e.g. Bulmer, 1982; Punch, 1986, in Spicker, 2011, p. 118). For me as a researcher, public space observation did not include ethical concerns on the basis that the observations did not harm, disturb or try to mislead the participants. 'The argument against covert observation is that

people have the right to privacy and to know they are part of a study whilst investigators have no special privileges' (Mulhall, 2003, p. 308).

Individuals have the right to privacy; this does not mean though that the public space observations that I conducted intruded on the privacy of hotel staff. It is more than true that every human being has the right to privacy as this right could be described as something prerogative. 'Privacy refers in the first instance to non-interference; respecting privacy means that people are not inappropriately observed, inconvenienced or reported on. The private sphere is a zone of protected activity' (Faden and Beauchamp, 1986). The argument over the right of privacy is unsuitable in my case as I did not have any interaction on a personal level with hotel staff and the areas being observed comprised public spaces to which many people have access. In addition, in restaurants and bars, many social actions take place on the part of customers, including use of portable technological gadgets from which customers can upload photos, post comments on the web related to their positive or negative customer experience and make comments about the behavior of staff by naming them or discussing how good food tasted. This is just a short description of the kinds of social actions which can occur in a hotel working environment on the part of customers. As a researcher, I did not adopt any of the above behaviors, meaning that comments about not respecting or protecting the privacy of hotel staff during their work time are invalid.

Arguably, reflection on ethical issues and moral dilemmas ought to be communicated for the wellbeing of research itself, which could have a constructive impact on society by carrying out sociological research. Sociological research is carried out with the intention of investigating phenomena, situations and behaviors which can influence society positively or negatively in a certain way. From there and onwards, data are analyzed, conclusions are drawn and suggestions are made on how these phenomena and issues investigated in the project can further improve the scope of the discipline to which they belong. For this to be achieved, as long as there are good reasons and an ethical framework, unconventional research methods might be utilized on the part of the researcher so as to reach her research aims. 'The goal of any science is not willful harm to subjects, but the advancement of knowledge and explanation. Any method that moves us toward that goal is justifiable' (Denzin, 1968).

Official bodies, professional associations and ethical committees with established and specific codes of principles and practices related to ethical issues therefore exist. Arguably, the ethical guidelines developed by formal institutions aim to convey the essence of what is acceptable and, in research, what can be dangerous for the researcher and what can be harmful for the participants. The BSA and SRA are well known professional organizations which have set up specific ethical guidelines. These should be taken into consideration by researchers in relation to how to conduct research and how to be thoughtful and accountable for their behavior and actions. It is the duty of the researcher, then, to consider how ethical guidelines can contribute and prepare in relation to ethical reflections. This is what it is stipulated in the statement of BSA (2002):

> 'It provides a set of recipes for resolving ethical choices or dilemmas, but recognizes that it will be necessary to make such choices on the basis of principles and values and the (often conflicting) interests of those involved' (BSA, 2002, p. 1).

It is understood, then, that the ethical guidelines stipulated by each official body are not meant to provide universal solutions to the predicaments or obstacles that each researcher may face in fieldwork. It would also be unwise and unproductive in the name of ethical sociological research to promote convenient solutions related to ethical issues by endorsing traditional research methods against other ones which are less popular. 'Although not a particularly popular means of conducting research, ethnography, like observation, can provide insights not found through quantitative research' (Dantzker and Hunter, 2006, p. 73). It is up to the researcher to reach decisions and to solve issues relating to what is right or wrong in fieldwork. In addition, because the nature of research can be multidimensional and varied (i.e. research carried out in business organizations versus research carried out in schools or hospitals), it might not be possible to apply the same ethical regulations simply because every research has its own particular needs and requirements. The ethical guidelines assist the researcher in being more judgmental and reflective. The SRA (2003) states, along the same lines, that:

> 'The aim of these guidelines is to enable the social researcher's individual ethical judgments and decisions to be informed by shared values and experience rather than to be imposed by the profession. Thus, implicit or explicit choices between principles will sometimes have to be made' (SRA, 2003, p. 10).

It is apparent that both the BSA and SRA provide some freedom to the researcher to act on his/her own initiative as long as ethical standards are adhered to and reflected upon. Ethical guidelines exist to advise and prepare the researcher prior to and following the research stages to contribute and possibly shape, to an extent, reasoning, choices, thoughts and actions on how to tackle upcoming ethical issues/dilemmas and develop awareness of the role of ethics in research. As a result, the role of ethical guidelines and consequently of its representative body is not to impose, dictate or control the researcher over the research that she/he wishes to carry out. The ethical guidelines can be of great support in building and enlarging upon the knowledge of the researcher about ethics and how to consider responsibilities towards research participants, the ethics committee, the university and society. The SRA (2003, p. 11) recognizes that 'the guidelines' first intention is thus to be informative and descriptive rather than authoritarian or rigidly prescriptive'.

6.13 The contribution of the ethics committee during the ethical approval and the role of the personality of the researcher

> Sociological research is a valuable activity and contributes to the well-being of society. Members should strive to maintain the integrity of sociological inquiry as a discipline, the freedom to research and study, and to publish and promote the results of sociological research including making data available for the use of researchers in the future (BSA, 2002, p. 2).

For the above reasons, the contribution and the decisions of each ethics committee are crucial and play a critical role in the development of sociological research. If projects which entail ground-breaking and innovative research are impeded from being completed, there is a risk of not making a positive impact on society and human beings. According to Guillemin and Gillam (2004, p. 268), 'research ethics committees satisfy an obvious need to protect the basic rights and safety of research participants from obvious forms of abuse'. It has also been underlined (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004, p. 263) that 'procedural ethics involves seeking approval from a relevant ethics committee' and 'ethics in practice are concerned about the ethical issues that arise in the doing of research'. During research, it is necessary for a consensus to be reached between the researcher and the ethics committee where the procedural ethics and the ethics in practice are along the same lines.

Cooperation and understanding on both sides – researcher and ethics committee – regarding ethical issues are therefore necessary. In my case, seeking approval from the ethics committee of the University of Glasgow for conducting public space observations was not a process without obstacles (Appendix A). Members of the ethics committee have to follow and adhere to rules and regulations designated by the organizational body by which they are employed. My personal experience as a researcher who had to seek ethical approval from the University of Glasgow's ethics committee could be described as rigid for my choice of conducting public space observations. Nonetheless, I found that some of the comments of the ethics committee were constructive because they contributed to the planning of observations and they helped me in being more prepared and specific as to what I was looking into during the observations. For instance, I found very useful the feedback of the ethics committee which focused on my behavior as a researcher upon conducting the observations. In some circumstances, the role of the ethics committee was largely preventive. Obstacles appeared with regard to the academic knowledge of the ethics committee related to the utility of observations and in particular to public space observations.

The ethics committee did not seem to have significant background knowledge of conducting research which involved observation. However, these obstacles were overcome gradually as I supplied the ethics committee with the relevant and appropriate literature related to public space observations and I managed to obtain my ethical approval. The SRA (2003, p. 41) has emphasized that 'over-protective and bureaucratic procedures can pose a danger of restricting valuable, particularly innovative, social research methods. Research needs creativity and innovation which potentially can shed light on research matters and sociological phenomena which remain unresolved'. 'Undeclared, undisclosed research in informal settings has to be accepted as a normal part of academic enquiry' (Spicker, 2011, p. 118).

Arguably, the ethics committee cannot predict everything that will happen during fieldwork. The researcher's personality and composure therefore play a fundamental role in conducting ethical research and taking ethical decisions. Guillemin and Gillam (2004, p. 269) have recognized that 'the committee does not have direct control over what the researcher actually does. Ultimately, responsibility falls back to the researchers themselves – they are the ones on whom the conduct of ethical research depends'. At this stage, I

would like to highlight the connections between ethical decision making, conducting research and the role of the personality of the researcher. 'Ethical decision making includes being consciously aware of one's values, principles and allegiance to ethical codes, intuition and feelings, within a context that is characterized by professional and power relationships' (Laine, 2000, p. 3). It was my responsibility as a human being and researcher to ensure that, upon conducting public space observation, I would not put in any danger the participants of the study and the reputation of the University of Glasgow. My sensitivity and thoughtfulness as a person also assisted in the completion of ethical research. 'The validity and reliability of qualitative data depend to a great extent on the methodological skill, sensitivity, and integrity of the researcher' (Patton, 1990; 2002).

As a researcher, I found that feelings are interrelated with the process of research. The fact that I had to deal with some obstacles with the ethics committee in relation to using public space observations in conjunction with difficulties in gaining access to hotel premises for interviews had the power to affect me with different kinds of feelings. As mentioned above, gaining access for interviewing in hotels was quite formidable, automatically rendering public space observations difficult to achieve. Hedican (2006) has highlighted how feelings are disregarded in research. 'A study of one's emotional experience has been a neglected or understudied phenomenon in qualitative methodology because of its complex and sometimes ambiguous nature. As human beings the qualitative researcher is a feeling, self-examining individual' (Hedican, 2006, p. 6). 'One of the problems with fieldwork is that we never seem to have as much control over what is going on around us as we would like sometimes' (Hedican, 2006, p. 5). Feelings fluctuated from positive to negative; thus, as well as dilemmas, disappointment and anxiety I also experienced enthusiasm, relief and satisfaction. All in all, mixed feelings rewarded me with skills, knowledge, confidence and patience and this is another area where, as a researcher, I had to become familiar; the sentimental part involved in undertaking research.

6.14 Thematic analysis

'Thematic analysis is a poorly demarcated and rarely-acknowledged, yet widely – used qualitative analytic method (Boyatzis, 1998; Roulston, 2001, in Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.

3) within and beyond psychology'. 'Thematic analysis is widely used, but there is no clear agreement about what thematic analysis is and how you go about doing it' (see Attride - Stirling, 2001; Boyatzis, 1998; Tuckett, 2005 for other examples, in Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 6). 'If we do not know how people went about analyzing their data, or what assumptions informed their analysis, it is difficult to evaluate their research, and to compare and/or synthesize it with other studies on that topic, and it can impede other researchers carrying out related projects in the future' (Attride-Stirling, 2001, in Clarke and Braun, 2006, p. 7). It is important then to be very clear as to how I worked on thematic analysis on a theoretical and practical level and how I constructed my themes. 'Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.6).

Areas in which thematic analysis was applied: Thematic analysis was applied in four ways during the research: on the official website of each hotel brand and on job advertisements which happened at the end of the time scale of data collection, on qualitative interviews and public space observations which happened at the start of data collection. In terms now as to how I worked on thematic analysis on the official website of each hotel brand: if two hotels which belonged to the same brand participated, one hotel was actually examined as the information and the images which were provided concerned both hotels. Thematic analysis was employed on job advertisements present on the websites of each hotel brand as well. A variety of different job descriptions were examined related to management roles and waitress and receptionist vacancies. By looking into the characteristics of a variety of job roles ranging from high to low hierarchy across the hotel sector, it was investigated if the themes were related to common themes identified in interviews and observations. Themes in job advertisements embodied the social actions that hotel staff are called to adhere to. These themes referred broadly to the excellent customer service skills that hotel staff are required to show by embracing specific behaviors and demeanors. As regards themes related to intercultural communication, it was interesting to find that the presence of intercultural communication and of intercultural elements existed on the food and beverage menu only.

The connection of thematic analysis and interpretive (hermeneutic) phenomenology: Indeed, through the use of thematic analysis, I traced how hotel organizations, through the

use of themes constructed reality in their working environments. There are specific reasons for which hotels build, in specific ways, their reality. The characteristic of reality in thematic analysis as a research method can be linked with the purposes of interpretive (hermeneutic) phenomenology from a methodological perspective. Interpretive (hermeneutic) phenomenology studies the human perception and human experiences through which it becomes possible for the researcher to understand real situations. As noted earlier 'Heidegger asserted that human existence is a more fundamental notion than human consciousness and human knowledge. His philosophy makes it clear that the essence of human understanding is hermeneutic, that is, our understanding of the everyday world is derived from our interpretation of it' (Dahlberg, Drew and Nystrom, 2008, in Reiners, 2012, p. 2). Within the hotel working environment, specific social practices define social actions which are performed on the part of hotel staff so as to satisfy customers and the principles of their organization. However, these kind of social actions and practices are 'imposed' by each organization towards its employees who have to adjust and conform to the rules represented as values of their organizations. It was then necessary to identify the themes which potentially indicate that specific social practices and therefore actions are held by hotel staff and are represented in their behavior and demeanor during customer service. On the website of each hotel, the role of images and pictures that were used to describe and prettify the dominant atmosphere of the inside of the hotel environment was examined as well. Some of the themes located on the website were common in the job advertisements, qualitative interviews and public space observations.

6.15 Coding

'Codes identify a feature of the data (semantic content or latent) that appears interesting to the analyst, and refer to "the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon" (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 63). 'To codify is to arrange things in a systematic order, to make something part of a system or classification, to categorize' (Saldana, 2012, p. 9). Manual coding was used on qualitative interviews and public space observations. However, I found that coding of interviews was richer and more demanding than the coding of observations because of the length and volume of the transcripts and because coding of interviews was

the starting point of the process of coding for the study. Coffey and Atkinson (1996, pp. 29–31) propose that 'coding is usually a mixture of data [summation] and data complication… breaking the data apart in analytically relevant ways in order to lead toward further questions about the data'. Coding is a gradual process which entails different stages and practices in order to reach that phase of analysis.

A "good code" is one that captures the qualitative richness of the phenomenon (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 1). A very good and detailed coding of the interviews therefore helped me significantly with the identification of themes. Rubin and Rubin (1995, p. 226) claim that analysis is exciting because "you discover themes and concepts embedded throughout your interviews". In this way, public space observations were greatly dependent on the coding of interviews in the sense that I had already acquired a picture of the upcoming themes. 'Theoretically derived themes allow the researcher to replicate, extend or refute prior discoveries' (Boyatzis, 1998). As Charmaz (2006, p. 45) noted, 'coding generates the bones of your analysis… integration will assemble those bones into a working skeleton'. Initially I coded quite a lot of information but, step by step, I managed, not necessarily to narrow down the amount of my data, but to have a more exploratory look at what I needed to code relevant to my research questions. For this reason, coding is a skill which takes time to be acquired, meaning that after the coding of a few interviews I was better able to code faster and be more accurate in my work.

6.15.1 The process of coding

First, having printed out each interview on four, five or six paper sheets depending on the length of the interview, I stuck the interview sheets on art cards of A2 size of different colors; in total I created twenty-two art cards of interviews. In my study, codes were written with reference to Boyatzis (1998) and identified by:

- The code label or name,

- The definition of what the theme concerns and

- A description of how to know when the theme occurs

I started the coding by highlighting or circling with pens in different colors key words which were striking to me and that I felt had the capacity to create themes and categories. I used different colors so as to give a more vivid image on the black and white paper; this also acted as a more eye-catching technique for the further progress of the coding and thematic analysis. As Layder (1998) noted, 'never overlook the opportunity to "pre-code" by circling, highlighting, bolding, underlining, or colouring rich or significant participant quotes or passages that strike you'. After the highlighting and circling stage, I moved to the second stage, in which I had to gather all my codes together in a clear and organized table. I therefore created a table in Microsoft Office Word and put words that I had highlighted as having potential to create further themes and categories into the table. Table 4 shows how many times some of the coded words were mentioned in total in each interview, so I actually counted how many times each word was repeated by interviewees.

Customer satisfaction	Customer service	Hospitality	Business	Guest	Customer	Client
2	2	4	6	8	6	1

Table 4 Coding: Variable terms referring to buyers – guest, customer and client

The first theme which appears in the table concerns the "variable terms referring to buyers". Across the study, it was found that interviewees made use of three different terms – guest, customer and clients – indicating that employees use these words/categories interchangeably by referring to the broad category of buyers. In Table 5, the theme of the "global workforce" arises; the interviewee mentions the different nationalities of his colleagues: Polish, Lithuanian, English, Scottish, Irish, American and Indian. These different nationalities were interpreted as different categories or different cultural groups to which hotel staff belong.

Polish	Lithuanian	English	Scottish	Irish	American	Indian

(HS)	(HS)	(HS)	(HS)	(HS)	(HS)	(HS)
1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Table 5 Coding: Global workforce

6.15.2 Themes on: semi-structured interviews, public space observations, in hotels' brands official website and in job advertisements

It is important to make a distinction between the terms category and theme. Rossman and Rallis (2003, p. 282) have pointed out that:

> 'The differences between the terms category and theme: think of a category as a word or phrase describing some segment of your data that is explicit, whereas a theme is a phrase or sentence describing more subtle and tacit processes'.

In thematic analysis the task of the researcher is to search for themes which answer her research questions or at least the themes which are identified are contributing in a certain way to the answering of the research questions and to the inclusion or exclusion of a theme. 'A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 10). Thematic analysis is not a method in which the researcher has to follow or adhere to certain formulas as to how thematic analysis can be completed. It has been mentioned already that there is no consensus as to how the researcher goes about doing thematic analysis. 'The process involves the identification of themes through careful reading and re-reading of the data' (Rice and Ezzy, 1999, p. 258).

Semi-structured interviews: I could not have created themes without categories, meaning that categories enabled me to construct themes. Every theme was accompanied by more specific categories, which could explain why the theme was decided, why it was named as such and how it was identified. For instance, under the theme of customer service demeanor, categories such as attention to detail, communication and listening skills, ability

to speak to people and friendly personality were included. Coding helped to develop the thematic analysis. In my interviews, I identified fourteen themes, as depicted in Table 6:

1) Terms for buyers	2) Global workforce	3) Global customers
4) Use of social media	5) Customer care	6) Customer service demeanor
7) People's skills	8) Aesthetic labor	9) Grooming standards
10) Language issues	11) Non verbal communication	12) Religious and food matters
13) Intercultural differences	14) Diversity training	

Table 6: Themes in interviews

Across the thematic analysis of each interview, there was not a balance regarding the numbers of the themes which emerged. However, a balance was achieved after completing the analysis of all the interviews and public space observations. The last and third stage concerned how each theme emerged. Under each theme, I quoted some of the direct responses of interviewees, which indicated how I was led to the particular theme; at the same time, not only did I declare each theme, I also challenged interviewees' responses so as to establish the truth. Thematic analysis on appearance, grooming standards, tone of voice, verbal communication and non verbal behavior were defined as important aspects of customer service. It could be said that these themes not only give an account of how the behavior of hotel staff is dictated according to the power of their organization but also give the opportunity to see how society nurtures and endorses those norms as acceptable and agreeable. These norms can also influence the expectations of customers as to what is important and less important during customer service so it is perceivable that they are quite sustainable in nature and hard to change.

Public space observations: Originally, all the public space observations were hand written by me; after finishing each observation, each was organized and written in a Microsoft Office Word document. A lot of time was devoted to this as it was necessary to construct all my images, feelings and reality into a paper. The coding of observations was of lower volume than interviews and slightly different. I coded and counted key words which indicated actions and tasks of employees, describing staff's behavior verbally and non verbally, as well as intercultural elements and grooming standards. As hermeneutics were utilized across the analysis, it was very important to depict in words the observation moments. 'Hermeneutics is the study of human cultural activity as texts with a view towards interpretation to find intended or expressed meanings' (Kvale, 1996). The observations were as descriptive as possible and often contained dialogues. The themes which emerged during the observations were apparent because I was able to identify them, not only because they were not of massive volume, but because I used my perception. Below are two coding tables, Table 7 and Table 8; their construction was helpful not so much to define themes but at least to form an idea of what could follow as a theme. For instance, the words smile and smiling in Table 7 denoted the customer service demeanor, as did the words elegant manners, way, grace and smartness in Table 8.

Waiting staff (male– female)	Drinks	Smile /smiling	Customers	Pretty	Handsome	Thank you
15	7	9	11	2	2	5

Table 7: Coding on observations

That's great	French/German/ Dutch	Elegant manners/Elegant way/grace/smartness	Voice/volume	Black	Green	White
2	3	4	2	5	3	3

Table 8: Coding on observations

I found that it was quite easy for me to understand the themes, possibly because the themes that I was able to identify from my observations were quite common in my interviews. As the observations were quite explanatory from my part, it was possible to give more accurate information on some themes to supplement the responses of the interviewees or even to discover that intercultural elements do exist in food and beverage matters. For example, during observations it was detected that sometimes customer service demeanor was quite stylish, grateful and pleasant. Interviewees had not assigned exactly these characteristics as desirable during customer service, but their presence shows that they seem to be quite essential. Table 9 gives an account of the observation structure as part of which each section was developed further and more analytical writing followed. Usually, each observation was composed of three or four pages depending on the length of each observation.

1) Coding tables	2) Description of hotel staff behavior in bar, restaurant and reception	3) Decoration and atmosphere
4) Intercultural elements on the menu	5) Insight comments	6) Verbal communication skills
7) Non verbal communication skills	8) Customer service demeanor	9) Grooming standards
10) The role of aesthetics on employees and objects	11) Interior design	12) Style of interior design

Table 9: Descriptive and analytic account of what was recorded manually during observation

Coding of observations aimed to support or even challenge the themes arising from the interviews which I used to progress with analysis of my observations. I found that how descriptive I could be played a key role in observations: i.e., more information could be

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extracted by being more descriptive and analytic during my observational writing. Underneath follows the dialogue between a concierge and a customer. It is apparent that the behavior of the male concierge is distinguished by a smiling demeanor, friendliness, approachability and promptness. 'Descriptions of theoretical rigor involve sound reasoning and argument and a choice of methods appropriate to the research problem' (Rice and Ezzy, 1999; Higgs, 2001).

OBS1: At the concierge department a young male concierge takes the luggage of a female member of staff. She asks him if he can look after it. He replies to her with a smile:

My pleasure, I am in all night.

The conversation continues and at the end he gives her the card key and says goodbye to her with a smile.

The senior male employee passes in front of me and smiles.

The concierge members of staff constantly help with luggage of customers – they are very fast upon receiving luggage or when they have to hand it in.

(Observation in a 4 star hotel, reception and concierge area)

Themes in hotels' brands official websites. The search for themes in each hotel brand's official website as an action did not generate new or further codes because plentiful and rich material had already been obtained from interviews and observations. In this way, I managed to focus on the existing codes by testing, complementing and contracting the data which derived from them. During the web research all the information and potential data which had to be acquired was not produced by me so this was an excellent way of increasing the authenticity of my themes. As all the data were available on each hotel's website I did not have any involvement in constructing plenty of new data.

My task concerned identifying the key information needed to be associated with the existing data derived from observations and interviews. The themes in web research assisted with the validity of the data and of the themes found in interviews and observations. My role in this method also included interpreting the underlying meaning

behind the statements of each organization. 'No individual inspection of a work exhausts its meanings; interpretation can always be rectified. Even the best is only an approximation of the meaning' (Ormiston and Schrify, 1990, p. 97). The fact that these interpretations accrued from each official organizational body, the hotels, augmented the validity of the data provided from the discourse analysis and also strengthened the existing codes from interviews and observations. This is where confirmability/validity takes place as, practically and realistically, I can form specific valid themes. Lincoln and Guba (1985) included 'confirmability as one of their criteria for qualitative research as referring to the issue that data and interpretations are not figments of the inquirer's imagination'. The way that I worked on web research embraced a hermeneutic understanding and involved a deductive process in terms of the clarification and underlying meaning of each organization's statements.

Themes in job advertisements: In the job advertisement below, showing a vacancy for a reservations office manager, one of the personal requirements expected from the potential employee is communication skills, so this is one of the themes which arises. *JA: 'To be a clear and concise communicator and relationship builder':* It is apparent that communication and relationship skills are anticipated during customer service. It is therefore implied that the potential employee would have to possess intercultural skills during the customer service of global customers. Intercultural skills are the theme which arises from this statement as effective communication upon serving a customer from a different cultural group is also important. An advertisement for a food and beverage assistant listed among the key features for the job excellent grooming standards.

Another job advertisement for the position of an executive lounge receptionist–host also highlighted that *JA: 'Excellent personal presentation and communication skills':* it is implied here that, as well as grooming standards, communication skills are highly desirable. The theme in both advertisements concerns the external appearance and the image of employees. Overall, the themes which arise did not differ from the themes discovered during the interviews and observation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) established that 'credibility refers to confidence in the truth of the data and interpretations of them. Qualitative researchers must strive to establish confidence in the truth of the findings for the particular participants and contexts in research'.

1) Communication and organizational skills	2) Social, personal and interpersonal skills	3) Polite and friendly personality
4) Sale skills	5) Commercial awareness and product knowledge	6) Professionalism and a passion for customer service
7) Positive attitude and high level of customer care	8) Adherence to health and hygiene standards	9) Attention to grooming standards
10) Intercultural elements of virtual communication		

Table 10: Themes in job advertisements

6.16 Conclusion

In this chapter, the rationale for using the particular qualitative methods and the methodology which account for the forms of analysis used has been outlined. Every action, step and process leading to the synthesis of the findings has been depicted and discussed in detail. As the nature of the research was largely based on meanings and interpretations, details were given as far as possible on how the specific themes arose. Through triangulation of the data from semi-structured interviews, public space observations and thematic analysis, common themes were located and, in this way, credit was given to the trustworthiness of the findings. The next three chapters are based on the findings discussed within this chapter. However, in the next three chapters, these findings are further discussed, elaborated upon and challenged. The next chapter explores intercultural issues in the hotel working environment.

Chapter 7: Results/Intercultural issues in the hotel working environment

7.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines a section of the results derived from the study and focuses on the daily intercultural issues and challenges often encountered by hotel staff during customer service. Relevant quotes from interviews, observations and thematic analysis are provided, depicting real situations relating to work life in hotels. It starts with reference to the intense presence of the global workforce recruited in the hotel sector and with the concept of diversity management, alongside how it originated and what purposes it serves. The legal and economic rationale of diversity management is presented by analyzing its specific functions and benefits on an organizational level. The notion of invisible diversity is elaborated which takes place when there are differences in language, religion, dietary and bathing habits which usually require some prior knowledge on the part of hotel staff so as to be accommodated properly. The use of non verbal communication is also analyzed as an attempt to decipher meanings and achieve understanding when intercultural barriers exist between global customers and hotel staff. Food culture and different needs from different cultural groups of customers are also described and it is underlined that intercultural differences do exist in the accommodation of global customers. The existence of intercultural elements found in observations and thematic analysis in material and consumable goods such as food and alcohol is discussed along with the presence of intercultural communication on the official website of each hotel.

7.2 Diversified workforce and diversity management

A great number of employees from different cultural groups are employed in the hotel industry. Kossek and Lobel (1996, p. 4) offer the definition of diversity below: 'diversity includes differences in function, nationality, language, ability, religion, lifestyle, or tenure'. The presence of cultural diversity as a phenomenon induced and established the term and concept of diversity management. Possibly this concept is an attempt to elaborate on the objectives of how diversity has to be considered in a business and social context and what

kind of purposes and objectives diversity has to accomplish towards employees and stakeholders. 'Diversity management is a recent term used in literature. It can be traced back to 1987 when the Hudson Institute published its influential report, Workforce 2000' (Johnson and Packer, 1987). 'There was little or no mention of this term before then' (Mills and Hatfield, 1995). 'This report informed North Americans that by the year 2000 the majority of its workers would be African–Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, women and other minority groups' (Beasley, 1996). As has been noted by Mor Barak (2005; 2011):

> 'Diversity management refers to the voluntary organizational actions that are designed to create greater inclusion of employees from various backgrounds into the formal and informal organizational structures through deliberate policies and programs'.

The United Kingdom is characterized as a multiethnic society where a number of different cultural groups interact in all forms of everyday life and social activities. 'The UK had 321,200 permanent-type incoming migrants in 2011, the third highest level among OECD countries with comparable data and it is a top-ten source country of migrants to OECD countries' (Vargas-Silva, 2014, p. 2). In the below statements of management staff, the culturally diverse workforce in the hotel industry is apparent.

HS2: 'I think nineteen or twenty different countries, yeah, so we have all, all of the world, we have South Africa, Spanish' (Operations Manager, 4 star hotel).

HS1: 'Nigeria, India, Scotland, Ireland, Poland, Hungary, Canadian' (Director of Sales and Marketing, 4 star hotel).

HS3: 'We have some Indians, Eastern European, Polish, myself from England, Hungarian and Portuguese' (General Manager, 4 star hotel).

HS16: 'Oh loads. We have, let me see, Portuguese, Spanish, Polish, Lithuanian, South African, Australian, Italian, French; there are many more that I cannot think' (Guest Relations Manager, 4 star hotel).

A global workforce is a common feature in the hotel industry. Some nationalities are encountered in greater frequency whereas some others are less in evidence. Since cultural diversity is very intense in the hotel industry, hotels can be identified as pluralistic working

environments as they offer the opportunity to British and non British citizens to interact to a large degree.

HS2: '… when you work in a multicultural team the engagement of the team is better because, for instance, if you got two different nationalities working together, nine out of ten times they both want to know about each nationality and you get an engagement that promotes teamwork because they are getting more engaged in the team…' (Operations Manager, 4 star hotel).

HS2 identifies that the presence of multicultural teams has the capacity to build stronger relationships among employees of different cultures because there is interest in learning and finding out more about different cultures. This can lead to better team cohesion as the levels of interaction among members are higher; this helps the smooth running of businesses and the achievement of key targets. If professional rapports among employees are well established, this contributes to the creation of a healthy working environment which promotes team spirit and high levels of organizational commitment. Although the United Kingdom is considerably distinguished for its cultural multiplicity, not all working environments offer the same level of interaction with colleagues from all over the world.

> To date, however, little research has been conducted in the area of corporate diversity management in the global hotel industry (Gröschl, 2011, p. 225). Several studies have focused on either specific geographic regions (see, for example, Gröschl, 2004), specific types or dimensions such as persons with disability (see, for example, Gröschl, 2007), the processes of training and development of diversity (see, for example, Weaver et al., 2003), and other hotel related sectors such as the restaurant or casino industry (see, for example, Schaap, Stedham and Yamamura, 2008; Woods and Sciarini, 1995).

Diversity management or managing diversity aims at the management of cultural differences among employees from different cultural backgrounds. According to Bartz et al. (1990, p. 321), 'managing diversity involves understanding that there are differences among employees and that these differences, if properly managed, are an asset to work being done more efficiently and effectively'. Kandola and Fullerton (1998) have elaborated as regards the utility of managing diversity in the UK context, pointing out that 'it is founded on the premise that harnessing these differences will create a productive environment in which everyone feels valued, where their talents are being fully utilized and in which organizational goals are met' (Kandola and Fullerton, 1998, p. 7). The above insights of Bartz et al. (1990) and Kandola and Fullerton (1998) represent that managing

diversity can enhance the organizational performance, productivity and competitiveness of each organization based on the diversity of employees.

If cultural diversity gets managed appropriately this not only will make hotel organizations competitive but also it will contribute to responding and managing successfully the increase of diversity in the workplace by attaching importance that diversity is not only managed but also valued. 'Valuing diversity focuses on appreciating differences among diverse groups. That is, valuing diversity starts from the position that people's differences are an asset rather than a burden to be tolerated (Meyerson and Fletcher, 2000, in Kim, 2006, p.73). The hotels which participated in the study seem to value to a great extent the essence of diversity but they have not connected this value with the expansion of hotel's staff intercultural skills. 'Hospitality firms should strive to possess a highly trained and skilled workforce that is capable of working efficiently because in the future firms with the best workforce will be the ones that draw on the entire pool of available talent' (Kim, 2006, p. 71). At some point, organizations are interested in managing these differences so as to achieve better working relationships among colleagues of different cultural backgrounds. Accordingly, this leads to harmonic working environments which promote teamwork and facilitate the accomplishment of organizational objectives. HS13 mentions that having colleagues from different cultures can be a learning source for acquiring or broadening existing knowledge about different cultures and this also contributes to the efficiency of the organization.

HS13: '... are from different cultures, ehm, within the hotel there are lots of different people that work so working with them is being able to understand the culture as well for them' (Meeting Host Guest, 4 star hotel).

Within the framework of diversity management different diversity paradigms have flourished.

> Ely and Thomas (2001) proposed three reasons why an organization would encourage cultural diversity. First, an organization could adopt cultural diversity as a moral end to correct historic discrimination (i.e., discrimination-and-fairness perspective). Second, an organization could embrace cultural diversity to gain access to the markets of a cultural or national group (i.e., access-and legitimacy perspective). Third, an organization could promote cultural diversity as seen as a resource for learning (integration-and-learning perspective). After examining several cases in order to identify when diversity enhances or hinders work group functioning, Ely and Thomas (2001)

concluded that the integration-and-learning paradigm was the superior form of managing cultural diversity (in Shore et al. 2009, p. 124).

However the one which seems to be close to the practices and policies that most of the global hotel brands are adhered according to the study is the one of learning and effectiveness. 'It encourages an organization to internalize differences among employees so that the organization learns and grows because of them' (Thomas and Ely, 1996, p. 138). This means that the organization values the differences of global workforce and utilizes them in a productive and efficient way for the effectiveness and development of the organization. On TA4 it is seen that pluralism is valued and that a highly culturally diversified workforce has the opportunity to interact with each member of staff of a different culture and to enable them to complement each other, meaning that each one recognizes the strengths and weaknesses of their colleagues; this helps the team to go forward and succeed. Pluralism is another word used instead of diversity and, here, it is underlined that pluralism can offer advantages.

TA4: 'Day to day, the pluralism of our team is very rewarding. This diversity is also positive for our customers. Understanding our employees' cultures helps us to better understand our international clientele' (3 and 4 star hotel belonging to the same hotel group).

It is seen above that multicultural teams can contribute to the better understanding of the needs of their clientele base, belonging to different cultural groups. More specifically, it can provide employees with intercultural knowledge so as to deal successfully with global customers. 'Not only does this paradigm consider differences and similarities as dual aspects of diversity, but it also values multiple goals such as customer satisfaction, social responsibility, and innovation' (Kim, 2006, p. 81).

7.3 The legal and economic rationale

By investigating the raison d'être of diversity management and the mentality under which organizations such as hotels apply diversity management practices, it becomes possible to understand and evaluate the impact and the benefits of those practices on an organizational and individual level.

'Much of the discussion about diversity within a workplace or managerial context ranges from numerical compositions […] to inclusive behaviour' (Point and Singh, 2003, p. 751) 'or from a legal necessity […] versus a moral responsibility […] versus a competitive advantage' (Kirkby and Harter, 2003, p. 44).

The rationale of managing diversity is divided into two different categories: legal rationale and economic rationale. The essence of the legal rationale towards managing diversity is elaborated below. 'It creates organizational harmony' (Rossett and Bickham, 1994), 'is socially just and morally desirable' (Carnevale and Stone, 1994; Rossett and Bickham, 1994). HS7 highlights some of the advantages of diversity on a professional level; she conceives that diversity can bring innovation and creativity. It is a way of doing things differently and learning from each other how decision making can be undertaken. When people from different cultures have to cooperate, the chances of coming up with different solutions to problem solving can promote productivity and teamwork and generally enhance the organizational goals of the brand.

HS7: 'I believe a lot in many different cultures together bringing a lot of open new ideas, ways of doing things differently… within people there are loads of ideas and ways people do things are different and that's good to learn other ways' (Human Resource Manager, 4 star hotel).

Considering the sayings of HS7 is becoming obvious that diversity encourages and creates an inclusive working environment for employees from different cultures. Diversity means more than just numerical composition-it also has to do with behavior. It suggests an attitude that respects individual differences, that values all employees, and that fosters an environment where all employees can succeed. In this way, the organization can operate better and at its maximum because it has at its disposition a workforce which can be productive, knowledgeable and creative. 'Heterogeneous work groups are more flexible, creative, and innovative than homogeneous groups, making their employer more nimble in adapting to its constantly-changing business environment' (Kochan et al., 2003; Jackson, Joshi and Erhardt, 2003; Jackson and Joshi, 2004; Leonard, Levine and Joshi, 2004; Mannix and Neale, 2005). Given that cultural diversity has a very prominent presence in the working life of the hotel industry; organizations deal with the concept of cultural diversity by taking into account how it serves the purposes of the business. Kandola and Fullerton (1998) propose that:

'Diversity is about valuing the differences between people and the ways in which those differences can contribute to a richer, more creative and more productive business environment which is closer to our many different customers worldwide'.

It is apparent below how diversity and inclusion can be a competitive advantage for a particular hotel brand by being part of the strategic planning of the company and in line with the objectives of the business. In the extract below from TA2 it is noticed the strategic and commercial value of diversity and inclusion.

TA2: '… has valued diversity and inclusion. Embracing differences is part of the way we do business around the world, and essential to our business as a leading hospitality company with a growing global portfolio. Diversity and inclusion are closely tied to our core values and our strategic business goals…' (4 star hotel).

Diversity and inclusion play a significant role in decision making and the application of specific policies which support the view that cultural diversity can be prolific for the hotel brand. Rijamampianina and Carmichael (2005) argue that 'diversity, if effectively managed, can be a source of competitive advantage for the group or organization'. There is a strong emphasis on how diversity and inclusion facilitate 'strategic business goals' in the name of global competitiveness. In order for this to be accomplished, the global image of the brand is enhanced by the recruitment, training and retention of a global workforce so as to meet the objectives of the hotel brand. 'A more diverse workforce will increase organizational effectiveness' (Kulik and Roberson, 2008). 'It will lift morale, bring greater access to new segments of the market place and enhance productivity' (Thomas and Ely, 1996). Hotels therefore strive for organizational effectiveness on a local and global level by making the most of their global workforce. Diversity as an inclusive behavior embodies a collectivistic sense, underlining that, in a multicultural working environment, there is equal participation of all the employees where pluralistic and diversified lifestyles, perceptions, attitudes and beliefs are of equal importance. 'Diversity management is the right thing to do. This is the moral and ethical reasoning of diversity management. At the heart of this argument is the notion of equal opportunities regardless of individual characteristics such as gender, race and sexual orientation' (Mor Barak 2005, p. 228) Through inclusion, hotel brands draw attention to how ethical they can be towards diversified employees and also emphasize that, as a brand, they obey the legal rules and are corporately responsible on a social level. Hotel brands indicate that diversity and inclusion

work harmoniously together for the common good; a utilitarian sense is attached to the actions of each hotel brand.

> Managing diversity makes sound business sense as it (i) opens up new opportunities through broadening the customer base; (ii) ensures the selection, training and retention of people from the entire labor market rather than part of it, in order that the organization can attract the best talent; (iii) increases the important ethical stand of the organizations (Larsen and Mayrhofer, 2006, p. 218).

Cox and Blake (1991) have acknowledged that: 'diverse groups have a broader and richer base of experience from which to approach a problem. Thus, managing diversity also has the potential to improve problem solving and decision making'. In addition, it is maintained that 'it helps foster culture change in the organization' (Laabs, 1993; Thornburg, 1994; Owens, 1997). If diversity management is about teamwork and organizational change, these objectives cannot be examined separately from the economic rationale. A positive and rather prolific idea prevails over a diversified workforce presented as an organizational advantage in terms of teamwork, productivity and sources of cultural knowledge, as mentioned above. The organizational performance of a business is based on economic criteria and all the efforts of organizations towards competitiveness are associated with the economic benefits of each organization.

Below, the objectives of the economic rationale of managing diversity are examined. 'Under the economic rationale managing diversity improves productivity' (Gordon, 1992a; D'Souza, 1997; Owens, 1997), 'encourages more innovative solutions to problems' (Rice, 1994) and 'thus profits' (Segal, 1997). The economic rationale highlights the economic advantages that the recruitment of a global workforce can bring to an organization. Klein and Harrison (2007, p. 27) have pointed out that 'groups rich in diversity of knowledge, heuristics, and perspectives have more tools, more insights, and more estimates with which to tackle the problems assigned to them than do homogeneous groups'. Does the legal rationale of managing diversity act independently of the economic rationale and vice versa? If the legal rationale stands out as the right, ethical and moral thing to do, it is expected that hotel organizations pioneer in practices and policies aiming towards intercultural education, intercultural practices and policies.

7.4 Invisible diversity on different cultural groups and intercultural needs

Other personal characteristics which can be included under the general meaning of diversity are differences in language, religion and dietary and bathing habits. These are qualities though which belong to the sphere of 'invisible diversity'. 'To be aware of a person's invisible diversity you would need additional information from other sources' (Cummings, Zhou and Oldham, 1993; Jackson and Joshi, 2011). Invisible diversity within the hotel industry can be seen in internal and external customers and in third parties of the organization. For instance, a customer from a different cultural group may well need some special care or attention as a result of his/her invisible characteristics of diversity which need to be defined at customer service. Nonetheless, if these cultural needs have to be identified, intercultural awareness from hotel staff is needed to respond to and recognize those particular needs of the customer which would possibly need accommodation. Hotel organizations present a very strong and efficient image, mainly on their official websites, of how they value and respect the diversity of their employees, declaring how much it matters for each brand.

Interviewees have widely accepted that cultures differ and this is distinct from the fact that there can be some different cultural requirements on the part of customers. HS3 notes that, as a branded hotel, they have a particular interest in Chinese culture and underlines that this interest derives from the expansion of the organization to different continents. As a manager, he feels that cultural knowledge related to Chinese culture can contribute to the provision of better customer service, as being aware of customers' needs involves better provision towards them. This cultural awareness aims to contribute to better customer service experience and customer care. It is implied that an authentic meaning of hospitality is intended, which would be able to satisfy customers' expectations to the maximum.

HS3: 'We use China as an emerging economy because as an organization we are expanding more and more in that region and Asia Pacific as well. There is a lot of learning about Chinese guests visiting a UK hotel, what their expectations are, how they would be looked after the same or even better as they do back at home' (General Manager, 4 star hotel).

Some interviewees tended either to interrelate religion and culture or to view them as two separate ideas. HS4 asserts that culture and religion are different and admits that cultural

groups such as Muslims and Jews have their own principles and values. Religious and cultural issues are customarily interconnected and it would be a paradox to allege that the faith of religious groups is irrelevant to the cultures to which they belong. There are certainly exceptions of rules where there might be people of a particular culture who are not religious at all.

HS4: 'Suppose that we have to adapt in individual situations, religion wise different history, culture and religion is two different things, so if Muslims and Jewish people are staying here we would like to know their ethics, you know, and religious side. The cultural side of that for everybody is different' (Food and Beverage Manager, 5 star hotel).

Arguably, religion and culture cannot be viewed separately as the one predetermines the existence of the other. 'Religion is inextricably woven into the cloth of cultural life' (Tarakeshwar, Shanton and Pargament, 2003, p. 377). Culture as a social phenomenon finds its expression and existence in multiple areas of human activity; this is why every culture is unique and has its own rules and 'ethics'. As we cannot consider society without culture and vice versa, we cannot consider culture without religion. 'The cultures of other social groups shape religious beliefs and practices' (Tarakeshwar, Shanton and Pargament, 2003, p. 390). Different cultural groups not only have specific dietary habits but there can be some particularities in their daily lives as part of which they follow some rituals. HS11 informs us that Saudi Arabian customers follow a formal procedure as to how they wish to clean a part of their body. 'Divine religions have placed great importance on the cleanliness of the body and water. For example, Islam is a belief system that is based on physical and spiritual cleanliness' (Kuşçular, 2014, p. 4). The specific hotel has managed to respond to this specific cultural need of their customers by supplying basins and hoses in rooms. In this way, customer satisfaction and positive customer service experience have been achieved.

HS11: '... they are all Saudi Arabian… the first time when they came we realized that they liked to wash their feet in the bathroom floor so we thought that they are coming back next year what we can do so as to make that better because the rooms are getting flooding. We supplied basins and hoses…' (Guest Relations and Housekeeping Manager, 4 star hotel).

The sample of the study acknowledges that customers from different parts of the world differ because their cultures are different. Culture can be found in everything, including

dietary habits, religion, styles of communication, verbal and non verbal, dressing code, music and architecture. 'Aspects of our culture can be found in food, literature, language, religion, art, music, dance, artifacts, tradition and habits, entertainment, technology, geography, people and more' (Miller and McCaskill, 1993, p. 222). Some members of staff feel that cultures differ in terms of behavior, requirements and communication; thus they perceive that they need to find out more information about the idiosyncratic behavior which may characterize customers. HS2 reveals that there are three ways of discovering aspects about different nationalities, either by learning from the diversified workforce, from the same customers who are an authentic source of information regarding cultural habits and, lastly, from the web; Google as a research engine can provide a plethora of information.

HS2: 'We tend to take experiences of the people if we have got that particular nationality and guest coming from that particular country, we tend to learn from them and ask them, if not we will Google them…' (Operations Manager, 4 star hotel).

This indicates that hotel staff understand the need to know more about different cultures during customer service because, in their daily interactions with global customers, they perceive differences and obstacles. Having a better understanding and consequently knowledge of general needs of customers, which might be of a cultural nature, can facilitate their daily routines during customer service, enabling identification of key cultural aspects which might need special care and attention.

7.5 Non verbal communication and intercultural challenges

HS3 recognizes that customer behavior can be challenging as they are not limited only to verbal communication, but also to non verbal communication. HS3 observes that verbal communication can be problematic during intercultural communication as a result of the pace, tone and accent of the communicator. Body language is often used in conjunction with verbal communication or on its own. Hand gestures belong to the category of non verbal communication. Morreale, Spitzberg and Barge (2007) have given the below definition of non verbal communication.

> Non verbal communication is defined as all behaviors, attributes and objects of humans – other than words that communicate messages and have shared social meaning. This definition includes any aspect of physical appearance, body movements, gestures, facial expressions, eye movements, touching behaviors, the voice, and the way people use objects, time and space to communicate (Morreale, Spitzberg and Barge, 2007, p. 110).

HS3 remarks that sometimes Italian customers make great use of hand gestures and can be very expressive. In addition, he underlines that some intercultural understanding is useful on the part of employees as to how different cultures behave. This suggests that hotels acknowledge the existence of intercultural differences at the service encounter and, as a result, intercultural knowledge is necessary.

HS3: '… is not just different cultures, people speak in a different way, some people can use their hands more, Italians are very descriptive, for example you need to have an understanding of how different cultures behave' (General Manager, 4 star hotel).

Non verbal communication can be cultural in nature but also personal so the interpretation of non verbal cues is not always certain. However, messages which are transmitted non verbally can be more complicated to interpret as they may endorse a combination of different meanings. HS11 mentions that, during intercultural interaction, language barriers can be overcome non verbally. In fact, she uses the word 'visually'. Staff resort to the use of non verbal signals so as to understand each other when communicators do not speak a common language. The interviewee seems to recognize that non verbal communication might not be the best solution but there are no other alternatives. Here, another role of non verbal communication is revealed: as an attempt to achieve understanding.

HS11: 'Floor staff and guest relations managers, we have not come across any major problem; we can communicate "visually", we can describe things on the menu. It can be a challenge but it seems we get there' (Guest Relations and Housekeeping Manager, 4 star hotel).

It is hard to believe, though, that the interaction would be smooth as it would certainly be time consuming and then there is the involvement of personal feelings as both customers and staff may experience discomfort. HS11 describes an incident with Italian customers who could not speak English and thought that they had lost their money. The manager did not speak Italian and there was no Italian member of staff to interpret and assist with language skills or any employee who could speak Italian.

HS11: 'Personally I had a situation maybe about a month ago and the couple was Italian; they did not speak any English at all and they had left money in their safe. The safe was locked but they had moved during the night because their father moved them… could not understand what they were trying to say to me at all, they were starting doing sign language, they started show me money like that, pictures and doing things like that… I thought I would never get here with them, I would never get to understand, but we did get there and tried to be as visual as you possibly can without making them feel uncomfortable' (Guest Relations and Housekeeping Manager, 4 star hotel).

It is clear that not only lack of knowledge of international languages is becoming an obstacle but also that it is a 'myth' to believe that staff from different cultures are able to assist on a permanent basis with further language skills. For instance, a specific member of staff might not be available at the relevant time. If this was the case, all the hotels in the United Kingdom would have to employ global staff according to the linguistic groups to which their customers belonged so as to address their language shortage. Participants stated that they managed to communicate through hand gestures 'visually' without making them feel uncomfortable. From the incident described above, it is perceived that both parties were struggling to communicate, so any kind of negative feeling could affect both sides: staff and customers. It is clear that staff have let themselves inevitably use non verbal signs so as to communicate even though they perceive that is not ideal. Personal motivation, effort and enthusiasm towards achieving customer service excellence are qualities which can contribute to dealing efficiently and overcoming language and cultural barriers. HS13 asserts that, as a member of staff, she needs to adopt a cooperative and sympathetic attitude towards customers not able to speak in English.

HS13: '… they do not know any English is not that putting your barriers being able to go with what they are trying to say and some of them they just point to something and you do not really understand what they mean but then if you go that extra mile having an understanding what they want or if they need somebody to speak and get an interpreter so we do understand them as well' (Meeting Host Guest, 4 star hotel).

When customers make use of non verbal signs so as to achieve understanding with staff, the synergy of the latter is needed as well. This is why HS13 argues that understanding is necessary and not to be biased against customers not able to speak in English. In addition, HS13 explains how she tackles this cultural challenge; she tries to source a member of staff who possibly speaks the same language as the customer. In opposition to HS11, she does

not use non verbal signs so as to achieve understanding with the customers nor does she communicate visually but she finds a more practical solution by using the multilingual skills of her colleagues. In this way, communicators are not dependent on communicating non verbally so as to achieve understanding, thus saving time and avoiding feelings of embarrassment or annoyance.

7.6 Food culture

> Cross-cultural differences are not only experienced in interactions of people from different cultures, their manners, or customs, but in others areas such as food (Reisinger and Turner, 2003). What one eats defines who they are and who they are not (Kittler and Sucher, 2004). Food is very important in all cultures and identifies affiliation with specific culture. Food is the last tradition to change through acculturation which leads to the importance of being aware of food habits in other cultures (Kittler and Sucher, 2004).

Differences in dietary habits are often encountered in the hotel industry as a result of personal, cultural and/or religious reasons which belong to the sphere of invisible diversity. HS4 explains that, often, there might be confusion over Jewish and Muslim customers regarding their food preferences.

HS4: 'Yes, yes we have, ehm, Jewish guests, have Kosher food Muslim guests, no, they eat Halal meat so sometimes it is confusing around that but every time something happens we learn from it, we make sure it does not happen again' (Food and Beverage Manager, 5 star hotel).

HS2 notes that they will adapt their breakfast menu to the dietary habits of their Middle East groups. He recognizes that customers' differences in food preferences have a cultural origin so there would be an adjustment to these human needs during breakfast time; in this way, customer satisfaction can be ensured.

HS2: '… We have Middle East groups which are coming in a couple of weeks, we will change our breakfast, we will add items that are appropriate to that particular culture' (Operations Manager, 4 star hotel).

In addition, he underlines that cultural knowledge of food culture is acquired over time and by meeting different cultural groups. For instance, it is well known that Japanese cultural

groups are keen on rice. Accordingly, the hotel would customize its breakfast menu to customers' needs. He also adds that they have a variety of different chefs in cuisine who are able to create international dishes, including Chinese, Indian, British and Scottish cuisine.

HS2: '… Japanese like to have rice at breakfast time so we only find that happens. As a company it will flag you know what we have seen their eating habits, this is what they prefer so we tend to be flexible in our offerings from the clients who are coming' (Operations Manager, 4 star hotel).

HS2: 'We do Chinese food, Indian, British and Scottish food' (Operations Manager, 4 star hotel).

As hotels offer global cuisine on their menu, not only customers who stay in the hotel might have preferences for particular different dishes for cultural or religious reasons – customers who do not stay in the hotel may be keen on tasting global cuisine. Food culture in the United Kingdom, especially in the hotel industry, is not only diversified as a result of different cultural groups that customers belong to but because global cuisine is fashion. 'Yet, paradoxically, even as the internationalization of food can be seen to have broadened awareness of different lifestyles, comestibles, and cuisines, it also has reduced the distinctiveness and increased the homogenization of some food staples' (Finkelstein, 2003, pp. 189–190). It becomes more and more attractive for people to taste different cuisines and to experience something new. Food entails cultural meanings. 'Food consumption has been the central subject of analysis in many recent studies of ethnicity and consumer behavior' (Bojanic and Xu, 2006; Brunso and Grunert, 1998; Laroche, Kim and Tomiuk, 1998; Stayman and Deshpante, 1989; Wallendorf and Reilly, 1983). Laroche, Kim and Tomiuk (1998, p. 145) argue that 'it is quite apparent that acculturation and ethnic identification are related to consumption'. In other words, consumption is ethically bound from the moment that traditional ethnic food was served as a popular choice in the hotel industry; it has become a trend which appeals to the masses. HS4 accepts that they do serve global cuisine in the hotel; however, it lacks authenticity, which means that the ingredients and consequently the flavors might not be of particularly high quality. In addition, the chef might not possess expertise in preparing genuine, authentic, ethnic food. Alternatively, he might suggest to customers to eat in an authentic Indian restaurant in the area.

HS4: 'On our room service menu we have Asian food, in our bar menu we have curry, as well we have mixed food availability, but remember this is never authentic. If an Indian guest comes and says to me, look, I want to have authentic food, I will recommend. We do not hesitate to do that' (Food and Beverage Manager, 5 star hotel).

The question therefore arises why hotels tend to serve global cuisine which is not authentic and lacks quality. It is true that we live in an era which is characterized by an overproduction of goods and services and consequently by overconsumption. As Miller (2001, p. 32) has analyzed, 'production is also immediately consumption'. Customers actually buy products during food consumption and, because there is such a range of food choices and a plethora of different tastes to experience, the need for consumption and, in this case, consumption of ethnic food often becomes a synonym for exploring new cultural and food journeys. Ethnic food becomes a lifestyle and possibly an attempt to experience hedonistic consumption. 'Hedonistic consumption designates those facets of consumer behavior that relate to the multisensory, fantasy and emotive aspects of one's experience with products' (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982, p. 92).

From a commercial aspect, hotels offer and sell tangible and intangible products and services which have to be modified and enhanced in such a way as to attract customers' attention and encourage them to buy. Generally speaking, a dish can invoke multisensory dimensions starting from the jargon used to describe it on the menu and then the taste, the flavor and the image, all of which can influence and please the senses of the customer. Hotels, as businesses, aim to gain financial profit from the sale of products and services and, for this to be achieved, it is necessary to offer choices to customers which can keep them inside the hotel and make use of them rather than involve them going to places outside the hotel to find them, which is interpreted as a financial loss. As regards ethnic food from a gastronomic perspective, whether tasty or not or of low or high quality, its existence in the menu serves the profitability of the organization. The interviewees possessed a general and basic knowledge of different dietary habits of cultural groups. In some cases, such knowledge comprised an oversimplification or generalization of cultural needs; i.e. people from a particular country or continent have specific dietary habits. As a result, knowledge of food habits remains static and does expand. HS10 outlines some general food knowledge of specific cultural groups; it seems that, as a hotel, they have adhered to a standardized package of services.

HS10: 'We know that, for example, bakers' rolls, certain dishes that people from the US or Canada like, in terms of Asian people, tea, rice, people from India, we have in our menu chicken tikka curry so that's a must, we definitely, that's what they choose, yeah, more or less the basics' (Senior Supervisor, 3 star hotel).

Different kinds of cuisine might be served in each hotel according to the star category to which it belongs. HS15 informs us that, as a hotel, they specialize in French and Scottish cuisine.

HS15: 'The brasserie is French, we have got a quite Scottish menu in the bar and this is a selection of food which comes from brasserie kitchen because the kitchen is closer' (Food and Beverage Supervisor, 5 star hotel).

Arguably, the star rating of each hotel creates boundaries in the sense that specific social classes have easier access to a five star property because of their social and economic status. As well as French cuisine, traditional Scottish food is also served in this five star Scottish property; thus, tradition merges with French etiquette. It is generally accepted that French cuisine is a synonym of luxury; food and ingredients of the highest quality from the finest sources. 'What matters is the universal phenomenon of attaching to a higher cuisine elaborate rituals, codes and conventions of behavior' (Riley, 1984, p. 102). A hotel which serves cuisine of the highest standards such as the French one requires an eclectic mannerism found not only in the behavior of members of staff, but also in the ambience of the environment. In cases of fine dining, food is not presented simply as food. The customer will interact mentally and literally with the dish and multisensory and ecstatic dispositions will be experienced during the savoring moment.

7.7 Presence of intercultural elements in public space observations and thematic analysis

Some intercultural elements were depicted during observation of the menu of the café-bar and restaurant. The material and consumable goods such as food and alcohol on the menus of each hotel entailed some intercultural aspects. In particular, alcoholic drinks from different countries of the world and some global cuisine consisted of some intercultural

elements. It was interesting that intercultural communication was found in consumable goods which targeted the customers. As mentioned in the previous chapter, in total eight public space observations from eight different hotels were carried out for the purposes of the study. In OBS8, which was carried out in a 3 star hotel in Edinburgh, as well as alcoholic drinks on the menu there were non alcoholic ones named 'mocktails'. Mocktails are for those customers who do not wish to consume alcohol for religious or health reasons. It is common knowledge that Muslim people, because of their cultural values and beliefs, are not allowed to consume alcohol, so mocktails can be a choice for this cultural group. Other cultural groups which avoid alcohol are Sikhs and Buddhists. 'Mocktails' are therefore a marketing idea which serves the financial purposes of the organization. At the same time, the concept could be included in the category of interculturalism as a sign that customers might have specific drinking habits for religious reasons – the choice therefore represents adaptation towards their beverage needs.

OBS8: '… found on non alcoholic drinks known as mocktails as the alternative option for those customers who do not wish to consume alcohol' (3 star hotel).

After completion of the observation in the premises of each hotel, the official website of each was also investigated so as to identify further aspects of interculturalism as regards food and beverages. Observations already indicated a strong presence of intercultural material in alcoholic drinks from different countries. The category below gives a short description of how champagne and sparkling wine from France and Italy are advertised and promoted. For marketing purposes, a fascinating and alluring language is used which aims at highlighting the savory properties of drinks. TA8 shows the description of champagne and wine from France and Italy. The menu does not merely cite the origin and price of each drink but also gives a short yet vivid description of the tastes of the alcoholic drinks.

TA8: 'Veuve Clicquot Yellow Label Brut, Champagne – France *Full bodied, biscuity style, famous brand,* Fantinel Prosecco, Extra Dry – Italy *Fresh, dry, fruity sparkler'* (3 star hotel).

White and red wine originating from Chile, France and Spain is described using vocabulary linked to fruit, vegetables and sweets.

TA8: 'Errazuriz 1870 Sauvignon Blanc – Chile – *Herbs, cut grass and tropical fruit,* rare Vineyards Marsanne-Viognier – France *Fresh, lively citrus with notes of peach blossom,* Marques de Morano Rioja Crianza Tinto – Spain *Ripe cherry and smooth raspberry*' (3 star hotel).

TA1: 'Dinastia Vivanco Rioja Viura Malvasia.– Spain *Fresh and invigorating with elegant notes of green apple, citrus fruits and pineapple,* Lamberti Pinot Grigio Blush, Italy – *Pale and light with subtle raspberry and strawberry fruit*' (4 star hotel).

In both TA1 and TA8, a common language is used; words which have the power to awaken the senses of the customer by implying how the fresh ingredients work together for a tasty result. The words (nouns and adjectives) used to describe the properties and the flavors that derive from each alcoholic drink have not been selected at random. They have the capacity to induce pleasant, indulgent feelings to the potential customer and an atmosphere which can take him/her on an 'imaginary journey'. For instance, the phrase 'tropical fruit' in TA8 generates the feeling of being in an exotic place; in other cases some adjectives are used which do not exist in literal English language – 'biscuity' is a metonym and the word comes from the noun biscuit. On the menu, it is used in such a way so as to elaborate and parallelize the taste of the drink with the taste of a biscuit. Elsewhere, the phrase 'elegant notes of green apple' is used – a fruit cannot be elegant or unstylish but can be tasty or tasteless. Nevertheless, the word elegant is selected because it reflects the atmosphere of this four star hotel. The chic atmosphere of the bar–restaurant is reproduced on the food and beverages menu. A five star hotel in Edinburgh sells on its menu a variety of local alcoholic brands and some others from different parts of the world.

TA6: 'Beers from: Italy, Scotland, Czech Republic, Ireland, Holland, Belgium, Poland and Bavaria, gin from: England, Scotland and Iceland, vodka from: Russia, Poland, Sweden, France and Netherlands and other kind of drinks' (5 star hotel).

Hotels mainly sell alcoholic drinks from different countries, meaning that they do not promote alcohol produced in the United Kingdom, which is another interesting aspect of the hotel and alcohol industry. 'Globalization has accelerated the pace and the spread of the branded alcoholic drinks across the globe. The entry of global alcohol companies into new markets is well illustrated by what investors call the BRIC countries –the fast growing economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China' (Babor, 2010, p. 79). This is why there is such an abundance of branded alcoholic drinks; hotels have managed to promote and sell

alcohol from all the continents. 'The wine business is no longer a production-driven business as it has been traditionally; it is fast becoming a marketing-driven business' (Jernigan, 2008, p. 7). This is likely because the quality and consequently the reputation of products from specific regions are higher because of local production and superior sources. At this point, it can be added that branded alcoholic drinks have been popular and attractive in customers' preferences because customers often relish experiencing something different. Hotels take advantage of this kind of fantasy in customers' minds and work accordingly on their menus so as to catch customers' attention and desires. In TA9, another hotel brand makes use on its menu of the same fascinating language used in TA1 and TA8. A sophisticated and alluring yet standardized language is used, which can be found across the menus of most hotels.

TA9: 'San Abello Sauvignon Blanc – Chile *Refreshing acidity and balance. Elegant round and mouth filling,* Castillo de Clavijo Rioja Tempranillo – CVC Spain *Juicy, easy-going Rioja with a soft underbelly of raspberry, strawberry & red cherry fruit flavors on the palate*' (3 star hotel).

As well as the presence of alcoholic drinks from different countries, there was a presence of intercultural communication on the official website of each hotel in two ways. First, the choice is provided to the potential customer of different global websites of the hotel for those customers interested in staying in a hotel of the same brand group in a different country. Below, it is apparent that thirteen global languages operate on the website of a particular global brand. For instance, by clicking on German, the website is translated into the German language or, by clicking French, the website is translated into the French language; this happens with the other languages listed below. This intercultural facility aids potential customers to navigate the website without facing language problems but also to gain accurate and comprehensible information on what they are looking for. The different languages are listed below.

TA8: 'Dutch, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Polish, Turkish, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian and Arabic' (3 star hotel).

Other countries and regions were available on the website for which it was expected that the language would change: Finland, Croatia, Scandinavia, Romania, Ukraine, Slovakia, Sweden, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, India, Malaysia, South Korea and Thailand. However, for these, the web page was not translated into the native language – i.e. Finland

would be equivalent to Finnish. Those countries were translated into English. Again, it can be seen, as pointed out in the above section concerning languages, that the mentality which dominates across the world is that English is the lingua franca of the business world – the rest of the languages are treated as second division and of lower importance. Arguably, even though this is an intercultural service provided on the website, it does not operate properly; this means that there are other languages in the world apart from the most popular ones that are spoken and are alive; it should therefore be a consideration and a care for hotels to consider how they will accommodate the possible language needs of customers. For instance, after I did some further research on the internet, I discovered that a specific hotel group owns, operates and franchises under thirteen different brands in total. As the hotel group is present in countries such as Lithuania, Latvia, Greece and Iceland and none of the above countries has a presence on the official website of the hotel organization, the option of the native language from those countries is not offered; i.e. Lithuania would be equivalent to Lithuanian, Greece to Greek and so on.

On the website of a five star hotel, intercultural elements were located in six global languages: Italian, Arabic, French, Dutch, German and Russian. The reason that only six different languages are represented could be explained by the fact that the hotel accepts the majority of its clientele base from those specific countries. Another hotel brand offers an uncomplicated and highly organized system of websites in numerous languages. It is arranged based on the four different continents: the Americas, Asia and Oceania, Europe and International. Below is presented the continent of Europe and the different websites. It is the only hotel brand which offers a proper and efficient intercultural service on its website.

TA2: 'Europe: France – Français, Deutschland – Deutsch, Italia – Italiano, Portugal – Português, España – Español, United Kingdom – English and Россия – Русский' (4 star hotel).

7.8 Conclusion

Despite of the intense presence of global workforce it is seen that a number of hotels have not managed to build an organizational philosophy and culture which would appreciate and support practically that intercultural issues do matter at the service encounter and

employees therefore need to be equipped with intercultural skills. The fact that hotel staff are faced with specific intercultural challenges and despite that their organizations do not supply them with the rights learning opportunities or diversity training, shows that hotels may not have been alerted to apply practices which acknowledge that the changes which occur in the external environment on a socio-economic level have affected their daily operations. Indeed, the participating hotels seem trapped in their own actions as the fact that they provide virtual communication on their official websites and give the option for potential customers to navigate in their preferred languages other than English shows that they recognize the existence of the intercultural needs of customers. The next chapter draws attention to the role of international languages in the work environment by describing the difficulties and challenges that hotel staff are encountered with due to the lack of possessing multilingual skills.

Chapter 8: The role of international languages during customer service in the hotel sector

8.1 Introduction

This chapter underlines that the hotel industry is not composed from a high volume of hotel staff with multilingual skills at their disposal. As highlighted in previous chapters, the global workforce usually assists with multilingual skills simply because British hotel staff are often monolingual. Several hotels of the study appear to have ignored the importance of recruiting multilingual hotel staff. At the same time, an organizational paradox is depicted as to how hotels deal with international languages in comparison to the English language, offering English language courses to the global workforce. Communication skills are regarded as a vital part of the customer service experience and, taking this feature into consideration, challenges are presented as to why hotels are ignoring the fact that excellent communication skills are required during an intercultural interaction when most hotel staff are monolingual. Relevant segments from job advertisements across different hotel brands are also provided and it is apparent that communication skills are linked with other skills required for the delivery of excellent customer service. It is also explained that organizational competitiveness is impeded by the lack of recruitment of hotel staff with multilingual skills.

Four arguments are presented demonstrating that hotels have not managed to deal efficiently with language issues despite the fact that professionalism is, they claim, one of their core organizational values. An example of a hotel brand which has successfully incorporated in its training and development the opportunity of international language courses, using the online learning solution of Rosetta Stone, is given to show that learning international languages through the contribution of the hotel organization can be a reality and there are no obstacles to this. It is highlighted how the idea of diversity training is largely embraced by hotel staff still there have not been established any particular programs to facilitate employees in dealing with intercultural issues which might be regarded as challenging during customer service. Diversity training could therefore be

considered as a professional and efficient solution which can contribute to the enlargement of hotel staff intercultural skills.

8.2 The contribution of diversified workforce with their international language skills

'According to Monod (1992, p. 15) 'The knowledge not only of languages but also of the culture of different European nations, …, in short, a knowledge of others, is an absolute must'. 'A view affirmed by the UK Secretary of State for Education and Employment, emphasizing the importance of FL learning: 'There is no doubt that, despite the dominance of English as a world language, the ability to speak another language-or several languages-is increasingly important in our competitive and global economy' (Blunkett, 1998, p. 1). International language skills on the part of global workforce seem an asset for the hotel industry. HS14 points out one of the main organizational advantages of having a culturally diversified workforce: its input into overcoming language issues in cases where a member of staff and a customer cannot communicate in the same language. Having employees from different cultures facilitates daily communication as staff with nationalities other than British can communicate in at least two different languages: English and their mother tongues.

HS14: 'It is good as a hotel we have people from everywhere, so as a manager I may not understand something, I will try to get someone who can understand it' (Food and Beverage Manager, 3 star hotel).

HS9 also recognizes the importance of having a diversified workforce. She perceives the attribute of being bilingual as a skill, so being able to communicate in more than one language is a linguistic competency.

HS9: '… we try to, we have some people from Romania, Poland and, if we have someone who speaks the same language, we try to use their skills' (Front Office Supervisor, 3 star hotel).

HS11 connects culture with language by classifying language as a cultural characteristic and component of culture. All the different units of the hotel such as the restaurant and

housekeeping can be of great assistance as staff from different cultures can contribute with their language skills.

HS11: 'If it is a culture that we recognize we say, alright, I know somebody in the restaurant speaks that language and we would pull them forward to assist; we have done that many times in the past…' (Guest Relations and Housekeeping Manager, 4 star hotel).

HS3 makes the same point as HS11 about the use of culturally diverse staff across all the departments for language purposes. In this way, the importance of having multilingual staff and the necessity to respond successfully and efficiently from a customer service point of view is highlighted. It is evident that there is no specific department or organized structure with the aim of meeting the possible multilingual needs of customers so the way that this is handled is quite widespread, as HS3 asserts.

HS3: 'I speak, basically, French and then you can rely on a team to have, so one of the guys in the front desk speaks fluent German, one of the girls in housekeeping can speak fluently English, Polish and Russian so you have got a lot of people around you. There are people I have got around me which speak more nationalities including Chinese' (General Manager, 4 star hotel).

It becomes clear that, without a culturally diverse workforce which potentially has the advantage of being bilingual, hotels could not respond to the multilingual demands of customers; this is because the majority of native British citizens do not speak a second language. They are monolingual. Interviewees could be separated into three different categories. The first included those members of staff who speak international languages, being immigrants in the United Kingdom from the European Union or from other non European states. The second category incorporates members of staff born in the United Kingdom with immigrant parents; mostly British Asian staff. The first two categories of interviewees have been found to have some aptitude for bilingualism, either because they have been educated in international languages or because those in the second category mostly speak the mother tongues of their parents, who are migrants in the United Kingdom. The third category focuses on native British citizens who do not speak international languages at all, or have just a basic knowledge of an international language. HS2, a British Indian member of staff, speaks Hindi, Punjabi and some basic French, which helps him to communicate on food and beverage matters.

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HS2: 'I do, yes, I speak Hindi and Punjabi, so that's two languages that I speak. I started French for two years when I was in the first year of college. I never got along with the French tutor so but I do know the French terminology for the menus and stuff like that' (Operations Manager, 4 star hotel).

His language skills have been of some value in his work environment as they have enabled him to communicate with Indian customers and provide them with local information. In this way, customer service is enhanced as language barriers have been overcome.

HS2: 'Oh yeah, definitely, loads of times, eh, last week I had a team from a hotel in Indonesia and he was an Indian guy from Delhi and we had a great conversation; we told him all about Scotland, where to visit, where to stay' (Operations Manager, 4 star hotel).

HS4 was born in the United Kingdom to Pakistani parents and he speaks some basic Arabic and proficient Urdu.

HS4: 'Yes. I speak Arabic and Urdu' (Food and Beverage Manager, 5 star hotel).

HS9 is a Hungarian member of staff. Apart from her mother tongue and English, she speaks basic German and Spanish.

HS9: 'Well I am Hungarian so obviously I speak two languages already and I speak a bit of German and Spanish basic' (Front Office Supervisor, 3 star hotel).

HS10, a Greek member of staff, speaks French as he used to live and work in France. He also has some knowledge of the German language.

HS10: 'Yes I speak French and a little bit German' (Senior Supervisor, 3 star hotel).

It can be seen that non British members of staff or British Asians stand more chance of being bilingual, regardless of the level of competency (basic, intermediate or proficient). This means that these members of staff are more motivated to learn and speak international languages.

8.3 Global customers and language barriers

Arguably, hotels as working environments are distinguished for their cultural multiplicity, which can take variable forms. The presence of intercultural communication in the hotel industry in the United Kingdom has been intensified in two ways: through the influx of culturally diverse workers, as explained above, and through the presence of global customers in the country. Thus, intercultural interaction forms a significant part of the daily routine of employees during customer service. Global customers travel in the United Kingdom and receive accommodation in the hotel industry. 'By 2025, international tourist arrivals are forecast to total 50,138,000, generating expenditure of GBP44.2bn, an increase of 4.5% pa' (WTTC, 2015, p. 5). As there is already a strong presence of different cultural groups in the hotel industry and the further growth of global customers is expected in the near future, hotels should be able to respond to and understand how these external changes which occur on the external environment, affected by socio-economic and political changes, can influence the internal environment of hotels at the service encounter. However, it appears that several global hotel brands in the United Kingdom have not realized this change. The organizational culture of each hotel needs to infuse in its organizational goals, practices and approaches that the intercultural contacts of the clientele base have intensified and, therefore, hotel staff should possess the appropriate intercultural skills in order to respond to those changes during customer service. A variety of nationalities are encountered from different continents, some of which are new to hotel groups. As HS1 observes, Chinese and Japanese tours and some from the United Arab Emirates have started to make their presence felt.

HS1: 'Last year we have seen some Chinese and Japanese tours coming but minimal, but it's mainly European and American, that's the main. Yeah, and we are just about to have some groups from the Middle East as well so from Abu Dhabi' (Director of Sales and Marketing, 4 star hotel).

HS2 and HS6 talk about receiving customers from the US, from European countries and from Australia, which shows the widespread composition of their external customers.

HS2: '… the US guests, Germany, France, Spain and Australia, we have tours which bring the guests from Australia' (Operations Manager, 4 star hotel).

HS6: '… usually the weekends would be for leisure; there would be a lot of Americans. We get a lot more French now, Italians and Spanish as well' (Front Office Supervisor, 3 star hotel).

HS11 mentions that cultural groups vary and this indication helps us to understand that the clientele base of each hotel is not predictable.

HS11: 'Yes, we have many different cultures: British, Chinese, American, Irish, Scandinavian, Asian – just varies to be honest' (Guest Relations and Housekeeping Manager, 4 star hotel).

At this point, we should refer to those challenges encountered between global customers and staff as a result of language issues, ethics and customs. HS2 and HS14 talk about language difficulties that occur between Spanish and Italian customers, because customers from these countries do not possess a sound knowledge of the English language.

HS2: '… Spanish do not feel comfortable speaking in English and they had problems how to get on the Internet and we try to explain but they could not take the message… Then Gabriella came on; she speaks Spanish and she explained everything – they were so happy' (Operations Manager, 4 star hotel).

The situation worsens if there are no members of staff who can communicate in Spanish or Italian. HS2 mentions that there is a native Spanish member of staff at the reception who always helps out Spanish customers with her language skills, involving daily communication and sorting out any kind of problem that the customers may face. When language barriers are overcome, customers feel happy. HS2 agrees that this definitely brings relief to all communicators. HS14 asserts that the inability of customers to communicate in English creates not only language and communication problems but also confusion, both to customers and serving staff, in the selection of food and drinks.

HS14: 'Spanish, Italians, these people have not very good English so they come to the bar, for example they order food and drink which we are not sure about what they are asking for. For example one guest comes asking for Guinness, yes, pour the Guinness, no, no is too dark, something else?' (Food and Beverage Manager, 3 star hotel).

For instance, some customers may not recognize the brand of a beer, a specific type of food or in general different selections from those which exist in their countries. This causes frustration because of language barriers and represents a waste of products according to

HS14. Interviewees see that English is a global language, the lingua franca of the business world, and take for granted and as a kind of imperative that customers should be able to communicate in English. 'In its purest form, ELF is defined as a contact language used only among non-mother tongues speakers' (Jenkins, 2006a, p. 160). 'In the United Kingdom, foreign language skills are not normally required of hotel employees, who are assumed (not always justifiably) to have at least an adequate command of English' (Blue and Harun 2003, p. 78). Still, indigenous customers across the world are not able to communicate in English and hotel staff seem to disregard this, appearing to adopt a biased attitude against this situation and demonstrating a lack of intercultural understanding and cultural empathy. Employees perceive that this incapacity is generated from customers. They do not place themselves as members of staff in the position that they should possess some further language skills. Despite this, specific hotels recognize that customers' lack of English knowledge represents a problem; in order to minimize these language barriers and achieve understanding, such organizations resort to the solution of catering using a buffet.

HS14: 'So what we have done when they come for dinner as well rather than taking the order, they are confused what they are ordering and all these stuff, so for this year especially in this organization we started serving a buffet so they can see what they are having and they can have anything they want rather than wasting everybody's time on writing down every order and all this stuff' (Food and Beverage Manager, 3 star hotel).

In this way, customers can use their visual senses, hoping to understand what the food looks like and, if it is close to their liking, this is what that they want to taste. The organization in question has resorted to a practical and cost saving solution so as to avoid misunderstandings and annoyance, targeting the problem only from the customer's side. No coordinated effort on the part of the organization has been made to improve the situation regarding language issues or develop a solution which focuses on staff insight and awareness of how to overcome language barriers. If this happened, language misunderstandings could be treated in a more efficient and professional way as staff would have acquired a kind of relevant language sensitivity and would not regard as responsible for this challenging situation only the customers lacking in English language skills. HS8 found himself in the same position of experiencing language challenges.

HS8: 'There was a misunderstanding, it was a German, his English was not great at all and one great thing is a hotel's size usually has got a German speaking person, a French speaking, Spanish

but I did not have anybody and then they wanted a car and it was bizarre; the misunderstanding was he wanted a Mercedes an A-class…' (Assistant Concierge Manager, 5 star hotel).

As HS8 stated, at the specific moment of this language misunderstanding between himself and the customer, there was nobody to assist with language skills. This shows that the use of a diversified workforce from variable departments in an attempt to overcome language barriers is not a panacea. In some cases global staff might not be available at specific times to contribute with their language skills or they might not exist at all in the hotel premises, according to the interviewee HS8. Even though a culturally diverse workforce is employed in the hotel industry, significant dependence on them cannot be a reassurance that the specific staff would be available at any certain time to help.

8.4 The necessity of knowledge of international languages on the part of hotel staff

According to the findings of the study, there might be the chance for members of staff from different countries to be offered the facility of English classes within the hotel premises as their English is often not good enough to deal with customers. That is already a diversity management policy towards integration of global workforce into the organizational culture of the hotel brand in which they are employed. This confirms that hotels realize the need for linguistic competence towards the English language on the part of employees from different cultures due to possible language barriers which will affect the intercultural interaction with co-workers but also with global customers this is why they address it, by offering to their staff English classes. 'There are many obstacles to the smooth integration of immigrants into the workforce; however, language barriers are one of the greatest' (Loosemore and Lee, 2001; Madera, Neal and Dawnson; Victor, 1992). As there is the option of English classes, the opportunity for international language courses should also be offered to those employees who might be interested in these. Selected hotel brands offer English language courses to non native British hotel staff because their English is not good enough to communicate with customers. According to their statements, they realize that excellent communication skills are necessary at work during customer service. This feature of 'communication skills' is highly required from employers during recruitment as it is stipulated in job descriptions for any kind of department: food and

beverage, reception and housekeeping. The below job description spotlights a number of essential and optional requirements for the recruitment of a food and beverage associate.

JA: 'Listening and communication skills' (3 star hotel).

Another hotel brand's recruitment of a front house manager stipulates that excellent communication skills are desirable for the delivery of excellent customer service.

JA: 'Excellent communication skills' (4 star hotel).

From the moment that hotel brands regard communication skills as vital for their hotel staff without specifying verbal or written skills; chances are that they are mainly looking at verbal communication skills, as customer service is a live interaction between employees and customers. Efficient communication cannot be achieved if hotel staff have poor language skills in English; so, from a practical aspect, English is the key language during customer service and employees should be fluent in it. Nonetheless, communication skills in a hotel work environment have to be multidimensional because of the volume of global customers. When hotels note that communication skills are important, this is quite broad and actually insinuates consciously that multilingual skills would be an advantage. In fact, hotels acknowledge that multilingual staff are required but because the majority of British citizens do not speak international languages they rely on the global workforce to assist because they possess multilingual skills. In addition, as well as the fact that good communication skills on the part of hotel staff can ensure understanding and customer satisfaction, they are also a means of relationship building and consequently of customer retention. The advertisement below for the vacancy of a reservation manager describes that the potential employee has to be a relationship builder; in other words, this is named customer relationship management, which is a retention strategy to meet the sales objectives of the brand through relationship building.

JA: 'Clear and concise communicator and relationship builder' (4 star hotel).

It is hard to achieve relationship building with a global clientele base if hotel staff do not possess the appropriate skills, including multilingual ones.

> But, good relationships cannot be maintained without good-quality communication between visitor and host, particularly verbal communication which, in tourism, as Devereux (1998, p. 33) argued, has … a built-in aspect of coming face to face with a completely different national or regional culture. Some language in common is a pre-requisite for such communication, thus to be able to converse with visitors in their own language is important, particularly so when problems arise (Cocoa and Turner, 1997; Russell and Leslie, 2002). Such an attitude and the correlating development of FL skills is very much a part of what Devereux (1998, p. 33) describes as "cross cultural service competence" in the delivery of quality tourism service.

In this case, it is perceived that the lack of such skills can impede the performance of monolingual hotel staff. It is apparent that communication skills are interrelated with other duties in the workplace, so having staff characterized by multilingual skills is not only an asset for the execution of their daily duties but a feature which can lead to excellent customer service and boost organizational competitiveness. Hotels claim that their core focus is excellent customer service and, for this to be achieved, a combination of people skills and also practical–intercultural skills is required. One of the key aspects that a potential food and drink assistant should demonstrate, as specified in the advertisement below, is to provide professional customer service.

JA: 'To lead an efficient, prompt and trouble free customer service' (4 star hotel).

Professional customer service is not ensured only by friendly personality and the people skills to which most of the interviewees have referred. Hotel management staff seem highly positive that only soft skills are necessary for the delivery of customer service. Sadly, there is no interrelationship between people skills and intercultural ones. For instance, an exceptional and professional service does necessitate soft skills; but also requires practical ones of an intercultural nature – multilingual skills could be included in this category. Considering the above section of the job description, if multilingual skills are absent during customer service in an intercultural interaction, the quality of customer service can potentially be affected. Thus, the essence of professionalism and efficiency can be affected simply because hotel staff are deficient in multilingual skills.

'In the 1980s, Shames (1986) and Tanke (1988) emphasized the importance of staffing the hospitality and tourism industry with multilingual and multicultural employees who possess a combination of foreign language abilities and cultural awareness' (in Mok and Noriega, 1999, p. 31). Hotel staff have broadly admitted that intercultural communication

between them and global customers during customer service can occasionally be problematic. The majority of British hotel staff in the study are monolingual; as a consequence they do not possess multilingual skills. This is already a limitation to their professional skills, since a significant amount of their job in the hotel, on both a daily and monthly basis, entails intercultural interaction. Consciously, the participating hotel organizations have maintained a high volume of British hotel staff short of linguistic competencies. Yet, it was found from the study that members of staff from different cultures were more interested in international languages and, practically, they possessed some multilingual skills. Three different kinds of learners were depicted: those who possessed some basic knowledge of an international language or languages; others at intermediate level and some employees who were more proficient. A mixed picture is apparent of how linguistically competent hotel staff can be. It is clear that there are two major different models of employees: those deficient in international languages and those theoretically and practically more concerned and interested in learning different languages. This is proved by the fact that they have acquired some multilingual skills, meaning that they can speak an international language.

The reasons that render intercultural communication challenging also have to do with language issues. Indeed, organizational competitiveness is obstructed by the lack of multilingual hotel staff. 'Having a workforce that is sensitive to individual differences can provide a competitive advantage' (Belfry and Schmidt, 1989). A workforce of this kind, though, means that the hotel organization has to offer relevant learning and training opportunities to its staff. Knowledge of international languages on the part of employees can be seen as an organizational goal underpinning the cultural and global dimensions which affect the hotel industry. This should not remain unconsidered but, because it does matter in work life, it has to be tackled efficiently and successfully.

As there are two different types of employees, how they deal with international languages and how serious they are about it in their work lives differ and there are two different approaches for intercultural matters at work. This potentially suggests that some members of staff would be more interculturally aware and sensitive and others less so. Whether this is true or not, the fact that there are monolingual and multilingual staff shows that motivational levels related to intercultural issues can be lower or higher. This, though, does not imply that there is exclusion as to who can be an interculturally competent

communicator in the hotel work environment. The reason that there is a number of monolingual hotel staff is that hotels have not managed to create the appropriate learning environment in terms of training and development to offer employees the opportunities to further develop their capacities.

8.5 How different global hotel brands contradict themselves as to how they deal with international languages during customer service

'Employees' language skills crucially affect interorganizational and intraorganizational communication; language is also a managerial issue not to be ignored' (Charles, 2007, p. 261). The hotels of the study appeared to contradict themselves in four ways regarding international languages and this is where it can be asserted that their consideration of international languages is not only non existent but that there is no planned corporate objective in the near future relating to how this issue could be addressed effectively to improve the organizational performance of hotel staff and thus the organizational effectiveness of the brand. First, their incapacity towards formative action on language matters is verified when interviewees and job descriptions refer to the principles of professionalism; actually, hotels are looking for a package of skills, including personal, interpersonal,educational–practical and business ones (mainly for management roles).

A rhetorical question follows as to how hotels anticipate provision of exceptional–professional customer service when hotel staff lack multilingual skills. Multilingual skills can be classified as practical ones because learning a second language entails the transmission and exchange of words and symbols to achieve communication. Second, it is commonly accepted by hotel staff that their incapacity to communicate in international languages is composed of an intercultural barrier. Nonetheless, hotels have not yet resorted to any formal solution to overcome such language barriers. As management staff are very well aware of this intercultural challenge, it is a paradox that this issue has not been raised to the attention of human resource departments. So far, hotels seem to deal with an ineffective approach towards language matters by leaving their hotel staff to struggle with this ongoing problematic situation.

Third, hotel staff would welcome the option of language courses being run by their organizations simply because they realize that lack of skill in this area impedes their functioning in their duties on a frequent basis. Employees feel motivated to expand their knowledge of language issues whether they are monolingual or multilingual but no learning opportunity addresses this need, sponsored by their organizations. Fourth, the official website of some hotel brands offers the option for the potential customer to navigate the website in a language of his/her choice, other than English. Formally, on virtualization, hotels recognize the existence of intercultural differences and so, they have managed to respond to this linguistic challenge by offering a selection of major international languages. Again, not all of the languages spoken in the world are included, but at least it represents an attempt to address intercultural issues appropriately and effectively. Hotels are not unaware of the fact that there might be a clientele base that is not familiar with the English language and therefore they understand that some multilingual assistance is needed so as to facilitate their navigation. This contradiction between what hotel brands recognize on virtual technology and how they deal with language issues during customer service and live interaction gives us two different images of exceptional customer service (how things should work in the workplace) and of the average customer service related to language skills, which depicts the reality of today.

> 'Some suggest that English may already be a global language, having achieved a critical number or distribution of speakers… beyond which it proves impossible for any single group or alliance to stop its growth or even influence its future' (Crystal, 1997).

Even though the above statement might hold true, the advantages of learning international languages outweigh the disadvantages, whether for professional purposes or in real life. The response below shows a multilingual operations manager making use of his multilingual skills with a customer from Delhi. However, he also admits that, very frequently, he makes use of his multilingual skills on different occasions for professional purposes.

HS2: 'I speak Hindi and Punjabi so that's two languages that I speak… Oh yeah, definitely, loads of time, eh, last week I had a team from a hotel in Indonesia and he was an Indian guy from Delhi and we had a great conversation, we told him all about Scotland, where to visit, where to stay' (Operations Manager, 4 star hotel).

HS2: 'I do know the French terminology for the menus and stuff like that' (Operations Manager, 4 star hotel).

Acquiring linguistic competence in an international language does not merely involve learning morphology, syntax and phonology but learning a different culture, different traditions and beliefs. Thus, it could also be determined that, when learning an international language, the individual acquires a transferable skill which can find expression in a number of practices in daily life as well as professional life. The fact that the majority of hotel brands do not pay much attention to international languages and do not aim towards the incorporation of international language training courses in their workplace is because the mentality which dominates in the hotel industry is that such an action could be cost effective. The below interviewee states that even though she finds the idea of language courses fruitful, the main hold off factor for their realization relates to the cost and to the fact that short staffing might result because hotel staff have to attend different training sessions, impeding the normal operation of each department.

HS12: 'I think is important is something which is not commonly done or I have not heard at least and I think that it would be something interesting for people as well… at the moment you have to think of the costs and taking people off the desks because we find particularly hard there is no time you can have training with all your staff because someone has to be covering the desk. So we have to do two or three training sessions for everybody, which can be quite costly' (Assistant General Manager, 4 star hotel).

Given the above argument, it is apparent that, even though hotels claim professionalism and excellent customer service, they are not willing to 'sacrifice' themselves from a financial aspect for an optimum organizational performance. It is evident that the financial cost matters more for organizations than offering learning opportunities to employees. This argument can be contradicted in two ways: for a language course to take place it can be undertaken out of working hours; in this way both the employee and the organization can adjust themselves suitably. Also, learning an international language cannot be undertaken in a short period of time – it is a long process and thus cannot be completed in two or three training sessions. Typically, hotels in the United Kingdom endorse practices of executing more tasks with fewer staff and stick to a minimum wage. This current picture of the hotel industry is not positive as it seems that organizations are not interested in investing in their staff in terms of employee development. It is the organization's responsibility to further

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develop the skills of its workforce in the name of training and development or training and educational development. Interviewee statements illustrate that, even though it may sound interesting, the application of international languages for hotel staff can be discouraging as a result of labor costs, contradicting brand claims on their official websites, in terms of training and development opportunities provided to hotel staff.

TA2: 'Hospitality and business training for hotel employees to refine their skills to run a successful and profitable hotel… online training and educational development materials are available to help maintain high guest satisfaction ratings' (4 star hotel).

On corporate communication, it is asserted by the specific brand that care is taken towards training and development, aiming to meet the needs of each employee and subsequently contribute to the business objectives of the brand. Clearly, it is stated that hotel staff should be supplied with appropriate training either in the form of online or live teaching so as to ensure customer satisfaction. Since these learning opportunities exist on the agenda for employees of the organization it is strange that the incorporation of international languages into the official hospitality curriculum not only does not exist, but seems rather expensive. 'Hospitality programs should rethink their curricula to include foreign teaching to meet the needs of the industry they serve' (Casado, 2003). 'As the growth of international travel brings an increasing number of people of varying backgrounds, hotels and restaurants need to educate themselves about other cultures, which extend to an appreciation of the traditions and languages' (Pfeffer, 1998). In reality, even though hotels appear to offer a great range of training and development opportunities towards their employees, it is doubtful how true this is considering that hotel staff appear deprived of intercultural learning opportunities. On the contrary, a different hotel brand offers online language courses to their employees using the online learning solution of Rosetta Stone.

HS1: 'We have Rosetta Stone, a well known method of learning languages, and any associate from our organization across the world can learn any language with Rosetta Stone… I started learning French, some of the other people upstairs, somebody is learning German, somebody Spanish, so any associate globally has the ability with our organization to use Rosetta Stone to learn languages' (Director of Sales and Marketing, 4 star hotel).

It is evident that hotel staff who occupy senior positions set an example for other employees regarding how international languages can be of use in their professional lives.

These two different approaches to international languages by different global hotel brands show how divided the hospitality sector is in terms of training and development and how organizational communication varies from brand to brand. The brand in question has managed to overcome any financial obstacles and any other issues which would obstruct international language courses. This proves that the incorporation of international languages within the work lives of hotel staff can be a reality. It is actually the organizational philosophy of each hotel brand which can make the difference to how it can address and deal with intercultural issues. Whether or not hotel brands have integrated international languages into their training and development programs, there is a shared understanding that the need for international languages would facilitate interaction with global customers.

8.6 Diversity training required from hotel staff as part of diversity management

As staff often feel perplexed about how to deal with and how to overcome, for instance, language barriers, religious issues and how to interpret non verbal behaviors or matters on food culture, they expressed themselves keen to receive diversity training so as to learn about different cultural needs, behaviors and mentalities. 'People tend to respond better to training when they feel that the training is useful and important. One critical area of training in the hospitality industry is diversity training, particularly as a tool in the recruitment and retention of minorities' (Charles and McCleary, 1997). HS14 points out that knowledge of different cultural characteristics related to customers regarding food culture would boost their business profile. It would make possible the attraction of customers from all over the world by possessing better food expertise; this could be interpreted as a financial profit for the hotel brand.

HS14: 'Training, training – if the company, the organization, provides more training according to what they want us to do from a business point of view that could help and try to get business from every country they are coming from: the food culture, the standard of living, if we know in advance is helpful, so yes, more awareness and a kind of training could be provided to let us know, we want this' (Food and Beverage Manager, 3 star hotel).

As a food and beverage manager, he is interested in relevant cultural knowledge which can be linked with his expertise on food and beverages. Diversity training, in the forms of seminars or workshops, would interest hotel staff as they see that such training could contribute to their professional development and to the delivery of better customer service without obstacles. In this way diversity training can improve the organizational effectiveness of each hotel brand because hotel staff would possess the appropriate skills and knowledge. That is actually about implementation of those practices and policies which make the best use of employees aiming at the maximization of their talents and at the reduction of their differences. HS10 states that acquiring knowledge about different cultures for the specific cultural groups from which the hotel receives customers could potentially develop the intercultural skills of staff.

HS10: 'Possibly I would say some training, but seminars or seminar forums so as to identify certain aspects of each culture or of the cultures of the people that visit our hotel could be interesting and could possibly work' (Senior Supervisor, Food and Beverage, 3 star hotel).

This could facilitate interaction during customer service between customers and hotel staff. From a professional aspect, this can positively enhance the customer service experience provided and potentially lead to customer satisfaction. On the other hand, as well as the contribution to the professional expertise of hotel staff, it would be beneficial for their personal interest. HS11 states that there can be negative feelings when the communication is challenging between customers and hotel staff, owing to the fact that they cannot understand each other as a result of language barriers.

HS11: 'It would relieve a lot of frustration if we were able to communicate properly knowing that the guests understand everything; you know, sometimes you get frustrated and there is tension because you feel you do not put yourself across properly, they do not understand you. The customers probably feel the exact same way, frustrated as well. I think it would motivate a lot of team members if they had the confidence to go out there and communicate properly to the various different cultures' (Guest Relations and Housekeeping Manager, 4 star hotel).

Even if non verbal communication takes place as an attempt to decipher meanings, unsatisfactory feelings might be present. HS11 notes that both she and her colleagues have experienced frustration and tension. Knowledge about different cultures could be related to efficient organizational performance on the part of hotel staff. Again, better provision of

customer service could be achieved and would enhance staff's psychological values on how to respond to intercultural challenges, as they would possess some intercultural competence skills; at the same time, the presence of negative feelings would be diminished. It is important that employees feel comfortable and adequate in dealing with any kinds of requirements which might come up during their work. Diversity training can act as a behavioral tool and psychological support; this is largely related with the personal development of employees, organizational effectiveness and productivity. 'Organizational benefits from diversity programs are well documented and may enhance a company's ability to increase market share; compete more effectively; create better organizational structures and policies; and enhance recruitment, retention, and development efforts' (Wheeler, 1996).

The fact that hotel staff would welcome the introduction of diversity training in their work lives but it is not provided by their organizations shows that this issue has not been discussed or communicated by Human Resource Management (HRM). Diversity training falls under the responsibility of HRM as part of the learning and development process. 'Human resource management is the attraction, selection, retention, development and use of human resources in order to achieve both individual and organizational objectives' (Cascio 1998, p. 2). Thus, there could be support on the part of organizations towards intercultural issues. It is apparent that hotel staff recognize that training related to intercultural issues would support them professionally. As employees acknowledge that training would be ideal for them, they perceive that they lack in intercultural skills and this affects the quality of customer service delivered, job performance and organizational effectiveness.

8.7 Conclusion

This chapter has explained that a number of hotels do not appear to have managed to recognize the need to staff the sector with multilingual staff and, consequently, learning opportunities relating to international language courses are nearly nonexistent. The business objectives of each brand do not seem combined with the intercultural needs of global customers or with the intercultural aspects that a job in customer service entails.

Selected hotels seem to act rather inefficiently, not only because they have not found a solution as to how they are going to deal with the possible language barriers which exist during intercultural interactions but because they have not managed to further develop the professional skills of their hotel staff. Obviously, if hotels included in their training and development the introduction of international language courses, this would enhance the essence of professionalism that hotels relish and at the same time it would minimize the language barriers which might exist during an intercultural interaction. The next chapter describes how customer service excellence and customers care are top organizational values but, it is noted interrelated, with the presence of intercultural differences and intercultural communication.

Chapter 9: Results/Hotel activities and the image of global hotels brands

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter, an account is given of how different hotel brands are organized and prepared and how, through the use of different and common means, they build their images in the market. What branding means, the opportunities and the capacities that global hotel brands offer to customers and to hotel staff are analyzed. The business relationships which have been established between hotel brands, travel agencies and tour operators on a global level are highlighted, in conjunction with the intense presence of customers from all over the world. This helps us to understand the economic motivations of hotels as business organizations. The use of popular social media, which hotels utilize so as to promote, maintain and improve their public image and reputation, is discussed and it is acknowledged that the impact of social media is substantial, both on customers' choices and on hotel decision making. An overview is given of the different terms used so as to define individuals who purchase hotel accommodation services. The importance that hotel organizations attach to the essence of customer service and of customer care is analyzed and it is recognized that this is a fundamental principle and an organizational objective on which all relevant hotel activities are based. A specific customer service demeanor therefore has to be followed by each member of staff, which supports excellent customer service. Within this framework, the desirable behavior in customer service is examined, including specific skills, attitudes, aestheticism and emotional labor. Lastly the significance of grooming standards in customer service and the impact of culture on emotional representations are also discussed.

9.2 The power of branding

In branded hotels, there is a prominent presence of a diversified workforce, global customers, online travel agencies and tour operators. Arguably, branded hotels have more capacity for rapid growth in the global market in comparison to non global ones because

they possess a greater amount of human and economic capital. During interviews, management staff used the word brand in such a way as to highlight the power and social status of their organizations in the minds of their customers simply because their hotel brands were well known across the globe. Yet, even if this is true, the term brand was often utilized by interviewees as a 'magic' word when they could not give a specific answer towards a certain issue about which they were questioned, or the term was used in such a way as to avoid moving deeper into a subject about which they appeared not to be knowledgeable. HS2 conveys the message that the organization that he works for is a recognizable hotel brand worldwide and they are experts in the industry – on their calibre, they own different brands, so this gives them the 'authority' to think that they are infallible in their actions.

HS2: 'We are a very established brand; we have so many different brands in our portfolio…' (Operations Manager, 4 star hotel).

The question arises as to what brand or branding denotes in the hotel industry. 'Branding a hotel is more than just associating a property with a name and a logo. The successful branding development of a chain of hotels involves more than simply adding rooms and properties under the chain's name' (Cai and Hobson, 2004, p. 197). 'Brand equity has been used as a barometer of brand strength through the use of its logo, symbol, or name' (Farquhar, 1989; Morgan, 2000). 'Strong brands contribute to enhancing consumer trust of the intangible purchase, and reducing the perceived risk for the service purchase by assisting customers in visualizing and understanding the intangible aspects of the service product' (Berry, 2000).The name, symbol or logo of each hotel brand exerts a power on customer's choices but also on employees' thinking and consequently actions. HS4 relates branding to the consistency of services and to the quality of customer service that a potential customer will receive regardless of the location of the hotel across the United Kingdom.

HS4: 'We are a brand when people stay here or they stay in Edinburgh, Manchester; what we provide is the same all over but we do cater for everybody's requests' (Food and Beverage Manager, 5 star hotel).

This insight of HS4 is very close to the definition of Kotler and Armstrong (2001) of the term brand 'as a seller's promise to deliver a specific set of features, benefits and services

consistent to the buyers'. Management staff conceive that they are employed by organizations which are of a high status and of an exceptional dynamic simply because a brand is a name, often accompanied by a symbol that is well known worldwide. Taking into account the viewpoints of management staff, we are led to think that the capacities of a global hotel brand are significant and endless, achieving maximum customer satisfaction, top quality customer service and professional expertise. This is because they can offer more opportunities in training and development and in the accommodation of customer's needs. It is necessary then to identify if there is a positive relationship between branding and interculturalism. If this is the case, there should not be a limitation of knowledge and expertise on the part of hotels and consequently hotel staff as to how they deal with intercultural issues and challenges that may arise in the working environment with customers from different cultural backgrounds. HS4 states that, as a brand and organization, they pay attention to any kind of customer's needs; it is expected then to find that each hotel brand supports and encourages its management staff towards gaining knowledge on intercultural issues which will supply them with intercultural skills.

In job advertisements, hotels exhibit their strengths as regards their popular images on a global level. The job advertisement below (vacancy for a food and beverage team member) highlights how the expansion of the brand across the globe has resulted in a high volume of diversity; apparently, global hotel brands believe to a great extent in diversity, cultural diversity, organizational diversity, inclusion versus exclusion and all the relevant cornerstones of corporate social responsibility.

JA: 'At… we offer a wealth of diversity across the globe as part of a major brand. With over 750 hotels in 49 different countries, the largest of all the…hospitality brands… brand is the one that is recognised worldwide.' (3 star hotel).

This job advertisement, which aims to make the potential applicant aware of the superiority and size of the brand on a global level, assumes that a leading hotel brand which operates in 49 different countries is familiar with the management of a culturally diversified workforce. The concepts above are largely linked with the recruitment of global workforce and therefore the application of practices of an intercultural nature could be part of it because hotels are very well aware of the essence of diversity, not only because there has been an intensification of different cultures in the labor force but also because they operate

in different countries and therefore in different cultures, as a result of commercial development.

9.3 The hotel industry as a global product and economic activity

Some of the interview questions related to how globalization is becoming involved in the decision making of the hotel industry and the kinds of corporate methods hotels apply so as to respond to the competition of the market.

HS1: 'We work with all the main, we use expedia.co.uk, booking.com, late rooms…' (Director of Sales and Marketing, 4 star hotel).

HS3: 'Online travel agencies, yeah, expedia.co.uk, booking.com and then we have lastminute.com, travel agencies that we will use in times of distress needs when we need to sell rooms and we need to sell them cheap; some of these travel agencies will sell bedrooms, hotel, but you do not know where they are staying but we do that very rarely' (General Manager, 4 star hotel).

According to HS1 and HS3, online travel agencies such as expedia.co.uk, booking.com, lastminute.com and laterooms.com are very popular tools to maximize profit but also to attract business at cheap rates rather than leaving rooms unoccupied. HS6 points out very good cooperation with tour operators; in particular, with an American company. Both online travel agencies and tour operators act as tourism intermediaries that in most cases sell hotel products and services at reduced cost. As hotels use online travel agencies a lot and some cooperate with tour operators, I decided to have a look at these popular websites. In this way, I could obtain more information as to why there are more chances for individuals to use these intermediaries rather than booking directly with hotels.

Booking online might be instant and can happen everywhere and at any time, but online travel agencies offer more functions which may be appealing to potential buyers. It is true that these kinds of intermediaries offer a greater range of choices and products to individuals than hotels. Daily offers, top deals, package holidays, city breaks, greater savings and price matches are just a few functions that they serve. Broadly speaking, online travel agencies customize buyers' needs and take into account the available budget

of each potential buyer, so economic criteria can play a key role in the choice of the online travel agency, along with customer needs. Appropriate marketing techniques in conjunction with simple and friendly use of language and eye-catching web designs enable the buyer to navigate directly and without difficulty, with all information arranged on a single page; all the above consists of powerful communicative instruments. As well as online travel agencies, another alternative is the cooperation of hotels with tour operators, as HS6 points out.

HS6: 'We have a lot of tour operators; we are just coming in the period with lots of groups, ehm, we get a lot of American groups through the year, through the winter are off so we are starting again soon there a lot of different groups to come. For example, Globus, that's the American company. They use us a lot, http://www.globusjourneys.com' (Front Office Supervisor, 3 star hotel).

Tour operators' web profiles offer a variety of destinations worldwide, as do online travel agencies. Yet, comparing tour operators' websites and online travel agencies, I noticed that the former seem to offer more precise product knowledge and expertise about specific destinations and traveling in general. Their information is not provided in volume; it is selected very carefully and in such a way to be easy for the potential buyer to follow information and advice which will influence his or her decision. Tour operators employ a professional approach in the construction of their web material across destinations along with special offers and provide a sense of customer care. 'By using different business models, smarter business practices and by taking advantage of the poor management and application of hotels' online pricing online intermediaries proved to be very successful' (Enz, 2003; O'Connor, 2002; 2003; Tso and Law, 2005). Tour operators and online travel agencies appear to provide better added value to their selling products for their potential buyers.

9.4 Use of social media as an attempt to manage hotels' public images and quality of customer service

'Within the field of tourism and hospitality research it has been widely discussed how managers organize the hotels' usage of social media and what role social media plays in a

traveler's choice of hotel' (Sigala, Christou and Gretzel, 2012). Social media and new technology systems have the capacity to generate and distribute such an amount of tourism information so as to affect either positively or negatively the public profile of each hotel. 'The usage of social media among travelers has given the hotels the great opportunity of being able to find out what their guests do and do not like about them' (Dellarocas, 2003). HS2 mentions that, through Twitter, he was able to resolve an issue – an inconvenience that a customer was faced with. Twitter as a social network offers the facility to hotel teams to become aware of any kind of potential favorable or unfavorable situations that customers come across during their stays. Thus, they can offer immediate assistance, which is an advantage to the customer but also to the hotel as, in a different way, its brand image can be ruined with a negative comment.

HS2: 'I will give you a very good example, last week we had a guest, eh, who actually was in the hotel and now the Twitter is very popular, he just had a challenge; he tweeted about it and we have a dedicated team who watch us, they immediately email us' (Operations Manager, 4 star hotel).

HS4 adds that, as well as Twitter, Facebook is a very common social network, enabling hotels to see what competitors do. Twitter and Facebook as social networks can act as comparing instruments for the identification of what competitors do in the industry and how they attract business.

HS4: 'We keep an eye on Facebook; we keep an eye on Twitter, anything else that everybody else is doing; however, you have to remember every hotel product is different; this is a five star property. In comparison to us we have to see hotels of the same level' (Food and Beverage Manager, 5 star hotel).

HS7 points out that Tripadvisor appeals greatly to potential buyers as a different research and comment tool as they use it before they make up their minds about where they can book and stay, considering reviews from other customers who have already been accommodated.

HS7: '… Tripadvisor is something that we monitor all the time because it is a tool that a lot of people use before they book; it's the most popular. That's something that we need to measure on customer service and try get it better' (Human Resource Manager, 4 star hotel).

Through the interviews with hotel staff, it appears that prospective customers consult Tripadvisor to a great extent and, consequently, hotels have to be very attentive and observant in order to improve their standards. HS7 adds an important dimension to Tripadvisor as a travel information tool: it acts as a measurement and as a result an indication of the level of customer service provided in the hotel. Thus, Tripadvisor gives the opportunity to each hotel organization to improve the level of customer service provided and possibly to become aware of problems which may affect quality. Moreover, as HS7 suggests, 'try [to] get it better' customer service entails a constant effort towards development and enhancement. As its nature can be unpredictable because different customers may have different customer needs, customer service is arguably an ongoing learning process, so having a travel information tool enabling customers to describe their experiences contributes towards this aim. The strong presence of social media and travel information research engines shows that the hospitality industry is surrounded by social changes on a technological and commercial level. Hospitality as a business industry must therefore acclimatize to these evolutions, which will only grow in the near future; to respond successfully to them, business standards towards customer service can therefore be ameliorated, aiming at customer satisfaction.

9.5 Various classifications of human beings who stay in hotels: The essence of customer service and the significance of customer care

Throughout the study, three different categories emerged as regards the characterization of people who stay in hotels in the United Kingdom; guests, customers and clients. The responses from hotel staff show that different terms are used to name the human beings who stay in hotels. HS1 uses the term guests, possibly with a closer meaning to the traditional meaning of hospitality and of being hospitable in the sense of 'the friendly and generous reception and entertainment of guests or strangers' (Oxford Quick Reference Dictionary, 1996, p. 424) or 'kindness in welcoming strangers or guests' (Collins Concise English Dictionary Plus, 1989, p. 604).

HS1: 'Our philosophy is to look after your associates and your associates look after your guests and everything … does built round that philosophy' (Director of Sales and Marketing, 4 star hotel).

HS2 talks about customers and the importance of ensuring that customers are happy, as this brings about customer satisfaction and can obviously lead to customer retention, which is interpreted as a business profit for the hotel industry.

HS2: 'It goes like a circle so if our team is happy it makes sure that the customers are happy; the customers are happy they will come back; that means the business keeps running all the time' (Operations Manager, 4 star hotel).

HS3 and HS4 use either the terms clients or guests by using a business tone in their statements.

HS3: 'We have a small base of corporate clients who come mid-week …' (General Manager, 4 star hotel).

HS4: 'I would say bulk of our guests during the week is professional, corporate…' (Food and Beverage Manager, 5 star hotel).

HS5 talks about guests generally speaking in relation to the number of individuals who stay in the hotel. In hotels, a great number of different services exist: accommodation, meetings and events, conferences and other kind of social activities are organized. Indeed, hotels manage commercial accommodation facilities; there is a monetary exchange between hotels and the people who purchase those services and their commercial value. Despite the fact that there is no common agreement on the part of interviewees as to which language term is most appropriate to apply when referring to people who purchase hotel facilities, it is becoming clear that hotels are businesses which need to make financial profit so as to survive, as HS5 and HS1 describe.

HS5: 'We find sometimes ourselves in the situation that we got guests that we do not know where to put them' (Front Office Supervisor, 3 star hotel).

HS1: 'Looking at the business we have now versus 2006 to 2007, our business is very different; ehm, we had to become a lot more flexible in our pricing, ehm, we have taken a lot of business, not quite so much now, but 2009 to 2010 we have taken a lot of business that perhaps would normally have not looked at but it was very low rated' (Director of Sales and Marketing, 4 star hotel).

This helps us to understand that, regardless of which term is used – guest, customer or client – people who purchase hotel services are regarded as a source of financial profit by hotels. As HS5 points out, a great number of customers are often scheduled to stay in the hotel, which creates capacity issues. The hotel industry is viewed primarily as a business which has to adapt to the economic challenges of the market. According to HS1, economic criteria predetermine the kinds of business each hotel deals with. Arguably, the most appropriate and contemporary terminology is customer as this term entails a transactional and operational content which can be found in the relationship developed between a member of the hotel staff who represents the organization and a potential buyer–customer.

However, the term guest was most predominant in comparison to the other terms during the interviews when interviewees were talking about individuals who use their services. This could be explained by the fact that the term guest contains the traditional meaning of hospitality and its linguistic usage has remained unchangeable through time and, also, in employees' minds. Even though we have moved to an era where hospitality has acquired a commercial significance, it appears that there has been a marriage of its domestic meaning with its business one. Hence, when interviewees speak about guests, they actually imply customers, clients or consumers; yet, the first term prevails. This is a kind of metonymy because this term better describes better the way that organizations envisage how members of staff have been taught to think by their organizations; this is incorporated in their ways of thinking and daily expressions. Another argument regarding which term is appropriate to be used refers to customer service which as one of the key components within the hotel industry that contributes to the efficient operation of organizations. Already the phrase 'customer service' entails the term of customer so the use of the word customer stands as the most appropriate in when discussing about hospitality and the hotel sector in particular.

During interviews, questions related to customer service revealed that a customer focus approach is applied to the organizational culture of each hotel. The feeling of customer care and duty of care during customer service were highly estimated by interviewees. Being customer focused and having a passion for customer service regardless of the star category that the hotel belongs constitute fundamental behaviors and organizational values. 'Today, with more competitors vying for customers' attention exceptional customer service is essential to staying profitable in the business' (Gibson, 2011, p. 5). Attention to specific customer service skills reveals that there should be specific principles and values

in the United Kingdom which customer service should involve, or, to put it differently, how excellent customer service should be delivered.'The hospitality sector is a case environment for the consideration of skills in services. Despite its low status, it is one of the fastest growing sectors in the economy of the United Kingdom, and faces real challenges in matching its skills requirements to the changing labour market in this country and elsewhere' (Baum, 2002, p. 342). 'Because of the intangible nature of services, innovation success in the hospitality industry largely depends on the attitudes and skills of employees' (Chang, Gong and Shum, 2011, p. 812). HS7 points out that there are degrees of customer service and she talks about excellent customer service and service excellence. This gives us to understand that there are specific attitudes, behaviors and actions which should be displayed by members of staff, which classify customer service as excellent. Whether face to face or at a distance, customer service does not have exceptions to the rules. It has to be superior under any circumstances. Why does this happen and why is excellent customer service required? The answer is found in the business code, according to HS7. If excellent customer service characterizes the organization, this contributes to a first class reputation for the hotel, potentially bringing new customers to the hotel or simply increasing customer retention. High quality customer service generates a brand image popular for customer focus values.

HS7: 'Ehm, is basically ensuring that every single customer who walks through that door receives the most fantastic service from the minute they walk in to the minute they leave. Whether they pick up the phone to make a reservation, customer service over the phone, right to the point where you meet that person face to face, customer service is about service excellence, is about making sure that you completely create the ultimate factor for our customers because you want to ensure that they talk about us when they leave' (Human Resource Manager, 4 star hotel).

HS8 and HS9 explain that customer service has to do with daily duties in conjunction with interpersonal skills and a pleasant demeanor during customer service. HS8 underlines that top customer service is taken for granted as he is an ambassador of a five star property.

HS8: 'Customer service for me is delivering everything, basically is delivering the top five star service from when the guest arrives, meet them at the door, that's my job, carry the bags for them, taking to the reception so they are introduced. Take the bags to the room, come down, have a chat, tell them all about Edinburgh restaurants, what we can do for you, so customer service is absolutely everything for the guest in a five star hotel; just make their stay as pleasurable as possible and

always treat the guests as they have to be treated in a five star hotel' (Assistant Concierge Manager, 5 star hotel).

HS9: 'Customer service, oh well, is just your everyday duties, whatever you can do for the customers, just make the best of their stay, like you know the best as you can, so it's really the yes I can attitude; whatever I can we try to do for them, just be a happy smiling person' (Front Office Supervisor, 3 star hotel).

Interpersonal skills and product knowledge set up the atmosphere and create those dispositions which can offer a memorable customer service experience. Five star customer service implies that an elite clientele forms the main core of external customers, meaning that mainly well off individuals can afford to use those services. Arguably, the star category that the hotel belongs to predetermines the attributes of customer service, meaning that a different quality of customer service can be found in a three star category and in a four a five star category. The value for money that the customer receives for the services that he or she will use has such a power that there is no margin for low quality of customer service. To some extent, the prices for the services that customers will purchase and consume are decided by the star category, and other factors, such as the location of the hotel and the hotel group that a hotel is owned by, also explain the low or high price that an individual is asked to pay for his or her stay. Obviously, a five star property has a greater range of facilities to offer its customers and is possibly of more advanced nature. HS10 notes that hotel standards define the customer service provided in the premises, along with professional skills.

HS10: 'Customer service has to be about delivering good service in terms of the standards of the hotel, so delivering a good service to the guest in terms of satisfying his needs… Each hotel has its specific standards so always trying to maintain those standards in a very good way so as to make sure that you can keep your guests happy, but of course it is always about trying to see what they actually want' (Senior Supervisor, 3 star hotel).

The star category of the hotel offers, on the one hand, specific services, but these services actually have to be enhanced and supported by the human factor. The services and facilities which exist in hotels with the aim of being sold are the base upon which customer service is built. However, the hotel staff have to create an analogous relationship between services and the quality of customer service. There is actually a greater dependence on

personnel for rating the value of customer service. Regardless of the hotel star category, all the interviewees agree that high standards of customer service should be ensured.

9.6 Required customer service demeanor of hotel staff and specific customer service values embraced

Customer service in the hotel industry entails some particular behaviors which need to be demonstrated by hotel staff during customer service. Desirable demeanors that hotel staff are asked to incorporate into customer service are very typical and do not differ from one hotel group to another. There appears to be universality as regards the etiquette of what good customer service is composed of. HS2 and HS11 indicate that zeal for customer service and feelings of duty of care towards the needs of individuals are more than desirable. Politeness and good manners in serving individuals signify the right attitude. Enthusiasm and warmth should be depicted in staff actions so as to satisfy customers. A member of staff who lacks excitement about customer service will affect its quality. HS11 talks about 'going the extra mile' as a behavior intended to please the customer at its maximum by offering top quality customer service, not only covering his or her basic needs regarding accommodation, but implying having a talent for putting the customer first – this shows customer care and can ensure customer satisfaction.

HS2: 'You got to have that funness, that love of customer service, ehm most of our staff working here they are here because they adore, they want to work in customer service and that's what we are looking for people… So if we get the right people we can train them and we can make them a star, but yes, quite critical with the right people, so attitude and the skills are very important' (Operations Manager, 4 star hotel).

HS11: 'Yes, you need to have a real passion for what you do, go the extra mile for the customer' (Guest Relations and Housekeeping Manager, 4 star hotel).

As long as the right staff are recruited with the desired people skills, the practical and technical side is something that can be taught, according to HS2 and HS4. Personality traits matter more as these elements are formed by individuals and their surroundings before adulthood. Personality hardly changes; however, the professional aspect of customer

service can be learned because specific technical skills are required which can be taught during training. Personal and interpersonal skills, according to HS4, are fundamental; this goes back to peoples' skills during recruitment.

HS4: 'Hospitality is a little more than a job, is adapting attention to detail, ability to speak to people, the friendly personality, that is required if I do an interview with somebody that's what I look for more than anything else, because the technical side you teach anybody' (Food and Beverage Manager, 5 star hotel).

Sales skills are quite important and hotel staff should demonstrate them when appropriate and when required. During interviews, management staff did not identify sales skills as such as a required characteristic of customer service, without denoting, though, that they are not desirable. During public space observations, it was apparent that sales skills are highly required from hotel staff at the café-bar, restaurant and reception. On hotels' job advertisements, a great number of job descriptions listed sales skills among the duties of the potential employees. In the below job advertisement, the recruitment of a food and beverage member of staff includes sales skills. Hotel staff not only need to meet their sales targets but also to exceed them. Sales skills are so important in the hotel industry because products and services are meant to be sold and, for this to be achieved, hotel staff should demonstrate this kind of skills so as to meet the financial objectives of their organization.

JA: 'To be a salesman and go beyond the general level of service expected' (3 star hotel).

Sales skills are not limited to food and beverages but are spread across different hotel departments. For the recruitment of a reservation office manager in another three star hotel, strong sales skills and in depth knowledge of KPIs are essential, according to the below job advertisement.

JA: 'Delivers a proactive sales culture within the office' (3 star hotel).

Here there is a need for a knowledgeable salesman who combines leadership and managerial skills. As a manager is able to motivate the rest of the team towards daily and weekly targets, he or she knows the market trends and the target market of the diverse customers to be dealt with. In terms of professionalism, a sympathetic demeanor on

behalf of staff, involving listening skills, patience, fairness and generosity during customer service shows professionalism in the name of customer care, as HS8 asserts.

HS8: 'I sit down with the guest, reason with the guest, and justify a complaint. I see if I can put an amenity in the room, a bottle of wine, a card as an apology because they may have deserved better, a small section of the bill… I am sorry for keeping you waiting Sir, we just came in park in charge and he was delighted with that, just as long as you do something to follow through if you feel that the guest has a reasonable point. It does not have to be a huge thing, just offer an apology, an amenity or give something complimentary' (Assistant Concierge Manager, 5 star hotel).

Even when a difficulty arises which is likely to cause tension and hence unpleasant feelings for the customer, whether he or she is right or wrong, it is upon the employee to act according to brand standards. This can be achieved by always maintaining a courteous and superior attitude in favor of the customer, as if the trust is lost between the two parties, both are affected negatively: the organization as a business and the customer as a buyer. A good will gesture from the employee, who is the hotel brand ambassador, can create a whole different atmosphere.

HS4: 'If for every reason the customer is dissatisfied then we have to make sure before they leave the hotel that they turn that complaint round; they leave happy' (Food and Beverage Manager, 5 star hotel).

HS4 has the same opinion as HS8 that, during complaint handling, the employee's customer service demeanor has to ensure customer satisfaction, as customer loyalty brings customer retention to the brand.

The responses of interviewees as regards customer service demeanor and skills provided me with an insight into which behaviors are encouraged during customer service. It is logical, however, to think that sometimes interviewees may exaggerate and attempt to embellish the reality as regards the components of good or excellent customer service. Nobody wanted to say anything negative about their brand. This is why I employed public spaces observations; so as to verify whether or not interviewees were telling the truth, as what is said is often quite different from what is done. Behavioral and organizational values are expected to be at the top level during customer service, as is evident from the information below, derived from my observations.

OBS1: 'The main aim of staff is to serve customers immediately and replenish their drinks if they wish so. They are very fast in serving and each member of staff is communicating with each other quickly' (4 star hotel).

OBS2: 'They were well organized and the two guys were communicating fast at the bar so as to ensure that everything runs smoothly and customers are served promptly' (4 star hotel).

Features such as teamwork, cooperation, integrity and commitment build the basis for the rest of the values which follow on a professional level. From OBS1 and OBS2, it is apparent that members of staff have established cooperative relationships with their colleagues. They are able to work together for a common purpose to serve customers efficiently and promptly. This cannot happen if there is a lack of team spirit as it is mainly through coordination in the actions of colleagues that healthy working relationships can flourish. At the same time, it is an indication that employees gain job satisfaction and are happy to work for the specific brand. This goes back to the statements of some interviewees that their focus is not only on the external customers but also on the internal, making sure that the staff are pleased and in this way have high levels of organizational commitment. There is mutual respect and mutual understanding between the organization and the labor force.

Psychological values such as respect towards the customer and accountability of the employee are present in the below dialogue during complaint handling at the reception. Arguably, the receptionist resorts to a good will gesture in an attempt to calm down the customer and so as not to negatively affect her customer service experience and consequently the image of the brand. Management of customer feelings on the part of employees in favor of the brand often occurs. The purpose is to stop the customer from further complaining and avoid negative comments in front of other customers or on online travel websites. It is actually a psychological technique which aims to bring about customer retention and customer satisfaction and minimize financial loss for the hotel. The dialogue between the receptionist and the customer during the complaint is depicted below.

OBS3: Receptionist: It is £120 with breakfast included; you have paid only £85.

Customer: Why the prices are so up?

Receptionist: There is a concert tomorrow.

Customer: I am not paying £120 for one night.

Receptionist: I can add you breakfast for an extra £10.

Customer: Can I have that written?

Receptionist: He is smiling and replies to her, I am swearing on my life…(4 star hotel).

Despite the receptionist having to deal with a difficult customer, he remains calm, does not lose his temper and arranges an amendment for her. Possibly through time and working experience, staff become able to control their feelings in front of customers and display only the appropriate ones so as to delight them and not irritate them. Characteristics of integrity and sense of humor from the receptionist at the end create a pleasant atmosphere. From the description below, it appears that the receptionist also contributes to the improvement of the brand standards of his organization during the serving of another customer.

OBS3: Receptionist: 'What do you think of the hotel? I will give you this card where you can write how it was, your stay, so as to let know other people as well' (4 star hotel).

Customer loyalty as a psychological value can have the form of a reward system; often, global chains hotels have launched such systems.

OBS3: 'You are a member of the rewards card so you are collecting points whenever you stay with us' (4 star hotel).

Physical values were more often encountered during observation in the bar and restaurant areas in terms of cleanliness and health and hygiene. Members of staff were accomplishing their daily tasks with devotion, efficiency and promptness.

OBS4: 'The rest of them had the duty of cleaning the tables and keeping the place tidy and clean'. 'The supervisor is cleaning tables and is serving drinks to customers in a smiley and friendly way' (5 star hotel).

OBS4: 'Cleaning of glasses and bottles at the bar area is a task undertaken very often by members of staff' (5 star hotel).

OBS5: 'After that she is taking the glasses and empty bottles from a table and she cleans the surface of it. She is working behind the bar cleaning, working with ice, and she uses the dishwasher a lot' (4 star hotel).

OBS4 and OBS5 give a picture of how essential the above duties are not only because these are health and hygiene rules to which the members of staff have to adhere, but because they give a very good impression to the customer that the place is clean and not dirty. A pleasant aesthetic outcome is generated visually and in the senses; as first impressions matter, they have the power to predispose relevant feelings which will form the service experience. As regards the display and promotion of products, it appears that members of staff attached a lot of attention to the time of production either of food or beverages. Thus, it can be added that the physical values of products such as presentation standards, quality and value, have to be further enhanced by the staff, not only from a hygienic aspect but also from an aesthetic one. Below, the moment of preparation of alcoholic drinks before the waitress serves them is presented.

OBS1: 'A lot of drinks are served, mainly wine and champagne. The senior waitress is in the process of serving two customers. He opens a bottle of champagne of an orange color; he has placed the two champagne glasses on the serving tray. He is very careful so as to put the same amount of drink in both glasses and achieve symmetry but also a nice visual and aesthetic result is created. Before he takes the drinks to customers he has a final look on the drinks and then he is ready to serve them' (4 star hotel).

From OBS1, it can also be understood how the commercial value of consumable products such as beverages is related to the essence of customer service. Customer service not only means disposition of personal and interpersonal skills and all the characteristics mentioned above but also artistic skills which seem to be absolutely necessary for the production and consumption of goods. These artistic skills have the power to influence the service experience and are discussed in the following section.

9.7 How the customer service experience is surrounded by aesthetic values and emotional labor in the hotel environment

'The literature suggests that whatever the service (or indeed product) a customer is buying or receiving, that customer will have an experience; good, bad or indifferent, i.e. service always comes with an experience' (Carbone and Haeckel, 1994) and that 'all service encounters provide an opportunity for emotional engagement, however mundane the product or service might be' (Berry and Carbonne, 2007; Voss and Zomerdijk, 2007). It is supported then that the customer experience delivered within the hotel sector is not designed separately with the presence of aesthetic values, aestheticism, pleasant emotions and emotional labor. Aesthetic values are embraced during customer service in conjunction with the disposition of pleasant emotions on the part of employees. During observation, I located an intense presence of aesthetics during customer service, particularly in the bar and restaurant areas which indicates that a great number of hotel brands link the pleasant or good customer experience with the aestheticism which exists in the atmosphere of the hotel surroundings.

> Providing a good experience is also important because it affects customer satisfaction (Liljander and Strandvik, 1997), delivers customer loyalty (Yu and Dean, 2001; Pullman and Gross 2004; Mascarenhas, Kesavan and Bernacchi, 2006), influences expectations (Johnson and Mathews, 1997; Flanagan, Johnston and Talbot, 2005), instills confidence (Flanagan et al., 2005), supports the brand (Grace and O'Cass, 2004; Berry and Carbone, 2007) and also creates emotional bonds with customers or, conversely, leads to emotional scarring (Pullman and Gross, 2004).

By supplying customers with a pleasant customer experience the competitiveness of the organization increases and this is where aesthetic values contribute in conjunction with the presence of emotional labor. The term aesthetic values is usually used when referring to the properties of a piece of art, an object or a fact. Yet, the aim of this section is to present that the role of aesthetics in the hotel industry can be found in the interior design of the hotel and on the presence of emotional labor. 'Aesthetic value is a positive value, and thus can never be defined as a negative value' (Kronegger, 2000, p. 421). By stating that aesthetic values are incorporated in employee behavior during their work, I mean that aesthetic values are incorporated in the way that employees behave, stand, talk and serve customers. Aesthetic values therefore define to some extent how employees perform their

tasks and how they organize themselves accordingly. Does though aesthetic values and aestheticism work harmonically with the presence of emotional/aesthetic labor?

> Front-line employees in the hospitality industry are the medium through which companies interact with customers, and they are often seen as a source of service differentiation. In the process of service delivery, managers must depend on employees to maintain the quality of services provided (Nickson, Warhurst and Dutton, 2005). Given the significance of the provider-customer interaction, the concept of emotional labor has emerged to describe organizational expectations that employees display positive emotions to prompt customers' positive disposition toward the service provided (Groth, Henning-Thurau and Walsh,2009; Hochschild, 1983; Wharton, 2009).Displaying positive emotions through simulated affection on the part of employees (e.g respectful expressions, empathy) is associated with organizational objectives such as customer satisfaction, intention to return, and positive word of mouth (Chi, Grandey and Diamond, 2011; Johanson and Woods, 2008; Söderlund and Rosengren, 2008; Tsai, 2001).Conversely, negative affective displays (e.g. impolite wording, unfriendly attitude) have a negative effect on service satisfaction (Brotheridge and Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge and Lee, 2003; Gross and John, 2003).

In OBS6 it is depicted the stylish manner that the member of staff utilizes towards customers.

OBS6: 'He places his hands behind his waist. He takes an empty bottle from a customer's table and smiles. He acts fast and in an elegant way; he is careful with his hand movements and he has an air of grace and smartness' (5 star hotel).

OBS6: 'The female waitress is serving some dishes to customers. She has a charming and airy manner of serving. She does not seem to struggle with the volume or the size of dishes' (5 star hotel).

From OBS6, it can be noted that corporeal features are merged with daily tasks. Technical skills are not presented as basic skills but are made to look superior and, as a result, a joyful atmosphere is created which pleases the senses of customers during customer service. By using aesthetic labor some of the senses are pleased either visually or by hearing. In addition, aesthetic labor serves other purposes – for instance, to calm down the feelings and the anger of customers during complaint handling or during delays or to avoid forthcoming negative feelings. An attractive face with other facial features such as a smile or a specific adjustment of voice can generate harmony between the two parties. 'Organizations have developed internal normative standards to encourage their frontline

employees to simulate certain emotions through facial (e.g. smile, eye gaze) or verbal (e.g. greetings, farewell) expressions (Shani, Uriely and Reichel, 2014) to optimize the provider-customer interaction and elicit desirable feelings from customers'. Social skills form a significant part of customer service as well; how to communicate verbally and non verbally and how to react in specific situations. HS13 refers to communication skills and how a cordial personality is essential with reference to non verbal communication gestures such as smiling. 'The hospitality industry encourages its frontline employees to smile while talking. This immediately relaxes a guest and breaks down any negative barriers. Those who communicate on the phone too are encouraged to smile while speaking. The tone of voice becomes cheerful' (Andrews, 2007, p. 28).

HS13: 'Good communication, be very friendly, always smiling and be able to, ehm, always talk to them, make sure that all are ok and things like that' (Meetings Host Guest, 4 star hotel).

HS1 also acknowledges that smiling to customers should be an innate behavior. It acts as a friendly non verbal gesture, welcoming the customer. A pleasant demeanor towards customers using non verbal gestures is used, aiming at expressing hospitality and creating a warm atmosphere. Indeed, this shows the customer the strength of the feeling of customer care whether you actually serve them or not and, in this way, they might feel more valued and welcomed.

HS1: 'We also encourage small things; we actively say that you should smile to the guests, so if I am walking along the corridor and the guest is walking towards me I would smile at them, say good morning' (Director of Sales and Marketing, 4 star hotel).

HS12 believes that an extrovert personality who is able to show understanding towards customers in cases of complaints and has a sense of humor and a diplomatic demeanor if a challenge comes up can leave a favorable impression on the customer even if he or she encounters a difficulty.

HS12: 'So I think it is partly an outgoing personality, but somebody that can relate to different people. You empathize with people because you can turn a complaint into a kind bit of a laugh or you can turn it into something a lot better…' (Assistant Manager, 4 star hotel).

A member of staff is asked to perform numerous feelings and behaviors during customer service, so definitely has to be confident and have well developed social skills. An employee should be skilful at recognizing the kinds of social skills appropriate to use in each situation, so a mixture of social skills during professional communication should be demonstrated.

OBS7: 'The supervisor is going to the office. At that time a male young customer needs to check out. He has not been waiting for too long. She apologizes with a smile when she is coming out. Hi! Sorry for keeping you waiting' (3 star hotel).

It can be seen from the above information provided from observation that the smile of the front office supervisor can be interpreted as a sign of apology for the delay that she caused. Her nice demeanor has managed to prevent a negative feeling and to maintain a very good impression. Tone of voice, clarity and attention to the manner of articulation are elements which could exist on their own or be accompanied by the use of aesthetic labor. Below, it is noticeable that the voice of the young waiter is not used in a usual way but in a quite pleasing one which delights the auditory senses.

OBS2: 'His voice was also very charming and it was used in a way so as not irritate the customer but to listen pleasantly' (4 star hotel).

Simple, non complicated language and specific use of words during customer service were a common finding across observations. A typical and oversimplified use of words aiming to convey short and clear messages yet serving purposes of the conversation was part of the routine for members of staff. Ways of speaking looked more like accomplishment of a daily task and a natural conversation – this can be supported through observations across different hotels, which show that there are many similarities of vocabulary and phrases used by staff during customer service.

OBS7: 'A female employee who is working in the reception says to a customer with a smile, take care, have a nice day, goodbye' (4 star hotel).

OBS7: 'A male member of staff hands in luggage to customers and wishes to them with a smile, have a nice day, thank you' (4 star hotel).

'It is increasingly recognized that control of employees' attitudes and appearance are seen as legitimate managerial strategies for service companies in the name of customer care and service quality. Within these broader customer care strategies, the aesthetic content of labor, in the form of language, dress codes, shape and size of body, manner and style, is deliberately manufactured to appeal to customers' (Nickson, Warhust and Dutton, 2005, p. 201). This has led to the production of specific grooming standards related to hairstyle, nail color, uniform, body posture and language, as is apparent in the responses of interviewees and observations. There is direct control of management over staff whereby these 'qualities' are monitored and further developed in support of hotel brand image.

> The term aesthetic labor is analytically complex' and a full working definition can be found in Nickson et al. (2001). Here it is enough to note that companies employ people with certain capacities and attributes that favorably appeal to customers' visual or aural senses, and which are then developed through training and/or monitoring (Nickson, Warhurst and Dutton, 2005, pp. 197–198). It has become translated in the popular imagination as those people who are employed on the basis of "looking good" and/or "sounding right" (Warhurst and Nickson, 2001). In looking good or sounding right, employees, then, are potentially offering competitive advantage in relation to both the process of service and the service encounter (in other words doing the work); and equally becoming an integral part of the tangible product (that is, literally embodying the image of the company) (Nickson, Warhurst and Dutton, 2005, p. 198).

Words and phrases which show kindness and the feeling of being welcome as a customer create a warm atmosphere and show friendliness and this attitude takes us back to the traditional meaning of hospitality. The sections from OBS1, OBS3 and OBS8 also reveal how informal and casual the language that is used can be. On the one hand, staff therefore have to be professional, as discussed above, but they also have to show cordiality and familiarity during customer service, as shown here. There is not much autonomy for staff regarding verbal communication, as a specific tactic is followed by all employees – adhering to organizational rules. The employee seems to be restricted; yet, he does not appear inadequate or look inefficient in front of customers. In a way this submissive behavior can be explained as customer affection in the name of good customer service. This stereotypical behavior is accompanied by a smiling demeanor and a combination of pleasant physical features supports the verbal content of the greeting.

OBS1: Receptionist: Thank you very much, enjoy your stay (4 star hotel).

OBS3: Receptionist: Bye bye, thank you very much, thanks (4 star hotel).

OBS3: Receptionist: Lovely, thank you (4 star hotel).

OBS8: Receptionist: Thank you very much. Cheers. Bye (smiling) (3 star hotel).

Very intense is the presence of aesthetics as regards the decoration of the interior design; mainly in the bar and restaurant. These high standards are found in furniture, fabrics, lighting, colors and metamorphic rocks used for the construction and decoration of the building. For instance, five different styles of interior design emerged during observations: contemporary, art-deco, traditional–classic, industrial and old world. Below follows an example of contemporary style:

OBS1: 'The decoration of the hotel is very stylish and the colors which dominate are black and gold, which can be found on many artifacts: in the logo of the bar, in the dress code of the members of staff, in the menu book and in the architecture of the building. The bar area is very spacious and there are plenty of tables to sit in. Upon entering, the customer can notice how high the ceiling is but also the magnificent suspended ceiling light ball which has smaller lamps on it. It creates brightness and a kind of luminosity but the light which is coming out is not very intense, is rather darker, thus a more romantic and dreamy atmosphere is created. The ceiling is decorated by an architectural dome in white and gold colors. It is an amazing piece of art as the dome does not stand on its own; it is decorated and surrounded by a small design of limpets in gold color. There are as well five columns inspired by the ancient Greek Ionian style; they are made from marble in grey and beige color…' (4 star hotel).

Arguably, the interior design of each hotel reflects the star category, meaning that the interior design and decoration of each hotel may be heavily decorated so as to convey the feeling of opulence because the main clientele base comes from high social classes, as is apparent from the below observation of a contemporary yet classic style.

OBS4: 'The lobby lounge is big in size with a superb interior design. As a five star property the hotel conveyed a feeling of luxury, majesty and superiority upon arrival. The high aesthetic image that the interior design communicated was obvious to that which guests of a certain social status – high class could have access. The high-pitched ceiling is made of glass, adding more character to the whole environment. The style is traditional–classy without being outdated and unfashionable. The feeling of warmth and welcome is outlined by smooth colors and comfortable seats. The triadic

color scheme is composed from neutral colors: light and dark brown, ivory–cream, beige and white. The armchairs and the sofas, they are quite spacious and comfortable in brown or ivory color with assorted pillows. The floor is fully covered with carpet in brown and gold motif of Moroccan style. Table lamps are spread all over the place; they are switched on and they convey a cozy and elegant atmosphere…' (5 star hotel).

An idyllic atmosphere is created in the hotel environment by combining materialistic attractive elements which coexist in harmony with the mannerisms of hotel staff during customer service. The environment of the hotel industry can be perfectly described in the following remark from Baudrillard (1983, p. 148) 'we live everywhere already in an aesthetic hallucination of reality'.

9.8 The significance of grooming standards during customer service and the impact of culture on emotional representations

Adherence to high grooming standards and employee compliance with relevant regulations relating to these forms a substantial part of training and attention, according to management staff. Questions focusing on grooming standards, appearance and aesthetic labor were added to the interviews at a later stage, meaning that a small number of management staff was interrogated on these. Grooming standards and appearance are interdependent – looking nice and neat are attributes defined by grooming standards. But why are grooming standards necessary? If employees do not follow grooming standards, their appearance would not be appealing to the public. Grooming standards are not innate characteristics. They can be taught and each individual can enhance them according to the guidelines of each organization. 'In terms of appearance, exterior characteristics, either native or acquired, contribute to the whole composition of it. The face has occupied center stage in the research on physical appearance' (Jackson, 1992, p. 3). HS14 talks about attitude and appearance as the key factors for recruitment.

HS14: 'Posality basically of a person to be a waitress, how charming she is serving and the way of serving; we train them accordingly, but the whole posality is what we are looking for – attitude and appearance' (Food and Beverage Manager, 3 star hotel).

He uses the adjective *charming*, which connotes attractiveness, during customer service and conveys an aesthetic pleasure. 'Facial attractiveness best represents one's conception of the ideal appearance and gives greater pleasure to the senses' (Hatfield and Sprecher, 1986, p. 4). Still, judging attractiveness based on appearance can be quite subjective for recruitment. As has been seen above, recruitment is based on practical, social and interpersonal skills and personal taste. HS14 informs us that specific training is provided by the organization so as to teach hotel staff how to display a positive and enjoyable disposition. 'Soft skills are much more important than hard, technical skills in the provision of hospitality: emotional demands are made of employees to constantly be in a positive, joyful and even playful mood' (Burns, 1997, p. 240). What is fundamental during recruitment is the mentality and the personality of the potential employee. HS2, HS4 and HS9 share the same opinion that, to work in hospitality, the attitude of the individual matters most, as this predisposes her/his approach towards customer service.

HS2: 'Definitely. I think for me the first point for any staff to do excellent customer service is the attitude. I mean, we are not in the industry for money for sure' (Operations Manager, 4 star hotel).

HS4: 'Ehm, no, I do not think so. Because we train a lot of staff, well, yes and no, the skill we can train everybody, the people's personality, that's most required' (Food and Beverage Manager, 5 star hotel).

HS9: 'I do not know if it really has to be skills; it might be skills, I think an attitude what you should have, how you deal with the situation, how you talk to people, how you cope with the pressure…' (Front Office Supervisor, 3 star hotel).

'The socio-cultural perspective holds that human attitudes and behaviors are influenced and determined largely by the socio-cultural forces around them' (Tavris and Wade, 2001). The attitudes of an individual are formed through time. Indeed, they are formed from early childhood and can be influenced by family and other social systems and institutions such as school, university and church. When management staff talk about attitude, they refer to the personality and behavior to which employees are disposed – for them, attitude seems to be used interchangeably with the terms behavior and personality. It is true that attitudes shape a part of the personality and of the behavior of the individual; there is an interrelationship of thinking, feeling and acting. 'Although many studies have uncovered a relationship between attitudes and behavior, this relationship is not consistent' (Ashford

and Croy, 2009, p. 111). Management staff base the recruitment of staff on attitude, meaning feelings and beliefs, as they strongly believe that attitude can predetermine the behavior of staff during customer service.

Even if hotel staff might seem to have the relevant attitude that is sought to meet the requirements of the organization, this does not necessarily ensure that behavior will be as such during customer service. Management staff suppose that, if the attitudes of employees entail characteristics such as friendly personality and social and interpersonal skills, these elements act as a guarantee for the appropriateness or not of the potential candidate in the hotel industry. It is apparent that intuition and personal perception on the part of hotel management guide decision making in recruitment. During my interviews, management staff partially admitted the use of aesthetic labor. As this is obviously a sensitive issue, some interviewees were more cautious about what they said or tried to be diplomatic. The observations nonetheless provided more information as to whether or not aesthetic labor is used. Below follow examples from observations in two different hotels across Glasgow and Edinburgh:

OBS3: 'He is good looking, groomed and very fresh. He is dressed in his uniform – a dark grey suit, white shirt, and he wears a tie in black and gold color' (4 star hotel).

OBS3: 'She is dressed in a white shirt, grey suit and a green scarf. She is very sweet, bit overweight but good looking, with blue eyes, light makeup and neat hair' (4 star hotel).

OBS1: 'The female employees are wearing a champagne-gold scarf and the male ones a black tie or a Paisley tie – very well, good looking girls' (4 star hotel).

Along with high grooming standards, male and female staff possess aesthetic facial qualities. These grooming and aesthetic characteristics are presented as skills without yet having a clarifying purpose of importance from a behavioral or cognitive perspective which would actually give them the right to be considered as so important. They serve the health and hygiene regulations and the general idea of the very first impression according to interviewees: apart from that, there is no intrinsic value. These characteristics work as contributors so as to enhance the customer service experience in two ways: with the use of grooming standards which apply to all members of staff and with the promotion of aesthetic labor which cannot be found in all members of staff. Aesthetic labor does not

exist in abundance; neither is it is hidden. Rather, it is balanced and very thoughtfully placed by management staff in locations such as cafés, bar–restaurants and receptions.

> Organizations can improve corporate images through enacting dress codes for employees. Nickson et al. (2005) indicated that dress code specifications include guidelines for general neatness, clothing style, accessories, personal grooming, hairstyle, and hair length. Warhurst and Nickson (2001) indicated that organizations use training to improve the appearance and aesthetic skills of employees. Pettinger (2004) felt that the clothing worn by employees when serving customers must reflect the corporate brand and enhance the corporate image. Additionally, Entwhistle and Wissinger (2006) indicated that employees must spend additional time (beyond regular work hours), effort and money on presenting an appropriate and attractive appearance in the workplace.

The theme of grooming standards was more apparent during my public space observations, where I realized how aestheticism is used from an organizational aspect. All the hotel brands which participated had specific regulations regarding grooming standards which did not differ much from brand to brand. They were quite common; there can be, though, different degrees of aestheticism rating from high to medium. HS2 mentions that personal grooming matters a lot but appearance is not taken into account during recruitment. As long as the potential employee has respectable behavior, fine grooming standards and the motivation to work in hospitality, these factors influence the decision making of hiring. HS2 finds that, if recruitment is authorized by the physical attractiveness of each candidate, this is synonymous with discrimination in the workplace and against ethical rules.

HS2: 'Personal grooming is very important; appearance is not a key factor, not with us. At least we do not discriminate of the appearance if the person has the right attitude, good grooming standards and the willingness to work in the industry; that's the factors that we are looking for' (Operations Manager, 4 star hotel).

HS1 and HS4 agree that some of the rules which refer to grooming standards concern hairdressing style and appropriate colors of nail varnish.

HS1: 'We do have quite strict grooming standards… staff uniforms have to be worn in a certain way and, if you have long hair, the long hair should be tied back, multicolor nail varnish, you know, things like that' (Director of Sales and Marketing, 4 star hotel).

HS4 underlines the importance of grooming standards in relation to health and hygiene rules during dining. Potential candidates who have tattoos would not have a high chance of being hired. Even if the organizational ethics of a brand do not allow discrimination, unwritten rules are followed by management staff. The existence of these unwritten rules is encountered in the workplace where those imperatives influence employment decisions. These unwritten rules are called as such because they do not have a legal disposition and are in favor of discrimination acts.

HS4: 'Ehm, yes, definitely, because we got health and hygiene rules. For example, no visible tattoos, so if somebody has a visible tattoo here or on the neck then it would not be appropriate; the official line is we are not supposed to discriminate, we do not discriminate, the unofficial line is, look, if they do not fit in for example, nail polish, we do not allow bright nail polish; that's partly for our grooming policy and partly to do with the health and hygiene. You will not be allowed to work if you have false nails on, because if they fall off in somebody's dinner, things like that, health and safety standards. Hair tied back but, you know, people apply for jobs in hospitality that they should really know' (Food and Beverage Manager, 5 star hotel).

HS15, from a different hotel, concurs that people who have body modifications would not be suitable in the surroundings of this luxury hotel. She thus associates the image of the ideal candidate with the whole atmosphere of a five star property; this helps us to understand that, during recruitment, the character of each candidate plays a key role in decision making.

HS15: 'Say, for instance here, somebody that is tattooed all over, they are not going to fit in, they will not probably feel comfortable…' (Food and Beverage Supervisor, 5 star hotel).

HS2 comments that having staff dressed in uniform positively affects their psychology from a professional aspect and can contribute to the high quality of customer service.

HS2: 'If the staff is in the right uniform, they are appreciated in their uniform, they feel more confident and, if you feel more confident, you deliver better customer service' (Operations Manager, 4 star hotel).

What I noticed during my observations was that the choice of color or of uniform design was not at random. For instance, the colors of the uniform usually reflect the main colors that the brand represents globally and, often, they were matched with the decoration, with

the interior design of the working environment, including the colors of walls, furnishings and material objects, and so on. On the one hand, the role of the uniform improves the psychological values of staff and, on the other, it contributes to the aesthetic pleasure of customers from a visual aspect. In the observation below, it is evident that the green satin-silky tie of the waitress matches with the one dominant color of the interior design of the bar–restaurant – the green one.

OBS6: 'She has a bit of makeup, a ponytail on the left as a hairstyle, she is dressed in a white shirt, a black pair of trousers, black waistcoat, green satin-silky tie and a green apron. Clean uniform' (5 star hotel).

OBS6: 'The interior design is quite sophisticated with bold items, I would say. The style is very close to what we call art-deco. It dominates a triadic color scheme with green, purple and black. The sofas have a velvety texture in purple color; the 'art' chairs have a green–olive color of leather and velvety texture' (5 star hotel).

There are specific acceptable and non acceptable grooming standards for hotel staff which are connected with the customer service experience, health and hygiene rules and the public image that each hotel brand aspires to be popular for. The reason that grooming standards have to be maintained to a high level is because they generate a very good impression to customers, possibly signifying that, on a general basis, the hotel follows high standards in every course of action. The existence of grooming standards by itself does not imply any kind of discrimination. Yet, there seems to be a prejudice and exclusion of specific social groups because some corporeal features are not preferable. According to Smith, Buttel and Ankerholz-Potts (2004, p. 55), 'it is vital to remember at all times that first impressions count. Customers do not want to frequent an establishment where the employees do not look after their personal standard of grooming'. As it has been examined so far, universality around the display of positive emotions, dispositions and grooming standards seems to exist meaning that the current literature does not differentiate these displays from an intercultural aspect. It may be that not all the different cultural groups of customers embrace and feel comfortable around the aforementioned emotional displays of hotel staff.

> The literature verifies that the study of emotions is also important as a cross-cultural issue (Shani, Uriely and Reichel, 2014) given that the hotel sector has been largely influenced by globalization and international franchising trends

(Go and Pine, 1995; Guerrier and Deery, 1998). However, there are few studies exploring the role of culture in the performance of or response to emotional displays (Li, Canziani and Barbieri, 2016, p. 2). Since cultural manifestations (e.g. beliefs, values, traditions) shape people's thoughts and behavior (Furrer, Liu and Sudharshan, 2000; Leu, Wang and Koo, 2011), it is expected that culture also impacts emotional displays and customers' perceptions of providers' emotions (Johanson and Woods, 2008).

When two different cultural groups: an employee and customer(s) interact the potential cultural differences and patterns of behavior that the customer embrace might affect his/her customer service experience and satisfaction in a negative way if the emotional displays of employees do not take into account what would be appropriate for the customer's expectations. For instance, direct eye contact, smiling, speaking loud, laughing with open mouth, specific greeting gestures might be approved non verbal behaviors in specific cultural contexts but in some others might be unacceptable. 'Individuals from western individualistic cultures tend to convey their emotions in a more direct way than do people who are engrained in collectivistic cultures; the latter are encouraged to control their emotional expressions to maintain group harmony' (Heine, Lehman and Markus, 1999; Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Matsumoto, Yoo and Nakagawa, 2008).

If cultural awareness characterizes hotel staff as a feature of intercultural skills this can motivate them to develop further their intercultural knowledge on specific emotional labor displays so as to avoid customer disappointment. At the same time if hotel organizations were considering how different emotional displays could potentially affect their reputation as a brand from an intercultural aspect this could be not only a reassurance for an excellent customer service experience but also an opportunity to boost their competitiveness and add on their differentiation strategies. 'Emotional labor has been recognized as a key dimension of service quality' (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1985) and 'a key contributor to organizational goals' (Grandey and Brauburger, 2002) (in Li, Canziani and Barbieri, 2016, p. 3). Hotel brands should perhaps apply strategic thinking over which emotional displays can enhance a positive customer service experience from an intercultural aspect and which can risk it. Due to the fact that emotional displays can be taught and are taught, is not unusual to be enriched or altered on the part of hotel staff when needs be in an intercultural interaction. However, mindfulness is required, attention to detail and accurate knowledge of the purpose and importance of emotional displays need to be further improved.

9.9 Conclusion

It can be inferred that most hotel brands in the study highly estimate and pay attention during recruitment to the personality of the potential employee. A different range of skills, attitudes and values have to be combined which all work together for the provision and production of effective customer service. Hotel staff are required to incorporate and demonstrate at the service encounter those particular characteristics which have been established from each hotel brand and tend to be common in all the different hotel brands which participated in the study. Soft skills are sought more than hard skills upon and after recruitment and this helps us to understand the reasons behind the importance of themes related to grooming standards, appearance, aestheticism, aesthetic labor, decoration and interior design. The concept of emotional labor is largely connected with the competitiveness of hotel brands and with the service quality however most brands appear to have ignored the impact of culture on emotional displays from an intercultural perspective which potentially can affect the customer service experience, satisfaction, return and word of mouth about each hotel brand. It is seen here again how the role of culture can be challenging in the provision of excellent customer service and how it is fundamental on the part of hotels to take into consideration the distinctive cultural needs of global customers; but for this to be achieved cultural awareness is needed to be infused from hotel brands to hotel staff through appropriate training in order to further develop their intercultural skills.

Chapter 10 Conclusion

10.1 Introduction

This chapter assesses the contribution of the study, discussing relevant issues and reassessing their input in the applicable chapters. The opportunity is given at this stage to refer to the contribution of the study by examining the participating global hotels as multicultural and learning organizations. Despite the fact that hotels are aware of the essence of cultural diversity found in internal and external customers they appear to have not yet build a connection between diversity management and intercultural issues. Specific features and skills of hotels' management and non-management staff are presented based on the study, considering what has been examined in previous chapters either as obstacles or skills on the part of hotel staff. Lastly, suggestions for future research follow as, within this study, intercultural communication and intercultural issues on the part of hotel management staff were examined, but it is possible to expand further on these by exploring how the clientele base feels towards these challenges at the service encounter and if their customer service experience is affected positively or negatively.

10.2 Contribution of the study: hotels as multicultural and learning organizations

This study has addressed issues on cultural diversity, globalization, intercultural communication, diversity management and diversity training which up to a point appear to remain unconnected in some hotels in the United Kingdom. Consequently these issues may have affected the normal operation of a number of hotels regarding the customer service experience, the recruitment and training that hotel staff receive. Despite the prominent presence of intercultural communication in customer service with global customers and the recruitment of a global workforce, it could be argued that the role of intercultural communication at the service encounter has not been researched adequately; nor the intercultural skills that hotel staff should be disposed of so as to respond to the intercultural challenges that hotel staff and customers from different cultural groups may encounter. This is also rationalized by the fact that global hotel brands are very well acquainted with

issues related to diversity management and cultural diversity but they do not seem to have achieved a connection of those issues with intercultural communication and with the further development of the intercultural communication skills of hotel staff. The argument which arises here is how hotels can claim that excellent customer service is a top priority in the name of professionalism, customer satisfaction, customer care and retention as discussed in chapter 9, but this is not examined in relation to the secondary dimensions of global customers. As discussed in chapter 7, hotel staff acknowledge that customers from different cultural groups may have different cultural needs in terms of dietary, bathing and religious habits or because of different styles of verbal or non verbal communication. Despite that, it could be considered hotels have not managed to link these particular needs of their global customers with the essence of cultural diversity and how diversity training could benefit hotel staff so as to respond successfully to the challenges that they encounter during customer service but also to extend their intercultural skills.

In chapter 8 it is underlined that diversity training can potentially enhance not only the skills of hotel staff, the customer service experience but also their intercultural knowledge of intercultural differences and similarities and therefore their intercultural understanding. There is a strong link between diversity training and diversity management as the latter signifies maximization of employee's skills and talents. The fact that diversity training is regarded as desirable on the part of hotel staff but hotels do not seem to supply their employees with this opportunity, which belongs to the area of learning and development, reveals that hotels may have not established efficient communication between employees and HRM. Hotels as organizations might be in a position to offer all the necessary learning and development opportunities to train their employees. This is also what hotels claim on their official websites, as pointed out in chapter 8 – they can offer all the necessary opportunities for employee development as regards further training. However, if this is indeed the case, hotel staff would have access to achieving a desirable extent of intercultural skills and intercultural understanding. Both monolingual and multilingual hotel staff would welcome the introduction of international language courses but the organizations concerned do not seem to have initiated any action regarding this issue.

'Managing diversity is concerned with ensuring that all people maximize their potential' (Kandola, 1995; McDougall, 1996). Arguably, managing diversity is connected with all training opportunities as well, therefore training aiming at the increase of the intercultural

understanding and awareness of hotel staff could contribute to the redefinition of what kind of intercultural skills are necessary for hotel staff during customer service. It has been argued in chapter 9 that attention to soft skills, grooming standards, appearance, posture, behavior and verbal communication is highly important and specific training is offered to employees in those areas. However, it should be noticed that some of the soft skills still need to be expanded upon and these could be interrelated with the intercultural aspects of customer service. Soft and hard skills in the hotel sector are interrelated and, according to the findings of the study, hotel staff could invest on hard skills. Generally soft skills focus on those qualities that enable a person to engage and communicate successfully with others. For instance knowledge of international languages is a hard skill because it needs to be taught and learnt so that it can contribute to the repertoire of soft skills that hotel staff hold; such as listening and communicating effectively with customers from different cultural groups in their mother tongue which requires both soft and hard skills.

In chapter 7, the legal and economic rationales of diversity management were analyzed, revealing that both rationales coexist in the organizational culture of each hotel brand. 'Diversity management assists to the understanding of a greater number of customer needs' (Rice, 1994; Thidaboux, Jeffards and Greenberg, 1994; Capowski, 1996); 'thus increasing the customer base and turnover' (Segal, 1997). Since diversity management is accepted as a competitive advantage in hotels, it is necessary to examine how this competitiveness can be achieved by using and expanding the skills of hotel staff from an intercultural aspect. Hotels may not have realized that further development of intercultural skills can boost the competitiveness of their organizations and also improve the customer service skills of hotel staff in a broader sense which would be valuable in the everyday duties and tasks that they have to perform. Chapter 3 discussed how globalization has contributed to socio-economic, cultural and political changes that cannot leave the work environment of hotels unaffected. A global workforce as a result of economic globalization has created multicultural organizations and hotels characterize themselves as such organizations, placing great emphasis on this on their official websites. Sales and Mirvis (1984) argued that 'an organization which simply contains many different cultural groups is a plural organization, but considered to be multicultural only if the organization values this diversity'.

> 'In multicultural organizations differences of all types are not merely tolerated;
> they are actually sought out because their inclusion offers critical opportunity
> for improvement and enhanced outcomes for organizations, including

increased profitability, learning, creativity, flexibility, adaptation to change and organizational growth' (Greenhaus and Callanan, 2006, p. 518).

The participating hotels seem to have well established in their organizational philosophy and values the essence of diversity but they may have not been alerted as to how the professional training provided to their employees need to be updated or enriched to be in line with the intercultural challenges that hotel staff encounter. Hotels being multicultural can be considered to be in the position to understand and reflect on the intercultural differences which exist in their clientele base. Welch, Tanke and Glover (1988) reported that 'developing cultural awareness within an organization may help employees become more familiar with different values, interpersonal interactions and communication systems, which are critical for an effective multicultural environment'. Supplying employees with the relevant intercultural skills provided in the form of training is a consideration of the changes which occur in the external environment and affect the environment of a hotel business.

For this to be achieved hotels need to act as learning organizations which are able to value, improve and expand the talents of their employees. 'A learning organization is an organization skilled at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge and modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights' (Garvin 1993, p. 80). Learning organizations could be described as non conventional organizations with creative dimensions. 'From an organization's point of view, learning, whether planned or unplanned, formal or informal, produces a wider range of solutions to organizational issues and increases everyone's capacity to contribute to the success of the organization' (Burgoyne et al., 1999, pp. 16–17). As global hotel brands seem to be supplied with all the relevant training and development opportunities, it is necessary to link those opportunities with the intercultural elements of which a job in the hotel industry is composed and invest in them. That is automatically a benefit for each hotel and its employees as it can improve their job performance and employee commitment because they will feel valuable. As hotels strive for competitiveness through their culturally diversified workforce, how this can be attained could be depicted by taking advantage of hotel staff skills and maximization of their talents. Having expanded the intercultural skills of hotel staff the chances of enhancing the customer service experience are higher because employees would have increased their intercultural understanding to a greater extent with the appropriate training in place.

Encouraging intercultural skills within the hotel industry signifies new learning which could provide long term benefits at individual and organizational level. Hotel staff can benefit from the further acquisition of intercultural skills on a personal and professional level (as a transferable skill) and the hotel organization itself benefits from a commercial perspective. 'A common explanation for the need to learn is the requirement for adaptation and improved efficiency in times of change' (Dodgson, 1993, p. 378). Hotels cannot remain static; they need to adapt and be able to respond to new socio-economic and cultural conditions, as discussed in chapter 3, because these new conditions create new needs and trends in the market in terms of recruitment of hotel staff and the needs of global customers.

> From the perspective of organizational development, change is ''a set of behavioral science-based theories, values, strategies, and techniques aimed at the planned change of the organizational work setting for the purpose of enhancing individual development and improving organizational performance, through the alteration of organizational members'' on-the-job behavior (Porras and Robertson, 1992, p. 723).

It is necessary for hotels to be consistent in what they say and do regarding how the cultural diversity of their hotel staff is valued, how excellent customer service can be achieved and how relevant training and development opportunities are offered to hotel staff, appreciating that the changes which occur in the external environment will not leave internal or external customers unaffected. 'Executives in leading service companies see quality of their performance as a key to improving global competitiveness, productivity, customer satisfaction, and thus profitability' (Bejou, Edvardsson and Rakowski, 1996).

10.3 Features and skills of hotel management and non management staff required based on the findings of the study

'The rapid global development of the hospitality industry has created a demand for competent and qualified global managers' (Chon and Yu, 2012, p. 364). In this section, specific features and skills are suggested that management and non management hotel staff should have in their repertoires. The features and skills recommended are based on the findings of the study and, arguably, depending on the level of hierarchy that each employee holds in the hotel, there should be an in depth or less in depth knowledge of the technical

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skills that a job in hospitality entails. For instance, it is expected that hotel management staff in food and beverages should have a sound knowledge of marketing, finance and sales. Ashley, *et al.* 1995 has suggested the competences for hotel staff below.

> The competency study which was conducted by Ashley, *et al.* (1995), in which the University of Central Florida's hospitality-management department invited twenty-five industry executives to be on an advisory committee. The executives participated in a four -hour brainstorming session to help identify the skills, knowledge areas and competencies critical for baccalaureate-level employees. The top 10 competency categories such as (1) people skills, (2) creative-thinking ability, (3) financial skill, (4) communication skills (for both written and oral presentations), (5) developing a service orientation, (6) total quality management, (7) problem-identification and problem-solving skills, (8) listening skills, and (9) individual and system-wide computer skills (Mayburry and Swanger, 2010, p. 4).

Generally speaking, hotel staff skills should be multidimensional but relevant to the needs of the global market and the industry. The features and skills that I am introducing are closely related to the intercultural nature that a job in hospitality entails. Arguably, if the below characteristics are included in the professional skills of hotel staff, customer service would be treated as non complicated product which does not create obstacles or cause negative feelings, frustration or confusion. Rather it is highly professional, skillful and efficient without ignoring intercultural aspects: 1) Knowledge related to marketing, finance and sales, 2) social, personal and interpersonal qualities, 3) multilingual skills, 4) awareness of non verbal cues, 5) cultural and religious knowledge, 6) cultural empathy, 7) global work experience. Some general business knowledge related to key areas such as marketing, finance and sales is beneficial as hotels are primarily business organizations. As working in a hotel environment entails high levels of social interaction, individuals who can engage with a diverse client base are more preferable. Social competence in conjunction with personal and interpersonal skills can create a favorable impression to the customer, and an environment which will make communicators feel comfortable. Thus, a trust relationship stands a chance of being achieved between customers and staff. Chapter 9 outlined the desirable demeanor of hotel staff during customer service as a combination of people's skills. Thus far, an account has been given of some broad qualities that employees should possess.

In terms now of the kinds of intercultural skills necessary, it is evident that hotel staff should possess some knowledge of international languages. Having the ability to speak an

international language is not only about linguistic competency but involves learning about another culture. The opportunity for employees to take an international language class provided by their respective organizations could be regarded as a formal organizational policy, targeting more effective dealings with intercultural issues at work. In chapter 8, language barriers were investigated, the contribution of the global workforce and their multilingual skills was discussed and it was acknowledged on the part of hotel staff that international language classes would be in their interests. In chapter 8, it was explained that hotels contradict themselves on how they deal with international languages as, in some way, they admit that language issues do play an important role in customer service.

Awareness of non verbal communication cues alerts the employee that some cultures might be more expressive with hand gestures or facial expressions, whereas others may have particular non verbal codes which need prior knowledge to decode them. Chapter 7 examined the different purposes of non verbal communication as an attempt to achieve understanding between customers and hotel staff. 'Non verbal communication is a fundamental part of intercultural interactions. Sometimes this aspect of communication is overlooked in training or it is treated as a kind of vocabulary problem, with different gestures having different meanings in different cultures' (Brislin and Yoshida, 1993, p. 274). Some relevant cultural knowledge is important, highlighting specific aspects of a culture: its values and norms. There might be religious issues which should be explored so as to understand the behavior and ways of thinking of customers and some of their habits. This is where cultural empathy takes place, as the employee is able to identify where a customer's behavior originates; always to an extent and not thoroughly. Finally, global work experience in another country where the same hotel organization operates enhances the ability of the employee to work with different cultures. This signifies higher familiarity for the employee when working in an intercultural team where she/he can perceive different behaviors, values and norms. Such familiarity can be gained from a variety of life experiences as she/he becomes a citizen of the particular culture and spends a considerable amount of time in the country in question.

10.4 Suggestions for future research and limitations of the study

This study extensively investigated how global hotel brands deal with intercultural issues and how they feel through the contribution of hotel management staff and through relevant material which was found on the official websites of hotels. Professionalism, and excellence in customer service are depicted as key organizational goals for each hotel brand. However it can be suggested that there is the need to redefine the kinds of customer service skills hotel staff should possess at the service encounter mostly from an intercultural aspect. The findings show that the participating hotel organizations have realized that intercultural barriers do exist between global customers and hotel staff but may not have had the chance to expand to a great extent their intercultural skills and awareness. This shows the need for reevaluating the training provided to hotel staff.

It may be worth considering then to investigate how global customers feel about the intercultural obstacles that they may encounter with hotel staff and if it would be valuable to them to be solved. As communication during customer service can be problematic between global customers and hotel staff, future research could focus on how global customers feel towards the possible intercultural barriers that they come across. If global customers feel that a negative customer service experience affects their customer satisfaction to the specific hotel brand due to intercultural barriers the hotel would be likely to become more concerned as to how they can organize and respond to those issues as there can be an impact on the customer retention and consequently on the productivity levels of the respective organization. In addition to this as to which extent intercultural skills can be interpreted as a competitive advantage and added value for hotel organizations it could be important to look into bearing in mind that hotels are business organizations.

10.5 Conclusion

This chapter has given an overview of the thesis, pointing out the strengths of this study and how global hotel brands may improve in the areas of intercultural communication and

issues related to it. The participating hotel brands have already been identified as multicultural organizations and the dimension that they can act as learning organizations too has been added to them because they dispose of the appropriate potential and opportunities. Diversity training and further education to hotel staff provided by their organization can be regarded as an emerging need so as to respond to the changing needs of the global market and to the requirement to see this flourishing within the diversity management spectrum.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ETHICAL FORM

University of Glasgow | College of Social Sciences

COLLEGE ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR NON CLINICAL RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

EAP1 - APPLICATION FORM FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

This application form should be typed, and submitted electronically. All questions must be answered. "Not applicable" is a satisfactory answer where appropriate. (**NB: In Word format, click on shaded area within box to enter text, boxes will expand as required).** Applications should be submitted **at least one month in advance** of the intended start date for the data collection to allow time for review and any amendments that may be required.

1   APPLICANT DETAILS

1.1 Project Title **Title of Project: Communication across cultures? An intercultural approach to customer service in the hotel industry: A study with global elite hotel brands in the United Kingdom.**	
1.2 Name of Applicant **EIRINI DASKALAKI**	**1.3 Matriculation or Staff Number** **1106222D**
1.4 School/Subject/Cluster/RKT Group **SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**	

1.5   This Project is:

Staff Research Project ☐	Postgraduate Research √	Programme Convenors Only ☐ Project within a PGT or UG Programme
Postgraduate Taught ☐	Undergraduate ☐	

1.6   Programme Title:

  PhD EDUCATIONAL STUDIES

1.7   Ethical Risks: *Application will not be considered if this section is blank*

Supervisors should complete section <u>1.7A</u>   **Staff applicants** should complete section <u>1.7B</u>

1.7A COMMENTS FROM SUPERVISOR: (Student Applications)

Comment on the research ethics risks involved in the project

  I am satisfied that this is a low risk project. The student has produced the risk assessment below as part of her consideration of the risks involved. Her project involves safe locations with elite tourist groups who will be interviewed as part of the study, a method chosen as it fits well with elite groups and is considered a good method for working in the hospitality interview and occupational contexts. This project does not entail any practical ethics risks for me as a researcher, for my research participants & for the university. In the research as (Petre & Rugg, 2004:107) have commented *"the focal concept in research ethics is 'duty of care'.*

The participants of the study would be adults over 20 years old.

The safety of each research participant can be assured as all the stages would be evaluated and monitored constantly as the research proceeds.

There are no sensitive and private issues which would be approached. Any presence of lexical, physical, mental, psychological harm would not arise as the questions which would be asked would be carefully designed and structured so it would not be caused any discomfort to the research participants.

Confidentiality issues

Confidentiality, anonymity and privacy regarding the information which would be gained during semi structured -interviews and public space observations from the research participants would be guaranteed and after the completion of the study.

Health and safety issues: location of the participation

The research would be carried out inside the hotel or outside in a quiet place where this establishment would belong to the premises of the hotel.

Risk Assessment: Does this application qualify for a low risk review or fall within the applicable programme parameters? *Please refer to Low Risk Research Guidance on College ethics webpages for clarification.*

YES x☐   NO   ☐

I have checked this application and approve it for submission for review to the Ethics Committee.

Supervisor's Name Alison Phipps	Date 23.7.2012

1.7B RISK ASSESSMENT FROM STAFF APPLICANT:

Comment on the research ethics risks involved in the project

1.8   Researcher(s) (and Supervisor(s) where appropriate)
Researcher(s)

Title and Surname	First Name	Phone	Email *(This MUST be a University of Glasgow email address)*
Miss Daskalaki	Eirini	07754312046	e.daskalaki.1@research.gla.ac.uk

Principal Supervisor(s) *(where applicable)*

Title and Surname	First Name	Phone	Email *(This MUST be a University of Glasgow email address)*
Professor Phipps of Languages and Intercultural Studies	Alison	01413305284	Alison.Phipps@glasgow.ac.uk
Dr Crichton Lecturer Pedagogy Policy and Practice	Hazel	01413306586	Hazel.Crichton@glasgow.ac.uk

1.9   External funding details

Note. If this project is externally funded, please provide the name of the sponsor or funding body.

Sponsor/Funding Body: NO

2   Project/Participant Details

2.1 Start date for your **data collection** and end date of your research project

From: December 2012	To: August 2014

2.2 Justification for the Research *(use no more than 100 words)*

Why is this research significant to the wider community? Outline the reasons which lead you to be satisfied that the possible benefits to be gained from the project justify any risks or discomfort involved.

Labor force mobility and global customers are phenomena with which the hotel industry in the United Kingdom is highly familiar. There is a direct interaction between society and tourism activity on the micro and macro level. As Rojek and Urry (1997:3) have suggested "tourism and culture now plainly overlap and there is no clear frontier between the two". My analysis will attempt to present a systematic examination of which features form the organizational culture of each hotel and how intercultural communication and intercultural skills are part of the daily routine of hotel staff. Do intercultural issues matter in the hotel work environment? Living in a global world where specific socio-economic, cultural and political phenomena such as: globalization, multiculturalism and labor work force mobility have altered the image of hospitality with the recruitment of global work force and with the expansion of branded hotels around the world it is expected that the recruitment and training provided to employees would meet the needs of the market. Since intercultural communication is present on a social and professional context it needs to be examined as to whether or not the training provided to hotel staff is interrelated with the changes which occur on a social level. The research would be carried out in the United Kingdom in 3, 4 and 5 star global hotel groups.

2.3   Research Methodology and Data Collection

2.3A Method of data collection *(Tick as many as apply)*

Questionnaire (attach a copy)	☐
Online Questionnaire (provide the address) http://	☐
Participant observation (attach an observation proforma) Public space observations carried out hotel reception, café –bar restaurant	√
Audio or video-recording interviewees or events (with consent)	√
Focus Group (attached proposed questions and recording format)	☐
Other (please provide details – maximum 50 words) Thematic analysis on job advertisements and on the official websites of hotels.	√

2.3B Research Methods

Please explain the reason for the particular chosen method, the estimated time commitment required of participants and how the data will be analysed (Use no more than 250 words).

A number of branded hotels in the United Kingdom would be researched for the purpose of this study.

Qualitative research would be used depending on three different research methods: semi-structured interviews, public space observations and online analysis of material used in job advertisements and on the official website of each hotel. By using mix research methods I can triangulate my data. As Webb (1966) has mentioned 'whereby more than one method would be employed in the development of measures resulting in greater confidence in findings'.

1) Semi-structured interviews offer a low degree of structure, the opportunity to add new questions as the conversation flows and because it is a face-to-face research method the use of probing and of open questions offer the facility to investigate deeper the related issues which can lead to common themes.

    Each interview is organized under three different sections and the order does not change across each interview. On section A) It is investigated the organizational culture of each hotel (values and beliefs)

    On section B) It is investigated what customer service is, which specific skills are required on the part of hotel staff towards the provision of excellent customer service. On section B) It is investigated the presence of intercultural communication. How hotel staff deal with intercultural issues, intercultural misunderstandings, language barriers. Non-verbal communication and food culture are also examined as elements of intercultural communication. The feelings of hotel staff and the challenges that they may face in an intercultural interaction are also examined and the learning opportunities that hotel staff would wish to be provided with by their organization are also explored.

2) Public space observations would be utilized for the purposes of this research.

"The data from observations consist of detailed descriptions of people's activities, behaviour, actions, and the full range of interpersonal interactions and organisational processes that are part of observable human experience." (Patton, 2002, p. 4).

According to literature review there are two kinds of observation: covert and overt. 'Supporters have claimed that covert methods offer researchers access to information that is otherwise denied to them' (Calvey, 2000; Lauder, 2003; Miller, 2001), 'while critics have denounced covert methods as ethically and professionally unsound'. Shils (1959) is opposed to all forms of covert research

including 'any observations of private behaviour, however technically feasible, without the explicit and fully informed permission of the person to be observed'. As a researcher I recognize that there are issues of ethicality however, many authors have acknowledged that 'there is not a clear divide between overt and covert research' (Agar, 1996; Bulmer, 1982b; Gomm, 2004; Herrera, 1999; Hilbert, 1980). In public space observations it can be found a lot of interaction among hoteliers and customers. I have found that there is a lot of potential, of information and resources in this kind of settings which acts as a public space. In general whether people are staying as customers in the hotel or they are just customers who enjoy their meal or café, are chatting, reading a newspaper, a magazine, take photos or they use their laptop social actions are taking places in the hotel environment which are worthy investigated as part of communication. During my public space observations I will take into account the following:

- Observation will be carried out during afternoons as this time would be busier for hotel staff and I can depict plenty of social actions.

Observation provides direct access to the social phenomena that I want to investigate. I would focus on:

- how customers and staff interact on the reception during check-in/out, when they order at the restaurant,

- how they interact in the café bar restaurant

- It would be clarified which are the skills that are necessary for excellent customer service by taking into account verbal and nonverbal communication behaviours from staff. *(please see the attached observation sheet).*

- It would be examined the role of atmosphere in each hotel

- The presence of intercultural elements in the café-bar restaurant

Definitely I will keep written notes. Whether I am in the reception or in the café restaurant I will be sitting in a sofa or in a chair I will not be standing. I will keep a discreet position I will not disturb the customers. I am observing the hotel staff and how they interact with customers I will not aim at any interaction with customers. For each hotel I will spend approximately 3 hours and this would be split up in 2 days accordingly.

3) Web online resources would be used such as job advertisements and the official websites of hotels so as to investigate the skills that are required from hotel staff, which is the presence of intercultural communication and which intercultural elements can be depicted if any in the job advertisements. Also as part of the online research of each official hotel website it would be explored if hotels offer intercultural navigation tools for their global customers which can facilitate their navigation.

2.4 Confidentiality & Data Handling

2.4A Will the research involve: *Tick all that apply*

Participants consent to being named?	☐

De-identified samples or data (i.e. **a reversible process** whereby identifiers are replaced by a code, to which the researcher retains the key, in a secure location?	☐
Subject being referred to by pseudonym in any publication arising from the research?	√
Anonymised samples or data (i.e. **an irreversible process** whereby identifiers are removed from data and replaced by a code, with no record retained of how the code relates to the identifiers. It is then impossible to identify the individual to whom the sample of information relates)?	☐
Complete anonymity of participants (i.e. researchers will not meet, or know the identity of participants, as participants are part of a random sampled and are required to return responses with no form of personal identification)?	☐
Any other methods of protecting the privacy of participants? (e.g. use of direct quotes with specific, written permission only; use of real name with specific, written permission only)	☐
If 'any other method of protecting the privacy of participants' , please provide more details**:**	☐

2.4B Which of the following methods of assuring confidentiality of data will be implemented?
   Tick all that apply

Data to be kept in locked filing cabinets	☐

Data and identifiers to be kept in separate, locked filing cabinets	☐
Access to computer files to be available by password only	√
Storage at University of Glasgow	☐
Stored at another site (please provide details, including address)	☐

2.5   Access to Data/Dissemination

2.5A Access by names researcher(s) and, where applicable, supervisor(s) and examiner(s)
√

2.5B Access by people other than named researcher(s)/Supervisor(s)/examiner(s)   ☐

Please explain by whom and for what purpose: Access to data will have mainly my supervisors Alison Phipps and Hazel Crichton

2.5C Retention and Disposal of Personal Data

The 5th Principle of the Data Protection Act (1998) states that personal data must not be kept for longer than is necessary based on the purpose for which it was initially collected. *Please state when and how you intend to destroy the data you have collected.*

The data would get destroyed after I graduate in 2016 from the recorded interview transcriptions would get deleted and the digital forms also

2.6 Dissemination of Results. (NB: Take account of age appropriateness of participants)

2.6A Results will be made available to **participants** as:

Written summary of results to all ☐	Copy of final manuscript (e.g. thesis, article, etc) √ presented if requested
Verbal presentation to all (information session, ☐debriefing etc)	Presentation to representative participants (e.g. CEO, ☐ school principal)
Dissertation ☐	Other or None of the Above ☐ Please explain

2.6B   Results will be made available to **peers and/or colleagues** as: (Tick all that apply)

Dissertation ☐	Journal articles √
Thesis (e.g. PhD), √	Book √
Submission ☐	Conference Papers √
Other or None of the Above Please explain	

2.7   Participants

2.7A   Target Participant Group (Please indicate the targeted participant group by ticking all boxes that apply)

Students or Staff of the University ☐	Adults (over 18 years old and competent √

	to give consent)
Children/legal minors (under 18 years old) ☐	Adults (over 18 years who may not be ☐ competent to give consent)
Young people aged 16-17 years ☐	

2.7B Will the research specifically target participants with mental health difficulties or a disability?

YES ☐   NO √

If YES, please explain the necessity of involving these individuals as research participants (no more than   50 words))

2.7C   Number of Participants (if relevant give details of different age groups/activities involved)

For research in UK -Scotland Interviews for staff 1-2 participants would be interviewed from each hotel

The number of participants for the observation cannot be estimated precisely at this point

2.7D   Please explain in detail how you intend to recruit participants.

If payment or any other incentive (such as a gift or free services) will be made to any research subject please specify and state the level of payment to be made and/or the

Participants for the interviews would become aware of the purpose of the study and would be explained in simple language why is important, what I want to achieve and that their data and information would be kept anonymous and confidential.

Also I will provide a PLS of language both for my interviews and for my observation.

As I have mentioned above I will keep notes and I will be sitting. Being in a public space where a great number of different activities are taking place I am allowed to write and observe in a discreet way. I do not think also that there are great risks as regards my health and safety as the hotels that are participating in the study are elite hotels the guests have some higher standards their purpose is not to consume excessive amounts of alcohol. Also as I have mentioned above they are actually observed the employees on how: they communicate, behave and serve customers.

source of funds/gift/free service to be used. Please explain the justification for offering payment or other incentive.

2.7E   Dependent Relationship

Are any of the participants in a dependent relationship with any of the investigators, particularly those involved in recruiting for or conducting the project? (For example, a school

pupil is in a dependent relationship with their teacher. Other examples of a dependent relationship include student/lecturer; patient/doctor; employee/employer)

YES ☐   NO √

If YES, please explain the relationship and the steps to be taken by the investigators to ensure that the subject's participation is purely voluntary and not influenced by the relationship in any way.)

2.7F   Location of Research

University of Glasgow	☐
Outside Location: Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Manchester	√
Please provide details of outside locations, including as much information as possible.	

2.8   Permission to Access Participants

2.8A   Will subjects be identified from information held by another party?

(eg. a Local Authority, or a Head Teacher, or a doctor or hospital, or Glasgow University class lists)

YES☐   NO √

If YES please describe the arrangements you intend to make to gain access to this information including, where appropriate, any other ethics committee that will be applied to. (No more than 150 words)

2.8B   Written Permission

Please note that written permission is usually required to gain access to research participants within an organisation (e.g. school, Local Authority, University of Glasgow class)

Are copies provided with this application?

YES √   NO   ☐

OR are they to follow?

YES☐   NO   ☐

OR if not required, give details explaining why

2.8C Is this application being submitted to another Ethics Committee, or has it been previously submitted to another Ethics Committee?

YES☐   NO   √

(If YES, please provide name and location of the ethics committee and the result of the application.)

2.9 INFORMED CONSENT

If you require information on the age of legal capacity please refer to the Age of Legal Capacity (Scotland) Act 1991 available at: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1991/50/contents

2.9A   Have you attached your Plain Language Statement(s) (PLS) for participants?
A Plain Language Statement is written information in plain language that you will provide to subjects to explain the project and invite their participation. Contact details for Supervisor and College Ethics Officer MUST be included. Please note that a copy of this information must be given to the participant to keep.)

YES √   NO

Yes I have attached a PLS for my participants.

If NO please explain

2.9B How will informed consent be recorded by individual participants or representatives?

Signed consent form A copy of the proposed consent form, written in simple non-technical language, MUST ACCOMANY THIS APPLICATION. The final consent form MUST contain the University of Glasgow logo	Recorded verbal consent and PLS ☐ √
Implied by return of survey ☐	Other ☐ Please specify

3   Monitoring

Please describe how the project will be monitored to ensure that the research is being carried out as approved (e.g. give details of regular meetings/email contact) (Maximum 50 words).

In case that any change occurs I will notify the Ethics Committee. I am in regular contact with my supervisors for meetings and via email.

4   Health and Safety

Does the project have any health & safety implications?

YES ☐   NO   √

If YES, please outline the arrangements which are in place to minimise these risks

5   UK and Scottish Government Legislation

Have you made yourself familiar with the requirements of the Data Protection Act (1998) and the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002? *(See Application Guidance Notes for further information. In addition visit http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/dpfoioffice/ for guidance and advice on the Act).* Please ensure you have read the eight basic Principles underlying the Data Protection Act 1998 ["DPA"] that protect the rights and freedoms of individuals with respect to the processing of their personal data. The Freedom of Information Act 2002 ["FOI"] provides a general right of access to most of the recorded information that is held by the University. The Act sets out a number of exemptions/exceptions to this right of access.

If NO please explain

YES √   NO   ☐

6   Declarations by Researcher(s) and Supervisor(s)
- The information contained herein is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, accurate.
- I have read the University's current human ethics guidelines, and accept responsibility for the conduct of the procedures set out in the attached application in accordance with the guidelines, the University's Code of Conduct for Research and any other condition laid down by the University of Glasgow Ethics Committee and the College of Social Sciences Ethics Committee. Full details of the University's ethics guidelines are available at:

http://www.gla.ac.uk/research/aimsassessmentandpolicies/ourpolicies/ethicshomepage/

- I and my co-researcher(s) or supporting staff have the appropriate qualifications, experience and facilities to conduct the research set out in the attached application and to deal effectively with any emergencies and contingencies related to the research that may arise.
- I understand that **no** research work involving human participants or data collection can commence until **full** ethical approval has been given by the either the School Ethics Forum (UG

& PGT students only) or the College of Social Sciences Ethics Committee (for PGR students and Staff).

	Signature	Date
Researcher	EIRINI DASKALAKI	31/10/2012
Principal Supervisor		

In the case of student applications, the Ethics Committee will give no final decision UNLESS the electronic submission has been authorised by the supervisor. **If there is no digital signature then please type the names into the boxes above.**

For student applications, there are two options for submitting Supervisor approval:
a. The student e-mails the application to their supervisor, who checks it and submits it to their local SEF contact (UG and PGT only) or to the College Ethics Secretary, Terri Hume (for PGR only).
b. The student e-mails the application to the SEF contact (UG and PGT only) or the College Ethics Secretary (PGR only) and the supervisor sends a separate e-mail to the appropriate UG/PGT/PGR admin point of contact giving the details of the application and confirming approval for the submission.

Where to send your application

Applications should be submitted electronically as follows:

- **Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Student applications should be sent to their School Ethics Forum. Please see contact details on the respective School's website.**

- **Postgraduate Research (PGR) and Staff applications** should be submitted to: Terri Hume in the College Office Terri.Hume@glasgow.ac.uk, Room 104, Florentine House, 53 Hillhead Street, Glasgow, G12 8QF

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SECTION A.

Would you like to tell me a few things regarding your job responsibilities?

Which are the values of your organization?

Do you cooperate on online travel agencies?

How do you respond to the competition of the market?

Has the global economy affected your customer policies, (if yes), in what way?

SECTION B.

Which are the main nationalities of your hotel as regards customers?

Which are the nationalities of your colleagues?

What it means customer service for you?

Do you think that specific skills are needed for excellent customer service?

Do you find that appearance and personal grooming are important during recruitment?

Do you find that communication skills are important?

Which actions do you think that lead to customer satisfaction?

SECTION C.

Do you speak any foreign languages?

Do you have any training in international language(s) for your members of staff?

Have you ever encountered any misunderstanding due to the different language?

Do you have/offer opportunities for training to your staff on how you will deal with customers who come from different cultural groups/with international customers?

Do you think that you can understand everything from the behavior of people from different cultures?

What would motivate you to become more aware of cultural issues?

Do you have the opportunity for expanding your knowledge on cultural issues at work?

Do you offer international cuisine?

Do you find that different cultural groups of customers have different cultural needs?

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AREAS OF OBSERVATION

- Reception
- Café-Bar
- Restaurant
- Lounge

Description of the atmosphere and decoration of the hotel on items and hotel staff

Insight comments

Discussion on intercultural elements found on the areas observed (if any)

Behavior of hotel staff

Communication skills of hotel staff

- **Verbal communication:**

Interpersonal (relationship) skills

Message skills

Social skills

Sense of humor

Friendliness

- **Non-verbal communication:**

Body language and posture

Facial expressions, eye contact and gestures

Grooming standards of hotel staff, aesthetic labor, style of interior design

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Consent Form

For Hotel Staff

- **Title of Project: Communication across cultures? An intercultural approach to customer service in the hotel industry: A study with global elite hotel brands in the United Kingdom.**

Name of Researcher: Eirini Daskalaki

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Plain Language Statement for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

3. As a participant you give your consent to the interview to be digital recorded, you acknowledge also that copies of transcripts will be returned to you for verification only if you wish. Your identity will be kept completely anonymous in any publications arising from this research. All names will be replaced by numbers; the name of the hotel that you are employed with will not exist on any document. Your participation will be kept confidential in the local and broader community. Issues which were discussed during interviewing will be not discussed with any of your colleagues. There is no any intention from my part as a researcher to comment on any other issue which does not relate to my study. All the data obtained from the research will be destroyed after a certain period of time.

4. I agree / do not agree (delete as applicable) to take part in the above study.

_____   *_____*   *_____*

Name of Participant   *Date*   *Signature*

_____   *_____*   *_____*

Eirini Daskalaki   *_____*   *_____*

Researcher   *Date*   *Signature*

Contact for Further Information

Personal details

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Plain Language Statement Guidelines for Interviews

For Hotel Staff

- **Study title and Researcher Details**

  PhD in Education,

  Student: Eirini Daskalaki

  Year: 2nd

  Email: e.daskalaki.1@research.gla.ac.uk

- **University: University of Glasgow**

- **School or subject area involved: School of Education**

- **Title of Project: Communication across cultures? An intercultural approach to customer service in the hotel industry: A study with global elite hotel brands in the United Kingdom.**

- **Principal (and other) investigator(s) (including contact numbers for these) Eirini Daskalaki 07754312046**

- **Supervisor, if it is a student research project: 1st supervisor Alison Phipps, 2nd supervisor Hazel Crichton**

- **Degree for which the research is being undertaken: Postgraduate Research (PhD)**

2. Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. *Thank you for reading this.*

3. What is the purpose of the study?

This study has started since September 2011 and will finish in August 2014 by carrying out research in global hotel brands in the United Kingdom. It is examined how the hotel industry in the United Kingdom is getting affected by the current socio-economic, cultural and political phenomena. Which is the impact of these phenomena on the recruitment of hotel staff and on the customer service provided? Do intercultural issues matter in the hotel work environment since the world is getting globalized how the hotel industry is responding to these situations?

4. Why have I been chosen?

As a member of staff of the hotel you are the right person to be interviewed because you possess the knowledge and actually the experience of the everyday communication with customers. You can provide valuable information on how your professional yet personal approach on interacting with customers builds the framework of excellent customer service and further issues related to this.

5. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

6. What will happen to me if I take part?

You will participate in a semi-structured interview and the whole conversation would be digital recorded so later I would be able to transcribe the whole discussion between us and then analyze and interpret the data. The interview will last 35-45 minutes maximum by answering to me questions which focus on customer service issues, the nationalities of your customers and of your colleagues, which skills and attitudes are required on the part of hotel staff during the delivery of excellent customer service. Intercultural communication and intercultural issues are also explored so during the interview time you will be asked questions on your knowledge on international languages and if you encounter any language barriers during communication with global customers. Would you be interested in receiving diversity training and how would you feel towards this? Non-verbal communication is also examined and issues on food culture and on dietary habits of customers are also investigated where this is applicable.

7. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All information, which is collected from you during the interview will be kept strictly confidential. You will be identified by a number in the final academic document and the name of your organization will get removed. Your unique number will be accompanied by your current job position. Also all our discussions from my part and from your part will not be made to anyone else known (colleagues, friends, family,).

8. What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results would be used for the publication of my PhD thesis hopefully on September 2015. I am also interested in using the results for the presentation in a conference or for the writing of a journal article. I can provide you with a copy of the whole material and I can send it to you, to your personal address. You will not be identified in any publication/report/presentation.

9. Who is organising and funding the research?

I am a PhD student of the Glasgow University and I am privately funded

10. Who has reviewed the study?

The project has been reviewed by the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee and from my supervisors.

11. Contact for Further Information

Personal details
Name & Surname: Eirini Daskalaki
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Supervisor's details

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