School of Management and Marketing

Non-English Speaking Background Effects on Hospitality Front Desk Services: A Case Perspective from Western Australia

Titania Suwarto

0000-0003-4690-709X

**This thesis is presented for the Degree of
Master of Philosophy (Marketing)
of
Curtin University**


November 2022

DECLARATION

To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) – updated in March 2014. The proposed research study received human research ethics approval from the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00262), Approval Number HRE2020-0454.

Signature:
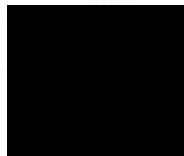
Titania Suwarto

Date: 21 June 2022

ACKNOWLEDGMENT TO THE COUNTRY

We acknowledge that Curtin University works across hundreds of traditional lands and custodial groups in Australia, and with Firs Nations people around the globe. We wish to pay our deepest respects to their ancestors and members of their community es, past, present, and to their emerging leaders. Our passion and commitment to work with all Australians and peoples from across the world, including our First Nations peoples are at the core of the work we do, reflective of our institutions' values and commitment to our role as leaders in the Reconciliation space in Australia.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

First and foremost, I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to my supervisors, Professor Christof Pforr and Associate Professor Michael Volgger, for giving me the opportunity to do this research and providing invaluable support throughout my M. Phil study and research. Their assistance, input, and vast expertise have assisted me in producing high-quality research and enhancing my thesis writing. In addition, their understanding, patience, motivation, and encouragement have aided me tremendously in overcoming my difficulties and moving forward with my research and thesis. It was a privilege and an honour to work and study under their supervision. I am extremely grateful for everything they have given me and the opportunities they have provided. I could not have asked for better or more understanding supervisors and mentors while conducting this research.

I am incredibly grateful to my husband, Scott Miller, for the support, care, and understanding that he has shown me for the past two years, while I have been working on my research. My parents gave me their love, prayers, care, and sacrifices in order to educate me and get me ready for the future. I will be forever thankful to them for all that they did. I would also like to express my gratitude to my sister, brother-in-law, niece, and nephew for the support and prayers they have offered. My most sincere appreciation goes out to my best friends, Alliza and Runita, for being the most significant source of motivation and encouragement for me to become a better version of myself and to successfully complete my studies.

I would like to express my gratitude to Associate Professor Min Teah, Chairwoman and Director of Graduate Research in the School of Management and Marketing, for the opportunity, guidance, feedback, and empowerment. I'd also like to thank the reviewers, Associate Professor Mingming Cheng and Doctor Sean Lee, for their insightful comments that helped me produce better research. I would also like to thank the Research Office at Curtin (ROC) HDR Team for their ongoing administrative assistance and support, particularly with the milestone presentations. Of course, I'd like to thank my research colleagues at Tourism Research Cluster - Curtin University, particularly Aji, Cherry, and Sarah, who helped and supported me throughout my studies.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS FROM THIS THESIS

i) Titania Suwarto, Christof Pforr, and Michael Volgger (2022), "The Influence of Migrant Workers' Cultural Background in Hospitality Service Quality" In Proceedings of the 32nd Council for Australian University Tourism and Hospitality Education (CAUTHE) Annual Conference," February 7-9, Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia.

ABSTRACT

Migrant workers from various cultural origins make major contributions to the tourism and hospitality industry by addressing labour shortages and providing an array of goods and services. It is vital to understand how cultural diversity influences the provision and evaluation of accommodation services quality since each culture has its own norms for what constitutes good service and how it should be delivered. While there is an increasing presence of non-English speaking background (NESB) migrant workers in Australia's hospitality businesses, there is still a scarcity of empirical evidence on the subject in the Australian context. This is a significant empirical gap, made even more so by the fact that Australia is a diverse nation, where the impact and dynamics of a culturally diverse workforce differ from those in more homogeneous societies.

This study aims to fill the aforementioned empirical gaps by exploring the relationship between the NESB cultural background of hospitality staff and the quality of front-desk service in Western Australia. The emphasis placed on front-desk positions stems from their essential role as the "face" and "primary driver" of the hospitality industry. With previous research on cultural diversity and hospitality service focused on customers' perspectives, this research finds a more robust knowledge by providing multiple stakeholders' insights. This qualitative case study provides insight into the workforce cultural diversity affects on accommodation front-office service quality by conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews with 31 guests, staff, and managers at a well-known service apartment chain across Western Australia.

As the study's main finding, it can be stated that NESB personnel' cultural backgrounds influence several essential attributes of front-desk service, including communication skills, attitude, and personality, as well as knowledge, experience, and awareness of local and foreign cultures. This study shows that communication challenges might arise in cross-cultural front-desk service encounters mainly due to differences in accent and communication style as well as the presence of slang language. Second, there is an unfavourable interaction between an employee and a guest from a greater power distance society, with the presence of an 'abusive' guest towards a subservient employee. Finally, this study uncovered an unexpected finding

regarding the ability of NESB front-desk employees to act as local 'Australian' hosts and provide an authentic experience.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1.   INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1   Chapter Introduction

Existing research has expanded our understanding of migration's role in shaping the tourism and hospitality industries in many Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, particularly in the European context (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2007). For decades, migrant workers, primarily from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB), have played a pivotal role in filling the labour gap in Australian tourism and hospitality (Australian Trade Commission, 2015). As a result, diversity is inevitable and has an impact on many aspects of the industry (Baum, 2006). On one hand, a culturally diverse workforce can add competitive advantages to the hospitality and tourism businesses by facilitating a better understanding of culturally diverse markets (Elshaer & Marzouk, 2019), providing a platform for skills and knowledge exchange (Baum, 2012; Janta et al., 2012), and fueling innovation in products and services (Baum, 2012). On the other hand, increased reliance on culturally diverse migrants in the hospitality and tourism industry may pose risks such as cross-cultural miscommunication (Baum, 2002), increased conflict and misunderstanding (Mor Barak, 2011), decreased quality of tourism products and services (Baum, 2006), and misrepresentation of local culture (Janta, 2011).

The Australian hospitality industry has the most culturally diverse workforce, with 40% of its workers born overseas and the highest proportion of migrants in its workforce (Mackey et al., 2022). In Western Australia (WA), with more than 20% contribution to WA's hospitality workforce (Australian Trade Commission, 2015), culturally diverse tourism migrant workers might come resourceful in dealing with the fast-growing visitors from NESB countries, contributing to more than 60% of the international tourism market (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2020). However, despite the growing presence of NESB migrant workers in the Australian tourism and hospitality industries, there is still a paucity of literature on the subject, particularly in the Australian context. This is a significant empirical gap, especially given that Australia is a multicultural country where the impact and dynamics of a culturally diverse workforce may differ from those in other, less culturally diverse countries.

Furthermore, the researcher's experience as a NESB staff member in an accommodation front-desk position piqued the researcher's interest in how the diverse cultural backgrounds of frontline staff might influence service delivery and evaluation in an Australian tourism and hospitality setting. This research aims to address the aforementioned empirical gap by exploring the relationship between the NESB cultural background of hospitality staff and service quality from an Australian perspective, particularly in the Western Australian context. Thus, this study utilised a case study approach with a focus on the Western Australian tourism and hospitality industry.

Previous research has demonstrated the significance of front-office personnel as the 'face', 'representation', 'heart', and 'focal point' of the tourism and hospitality industry, as well as the local society (Cook et al., 2018; Heyes, 2017). The presence of migrants in front-of-house positions has increased, with the Australian Trade Commission (2015) reporting that one-third of tourism sector employees in Western Australia were international migrants. As Dimanche and Reisinger (2011) argued, cultural background influences service quality in the tourism and hospitality industry in one way or another. There is no doubt that the cultural diversity of migrant workers may impact various aspects of the tourism and hospitality industry in Australia. Furthermore, previous studies on this subject have solely focused on a single stakeholder approach, heavily relying on customer perceptions. This study fills a research gap by presenting the perspectives and evaluations of multiple stakeholders on the influences of front-desk staff's cultural background on hospitality service quality.

By employing in-depth interviews with 31 tourists, employees and management of various properties of a leading service apartment chain in Western Australia, this qualitative case study provides a better understanding of the influences of a workforce's cultural diversity on the quality of the front-office service in the accommodation sector from multiple stakeholders' perspectives. As the main finding of this study, it can be argued that the NESB employees' cultural background can influence some essential attributes of front-desk services delivery, particularly attitude and personality, communication skill, knowledge, experience, and understanding of local culture and other cultures. This research, in particular, demonstrates that communication barriers can arise in cross-cultural front-desk service encounters due to differences in accent and communication style as well as the presence of colloquialisms (Australian slang). Furthermore, all stakeholders agreed that in the

service apartment setting, where long-stay and corporate guests predominate, the importance of staff speaking the "guest's language" is even more significant. This qualitative study also highlights the two sides of front-desk service encounters when tourists and employees share a common foreign cultural background. First, positive interaction leads to comfort and a familiar experience. Second, the unfavourable interaction between an employee and a guest from a higher power distance society, caused by the presence of 'abusive power' by a demanding guest to a subservient employee. Finally, this study reveals an unexpected finding regarding the ability of overseas migrant front-desk staff to be local hosts and provide an authentic experience in a tourist destination with a more culturally diverse society. This finding contradicts earlier research by Janta (2011) and Karayilan and Cetin (2016), which found that NESB migrant workers are capable of representing Australia well and providing an authentic experience to guests due to their extensive knowledge and understanding of local culture and other local tourism information. This finding has theoretical as well as practical implications for research on migrant hospitality workers and tourism destinations' authenticity.

This chapter serves as the introduction of this master thesis and gives an initial overview of the relationship between workforce cultural diversity and service quality in the Australian accommodation sector. The following section summarises the literature review, which is presented in greater detail in Chapter 2, on the relationship between tourism and migration, the phenomenon of cultural diversity in the tourism and hospitality workforce, and cross-cultural front-desk service encounters. Furthermore, Sections 1.3 to 1.5 detail the research objectives and introduce the 'conceptual framework' as a foundation for investigating the relationship between the identified workforce and service attributes. Meanwhile, the following sections outline the process, significance and limitation of this study. Finally, the final section summarises the structure of this master thesis.

1.2 Background of the Study

1.2.1 Culturally Diverse Migrant-Workers and the Inter-Relationship Between Tourism and Migration

This study is rooted in the relationship between tourism and migration, with both phenomena being forms of movement and connected to globalisation. Several

existing studies discuss the inter-relationship between tourism and migration in detail (Dwyer, 1993; Dwyer et al., 2010; Forsyth, 1993; Hall et al., 2002). The United Nations World Tourism Organization (The United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2009) suggests that migration generates both inbound and outbound tourism flows ('migration-led tourism' — MLT), while the growth of the tourism industry generates labour demand, which is partly supplied by overseas migrants ('tourism-led migration' — TLM). The UNWTO (2009) also claims that the cultural diversity associated with international migration contributes to cultural enrichment and new tourism product development in the host countries, which in turn can influence tourism growth. While most previous studies mainly discuss the migration-led-tourism phenomena, this thesis explores the latter part of the relationship. More specifically, it focuses on the migrant workers' role in the accommodation sector as one of the major sub-sectors in the tourism industry, which also exhibits a particular set of relationships between service providers and customers.

For decades, culturally diverse migrant workers have played a pivotal role in addressing the labour shortages in the tourism and hospitality industry, particularly in some developed countries where the local workforce is less interested in relatively low-wage and low-status jobs (Baum, 2006; Choi et al., 2000; Williams et al., 2000). Extending beyond the tourism and hospitality industries, Western Australia (WA) has been relying on international migrants to boost population growth and fill labour gaps (Australian Trade Commission, 2015). More than a third of West Australians are foreign-born, mainly from non-English speaking backgrounds (ABS, 2021). The presence of almost a quarter of NESB migrant workers among the WA tourism workforce (Australian Trade Commission, 2015) provides opportunities in dealing with the fast-growing visitors from NESB countries, which constitute more than 60% of the international tourism market to WA (ABS, 2020).

There can be a mutually beneficial relationship between the tourism workforce and migration. From the migrants' point of view, with the low barriers to entry, the tourism and hospitality industry provides accessibility and flexibility (Pechlaner et al., 2012). These tourism and hospitality jobs, particularly the low-level ones, are suitable entry points for migrant workers because it accommodates their limited local work experience, their lack of familiarity with the host country's economy and business culture, and a lack of host language competence (Janta, 2011; Janta et al., 2011; Janta & Ladkin, 2009). From the host countries' point of view, Janta et al. (2011) and Baum (2006) suggest that international migrants can help to alleviate labour

shortages under cost-efficiency pressures in the tourism industry due to their ability in providing high skills while sometimes being willing to be paid less than locals.

With culturally diverse migrant workers as a significant source of tourism employment, cultural diversity in WA's tourism workforce is inevitable, including differences in language, customs, religion, beliefs, and ethnic background (Gruber et al., 2013). However, diversity could be a double-edged sword for the tourism industry. On the one hand, workforce diversity might add benefits to their employing organisations by facilitating a cultural and knowledge exchange and a better understanding of international cultural, social, and economic perspectives and expectations (Elshaer & Marzouk, 2019). However, on the other hand, the high dependence on a multiculturally diverse workforce, in particular, if not accompanied by effective diversity management in the workplace, imposes various challenges, including potential misunderstandings and cultural discrepancies (Janta et al., 2011) and, in the long term, can affect employee job satisfaction, productivity, and turnover (Elshaer & Marzouk, 2019; Janta et al., 2011). Therefore, in a competitive global market, it is crucial for tourism and hospitality enterprises to successfully manage workforce diversity in order to maximise their ability to understand and interact with people from various cultural backgrounds but also to be able to successfully manage potential conflicts and challenges (Armstrong et al., 1997; Mok, 2001). However, there is still limited literature and research on this subject, which stresses the relevance of exploring the influence and management of workforce diversity in the tourism and hospitality industry (Dedeoğlu et al., 2018; Tsang & Ap, 2007).

1.2.2 Understanding the Role of Migrant Workers in Delivering Accommodation Front-Desk Services

The tourism industry encompasses a broad range of sub-sectors. This study focuses on the accommodation sector as one of the major sub-sectors in the tourism industry that provides "temporary shelter" (Cook et al., 2018, p. 191) and services in facilitating the creation of a 'home away from home' experience while introducing the host destination for tourists. Tourism accommodations provide rooms for their guests and offer related services to support their guests' needs during a stay. As a "people-facing" sector, success factors for the accommodation industry include people interaction, customer service, communication, and diversity awareness (Australian Trade and Investment Commission, 2019, p. 8). Compared to other tourism and hospitality

businesses such as restaurants, the tourism accommodation service's characteristics often allow for deeper and longer interaction between guests and staff. This is why the accommodation sector is deemed a suitable focus for this research.

Compared to other departments, an accommodation provider's front office plays a pivotal role as the "face" and "heart" of accommodation properties as well as their focal point of communication (Cook et al., 2018, p. 208; Heyes, 2017). Besides, the front-office operations are also important in representing the host destination as well as delivering quality service to the customers (Janta, 2011). In carrying out these roles, the front-desk department performs multiple tasks, including reception, porter, concierge, guest relations (customer service), and security. While not an exhaustive list, typical tasks include managing and ensuring the safety, security, and comfort of guests; managing and communicating with other staff; managing technologies/ systems to facilitate the day-to-day operation; advising on room rates; and engaging in upselling (Heyes, 2017, p. 58). In order to deliver quality services, besides the ability to communicate effectively and efficiently, front desk staff are also required to have extensive knowledge and understanding of the accommodation establishments, local and host countries, as well as being able to interpret diverse guests' needs (Bardi, 2003; Cook et al., 2018).

As the intangible product, service itself can be referred to as "any act or performance that one party can offer to another" (Kotler & Keller, 2016, p. 346) and often involves the process of provisioning some tangible product to a customer (Reisinger, 2001). This research focuses on the service quality aspect, referring to "customers' appraisals of the service core, the provider, or the entire service organisation" (Duffy & Ketchand, 1998, p. 241). Parasuraman et al. (1988) suggest that the primary indicator in measuring service quality is the gap between guests' expectations and service performance. While the service providers, both staff and organisation (especially its managers), are responsible for the service performance, the "provision of service and the maintenance of its quality", the customer receives and assesses the 6rganize quality (Barrington & Olsen, 1987, p. 132). Service quality is distinctively influenced by customers' expectations and perceptions (Wuest, 2001), as well as service providers' motivations, skills, attitudes and behaviours (Reisinger, 2001). Individuals' backgrounds influence the expectations, perceptions, and evaluations of service performance. For example, as Dimanche and Reisinger (2011) suggest, different cultures may have different customs and traditions regarding good service standards and how to deliver them effectively.

1.2.3 The Influence of Workforce Cultural Diversity on Accommodation Service Quality

Diversity is a key factor that affects service quality in the tourism and hospitality industry (Baum, 2006). Previous studies suggest that cultural background substantially affects one's expectations and perceptions of services, which makes it necessary to investigate the relationship between a workforce's cultural diversity and service quality in the tourism and hospitality industry (Mok, 2001; Zhang et al., 2015). Furthermore, the cultural background might influence how staff communicate, interact, and perform the front-desk services (Gruber et al., 2013). Overseas-born residents in Australia provide diverse cultural knowledge and linguistic skills that could benefit the hospitality and tourism businesses by helping them to better understand diverse market segments, facilitate cultural exchange and support access to international markets (Australian Trade Commission, 2015; Mackey et al., 2022). In addition, a culturally diverse workforce can be an advantage for Australia's tourism industry due to their potential ability to introduce Australian culture to international tourists from a perspective that is capable of empathising with outsiders (Office of Multicultural Affairs & Inbound Tourism Organisation of Australia, 1995). Following the COVID-19 outbreak, recent research on the industry's new 'normal' shows that understanding diverse guests' needs and preferences may have become even more essential, potentially increasing the 'assurance' and 'empathy' dimensions in service quality (Mackey et al., 2022).

COVID-19 has shifted the guests' service evaluation towards the familiarity, security, comfortability, and reliability aspects of the stay, which might be addressed by having staff from a similar background (Abbas et al., 2021; World Travel & Tourism Council, 2020). Rao Hill and Tombs (2011, 2014) emphasise that similarity in the cultural background may facilitate better interaction and mutual understanding, supporting the 'reliability' dimension of accommodation service quality. Furthermore, Language barriers have been identified as a major issue for tourists when planning a trip to a foreign destination, and some tourists prefer destinations where they can communicate in their native language and feel at ease (Basala & Klenosky, 2001). By speaking the same language and better understanding guests' needs, the presence of NESB migrant workers can be significant in providing a comfortable and familiar 'home away from home' experience boosting the 'assurance' aspect of the stay (Office of Multicultural Affairs & Inbound Tourism Organisation of Australia, 1995). Thus, the similarity of cultural backgrounds between guests and employees can enhance the

provisioning of reliable, assuring and empathic service to guests, resulting in better service experiences and evaluations of service quality.

Nevertheless, challenges and issues in intercultural service encounters are inevitable. Language barriers are a real obstacle to cross-cultural communication in a touristic setting (Cohen & Cooper, 1986), emphasising the importance of staff fluency in the guest language, which highlights the significant role of having NESB staff. On the other hand, having NESB migrant workers can result in different levels of English proficiency (Australian Trade Commission, 2015; Madera et al., 2014) as well as different communication styles and accents (Rao Hill & Tombs, 2011), possibly affecting communication quality. In addition, Baum et al. (2008) argue that the significant increase in migrant workers might impact the products, services and experiences offered to tourists, as well as the perceived destination image. Migrant workers in front of house positions play the role of 'host' and thus are arguably capable of misrepresenting the host destination (Janta, 2011). With limited data and research on this topic, particularly in a multicultural Australian context, this research adds both empirical and practical insights into the role of culturally diverse frontline migrant workers as key players in delivering quality service in the accommodation sector. These findings will not only make empirical contributions in the Western Australian context but also supply insights for accommodation enterprises in managing their workforce's cultural diversity in order to ensure the delivery of quality service.

Hofstede's national cultural dimension (1980), particularly on the power distance dimension, suggests that customers from societies with more significant power distance, such as many Asian countries, presume to have higher power than the service providers, while the service providers are expected to exhibit subservient behaviours. Meanwhile, the opposite holds for societies with low power distance that strive for more equality of power and emphasises individualism. Thus, recruiting employees from a particular cultural background, who are then expected to deliver a service to customers from very different cultural backgrounds, may result in misunderstandings that could lead to a perceived underperformance of employees and dissatisfied guests (Vassou et al., 2017). In representing the host destination, migrant workers are considered to not having sufficient knowledge of local culture and host destination in general, resulting in misrepresentation of the host destination or country as well as giving inauthentic local experience to the guests (Baum et al., 2008; Janta, 2011).

There is a need to provide a more robust understanding of the influences of workforce cultural diversity on accommodation service quality in a more heterogeneous society context such as Australia, given limitations in data and research in the Australian context. Thus, this study delves into the impact of NESB migrant workers' cultural backgrounds on how they perform front-desk services, communicate and interact with guests from various cultural backgrounds, represent Australia, and provide an authentic Australian experience. Furthermore, previous research on the relationship between cultural diversity and hospitality service quality focused primarily on different customers' evaluations of service and experience in foreign destinations (Dedeolu et al., 2018; Huang & Crotts, 2019; Zhang et al., 2015). Other stakeholders' perspectives would provide us with a comprehensive understanding of this topic. As a result, this study attempted to fill a knowledge gap in this subject by providing a more detailed view of the subject from various stakeholders.

Furthermore, this research is intrigued by the researcher's curiosity and role as migrant workers, from the NESB country, in the WA accommodation front-desk position. For two years working in the industry, the researcher observed the increasing contribution of migrant workers' presence in this particular role, alongside the growing number of NESB guests. As a result of cultural diversity in both supply and demand of the accommodation sector, cross-cultural interactions and communication are inevitable and sometimes might result in misunderstanding. But, on the other hand, the researcher observed different sides of cultural background interactions and communications between NESB staff and guests. Therefore, this study also addresses the researcher's curiosity about how the NESB cultural background influences the accommodation service quality and guests' perspectives, experiences, and satisfaction.

1.3   Conceptual Framework

Figure 1.1 summarises theories, concepts and empirical findings from the literature review as the basis for developing research objectives. First, this research is rooted in the interrelationship between migration and tourism phenomena, particularly the tourism-led migration 'TLM' perspectives. Second, from the employee's perspective, the workforce's cultural diversity influences how service providers perform and deliver service, which directly impacts service quality. Meanwhile, from the customer's perspective, the cultural background influences guests' experience and satisfaction as a pivotal part of service evaluation. As explained in Section 1.2, the TLM phenomena result in the presence of 'workforce cultural diversity', which influences various aspects of the tourism and hospitality front-desk services, as follows:

- the 'cross-cultural communication', as the product of differences in language as the key descriptor of culture;
- the 'cross-cultural service encounters', as a result of culturally diverse frontline NESB migrant workers servicing culturally diverse guests;
- the 'similar cultural backgrounds interaction', represents the role of NESB employees in servicing NESB guests by speaking guest's language and providing comfort and familiar experiences; and
- the role of frontline NESB migrant workers as the 'local host' and enablers of 'authentic' tourism experiences, is influenced by their knowledge and understanding of local culture.

Figure 1.1

The Conceptual Framework of This Qualitative Research
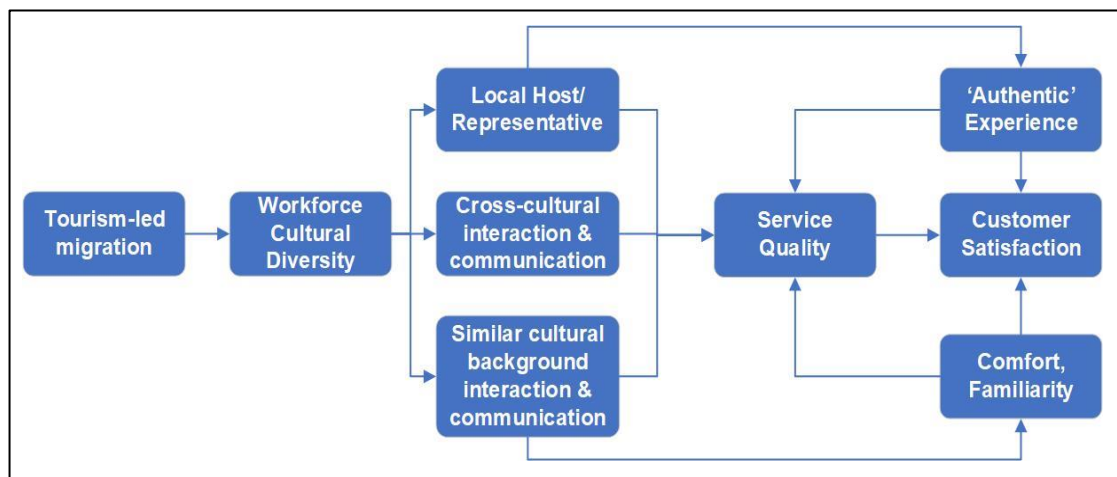
1.4   Knowledge Gaps

A series of studies by Dwyer et al. (1993; 2010; 2014) stress the close inter-relationship between migration and tourism in Australia and are particularly interested in the role of migration in producing tourism flows – the migration-led tourism 'MLT' phenomena. However, there has been minimal research focussing on the TLM phenomena, more specifically the role of the migrant-tourism workers and no related research in the Western Australian context. As a country that depends on migrant workers in filling low-entry barrier jobs, it is pivotal to have a more robust understanding of the role of a culturally diverse workforce in providing tourism and hospitality services in a culturally diverse Australian context, which is the basis of this research (Australian Trade Commission, 2015). Moreover, previous studies on the interplay between cultural diversity and service quality mainly focused on: the influences of the customers' cultural backgrounds, the customers' evaluation of service quality, and the quantitative correlation (Dedeoğlu et al., 2018; Huang & Crotts, 2019; Zhang et al., 2015). Hence, this research is expected to fill the knowledge gap by providing a more robust understanding of the key topics by employing a qualitative approach to exploring multiple stakeholders' perspectives (front-desk staff, management, guests, and experts) on the influences of NESB staff's cultural background on different aspects of front-desk service quality.

Previous studies on hospitality services, particularly accommodation services, mainly targeted conventional hotels. However, the insights into the chosen topics in the service apartment (or apartment-hotel) context are yet to be fully understood. This type of tourism accommodation may offer a different spectrum of front-desk service encounters by targeting a more diverse market, particularly long-term stay guests who require a personalised service to provide a 'home away from home' experience. Meanwhile, as a key theme in many migration and cultural studies, research on language and cross-cultural communication topics tend to focus on the language proficiency of NESB workers as a communication barrier (Janta et al., 2012; Madera et al., 2014; Treuren et al., 2021), while many other attributes are yet to be explored and better understood. As one of the major themes in this topic, the research into similar cultural background interaction explores only the 'cultural congruency' side of the interaction, as shown in Alden et al. (2010), Rao Hill and Tombs (2011, 2014), and Wang et al. (2015). Last, previous research also tends to stereotype migrant workers as misrepresenting the host destination and local culture (Baum et al., 2008; Janta, 2011).

1.5   Research Question and Objectives

In filling those knowledge gaps, this research aims to determine the extent to which NESB migrant workers' cultural background in the front of house positions influences the service quality in the WA accommodation industry. In addressing this research question, this study pursues the following research objectives:

1) To examine the features in service quality in the WA accommodation sector affected by the cultural diversity of frontline NESB migrant workers from the perspectives of tourists, employees and management.

2) To explore the relationship between cultural diversity among frontline NESB migrant workers and service quality in the WA accommodation industry, with a focus on:

   a) The importance of communication skills of NESB migrant workers at the front of house position in delivering quality services, with particular regard to English proficiency, accent, and multilingualism;

   b) the role of culturally diverse frontline NESB migrants workers in servicing guests, mainly from the same cultural background; and

   c) the role of culturally diverse frontline NESB migrant workers in representing Australia and contributing to an authentic tourism experience.

1.6   Research Methodology

Due to the complexity inherent in research that examines phenomena from a cross-cultural point of view, this research adopted a pragmatist and interpretive social science paradigm (Jennings, 2010). With the scarcity of empirical insights on this specific topic in an Australian and WA context, this study utilised an inductive-exploratory approach. Thus, this research started by collecting data to explore the phenomenon and identify key themes and features to generate new or modify existing theories (Saunders et al., 2016). This qualitative research applied a case-study approach to gather in-depth data and information on the influence of frontline workforce cultural diversity on service quality from different points of view (employees, management and tourists). A leading apartment-hotel chain, as one of the major players in the WA hospitality industry, is the case subject of this study.

Figure 1.2

Research Methodology
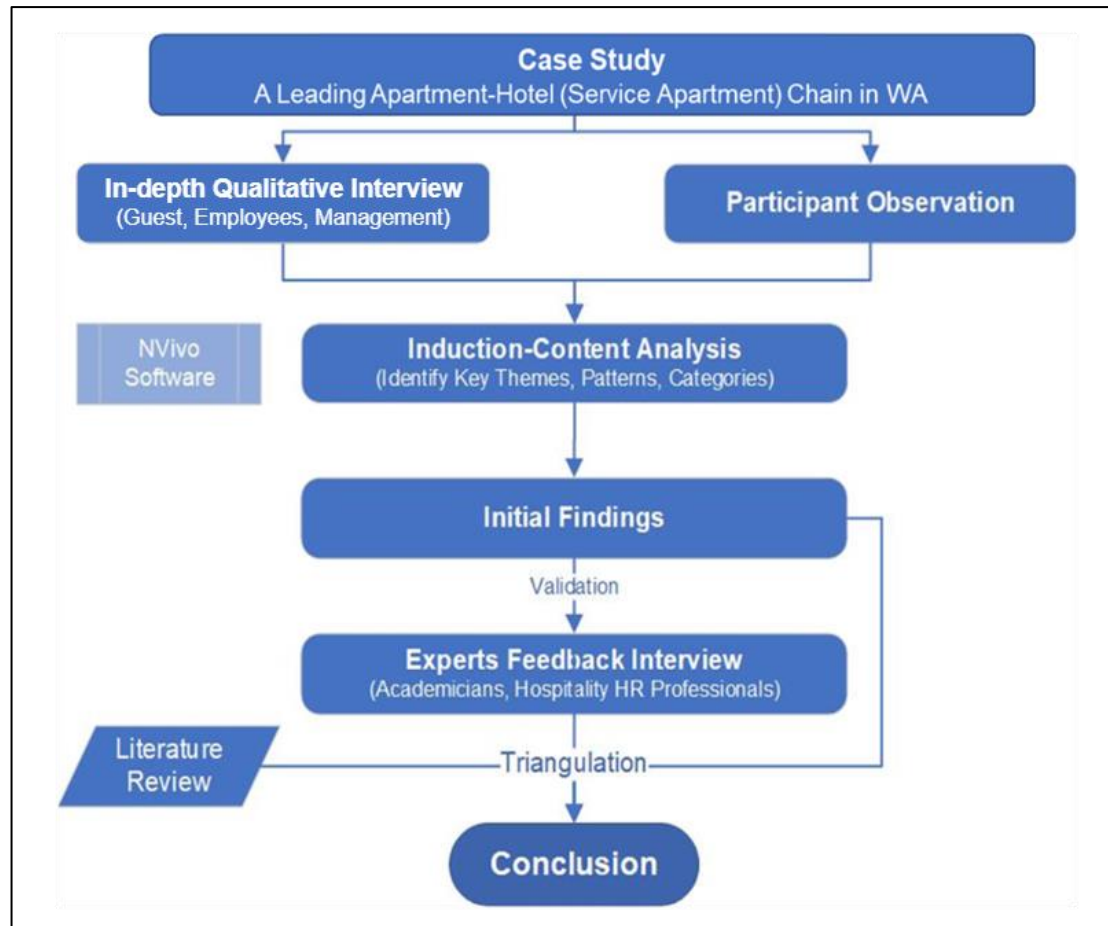
As shown in Figure 1.2, first, this qualitative study employed in-depth interviews to gather information on the different perspectives, perceptions, and experiences of guests, employees, and management of one of the leading service apartment chains in Australia located across Western Australia, in regard to the cross-cultural front-desk service encounters. The interviews with guest respondents compared different perspectives and evaluations of NESB worker-delivered service quality among guests from NESB countries versus main-English-speaking countries (MESC, the United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, United States of America and South Africa). The interviews conducted with the frontline employees explored different perceptions of the non-migrant workers, MESC migrant workers and NESB migrant workers in front of house positions and, in particular, captures opinions on the influence of their cultural background on front-desk service quality. Meanwhile, the management interviews focused on their corresponding evaluations and perceptions of frontline NESB migrant workers. The sampling methods for this research are non-

probability convenience and snowballing sampling, targeting around 10 participants for each type of respondent. In addition, the researcher employed participant observation to delve into the day-to-day cross-cultural front-desk service encounters facilitated by the researcher's role as a front-desk employee.

After transcribing the interviews, key themes, patterns and categories are identified based on a triangulation of findings from different stakeholders' perspectives and observations. The data analysis for this research follows the inductive content analysis method which is implemented with Nvivo software assistance. Third, the dependability and credibility of the initial findings were then confirmed through expert interviews, targeting a number of academics and industry experts in tourism and hospitality workforce management. Last, the validated findings were merged with theoretical insights from the literature review to generate theoretical insights on the relationship between workforce cultural diversity and service quality in the accommodation sector.

1.7 Scope and Delimitation of the Study

As explained in Section 1.5, this study primarily focuses on exploring different stakeholders' perspectives on the influences of NESB migrant front desk workers' cultural backgrounds on accommodation service quality. As such, this qualitative exploratory study employs a case study approach by non-randomly selecting to interview over thirty respondents of employees, management (owners/franchisees and managers), and guests of a leading service apartment chain in Western Australia within the Q3 2020 – Q2 2021 period. In addition, two months-long participant observation in one of the targeted properties is conducted to support the interviews' findings, along with the expert interviews to validate the initial findings.

There are several research limitations associated with the scope of this study and COVID-19 outbreak impacts, including the number of research respondents, generalisation of the findings, the depth of findings, and reflexivity of the researcher. First, the findings of this study are not necessarily generalizable due to the case study approach and moderate sample size used to collect data. Second, to obtain more accurate relationship outcomes, the findings of this inductive-exploratory research require additional validation through more specific qualitative or quantitative research. Third, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a moderate sample size and a limited type of guest respondents, particularly international first-time leisure travellers or NESB

guests with limited English proficiency, who could provide a unique perspective on some aspects of this study. Lastly, along with the active role of the researcher as the interviewer and observer from a non-English speaking background, the researcher is aware of a certain degree of bias and subjectivity that may be found in concluding this study. On top of that, there are possibilities that respondents might alter their answers to be polite, affected by the sensitive nature of the cultural-related topic.

1.8   Significance of the Study

With insufficient empirical information being available on the impact of culturally diverse front desk staff on various aspects of accommodation service quality, particularly in a culturally diverse Australian context, this study complements and advances existing research. This research allows us to draw a more comprehensive picture of the interplay between employing frontline NESB migrant workers and accommodation service quality from multiple stakeholders' perspectives, not only limited to identifying the existence of the relationship but also the features that impact the relationship. This research is essential in filling the knowledge gaps due to the absence of related studies in the Australian and Western Australian contexts and the growing significance of the role of migrant workers in this industry. Therefore, this research adds empirical insights into:

- the better understanding of the language proficiency in NESB front-desk employees in delivering service quality in Western Australian service apartments, which is far beyond the ability to speak English fluently but also the importance of being confident and following the protocol and service standard;
- the presence of a foreign accent and colloquial language ('slang') as identifiers of culture and barriers to cross-cultural communication in Western Australian accommodation front-desk service encounters;
- the significance of NESB migrant workers in front of house positions in servicing NESB guests, as part of cultural congruency;
- the interplay between similar cultural background interaction and Hofstede's cultural dimension (1980)   within front-desk service encounters; and

- the subjectivity and objectivity natures of Australian 'authentic experience' influences the role of NESB migrant front-desk workers in being the local host.

The exploratory nature of this study will provide a useful knowledge basis for a fellow researcher who wishes to advance knowledge in this increasingly relevant topic area. Furthermore, the research explores various challenges and opportunities in cross-cultural interaction and communication in the context of Australian accommodation front-desk service encounters. Furthermore, the interplay between Hofstede's cultural dimension (1980) and similar cultural background service encounters is also an exciting arena to be further explored. Lastly, more studies are needed in providing a more robust understanding of the interchange of subjectivity and objectivity nature of authentic experience in culturally diverse host destinations. In addition, from a practical perspective, the results of this research are able to support policymakers and management in developing a more holistic language and skills training program to support NESB migrant workers alongside their integration into the local workforce. Besides, the practical findings of this research supply insight for accommodation enterprises in managing their workforce's cultural diversity and providing well-defined service standards (protocols) to support the delivery of quality service.

1.9   Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is structured in five chapters, with each chapter starting with the introduction to the chapter contents, followed by the main content, and a summary of the main points, as detailed as follows:

Chapter 1. Introduction

The first chapter has served as the introduction to this research. The first three sections of this chapter briefly summarise the historical background and relevant literature of the chosen topic and identify research gaps as the basic framework of this study. The following section outlines the purpose of this study in addressing the research problem. Section 1.6 defines the terms and methodology applied in this research. The next two sections provide a brief of scopes, limitations, and significance of current research to demonstrate the possible contributions for future work, further expanding in Section 1.8. Finally, the last section of this chapter discusses the layout of this thesis.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

This chapter summarises the historical background and relevant literature findings on the relationship between workforce cultural diversity and front-desk service quality. It serves as the background of the study, intending to better understand and interpret the related topics, elaborate on the knowledge gaps and identify the research significance. The first third section of this chapter introduces us to the definitions, concepts, and interrelationships between tourism and migration as global phenomena, particularly in better understanding the role of culturally diverse migrant workers in the tourism industry as the subject of this study. The fifth section focuses on understanding the service attribute in the tourism sector, particularly within the accommodation front-office operations. The later sections deep dive into migrant workers' cultural background influences on various attributes in front-desk service quality, including communication quality, similar cultural background interaction, and guests' authentic experience, followed by a brief overview of the chosen topics in the Australian context. The last section outlines the research gap from the existing literature and previous research to be addressed in this current study.

Chapter 3. Research Methodology

The third chapter discusses and justifies the research philosophy and approach and explains the process and methods utilised in collecting, analysing, and validating the data. First, this chapter briefly explains and justifies the pragmatism and interpretive social science epistemology, subjectivist ontology, inductive approach, and the exploratory qualitative method used in this research. Then, the following sections detail the semi-structured interviews and participant observation tools employed in data collection and inductive-content analysis utilised in this case-study-based research. The chapter also discusses the ethical consideration in conducting qualitative research, particularly when involving participants with diverse cultural backgrounds. Finally, the chapter ends with a discussion on the researcher's position in this research as well as how the validity and reliability criteria were met in the current study.

Chapter 4. Findings

This chapter outlines the relevant findings from interviews and participant observations on the interplay between workforce cultural diversity in WA accommodation front-desk service quality. The first two sections give an overview of the case subject and the respondents of this study. Then, the subsequent sections explore this study's findings from the different perspectives of the management, employees, guests, and experts regarding how workforce cultural diversity influences front-desk service quality, particularly with respect to communication quality, guests' authentic experience, and similar cultural background interaction.

Chapter 5. Discussion

The fifth chapter expands on various aspects that have been briefly discussed in the introduction chapter. The first section briefly reintroduces the objectives and methodology of this study. Next, the discussion section summarises the interpretations as well as empirical and practical implications of the findings in answering the research objectives. This section discusses how the findings of this study connect to the existing literature, either to extend and reinforce established theories or to challenge the findings of previous research.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

In this concluding chapter, the thesis's overarching conclusion is presented. This chapter begins by discussing the limitations and gaps of the current study. The second section then presents recommendations for future research areas based on the knowledge gaps discovered in this study and insights into the policy and management of workforce diversity management in the hospitality industry. The final section, concluding remarks, provides a summary of how the study's findings contributed to general knowledge and met the research objectives.

1.10 Chapter Summary

The first chapter of this thesis is dedicated to introducing the research topic as well as outlining the background and rationale for the current study. The chapter then briefly analyses key facets of the interaction between workforce cultural diversity and hospitality service quality, providing a framework to guide the research. Following that, the chapter explains the study's objectives in addressing the research question of the extent to which cultural backgrounds influence the quality of tourism accommodation services in Western Australia. This chapter briefly describes the approach and process of this qualitative exploratory research, followed by an assessment of the study's limitations and significance. Finally, this chapter lays forth the thesis's structure.

The findings of prior studies and related literature reviews on the relationship between workforce cultural diversity and front-desk service quality are detailed in Chapter 2. It serves as the study's background, with the aim to better understand and interpret related topics and identify knowledge gaps. The tourism-led migration (TLM) concept was introduced as the study's foundation in this chapter. The next sections of Chapter 2 allow you to better grasp the functions of hospitality migrant workers and the characteristics of front-desk service. The second chapter concludes by highlighting the knowledge gaps that this qualitative study addresses.

CHAPTER 2.   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Chapter Introduction

The previous chapter provides an overview of the chosen research topic. In addition, the first chapter briefly outlined the background, rationales and significance of this study, which will be elaborated further in this chapter. This second chapter reviews relevant literature and summarises the findings of previous studies by focusing on the interplay between workforce cultural diversity and hospitality service quality. It constitutes the theoretical foundation of the study, identifies and elaborates on knowledge gaps and recognises their research significance. This chapter is developed to provide background knowledge on various aspects of the relationship between cultural diversity and hospitality service quality. It is structured into seven sections in conjunction with this study's objectives and covers various topics, including the relationship between tourism and migration, the role of workforce cultural diversity, services attributes in the hospitality industry, and the influence of cultural background on different aspects of tourism and hospitality service quality.

Sections 2.2 to 2.4 provide a more robust understanding of the interrelationships between tourism and migration as one root of this research. The first two sections briefly outline definitions, concepts and characteristics of tourism and migration as global phenomena. Next, in section 2.4 the literature is reviewed and the findings of previous studies are discussed in the context of the tourism-migration interrelationship, providing a better understanding of the tourism-led migration ('TLM') perspective. At the beginning of this section, the role of culturally diverse migrant workers in the tourism industry is explained before the section concludes with an examination of workforce cultural diversity, as a result of integrating migrant workers into local tourism and hospitality sectors.

The fifth section discusses service attributes in the tourism and hospitality sector, in particular within the accommodation front-office operations. Firstly, definitions, characteristics, and concepts of services in the tourism and hospitality industry are briefly outlined by introducing service standards, service delivery, and service quality components within the sector. Finally, the section also outlines various roles of migrant workers in the diverse tourism and hospitality industry, which are not only

limited to service provision to the customers but also include being the 'face' of the business and host destination. The role of migrant workers in the front-desk position, particularly in the accommodation sector, is the focus of this sub-section of the chapter.

Section 2.6 presents empirical insights from the literature and previous studies on the influence of migrant workers' cultural background on hospitality front-desk service quality attributes, and also provides a brief overview of the Australian context. In detail, this section explores features in hospitality service encounters that might be influenced by the migrant workers' cultural background, including cross-cultural communication quality, similar cultural background interaction, and the local representation role. Later, this section is expanded into two subsections. As the influence of cultural background on language and communication attributes is widely documented in the existing literature, the first sub-section showcases the summary of those findings. Section 2.6.1 explores the literature on how migrant workers' cultural background influences the different traits of communication quality in providing hospitality services, including language proficiency, accent, and multilingualism. The last part of this section shows examples of the role of migrant workers, particularly from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB), in servicing culturally diverse tourists in the Australian tourism industry.

 Finally, the last section of this chapter summarises the most important insights that have been obtained from previous studies. In addition, Section 2.7 highlights the gaps in the existing literature on the relationship between workforce cultural diversity and service quality. This is the basis for discussing the research objectives and significance of this study.

2.2   Understanding the Tourism Phenomenon

2.2.1   Definition and Characteristics of Tourism

Undoubtedly, the tourism sector is one of the most significant and robust economic sectors globally, with continuous growth, expansion, and diversification. Before being impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2021) recorded 1.5 billion international tourist arrivals worldwide in 2019, with more than 50% growth in tourism values over the past decade

contributing 10.4% to the global GDP. Besides facilitating economic gains, the tourism industry generates social and cultural benefits by enhancing people's knowledge and providing livelihood to host communities. Therefore, it is essential to acknowledge the meaning of tourism as a complex concept to better understand this global phenomenon. For instance, the UNWTO (2019, para. 1) defines tourism as "a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes". Similarly, Mathieson and Wall (1982, p. 1) defined tourism as "the temporary movement of people to destinations outside their usual places of residence and work, the activities undertaken during their stay in those destinations, and the facilities created to cater their needs". The terms include people travelling for leisure, recreation and holidays, visiting friends and relatives, education and training, business and professional, health treatment, religious pilgrimages, and other purposes, which underpins tourism's relationship with other sectors (UNWTO, 1995).

Adopting a system perspective, Cook et al. (2018) and Netto (2009) explain that tourism is an integrated network of tourists, tourism promoters, and tourism service suppliers affected and impacted by the internal and external environment. While the tourists act as the customers, buyers, recipients, and evaluators of the tourism products, the tourism promoters and service suppliers act as the marketers, sellers, providers, and deliverers. Providing diverse products, the tourism sector is deemed a cross-sector industry, not listed as an independent entity in most countries' economic accounts (Cook et al., 2018; Riley, 2002). Under the Tourism Satellite Account (United Nations et al., 2010, p. 33), tourism industries can be classified into:

1) accommodation for visitors;

2) food and beverage serving industry;

3) railway passenger transport;

4) road passenger transport;

5) water passanger transport;

6) air passanger transport;

7) transport equipment rental;

8) travel agencies and other reservation services industry;

9) cultural industry;

10) sports and recreational industry;

11) Retail trade of country-specific tourism characteristic goods

12) Other country-specific tourism characteristic industries

Tourism is a dynamic industry with linkages to many other industries and is influenced by many factors, including historical, geographical, seasonal, economic, cultural, political, structural, technological, globalisation, and market perception (Baum, 2006; Hall et al., 1999). Baum (2006, p.61-62) details characteristic features of the tourism industry as follows:

- characterised by extensive diversity as a result of diverse products and markets, influenced by geographical, cultural, social, political and other factors;
- affected by seasonality resulting from fluctuation in supply and demand depending on climate, season, and various events;
- constrained by its service-sector characteristics, including the inseparability of production and consumption, the intangibility and perishability of the service products as well as the local nature of its demand;
- local tradition remains a critical factor for tourism in some countries;
- a labour-intensive industry with a mixed skill profile and dominated by unskilled and semi-skilled jobs, resulting in more access for workers with minimum skills or lack of formal training, and traditions of low pay and poor working conditions.

The strong linkages and interdependency with other sectors contribute to making the tourism industry diverse but also induce various challenges and opportunities. Furthermore, as a people-focused and labour-intensive industry, tourism employees play a pivotal role in supplying and delivering products and services to customers. As a result, a more robust understanding of many facets of tourist employment as the primary driver of the industry's survival is critical, which is further elaborated in the following subsection. In general, this section focuses on providing insights into the interaction between tourism and other industries, as well as the diversity within the industry and the characteristic of its workforce.

2.2.2 Characteristics and Challenges of Tourism Employment

As explained, tourism has a significant role in the global economy with tourism-related businesses as leading producers of new jobs worldwide (Cook et al., 2018). Prior to the global COVID-19 pandemic, which has of course caused significant loss to the industry, the World Travel and Tourism Council (2021) estimated that tourism

accounted for a total of 334 million jobs in 2019, contributing to 10.6% of the global workforce. The governments widely recognise the tourism sector for its employment-creation potential, despite the domination of low-skilled and semi-skilled jobs (Baum, 1994, 2012). Leiper (1979, p. 400) underlines the service-based characteristics of the industry by stating that "the tourist industry consists of all those firms, organisations and facilities which are intended to serve the specific needs and wants of the tourists". The service-centric nature of the industry also highlights the significance of tourism employees as the key success factor that needs to be better understood.

Based on the contribution and engagement in producing the tourism output, the UNWTO and International Labour Organization (ILO, 2014, p. 24-25) categorise tourism employment into:

- "direct employment", covers all jobs as a result of direct involvement in the production of tourism output, including staff in hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, tourism information offices, cruise lines, and tourism souvenirs outlets;

- "indirect employment", covers all jobs that support the production of tourism output, such as staff in hotels and restaurant suppliers, construction companies that build and maintain tourist facilities, aircraft manufacturers, various handicrafts producers, marketing agencies, accounting services; and

- induced employment covers all jobs where direct and indirect tourism employees spend their earn money, such as staff in non-tourism-related retail shops, including grocery stores, clothing shops, and electronics and appliance stores.

Affected by the dynamism of the tourism industry, which is highly influenced by historical events, the role and the nature of work in the tourism industry continue to evolve (Baum, 2006). For example, Saunders (2003) argues that the historical origins of the hotel and catering workforce in developed countries lie in the work of domestic servants who worked in the homes of the ruling classes since the mid-1900s. Furthermore, the advances in technology, industrialisation and urban living lifestyle influenced the declining needs for domestic servants, who then transitioned to work in the fast-growing hotel industry in the 20th century. Meanwhile, in countries or regions with little or no history of industrialisation or urbanisation, the movement into tourism-related employment was a departure from agricultural activity, which

eventually contributed to establishing the agritourism sector (Williams et al., 2000). On the other hand, Baum (2006) argues that tourism employment also owes its origin to activities part of the local natural landscape long before the emergence of tourism, such as ski instructors in the Alps. Nonetheless, the dependence and merger of tourism employment with other sectors have been inevitable.

Despite the low entry barriers, the seasonality, location (e.g., periphery) and other distinctive characteristics of the tourism industry make it challenging to recruit people as well as sustain talent and skills (Baum, 2006; World Travel and Tourism Council, 2015). Some tourism destinations are located in remote, rural, or outback locations that might be disadvantaged due to being isolated from the economic centre activities, characterised by insufficient infrastructure and confronted with a limited population, which affects the nature of the industry and the employees' roles and skills requirements (Frances & Margee, 2015). Geographic location has an impact on tourism employment in this scenario, with substantial obstacles such as labour shortages and lack of skills for the task of providing authentic local services to tourists (Baum, 2002, 2006; Carson et al., 2010). As a result, along with the scarcity of local workforce, employees in rural and outback tourism destinations are often sourced from interstate and even international origins, including short-term migrants (Carson et al., 2010; Carson & Harwood, 2007; Garofano et al., 2017).

Simultaneously, influenced by an array of factors, seasonality is one of the distinguishing features of the tourism industry that affects the fluctuation of both supply and demand (Commons & Page, 2001; Lundtorp, 2001). Seasonality in the tourism industry is a complex phenomenon resulting from natural seasonal changes and institutionalised seasonality. For destinations that rely on natural attractions, Collier (2011) emphasises that weather plays a pivotal role in the availability of tourism products and the tourists' decision to choose holiday time and destination. Meanwhile, Commons and Page (2001) explain that holidays and events as part of the institutionalised seasonality also significantly affect the tourism flow. Thus, the seasonality indirectly influences the fluctuation in labour demand, including the typical labour shortage during the high season period, which opens up a window for seasonal, part-time, and temporary working opportunities for migrant workers (Jolliffe & Farnsworth, 2003; Kusluvan, 2003; World Travel and Tourism Council, 2015). In addition, as it is characterised by low barriers to entry, seasonal tourism work tends to attract less educated, semi-skilled or unskilled workers, jeopardising product and service quality due to limited training (Baum, 2002; Mathieson & Wall, 1982).

Furthermore, Baum (2006) as well as Grobelna and Skrzeszewska (2019) argue that employing migrant workers to support seasonal labour demand might have impacts on service performance, the provision of adequate and rapid training, and employee motivation, loyalty, and job security. All these factors remain significant challenges for establishing sustainable human resource management practices in the sector.

On top of that, globalisation adds more challenges to work and retaining employment in the tourism industry, creating competitive and high turnover labour markets. For example, Baum (2006) argues that changing labour markets, particularly in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development "OECD" member countries, have attracted higher-educated people to take these lower-paid jobs, making them scarcer for the lower-educated jobseekers. As a result, globalisation makes it easier to mobilise more knowledgeable and skilled individuals, putting a strain on local recruitment. At the same time, the addition of migrant workers from less developed countries also adds more pressure on the local workforce. Therefore, despite its positive impacts in terms of alleviating the labour deficit and motivating people to become more skilled, globalisation might also lead to an unsustainable industry in the long term. For example, before Brexit, the tourism industry in the United Kingdom had an oversupply of workers due to an influx of people from other EU countries (OECD, 2001, 2007).

As tourism can be viewed as a "people industry", the employees play a significant role in connecting the guests, operators, and host communities. However, tourism demand fluctuation creates substantial challenges for tourism employment. As a result, in many developed countries, tourism became increasingly reliant on an external labour supply, particularly migrants, accentuating the relationship between employment and migrant workers. However, Baum (2006) argues that outsourcing tourism employment to migrants might create various issues and challenges that lead to an urgent need for more sustainable practices in workforce management within the tourism industry, Including maximising local employment, developing human resources to match the market and industry needs, and providing a conducive and inclusive working environment. Therefore, understanding the roles and characteristics of tourism employment is pivotal in addressing issues and challenges within the industry. With limited research on this topic, there is a need for a holistic approach to understanding the roles, characteristics, issues and challenges in tourism employment, particularly in sustainably integrating migrant workers into the local workforce.

2.3 Migration as People Movement Phenomenon

Migration is a complex social phenomenon involving individuals' decisions to move away from their usual residence for a substantial period of time (Gold & Nawyn, 2013; Greenwood, 1985; International Organization for Migration, 2019; Sinha, 2005; White, 2016). The International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2019, p. 1) defines a migrant as "any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a country away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is". Furthermore, the UNWTO (2009) categorises international migrants into regular and temporary labour migrants (guest workers or overseas contract workers), irregular migrants (undocumented migrants), highly skilled and business migrants, return migrants, and resident migrants. Definitions, concepts and categories of migrations and migrants depend on geographical, methodological, temporal dimensions, and other factors. Kosinski and Prothero (1975) classify migration by:

- timeframe for temporary and permanent migration;
- distance for long and short distance migration;
- boundary crossed for internal and international migration;
- number of people involved in individual and mass migration;
- decision-making for voluntary impelled and forced migration;
- social organisation for family, class and individual migration;
- causes for economic and non-economic; and
- aims for conservative and innovation.

The nomadic behaviour of our ancestors, to mainly source food, may be considered a forerunner of today's migration. People move from place to place, temporarily or permanently, for different reasons or motives. Some people migrate to find better economic opportunities or join their families, while others migrate to find asylum or refuge due to war in their home countries. For whatever cause, in general, the motivation to survive and to have better opportunities underline the migration decision. Countries with greater economic and socio-politic stability, such as OECD countries, are the preferred destinations for many international migrants and refugees (OECD, 2007). Conversely, immigration is seen as the answer to many OECD countries' labour shortages and the ageing population (OECD, 2007). The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA, 2020) estimates that

migrants constitute 3.5% of the world's population. Furthermore, labour migrants account for two-thirds of all international migrant populations, which shows the significance of international migration to the labour market, and vice-versa (ILO, 2018).

Each migration action is unique and depends on the individual's motivation to migrate, which is influenced by various factors associated with their country of origin and destination (Lee, 1966). These factors are fundamental for Lee's (1966) 'push and pull' theory that stresses economic, social, political and environmental factors that push out an individual from the homeland; similar factors may pull the individual towards the destination country (Castelli, 2018). Push factors are elements that force people to leave their place of origin, which often are related to poverty conditions, political instability, natural disasters, and wars. On the other hand, pull factors constitute conditions that attract people to move to a particular destination, including economic opportunities, established infrastructure, better education and health systems and family reunification.

There are various approaches in migration studies, including economic, psychological, environmental and historical approaches. Given the underpinning interest in the correlation with tourism employment, this study will focus on economic approaches to international migration, more specifically labour-migration theories. Karpestam and Anderson (2013) classify labour migration theories into the two following categories:

1) theories of the initiating causes of migration, including:

   a) *the neoclassical theory* argues that individuals will migrate when the expected income is higher at the destination than at their current residence;

   b) *the new economics of labour migration theory* stresses the importance of the household as the decision-maker rather than the individual and hypothesises that individuals are not indifferent to risk; and

   c) *dual/segmented labour market theory* studies migration at a higher level of aggregation than the former theories, and emphasises essential structural characteristics (e.g. the wage formation process) in the economy, which creates a demand for immigrant labour.

2) theories of the self-perpetuating causes of migration, which cover:

   a) *network theory* acknowledges the fact that connections between migrants and relatives back home have the power to induce more migration;

   b) *cumulative causation theory* explains several self-perpetuating forces of migration, such as the effects of migration on the income distribution and agricultural production in areas of origin; and

   c) the *institutional theory* focuses on the necessary institutions, which assist international migration.

The fast-growing international migration comes with various challenges for migrants and host communities, including a lack of language proficiency, cultural differences, and unmatched job skills. Furthermore, Baum (2006, 2012) argues that integrating migrants into the local host community is still the biggest challenge in growing immigrant countries. While immigrants may feel unwelcomed and unwanted, the host communities argue that sometimes immigrants disrespect and are reluctant to adapt to local customs as well as disintegrate from the local communities (Janta et al., 2011; Joppe, 2012; OECD, 2007). However, since migrants constitute a significant proportion of the resident population in many countries, the integration of immigrants and their children into the local host community, mainly through the labour market, is essential to ensure social cohesion and economic development of the host country (Dwyer, 1993; Dwyer et al., 2010; OECD, 2007). Nevertheless, although the statistics show the contribution of migrants to the local economy, their role within the labour market is yet to be fully understood, which underlines the significance of this current study and future works.

2.4   The Tourism and Migration Interrelationship

This research is rooted in the factual interrelationship between tourism and migration. Migration and tourism both possess similar dynamics, which contribute to the interrelationship. Firstly, tourism and migration share a similar attribute as they describe the act of people moving from a place of origin to a destination. Tourists travel to enjoy different natural, cultural and social experiences (for a shorter period of time), while migrants move to seek better economic opportunities or a refuge place due to war in their home countries (Lee, 1966). Second, fast-growing international tourism and migration are both products of globalisation, where globalisation

facilitates international borders' opening to boost global interdependence and the interconnectedness of the economy, society, culture, and politics (Cohen, 2012; Dicken, 2007; Song et al., 2018). Finally, both global phenomena are highly context-dependent and are influenced by the environment, political stability, economic conditions, environment, and cultural events. On the other hand, the role of both migration and tourism is pivotal to many countries' economic and social development, and their contribution is increasing in line with globalisation.

The tourism and migration sectors are intercorrelated and this relationship works reciprocatively (Dwyer, 1993; Dwyer et al., 2010; P. Forsyth, 1993; Hall & Williams, 2002). International migrants play a prominent role in both the supply and demand of the tourism industry. As shown in Figure 2.1, the UNWTO (2009) introduces two distinct concepts that explain the interrelationship between tourism and migration: 'Tourism-led Migration' (TLM) and 'Migration-led Tourism' (MLT). While the 'migration-led tourism' concept explains how migration generates both inbound and outbound tourism flows, the 'tourism-led migration' concept focuses on how the growth of the tourism industry generates labour demand, which is partly supplied by overseas migrants (UNWTO, 2009). This research focuses on the latter part of the relationship, the migrant workers' role in the tourism and hospitality industry.

Figure 2.1

Tourism-Migration Interrelationship
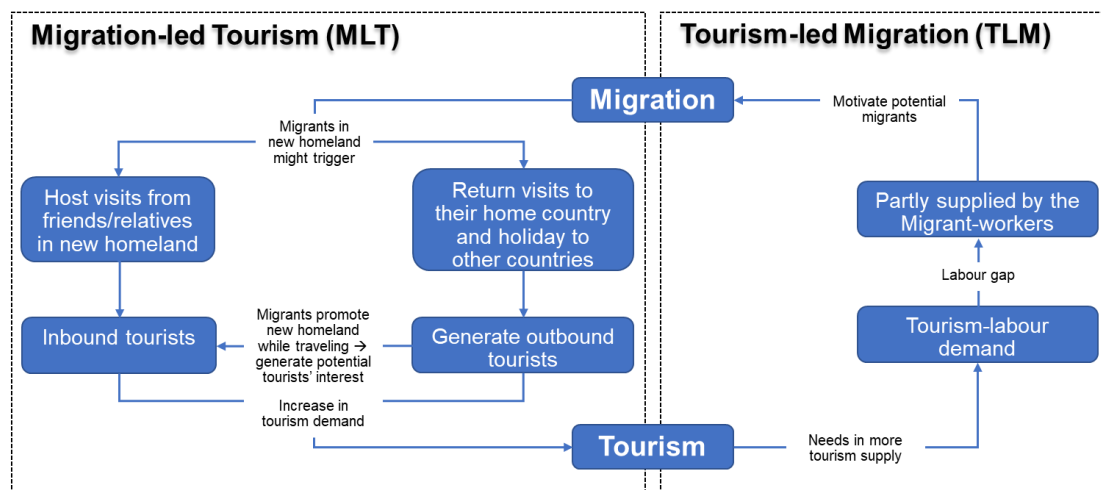
Note. This diagram represents the two different perspectives of the tourism and migration interrelationship. Adapted from *Tourism and migration: Exploring the relationship between two global phenomena*, by UNWTO, 2009 (https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284413140). Own elaboration and illustration.

From the MLT perspective, migration generates inbound and outbound tourism flows (Dwyer, 1993; Dwyer et al., 2010). Previous studies adopting the migration network theory provide insights into how permanent migration generates tourism flows, particularly VFR tourism, and in turn, a growing tourism demand stimulates migration. Overseas migrants are believed to boost inbound tourism by hosting visits from their friends and relatives (Dwyer et al., 1993; 2010). Moreover, the migrants who return to their countries of origin may "promote" their new homeland, stimulating more inbound visitations (Dwyer et al., 2014). On the other hand, a proportion of permanent migrants generate outbound tourism by making return visits to their home country and travel to other countries (Paci, 1994; Seaton and Tagg, 1995; Yuan et al., 1995; Feng and Page, 2000). Seeteram (2010) and Dwyer et al. (2014) examine that the relationship between migration and tourism is not limited to VFR tourism but can positively influence short trips for business and leisure purposes. UNWTO (2009) further suggests that the diversity of international migration contributes to cultural enrichment and new tourism product development in the host countries, which influence tourism growth.

On the other hand, and the focus of this research, the TLM concept summarises how the growth of the tourism industry generates labour demand, which is partly supplied by international migrants. In many developed countries, including Australia, international migration is the key to supporting population growth and filling labour shortages, particularly in industries with low entry barriers such as the tourism and hospitality industry (Lemaître et al., 2007; OECD, 2001, 2007). Tourism is valued as a low-barrier entry industry, making it a n accessible work place for labour migrants with limited local experiences, skills, and language proficiency. Additionally, extended studies suggest that the accessibilities and opportunities in the tourism industry also attract migrant entrepreneurs who see the tourism industry as a way to survive the challenges in the economic and socio-cultural context of the host countries (Desiderio & Mestres-Domènech, 2011; European Commission, 2008; Lardies, 1999; Pechlaner et al., 2012; Simon, 1990). Richmond (2002) observes another form of the migration-tourism linkage described as 'transilient' migration, where professionals and managers move internationally for career development. Besides that, research suggests that an individual's relationship with particular tourism destinations might lead to retirement migration (Williams et al., 2000). In summary, the tourism experiences in certain countries or greater work opportunities in the tourism industry are seen as a 'pull' factor contributing to one's decision to migrate to a specific country.

Though believed to benefit both origin and destination countries, integrating diverse migrant workers into the host society and workforce might have adverse effects and consequences. While filling tourism work gaps in destination countries, tourism-induced migration arguably contributes to the 'brain drain' phenomenon where countries of origin lose their most educated and talented workers to the destination countries, resulting in workforce gaps and economic loss there in the long term (Dragolea & Cotirlea, 2011; UNWTO, 2009). Furthermore, as suggested, migrant workers are mostly willing to work harder while being paid less, adding pressure and inducing more competition in the local labour market, which can lead to community tensions (Janta et al., 2011). Baum (2006) argues that the growing number of migrant workers is partly to blame for the low pay and inadequate working conditions in the tourism industry, and these might result in an unsustainable industry in the long term.

Despite all that, the migration-tourism interrelationship undoubtedly represents opportunities for cross-cultural knowledge assimilation. The UNWTO (2009) suggests that the diversity of international migration contributes to cultural enrichment and new tourism product development in the host countries, adding competitive advantages to the industry. However, the role of migrant workers in the tourism industry as the realisation of tourism-led migration is yet to be fully understood. There is still a knowledge gap that needs to be addressed to better understand the influence factors that impact the relationship between the two phenomena of mobility, particularly from a tourism-led migration point of view. Thus, extended research is needed to provide more comprehensive insights into this global phenomenon and address any associated challenges and issues.

2.4.1 The Role of Migrant Workers in Tourism and Hospitality Employment

As previously explained, the relationship between migration and tourism employment is captured in the concept of 'Tourism-led Migration', where the tourism labour demand generates migration. Furthermore, the tourism-migration relationship illustrates the importance of understanding the impacts of tourism on global economic, and political processes, as well as capital and labour circulation (Williams & Hall, 2000). For decades, migrants have played a significant role in the tourism industry workforce in filling the labour shortages where the local workforce is not willing to engage in low pay, low status and seasonal jobs (Baum, 2006; Choi et al., 2000; OECD, 2007; Williams & Hall, 2000). The ILO (2018) estimates 164 million migrant

workers worldwide, and their share within the tourism industry is proliferating, particularly within the hospitality, restaurant and catering sectors. In many countries, tourism has grown faster than the economy, which, when combined with a decline in labour force growth, has resulted in tourism- labour shortages (UNWTO, 2009). Furthermore, seasonality, geographic periphery, and globalisation also put pressure on tourism labour demand, resulting in the dependency on migrant workers to fill the labour shortages, particularly during high seasons.

There are various factors to be considered with respect to the growing role of migrant workers within the tourism industry. The motivation for seeking better economic opportunities is the main 'pull' factor for international migrants (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2018). Even though the tourism industry is considered to be an industry with low entry barriers, low wages and low status, the tourism industry in typical destination countries for international migrants provides more than in their origin countries. The neoclassical theory argues that individuals are likely to migrate when the expected income is higher at the destination than at their current residence (Karpestam & Anderson, 2013). From the migrants' point of view, the relative ease of access to jobs, restricted opportunities in other sectors, unfamiliarity with the host country's economy and business culture and a lack of host language competence constitute primary motives for taking up entry-level tourism jobs (Janta et al., 2011; Janta & Ladkin, 2009). There are limited employment opportunities for migrants in correlation to substantial linguistic barriers, significant cultural differences, and even employers' discrimination, resulting in downward occupational mobility (Richmond, 1969). Szivas and Riley (1999) argue that one attractor of the tourism industry as a place of work is the ease of earning a living. Most tourism jobs involve skills that can be acquired relatively quickly through short periods of training or practice (Riley, 2002). William (2012) adds that the tourism industry, in relation to the attractiveness of its location, is also able to offer psychological support for migrant workers, which compensates for the low material rewards. Working in the tourism industry gives a platform for migrants to interact with the host societies, both with colleagues and customers, which facilitates their learning of the host country's culture and language (Janta, 2011; Janta et al., 2011).

From the host countries' point of view, the ageing population in many OECD countries results in a declining working-age population and an ongoing labour shortage (OECD, 2007). Janta et al. (2011) suggest that international migrants are not only the answer to the labour shortage but are also an opportunity to increase cost efficiency in the

tourism industry. In many cases, migrant workers offer more knowledge and skills combined with a willingness to be paid lower. Besides that, geographic periphery and seasonality in many tourism destinations will continue to encourage operators to resort to cheaper migrant workers, particularly for entry-level positions (Joppe, 2012). In addition, the tourism industry and host countries are advantaged by the inflow of additional skills and talents from international migrants (Desiderio & Mestres-Domènech, 2011). However, despite the resourcefulness of migrant workers in the tourism sector, Baum (2006) contends that the industry's and host country's rising reliance on migrants may cause concerns and obstacles that are not sustainable in the long run.

In general, migrant workers in the tourism industry can be divided into entry-level unskilled workers, high-skilled professionals, and entrepreneurs. The supply of unskilled international workforce to address the labour shortages in entry-level tourism jobs is the major contributor to the ongoing relationship between migration and tourism employment (Choi et al., 2000; Williams & Hall, 2000). These entry-level jobs vary from room attendants, kitchen hands, waitresses, and concierges to events/meetings planners. Nevertheless, Collins (1991) suggests that the migrant intake has progressively evolved, from providing a pool of unskilled labour for post-war reconstruction projects to more diverse skilled migrants. Williams and Hall (2000) also identify that the growth of transnational tourism capital flows influences the increasing demand for skilled migrants, particularly senior management. Besides, there is also 'transilient migration', where high-skilled professionals and managers move internationally for career development (Richmond, 2002). This phenomenon is generally found in multinational hospitality companies which rotate the managerial level employees between countries in facilitating knowledge and skills exchange. In addition, the flexibility, openness and market-structure of the tourism industry also attract entrepreneur migrants (Desiderio & Mestres-Domènech, 2011; European Commission, 2008; Lardies, 1999; Pechlaner et al., 2012; Simon, 1990). Pechlaner et al. (2012) suggest that the diversity in the tourism industry opens a gate for migrant entrepreneurs to leverage their connection to their home country to establish tourism businesses while contributing to the host country's economy. Thus, migrant entrepreneurs open up employment opportunities and promote cultural and knowledge exchange between the origin and host countries.

From a different approach, in relation to migrant motivations, Uriely (2001, p.6) classifies tourism-migration workers into:

1) 'travelling professional workers', who work in the tourism industry due to the employment opportunities and engage in tourism activities as a by-product of travelling, are migrant-tourism workers with specific economic motivations;

2) 'migrant tourism workers', who travel to make a living (often seasonally), but only amongst tourism places, focus on their pleasure orientation, are workers with mixed economic and tourist motivations, such as some of the winter ski resort workers;

3) 'non-institutionalised working tourists', who work while travelling to support their trip, with the primary motivation being the experience of travelling abroad; and

4) 'working-holiday tourists', who work as part of their tourism experience, such as volunteer conservation workers.

The contribution of migrant workers to the tourism industry is well-recognised, yet there is still limited understanding of the role of labour in the tourism services production, skill and knowledge transfer (Williams, 2012). The employment of international workers in the tourism and related service sectors, which leads to increased cultural diversity, presents a series of challenges and opportunities for migrants, employers and the hosting communities. Furthermore, tourism migrant workers are arguably a source of community tension, particularly if they are perceived to burden community resources, represent competition for jobs, or do not integrate into the host society and culture (Rogers et al., 2009). Janta et al. (2011) add that migrants' lack of integration may be influenced by host society rejection and cultural discrepancy and may be intensified by tourism employment patterns that restrict social mobility or when organisations reinforce the formation of ethnic enclaves and social closure. Baum et al. (2008) further explain that increasing migrant mobility and greater numbers of migrants in the labour market also carry consequences for the industry in terms of the range of products, tourist experiences, and destination image. Migrants employed in front-of-house positions play the role of the local host and interact in this role with domestic and international tourists which may lead to an inaccurate perception of host destinations (Janta et al., 2011).

Despite all that, migrant workers may bring new skills, innovation, and knowledge to destination countries, which aid the industry's competitiveness, helping the host communities and overall destination countries to grow (Baum, 2012). Janta et al. (2011) also note that relationships and interactions in multicultural environments

might help to develop human capital, based on the importation and reproduction of cross-cultural norms and values, slowly giving a new image to the local tourism industry. Furthermore, through contact with host societies, co-workers, or customers, tourism employment also offers opportunities for greater social inclusion and helps to facilitate migrant adaptation to the host culture (Janta et al., 2011). Therefore, it is pivotal for future research to identify strategies to address the challenges and opportunities of migrant workers in the tourism industry.

2.4.2 Cultural Diversity in Tourism, Hospitality and Accommodation Employment as the Result of the Interrelationship Between Tourism and Migration

For decades, ethnically diverse migrants have played a significant role in the tourism industry workforce in filling the labour shortages in many developed countries where the local workforce is often not willing to engage in relatively low-wage and low-status jobs (Baum, 2006, 2012; Choi et al., 2000; Williams & Hall, 2000). In addition, the seasonality, high turnover and fluctuating demand in the tourism and hospitality sector result in high dependency on the international labour market (Baum, 2012; Joppe, 2012). As an industry that acts as the melting pot of people from different backgrounds, the tourism industry arrays extensive and complex layers of diversity. Moreover, as a sector that is highly dependent on international workers and markets, diversity, particularly cultural diversity, is inevitable in the tourism and hospitality industry.

Culture is a complex phenomenon, Hofstede (2005, p. 4) views it as "software of the mind" or the shared patterns of thought, emotion, and action that distinguish one group of people from other groups. Cultural diversity represents the differences in language, customs, religion, beliefs, rules, and ethnic heritage, differentiating collectives of people (Gruber et al., 2013). In addition, each culture has its values and customs regarding standards of good service, resulting in differences in expectations, perceptions, and evaluations of service performance (Dimanche & Reisinger, 2011). Regarding the multicultural workplace, Oerlemans and Peeters (2010) delineate how intercultural outcomes are the product of interaction strategies adopted by immigrant groups and the host community. Interaction among individuals from different ethnic backgrounds may be contributing to attitude change toward the other as an individual or community.

Previous research has demonstrated the competitive advantages of having a multicultural workforce, particularly in service industries that deal with culturally diverse customers, such as tourism and hospitality (Baum, 2006, 2012; ILO, 2014). As the International Labour Organization (2014, p.2) emphasises "employing a diverse workforce − and managing it effectively − not only satisfies legal and ethical obligations but is also beneficial for business". To begin, a diverse staff has the ability to enhance an organisation's image, as Milliken and Martins (1996) stress the importance of a diverse workforce as a symbol of equality and has a significant impact on an organisation's reputation. The presence of culturally diverse staff is also critical in terms of acting as a good promoter of diversity in the tourism industry and representing diversity in local society (ILO, 2014). By projecting a diverse and inclusive image, tourism and hospitality can be seen as a welcoming and accessible industry for migrants, which increases its chances of attracting and retaining diverse top talent (Cox et al., 1991; Mazur, 2010). Additionally, Janta et al. (2012) state that coexistence and cooperation among culturally diverse employees contribute to the creation of a positive work environment, thereby increasing an organisation's competitiveness. Thus, having a culturally diverse workplace is critical for sustaining a sustainable pool of resources and minimising resource turnover within the organisation, both of which may contribute to the organisation's improved performance.

Second, individuals from diverse backgrounds bring a variety of perspectives, knowledge, experience, and other cognitive characteristics, which results in the production of innovative insights and ideas, which contribute to a competitive and creative work environment (Baum, 2012; Cox et al., 1991; Watson et al., 1993; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). As Milliken and Martins (1996) emphasise, organisational diversity can result in "cognitive outcomes" such as increased creativity and invention as a result of the team's ability to absorb and process information from a variety of perspectives. This is consistent with the cognitive diversity hypothesis, which asserts that multiple perspectives resulting from cultural differences among organisational members may facilitate problem solving and innovation (Bright et al., 2019). Thus, cultural diversity in the workplace can facilitate the enhancement of innovation and decision-making and eventually increase an organisation's efficiency (Bright et al., 2019; Cox, 1993; Cox, 2013; Cox et al., 1991).

Finally, according to Baum (2012), cultural diversity may result in the reproduction of cross-cultural norms and values, which might help shape the tourism industry and

local society. Tourism employment provides opportunities to develop language skills and local knowledge through contact with co-workers, customers, and host communities from various backgrounds, which can aid in migrant adaptation to the host culture as well as in serving culturally diverse guests (Janta et al., 2012). Cultural diversity in the workplace opens conversation windows among people from different backgrounds, allowing a better understanding of different cultural, social, and economic perspectives, and enhancing the delivery of adequate services when accompanied by adequate communication and observation (Elshaer & Marzouk, 2019). Furthermore, culturally diverse organisations are better equipped to serve a diverse clientele in an increasingly global market because they have a better understanding of the requirements and needs of foreign nations as a result of their cultural background (Adler, 2003). Thus, workplace cultural diversity may help to boost customer satisfaction and overall service quality.

On the other hand, Baum (2015) and Mor Barak (2011) argue that the biggest challenge in managing a workforce's cultural diversity is creating an inclusive workplace, whereby various ethnic groups co-exist and work together, making intercultural situations a part of their everyday lives. However, as aptly clarified by Mor Barak (2011, p. 2), the problems of managing a diverse workforce do not stem from heterogeneity itself, but rather from the "inability of managers to fully comprehend its dynamics, divest themselves of their personal prejudicial attitudes, and creatively unleash the potential embedded in a multicultural workforce". Furthermore, without proper management and training, cultural diversity among team members might increase conflicts and misunderstandings, resulting in feelings of exclusion, lack of support, low commitment, and decreased productivity (Mor Barak, 2011). Besides that, without integration into the local community, the diverse tourism migrant workers are arguably a source of community tension, particularly if they are perceived to be a burden on community resources, to represent competition for jobs or if they do not integrate into the host society and culture (Rogers et al., 2009).

Therefore, adequate inclusive policies and diversity management are needed to address these challenges and improve employee performance. Many scholars suggest organisations should implement workforce diversity management where management proactively employs induction initiatives and diversity training to preserve intercultural understanding and workplace harmony (Zopiatis et al., 2014; Joppe, 2012; Mor Barak, 2011; McMahon, 2010; Devine et al., 2007). Diversity management aims to select and effectively manage diverse employees by valuing

their uniqueness while increasing their sense of belonging and identifying with the organisation (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015; Shore et al., 2011). Furthermore, diversity management can be a tool to uplift intercultural competencies and mutual understanding, empathy, trust, and cooperation between team members (Mor Barak, 2011). However, there are still a number of areas that require further attention and exploration, which underlines the significance of the current study by exploring the workforce diversity phenomena in the tourism and hospitality industry (Dedeoğlu et al., 2018; Tsang & Ap, 2007).

2.5 Understanding Service in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry

2.5.1 Definition and Characteristics of Services in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry

The tourism industry produces goods and services, while goods refer to the tangible and physical aspects of the product, such as hotel rooms and foods and beverages in restaurants, service refers to the intangible process and any supporting aspect of delivering the product to the customers (Reisinger, 2001). As Cook et al. (2018, p. 18) quote that "service and tourism go hand and hand". Service can be defined as different things, depending on context and perspective. Kotler and Keller (2016, p. 346) define service as "any act or performance that one party can offer to another that is essentially intangible and does not result in ownership of anything". From the customer point of view, service refers to the combination of outcomes and experiences delivered to and received by customers (Johnston & Clark, 2008, p. 10). Thus, service emphasises the interaction between the service provider and customer (Reisinger, 2001). Furthermore, while the service provider is "responsible for the provision of service and the maintenance of its quality at all levels of the organisation", the customer is responsible for receiving and assessing the service quality (Barrington & Olsen, 1987, p. 132).

Mills (1986) categorises services into maintenance-interactive work characterised by the straightforward nature and limited concerns in transactions (i.e., fast-food restaurants), task-interactive work characterised by higher risk in transactions and intense provider-customer interactions (i.e., banking and brokerage firms), and personal-interactive work characterised by labour-intensive and significant provider-customer interactions (i.e., hospitality and tourism services). The attributes of tourism

and hospitality services are detailed as follows (Barrington & Olsen, 1987; Lovelock & Wright, 2010; Reisinger, 2001; Wong et al., 1999; Zeithaml et al., 1988):

- perishability, meaning that services cannot be stored away and are intended to be consumed straight away as they are produced;
- short distribution channels and production-consumption inseparability;
- heterogeneous outcomes resulting from diversity in staff who provide the service, with different attitudes, circumstances, knowledge, and skills;
- intangibility, as it mainly focuses on "experiences", which are perceived indirectly and cannot be stored or transferred;
- the distinction of service standards as a result of varying perceptions and evaluations of services;
- the flexibility of service to meet demand fluctuation;
- reliability and consistency of service as the key of customer satisfaction and organisational success; and
- face-to-face (and voice-to-voice) interaction between employees and customers as the tourism and hospitality industry is deemed a 'high contact' type industry.

There are three pivotal aspects in the service flow: the service standard, service delivery, and service quality. Figure 2.2 shows the relationship between these aspects and how each aspect is influenced by customers' interpretations and perceptions. First, service standard refers to the level of quality that can be expected from products and services and the set of rules, guidelines, procedures and requirements in the service provider's provision and delivery of product and service (Barrington & Olsen, 1987; Commission, 2016). For example, in the accommodation sector, service standards can cover the room's cleanliness, the manner of greeting the guests, procedures for guests checking in and out, the procedure for handling guests' complaints, and many other protocols and procedures to ensure the delivery of quality service to meet the guests' expectation. Service standards are formed from a combination of industry protocols, insights from management and employees, and customer feedback (Alzaydi et al., 2018; Barrington & Olsen, 1987). The service standard is pivotal for the organisation's success in acknowledging the service provider's point of view on how to deliver quality service, and for the customers in terms of what to expect from the service provider.

Second, service delivery is "concerned with the where, when, and how a service product is delivered to the customer" (Lovelock & Wright, 2002, p.62). Thus, the core of service delivery is transforming inputs into outputs through a system where the staff, the customers, and the physical environment interact (Chase & Hayes, 1991; Jones & Lockwood, 1998). Solomon et al. (1985) further explain that service delivery is perceived as a person-to-person encounter between a buyer and a seller where success rests on the quality of the subjective service experience. Service delivery initiates with the anticipation of customers' needs, which then translates into service standards provided by the management (Martin, 1986). The process of service delivery also needs to account for flexibility to accommodate customers' requests.

The employees play a significant role in delivering quality service which satisfies both management's service standards and customers' unique and variable needs. Equally important, the customers also play a crucial role as their presence and participation as consumers are necessary to facilitate the production and delivery of the service (Barrington & Olsen, 1987). Although the attempts to standardise through the establishment of service standards, the provision and delivery of services are not uniform since it involves individuals from diverse backgrounds with different attitudes, personalities, knowledge and skills. Delivering quality service is the key to establishing and maintaining a thriving tourism and hospitality industry, with the employees-customers encounters as the focal point (Maglio, 2010). Therefore, employees in front office positions, who directly interact and deliver service to customers, play a key role in the success of the tourism and hospitality industry.

Service quality refers to "customers' appraisals of the service core, the provider, or the entire service organisation" (Duffy & Ketchand, 1998, p. 241). Parasuraman et al. (1994) suggest that the primary indicator in measuring service quality is the gap between guests' expectations and service performance. Dimanche and Reisinger (2011) add that service quality is related to both the products and attributes of services as well as the perceptions of the services. Thus, customers' perceptions play a significant role in determining service quality, which is distinctively influenced by customer anticipations and expectations (Barrington & Olsen, 1987; Wuest, 2001). On the other hand, Reisinger (2001) acknowledges that employees' motivations, skills and attitudes in delivering services greatly influence service quality and customer satisfaction. Yang et al. (2011, p. 349) add that service quality and customer satisfaction are key factors in establishing and maintaining the continuous operation of the tourism and hospitality industry, with the interaction between tourism providers

and customers as the focal point. From the concept and definition of service quality, employee-customer interaction is a key factor in measuring service quality, influencing consumer perceptions and corporative image (Salazar et al., 2010). This interaction works both ways: service providers who are attentive, caring, responsive, honest, neatly dressed, and accommodate customers' needs enhance the customers' experiences, while the customers who are respectful, friendly, proactive and appreciative can positively impact the service delivery (Dimanche & Reisinger, 2011).

Figure 2.2

Service Flow in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry
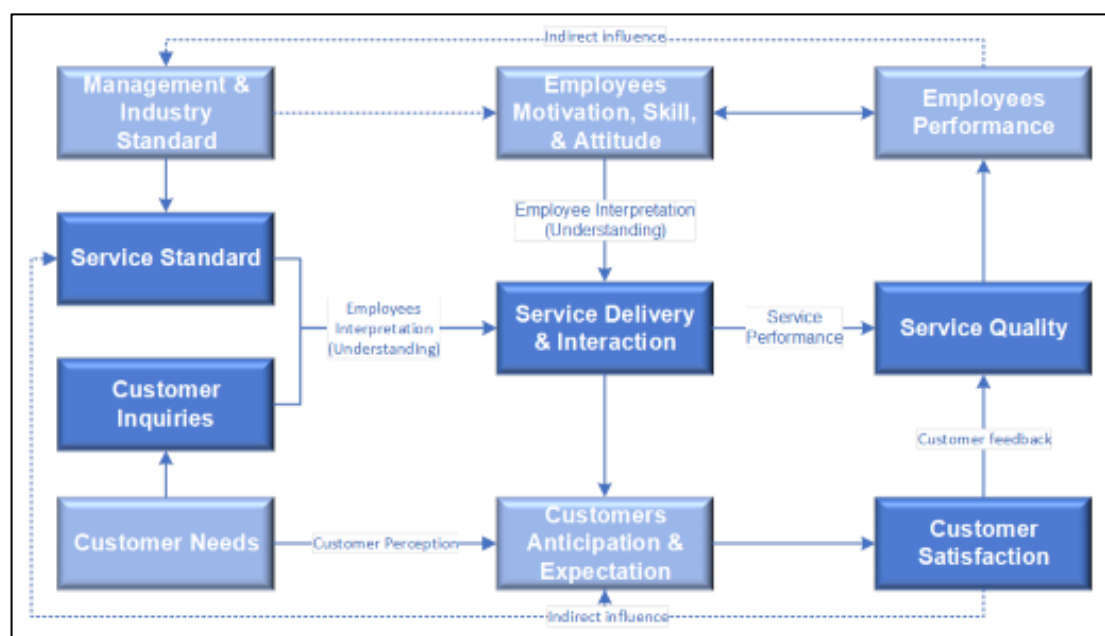
Note. This chart represents the relationship between various factors that influence service flow in the tourism and hospitality industry and is based on various studies on service management (Barrington & Olsen, 1987; Commission, 2016; Cook et al., 2018; Mok et al., 2001; Reisinger, 2001; Salazar et al., 2010; Wong et al., 1999; Wuest, 2001; Zeithaml et al., 1988). Own elaboration and illustration.

Titz (2001, p.68) identifies three main components in delivering a quality service experience in the tourism and hospitality industry: the people, the process, and the physical evidence of the experience. Tourism and hospitality services represent a people-oriented industry, "provided by people and for the people" (Dimanche & Reisinger, 2011, p. 237). Schneider (1990) identifies three distinct groups of people who participate in the customer's quality experience: the customers, employees, and management. The employees, particularly in the frontline positions, are the key to successful service delivery, not only as service developers and couriers but also as service feedback receivers. In addition, the process of delivering quality service

comprises benchmarking, continuous quality improvement strategies, service evaluation, and application of technology (Titz, 2001). This key point is the result of the collaborative work of the management and employees to develop an organisational service standard based on the understanding of the customers' expectations and feedback. Lastly, Titz (2001) stresses the importance of the physical evidence of service experiences such as service environments, such as cleanliness, atmosphere, and design.

High-quality service is critical to the success of any service industry, including the hospitality industry, but it is a difficult concept to grasp and measure (Martin, 1986, 1986b; Parasuraman et al., 1985). Martin (1986, p. 33) states that "service quality is always a combination of two major factors – service procedures and the service staff's "personality," or what I will call conviviality". While the procedural dimension highlights the technical aspects of providing or delivering service to customers, the convivial dimension reflects a service provider's ability to relate to, engage with, and understand customers in order to provide high-quality service (Martin, 1986). Martin's (1986) procedural and convivial dimensions are broken down in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

Major Components in Martin's Procedural and Convivial Service Quality Dimensions

Dimension	Component	Details
Procedural Dimension	Flow of service	A proper service flow requires that services occur in regular intervals and in the appropriate order, ensuring that no single component of the service system is overburdened at any given time and that customers receive prompt and consistent service.
	Timeliness	The time required for a product or service to reach each consumer, as well as the timely provision of adequate service.
	Accommodation	Service systems and procedures must be designed with the client in mind; it must be tailored to the clien''s specific requirements.
	Anticipation	Capacity of servers to anticipate customer'' needs and expectations and to provide services and/or products even before customers request them

Dimension	Component	Details
	Communication	The importance of clear and concise communication in providing high-quality services.
	Customer Feedback	The significance of knowing customers' evaluation on the service provided and what needed to be done to avoid service failure.
	Supervision	Effective management and monitoring are required to ensure that the service system runs smoothly.
Convivial Dimension	Attitude	Maintaining a pleasant attitude that is indicated through behavioural and verbal cues is critical to providing excellent service.
	Body Language	To effectively interact with consumers, use the appropriate face expression, eye contact, and smiles, as well as regulated hand and body gestures.
	Tone of Voice	High-quality service necessitates open and courteous communication, as well as the ability to adapt to the communication style of the consumer.
	Tact	Knowing what to say or do in various situations in order to deliver good service.
	Naming Names	The importance of the staf''s capacity to address consumers by their names in order to demonstrate individualised care and respect.
	Attentiveness	The significance of delivering individualised, courteous, friendly, and respectful service that is suited to the demands of clients.
	Guidance	To provide helpful guidance, direction, and assistance to consumers, staff must have sufficient knowledge and information.
	Suggestive Selling	The staf''s capacity to perform sales and representative roles, as well as provide product expertise to customers.
	Problem-Solving	The employees must be able to de-escalate any service failures and deal with customer complaints in a calm, professional, and tactful manner.

Note. The summarisation of procedural and convivial components in the provision of hospitality service quality based on Marti''s (1986, pp. 34-36) research titled ""Defining What Quality Service Is for Yo"".

Service is an intangible product that includes intensive interactions between service providers and customers from diverse backgrounds, resulting in difficulties in measuring and evaluating the service quality (Barrington & Olsen, 1987, p. 133). Furthermore, Wuest (2001, p. 54) states that "service quality is the result of a complex network of several dimensions". Thus, there is still difficulty defining and measuring service quality due to its intangibility, perishability, heterogeneity, inseparability, and subjective nature (Dimanche & Reisinger, 2011; Reisinger, 2001; Zhang et al., 2015). In response, the SERVQUAL (Service Quality) Model has for instance been developed by Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml (1988, p. 23) to measure consumer perception of service quality based on the most significant dimensions, including:

1) "reliability" represents the ability to perform service dependably and accurately;

2) "tangibles" comprise the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communications materials;

3) "responsiveness" reflects the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service;

4) "assurance" captures the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence; and

5) "empathy" embraces the caring, individualised attention the firm provides to its customers.

Since the SERVQUAL scale has been developed based on research in service and retailing organisations in North America, Akbaba (2006) and Salazar et al. (2010) argue that the SERVQUAL scale alone is not adequate in measuring the complexity of service quality in the tourism and hospitality industry, particularly in correlation to cross-cultural analysis. Consequently, the SERVQUAL method has been adapted to many other quality service measurements, including HOLSERV (Wong Ooi Mei et al., 1999) to measure the service quality in the hospitality industry, refining a hospitality-friendly measurement by employing: (1) employees, to represent responsiveness, confidence and empathy; (2) tangibles; and (3) reliability. Dean, White, and Wong (1999) also suggest that the employees' personalised and caring service, behaviour, and appearance play the most significant role in overall service quality. Furthermore, Wong et al. (1999) find that employees' attributes such as "friendliness", "helpfulness", and "politeness" are likely to be evaluated subjectively based on the guests' background.

Meanwhile, by combining surveys based on SERVQUAL scales and in-depth interviews with four- and five-star hotels guests in Portugal, Salazar et al. (2010) conclude that room, ambience or feeling, restaurant service, tangibles, and reception are the key dimensions in evaluating accommodation service quality. In addition, the findings of the in-depth interviews suggest that the 'staff' dimension is deemed the most pivotal aspect in measuring a hotel's service quality (Salazar et al., 2010). Attempting to generalise SERVQAL given the absence of cross-cultural analysis in previous research, Knutson, Stevens, Patton, and Thompson (1990; 1992; 1994) have developed LODGSERV which they argue is applicable in different cultural settings. Among the five key dimensions, "Responsiveness" has appeared as the strongest dimension across cultures, including Australia, followed by "Reliability", "Empathy", and "Assurance". However, with the main focus on the transferability of the method to different country settings, it fails to cover the cultural peculiarities, in particular why each country has different perceptions of service quality (Patton et al., 1994).

With a strong focus on the quantitative approach and the application of standardised methods, previous studies might not have fully captured the subjectivity of service quality; these studies might also have struggled to openly explore the relationship between the great number of factors influencing service quality. These methods also only focus on the customers' evaluation of service. Understanding both customer and employee knowledge, background, and circumstances are pivotal in measuring service quality, as service quality results from customer expectation, service providers' delivery, and their interaction (Reisinger, 2001; Wuest, 2001). As culture plays an imminent role in understanding people's backgrounds, exploring culture's influences on service quality is essential to fully comprehend the intricacies of the service concept in the tourism and hospitality sector. The following section explores the influence of culture on service quality, particularly on accommodation front-desk service, which is a central pillar of this study.

2.5.2 The Role of the Front Office in Delivering Accommodation Service

The tourism industry has been among the fastest-growing segments in the service industry and encompasses a broad range of sub-sectors, including cafes, restaurants and takeaway food services, clubs, pubs, taverns and bars, accommodation services, transport and travel services, travel agency and tour operator services, casinos and

gaming, exhibitions and events, and other related industry that support travel activities (ABS, 2014; Australian Trade and Investment Commission, 2019; Cook et al., 2018, p. 82; March, 2003). This study focuses on the accommodation sector as one of the major sub-sectors in the tourism industry. Tourism accommodation provides "travellers with temporary shelter", which can be found in many shapes and sizes, including bed and breakfasts (B&B), hotels, motels, hostels, condominiums (apartment hotels), as well as recreational vehicles (RV) parks and campgrounds (Cook et al., 2018, p. 191). Bardi (2003, p. 14) differentiates the accommodation market into residential hotels, which provide guest accommodations for the long term and commercial hotels, which provide short-term accommodations for travelling guests. The accommodation sector creates services to provide a 'home away from home' experience to cater needs of diverse travellers while also providing a local experience (Lu et al., 2015; Wu & Ko, 2013). The accommodation sector represents far more than only the provision of rooms for the guests but also related services to support their stay and meet their multi-faceted needs.

Cook et al. (2018) explain that there are three main functions to support the basic operation of accommodation providers, including administration (general management), guest contact service (such as receptionists and room attendants), and guest support service (such as groundskeeping, engineering and maintenance). As shown in the figure below, Shostack (1987) divides the process of accommodation service delivery into:

1) front-office operations, which are visible to customers and play a key role in delivering quality service to the customers in which direct contact takes place between the customer and the staff, and

2) back-office operations are invisible to the customers and mainly cover the non-contact operations between the staff and customers, but still play an essential role in supporting the relationship between the staff and customers.

Figure 2.3

Basic Hotel Organisational Chart
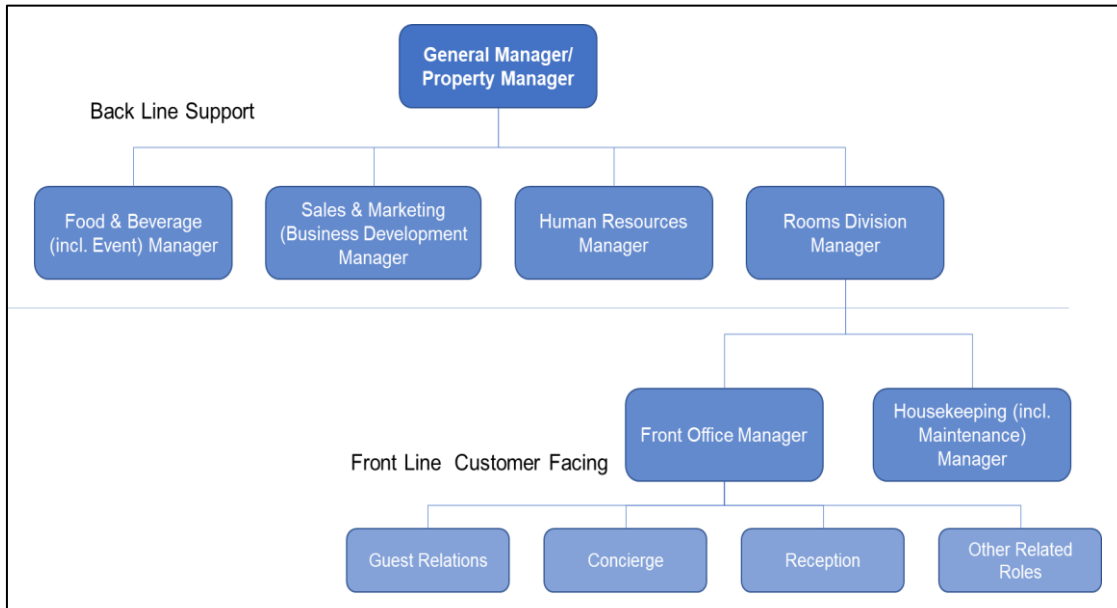
Note: The front-office operations are mainly part of the room division responsible for the customer-facing front line. From: ""Hotel accommodation management: Hotel front office management"" by Andi Heyes (2017, p.59).

This research focuses on front-office operations as the 'heart' of the day-to-day operation of the accommodation property and primary contact in customer-employee interaction. Heyes (2017) emphasises the significance of the front-office team in the overall operation to ensure guest" satisfaction, safety and comfort, manage staff and optimise the revenue. Thus, the front-desk department is responsible for multiple roles, including managing the guest and staff, ensuring safety, security, and comfort, managing technologies/ system in facilitating the day-to-day operation, advising on room rates, and engaging in upselling (Bardi, 2003; Heyes, 2017, p. 58). As shown in Figure 2.3, the front-office department covers different roles, including reception, porter, concierge, guest relations (customer service), and security. Furthermore, the front-office roles vary from one property to others depending on the property scale and business organisation: the smaller the property, the more roles the front-office department performs. For example, in relation to the "four-phases hotel guests cycle", Kooi (2013) divides the tasks of the front-office department into:

1) *pre-arrival*, which covers reservations and the importance of gathering as much information regarding a guest's needs and expectations for the stay;

2) *arrival* includes welcoming guests to the property, a porter helping with the luggage, or parking personnel or other transportation attendants assisting

with parking requirements and the checking-in process by front-desk and/or guest service assistance to establish and confirm the guest's detail, payment details, and room allocation;

3) *staying at the hotel* covers all tasks related to maintaining guest needs and expectations; and

4) *departur*e consists of the checking-out process, including bill settling, arranging for onward transportation (often to a local airport) and managing luggage collection.

Compared to other departments, the front office plays a pivotal role as the "face" and "heart" of accommodation properties as well as the focal point of communication (Bardi, 2003; Cook et al., 2018, p. 208; Heyes, 2017). As the "face" of the property, the front office is mainly responsible for representing and projecting the standard of the property (or the brand) to the outside world, influencing guests' first and final impressions (Heyes, 2017; Martin, 1986). In addition, as the "face" of the tourism industry and local community, the front-of-house employees are expected to be the 'host' representing the destination and providing authentic local experiences to the tourists (Karayilan & Cetin, 2016). Meanwhile, as the "heart" of the business, the front office plays a significant role in marketing and delivering service to the guests as well as fielding inquiries. Finally, as the communication hub, Cook et al. (2018, p. 208) indicate that the front office serves as the first and the last point of contact for guests, as well as the 'nerve-centre' and 'focal point' to provide relevant information for guests, other staff members, and the employer, emphasising the importance of communication skills for front office employees.

As a "people-facing" sector, the accommodation industry's success lies in people interaction, customer service, communication, and diversity awareness (Australian Trade and Investment Commission, 2019, p. 8). In performing these roles, communicating and interacting with guests as well as other departments and local communities are critical tasks. The roles of the front-desk staff are crucial in collecting and understanding guests' inquiries and needs, communicating these inquiries and needs to other departments and in delivering service and information to create quality experiences for the guests. Apart from the ability to communicate effectively and efficiently, staff must have extensive knowledge of the products and establishments, the local and host countries, as well as the characteristics of customers from diverse backgrounds in order to deliver high-quality services (Bardi, 2003; Cook et al., 2018). As the main link between the accommodation establishment and the guests, the front-

desk staff are key players in well-run establishments. Thus, a better understanding of the extensive role of the front desk service, particularly in producing and delivering quality service, is vital to ensure the lasting success of the accommodation sector.

2.6 The Influence of Workforce Cultural Diversity on Tourism Service Quality

With international migrants as the main source of employment and culturally diverse guests as an important source market, it is pivotal to understand how cultural diversity impacts the provisioning and evaluation of accommodation services. Each culture has its customs and values regarding the standard of good service (Dimanche & Reisinger, 2011). From the customers' perspective, as Kotler and Keller (2016) and Reisinger (2001) emphasise, an individual's cultural background constitutes values and beliefs that might affect their needs as well as perception, expectation, and evaluation of service quality. Meanwhile, from the employees' point of view, cultural background substantially affects how people perceive service standards and service quality as well as how they deliver and perform various services. Hence, there is a multifaceted relationship between workforce cultural diversity and service quality in the tourism and hospitality industry (Armstrong et al., 1997; Dimanche & Reisinger, 2011; Zhang et al., 2015). As a result, various challenges and issues in intercultural service encounters are inevitable, in which cultural differences between service providers and customers result in different views of service quality (Dimanche & Reisinger, 2011). Thus, Merchant (2017) suggests that a more robust understanding of different cultural and social perspectives is essential in delivering adequate services.

The cultural background is expected to influence how the staff communicate, interact, and deliver the services as cultural diversity represents the differences in language, attitude, customs, and values (Gruber et al., 2013) and as Kluckhohn (1951, p. 86) states:

> *"Culture consists in patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values."*

Furthermore, in order to better comprehend how cultural background interacts with service quality in a cross-cultural setting, it is critical to be familiar with Hofstede's (1980; 1985, pp. 347-348; 2005, p. 178) key cultural dimensions, as detailed below:

1) 'Power Distance', is the extent to which the members of a society accept that power in institutions and organisations is distributed unequally;

2) 'Uncertainty Avoidance', is the degree to which the members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity, which leads them to support beliefs promising certainty and to maintain institutions protecting conformity;

3) 'Individualism', which stands for a preference for a loosely-knit social framework in society in which individuals are supposed to take care of themselves and their immediate families only; as opposed to 'Collectivism', which stands for a preference for a tightly-knit social framework in which individuals can expect their relatives, clan, or other in-group to look after them, in exchange for unquestioning loyalty;

4) 'Masculinity', which stands for a preference for achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and material success: as opposed to 'Femininity', which stands for a preference for relationships, modesty, caring for the weak, and the quality of life. In a masculine society, even the women prefer assertiveness (at least in men); in a feminine society, even the men prefer modesty;

5) 'Long-term orientation' (LTO) stands for the fostering of virtues oriented toward future rewards – in particular, perseverance and thrift. Its opposite pole, 'short-term orientation', stands for the fostering of virtues related to the past and present – in particular, respect for tradition, maintaining social hierarchy, and fulfilling social obligations.

Hofstede's dimensions represent the effects of a society's cultures and beliefs on the individual's perceived values, which influence their behaviour as well as their perception and interaction with others. For example, while guests from a "masculine" culture value tangibles, reliability, and assertiveness, resulting in a more critical evaluation, guests from societies with more tenderness and sympathy for others provide a more moderate evaluation (Armstrong et al., 1997; Huang & Crotts, 2019). Furthermore, Dimanche and Reisinger (2011) further explain that since service quality is perceived differently based on cultural background, what is regarded as good

quality service in one culture may not be regarded as such in other cultures, and vice versa. For example, they further explain that the "escorting" culture in Asian countries with higher Power Distance is regarded as a good service for Asian guests but might be perceived as "over the top" and privacy intrusion for Western guests from cultures with lower Power Distance. Therefore, providing a personalised service experience based on the guests' needs and background is pivotal to achieving customer satisfaction (Salazar et al., 2010).

The diversity in a workforce's cultural background is like the two sides of the same coin. On one side, the diverse tourism migrant workers might be resourceful in dealing with guests from various backgrounds in a global market. In the situation after the COVID-19 outbreak, the significance of understanding diverse guests' needs and preferences is even more crucial in order to be able to provide adequate and personalised services, which might improve the 'assurance' and 'empathy' dimensions in service quality (Cronin & Taylor, 1994; Parasuraman et al., 1988; Patton et al., 1994). First, Elshaer and Marzouk (2019) suggest that having a culturally diverse team might facilitate cultural and knowledge exchange as well as a better understanding of different cultural, social, and economic perspectives to deliver adequate services, adding competitive advantages to the organisations in serving diverse guests. In addition, a workforce's cultural diversity might facilitate cultural integration, and access to export markets and create innovation in products and services that can cater to a more diverse market (Office of Multicultural Affairs & Inbound Tourism Organisation of Australia, 1995).

Second, culturally diverse staff members, particularly from NESB countries, are valuable when dealing with guests from NESB countries, particularly from similar countries. Rao Hill and Tombs (2011, 2014) emphasise that similarity in the cultural background may facilitate better interaction and mutual understanding, supporting the 'reliability' and 'empathy' dimension of accommodation service quality. Alden et al. (2010) suggest that in cultural congruency theory, people tend to choose the service provider they believe to be similar in terms of cultural aspects such as norms, values or languages. The similarity in cultural background can reduce communication problems (Caligiuri et al., 2001) and increase consumer confidence in predicting service quality by having adequate knowledge (Kogut & Singh, 1988). Moreover, cultural congruency might aid in de-escalating any service failure by speaking the same language and having better mutual understanding (Patterson et al., 2006).

Thus, cultural congruency plays a pivotal role in consumers' evaluation of service quality (Alden et al., 2010).

Furthermore, the presence of NESB migrant workers is significant in creating a comfortable and familiar home away from home experience for the guests while being able to introduce the host destination, providing an 'assurance' aspect to the stay (Office of Multicultural Affairs & Inbound Tourism Organisation of Australia, 1995). Thus, the similarity of employee-guest backgrounds stresses the importance of providing reliability, assurance and empathy to guests, resulting in better service performances as well as guests' service experiences and evaluations of service quality. Furthermore, the shifting in guests' service evaluation, as the result of insecurity and instability from the COVID-19 pandemic, has shown a growing significance of the familiarity, security, comfortability, and reliability aspects of the stay, which might be addressed by having staff from a similar cultural background (Abbas et al., 2021; World Travel & Tourism Council, 2020).

On the other side, various challenges and issues in intercultural service encounters are inevitable, affecting service quality. First, Baum, Herns and Devine (2008) argue that the significant increase in migrant workers might impact products, services, and experiences offered to tourists and the perceived destination image due to the fact that migrant workers might not have adequate local knowledge. Furthermore, Janta (2011) adds that migrant-workers in front-of-house positions play the role of 'hosts' and thus might potentially misrepresent the host destination to the touri sts. In other words, migrant front-desk employees might fail to provide an 'authentic' local experience since local hosts are seen as "sine qua non for authenticity and the interaction with tourists which is crucial for a proper tourist experience" (Karayilan & Cetin, 2016, p. 72; see also World Travel and Tourism Council, 2015).

However, different definitions of authenticity add complexity to this topic. On the one hand, it is subjective and interpretive, depending on the individual's observation and perception (Brown, 2013). Authenticity is defined as a reflection of an individual's perceived value in relation to their expectations, preferences, and beliefs, as further explained in the constructive authenticity paradigm (Su et al., 2021). Furthermore, the perceived authentic experience may shift and differ depending on the guests' knowledge of the host destination, which influences their perceived destination image. Steiner and Reisinger (2006), on the other hand, emphasise the objective 'realness' of authentic experiences. Furthermore, it varies depending on how well-defined the

cultures in the host destinations are (Baum et al., 2008). For example, Japan may be perceived to have a more homogenous society, in contrast to Australia, which has a population dominated by people with an immigration background and thus may be perceived to have a less defined culture.

Second, recruiting employees from one culture, who are then expected to deliver a service to customers from different cultural backgrounds, is also likely to cause misunderstandings that could lead to underperforming employees and dissatisfied guests (Vassou et al., 2017; Zopiatis et al., 2014). As Hofstede's cultural dimension (1980) of power distance suggests, customers from societies with more significant power distance, such as many Asian countries, presume to have higher power than the service providers, while the service providers are expected to show subservient behaviours. This is the opposite of societies with low power distance that strive for more equality of power and emphasise individualism. Thus, recruiting employees from one culture, who are then expected to deliver a service to customers from different cultural backgrounds, may cause misunderstandings between employees and guests (Vassou et al., 2017). Therefore, tourism and hospitality workers must be equipped with a robust knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the host culture and cultural differences to better service tourists from different backgrounds (Elshaer & Marzouk, 2019).

Figure 2.4

Influence of Cultural Diversity on Accommodation Front-Desk Service Quality
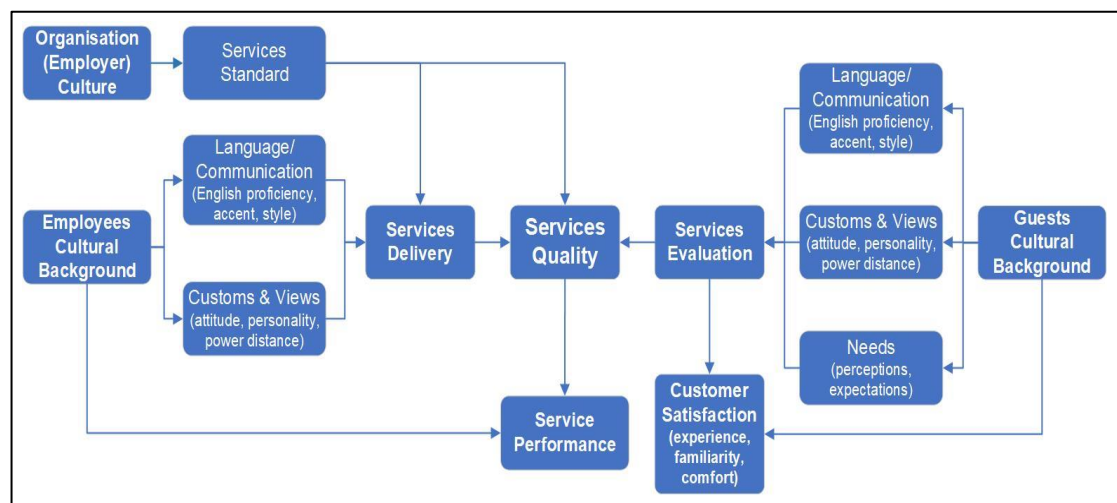
Note. This chart represents the relationship between various factors in workforce cultural diversity that influence accommodation front-desk service quality based on the literature reviews, own elaboration and illustration.

Figure 2.4 summarises the relationship between workforce cultural diversity and different aspects of hospitality service quality. From the employe's perspective, cultural differences in language and communication features, customs, beliefs, attitudes, and other cultural aspects influence how staff perceive service standards and perform (provide) services. Meanwhile, the host country's culture influences the establishment of an employer's service standards and regulations. As a result, service quality is directly influenced by service standards and delivery. On the other hand, from the guest's perspective, cultural differences lead to varied requirements and perceptions of service, influencing how guests evaluate service quality.

2.6.1   The Role of Cultural Diversity in Communication Quality

The link between language and tourism is apparent, as MacCannell (1976) and Urry (1990) argue that tourism establishment, through the language used, builds and determines tourist experience and destination imagery. Language, as a primary tool of communication and cultural identity, aids in the expression and transmission of ideas, beliefs, perceptions, sentiments, and emotions (Albu, 2015; Javier et al., 2020). While language is a tool, communication is a complex process of exchanging information between transmitter/speaker and receiver/listener through various channels, code, context, and referent (Albu, 2015; Azarova et al., 2019). Communication entails a 'continuous feedback loop' of sending messages to another person, who subsequently decodes (translates) these messages by giving them meaning (Hurn & Tomalin, 2013, p. 12). Communication is more than just transferring information; it is also about mutual understanding of each other's wants and needs (Albu, 2015). In a touristic situation, effective communication between staff and customers is critical in determining service quality because it represents how the staff is able to convey the right information and understand tourists' wants and needs, as well as how the tourists receive and interpret the information to achieve perceived experience and satisfaction.

This section discusses cross-cultural communication and similar foreign cultural background communication as a result of service interaction between culturally diverse staff and culturally diverse customers in an intercultural touristic situation. International tourism provides a platform for communication between representatives of different cultures, resulting in cross-cultural communication. Cross-cultural communication can be defined as "the way people from different cultures

communicate when they deal with each other either at a distance or face to face"
(Hurn & Tomalin, 2013, p. 2). Cross-cultural communication and interaction enable us
not only to learn about and respect other cultures but also better comprehend our own
culture and provide a platform for cultural assimilation (Albu, 2015; Azarova et al.,
2019). According to Azarova et al. (2019), in cross-cultural communication, the staff
(sender/speaker) sends information in the host destination language to the tourist
(receiver/listener) via face-to-face, phone call, or email, which is then translated and
interpreted by the tourists to provide feedback to the staff, see Figure 2.5. This
process is a continuous loop of sending information, coding/decoding, translating,
interpreting, and providing feedback, which is critical in achieving mutual
understanding, effective communication and positive interaction. Figure 2.5

Cross-Cultural Communication Process
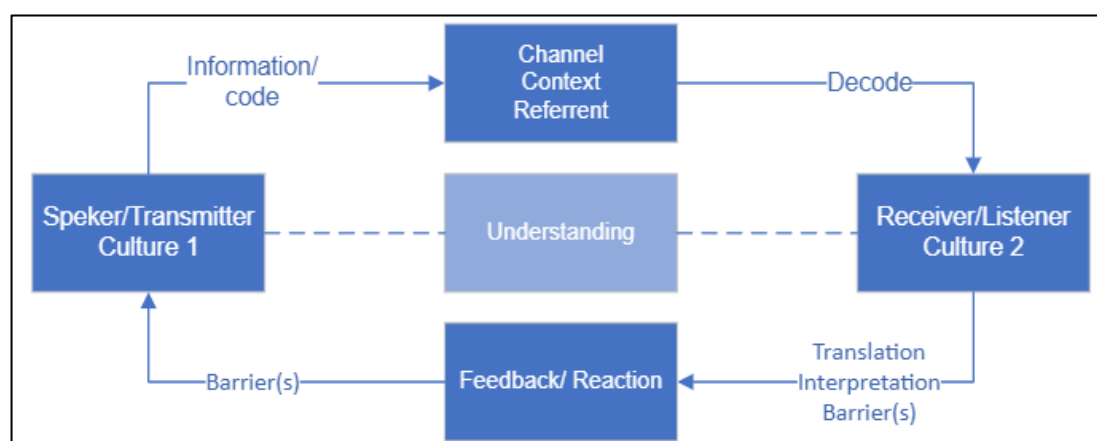
Note: Adapted from "Development of Cross-Cultural Communication in International Tourism" by
Azarova et.al. (2019).

Communication barriers are unavoidable in cross-cultural communication situations
due to misunderstanding and incorrect interpretations, as the way we communicate
is culturally embedded, shaped by attitudes, beliefs, customs, and specific
expectations of an ethnic group, and influenced by context, knowledge, and emotion
(Albu, 2015). Thus, the quality of cross-cultural communication is proportional to the
level of culture involved; the greater the differences between the two cultures, the
more complex the communication; and the greater the similarities between the two
cultures, the relatively easy the communication. Furthermore, previous research has
emphasised the role of stereotyping in the creation of cross-cultural communication
barriers, as individuals are labelled with certain attributes based on their background
(Albu, 2015; Barna, 1994; Miller et al., 2012). In "Stumbling Blocks of Intercultural

Communication", Barna (1994) detailed the main causes in cross-cultural communication barriers:

1) 'Assumption of similarities'

   As many people mistakenly believe, there is a universal 'language' and a sufficient degree of similarity among different individuals to facilitate better communication and mutual understanding. This assumption glosses over the complexities of culture in order to avoid feeling uncomfortable when confronted with differences.

2) 'Language differences'

   As stated at the outset of this section, language differences result in differences in vocabulary, grammar, idioms, accents, slang, dialects, and other language and communication attribute that may result in communication difficulties. However, in this case, the individuals struggling with a foreign language are aware of the language barriers.

3) 'Nonverbal misinterpretations'

   This depicts how people of different cultural backgrounds may interpret nonverbal communication, such as body language, differently depending on their beliefs, experiences, perceptions, and context in connection to their own culture.

4) 'Preconceptions and stereotypes'

   Individuals have a tendency to stereotype people based on their backgrounds, which might interfere with their objectivity, leading to misunderstandings and communication problems.

5) 'Tendency to evaluate'

   This demonstrates how individuals from different cultural backgrounds tend to make judgments and evaluations without adequate knowledge and a thorough comprehension of others' values and views.

6) 'High anxiety'

   Uncertainties and differences may cause significant levels of anxiety and tension in some individuals, affecting how they react to and digest information, and further contributing to cross-cultural communication barriers.

Researchers have delved into cross-cultural communication discussions for decades. In addition to Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimension (explained in Subsection 2.6), Hall and Hall's (1977;1990) theory of high versus low context cultures suggests that the higher the context of either the culture or the organisation, and the greater the cultural distance, the more difficult it is to interface and communicate. Hall and Hall (1990) places communication at the centre of every cross-cultural interaction in which an individual or organisation attempts to reinforce group norms to another individual by attempting to give meaning to the norm-context. In this stance, as context is in different proportions depending on the culture, Hall and Hall (1990, p. 6) argue that cultures of the world can be compared on a scale from high to low context: "High context (HC) communication or message is one in which most of the information is already in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message. Low context (LC) communication is just the opposite; i.e., the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code". Key principles of Hall's high and low context cultures theory (1977, 1990) are detailed in Table 2.2.

Individual personalities, national/cultural traits, corporate cultures, and professional training all have an impact on cross-cultural communication effectiveness. With cross-cultural communication representing multiple styles of language, the message can be received by those who are willing to listen and fully comprehend the message's underlying meaning (Hall & Hall, 1990; Hurn & Tomalin, 2013). A number of language and communication challenges have been identified in previous studies on cross-cultural communication, particularly in the Australian context, including limited English language proficiency, different accents, the presence of Australian slang, as well as different communication styles and verbal cues (God & Zhang, 2019; Hofstede, 2001; Nagai et al., 2020). Form of communication also might impact the quality of cross-cultural communication. Face- to face communication has the great advantage of providing instant feedback. In other forms of communication, particularly electronic communication, such as email, coding and decoding, problems occur when feedback is delayed (Hurn & Tomalin, 2013).

Table 2.2

Comparison of High-Context and Low-Context Cultural Dimensions

	High-Context	Low Context
Nationals	• Arabs, Japanese, Koreans, Italy (and other Mediterranean Countries)	• Germans, Americans, Dutch, British, Scandinavians, Australians and Canadians
Time	• Polychronic - time is seen as synchronic, several things at a time • Time commitments are more relaxed	• Monochronic – time is seen in a linear way, almost tangible, sequential • Time commitments strictly observed – closely follow plans/deadlines
Space	• Shared	• Private - concerns our own personal space
Communication	• Assume everyone has knowledge of essential information • Indirect and implicit but polite – can appear ambiguous • High use of non-verbal communication (body language, notation of speech) • Communication can be economical, fast and efficient • Comfortable with silence	• Do not assume that everyone has most of the information • Direct, explicit, and formalised – can appear abrupt and arrogant • Less use of non-verbal communication • Silence causes anxiety
Regulations	• Reliance on ritual/rites • Lower importance of written regulations • Importance of oral agreements	• Greater reliance on written codes/documents • Oral agreements are less important
Information	• Lower attention to detail • Hidden networks – wide information system	• High attention to detail • Open system
Relationship	• Close personal relationships (high value of family and members of organisation) • Group reward • The distinction between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' • Place importance on long-term relationships	• Personal relationships are less important - compartmentalize their personal relationships • Personal reward • 'Insiders' and 'outsiders' are less clearly distinguished • More accustomed to short-term relationships
Conflict	• Avoid • Comfortable with interruptions	• Confront • Dislike interruptions
Emotions	• openly expressed	• concealed
Status and Power	• Position, authoritarian	• Qualification, democratic • Committed to objectives and targets

Note: The summary of the theory of highs versus low-context of cultures by Hall and Hall (1977, 1990); adapted from "Cross-Cultural Communication: Theory and Practice" by B. Hurn, and B Tomalin (2013, p.23, 29).

Language Proficiency

Previous studies have shown that a lack of language skills is the most significant intercultural communication barrier affecting the quality of tourists' trips (Cohen and Cooper, 1986; Lee and Tussyadiah, 2012). When people communicate in a different 'language,' there is a 'distance' that may impact the travelling experience due to the need for translation, which may alter the original meaning (Cronin, 2000). For example, English-speaking people going to English-speaking destinations have the advantage over travellers from non-English speaking backgrounds because they do not need to transfer or decode the language of the host destination. Cohen and Cooper (1986) emphasised in their study that language has a significant impact on tourists' choice of prospective destinations, their trip preparations, the scope and content of their interactions with locals, and the quality of their experience. Furthermore, Basala and Klenosky (2001) added that, from the tourists' perspective, familiarity and the ability to speak their native language are critical in choosing their destination and having a good experience, which may be hampered by a communication barrier if they lack proficiency in the destination's language. In order to serve their role as both translators and interpreters, the intralingual traveller must be initiated into the culture of the foreign language in order to be attentive to cultural differences and have a better understanding because "words have connotations and languages have contexts" (Cronin, 2000, p. 24).

Cohen and Cooper (1986), on the other hand, emphasised the tourism language (TL) perspective, in which the host destination and tourism enterprises tend to accommodate the tourists' needs and preferences, rather than demanding that the tourists accommodate the local situation like other foreigners (e.g. migrants and business travellers). A pragmatic approach to language spread dictates that when two language groups come into contact, the group with the greater incentive (or the lower power or status group) will learn the other group's language (Cohen, 2012; Cohen & Cooper, 1986). Additionally, the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Inbound Tourism Organisation of Australia (1995) finds that having staff with the ability to speak multiple languages in addition to English might add a competitive advantage to the organisation due to their ability in speaking guests' languages. In servicing the guests, employees tend to develop strong bonds with others who speak the same dialect or come from a similar cultural background, resulting in mutual understanding and good service delivery (Office of Multicultural Affairs & Inbound Tourism Organisation of Australia, 1995).

Meanwhile, for tourists, particularly mass tourists, who are frequently not directly exposed to locals, communication and interaction are mediated by a variety of bilingual individuals, such as guides, tour leaders, or professional natives, referred to as "language brokers" (Cohen & Cooper, 1986). They are more than just translators; they are also social mediators with the local population and disseminators of information, explanation and interpretation of the visited sites (Cohen, 1985). Brokers play an important role in the tourism industry by controlling the flow of information, filling structural gaps in the communication network, and assisting foreign travellers in having a local experience and connecting with the local community. Despite the fact that English is a universal language and widely spoken, tourism businesses have recognised the importance of staff being able to speak the language of their guests, as well as better understanding their needs based on their background.

Accent and Australian Slang

Accent, as a language descriptor and speech characteristic, is crucial in identifying race or cultural background. Accent, according to God and Zhang (2019), represents differences in pronunciation, intonation, speed of speech, and word choice. Each language is distinct not only in how it is spoken, but also in the words it contains, the meanings they carry, and the way they are assembled in sentences (Cronin, 2000). Previous research on intercultural communication and interaction has found that non-native English speakers struggle to communicate with native speakers due to unfamiliar accents, acronyms, slang, and speaking speed (God & Zhang, 2019; Sovic, 2009). Cronin (2000) argued that accents provide credibility to the account by reproducing 'authentic' speech, establishing a distinction between native speakers and non-natives when speaking standard English. Cronin (2000) argued that accent is sometimes associated with linguistic/racial suspicion, particularly in same-country communication, whereas in cross-cultural communication in touristic situations, accent acts as a trigger for a 'question of racial and ethnic origin' rather than a class judgement.

Aside from linguistic knowledge, stylistic, and cultural variations in communication, one frequently reported challenge was unfamiliarity with Australian English, particularly its colloquialisms/slang and accents (Nagai et al., 2020). Furthermore, even between the main English-speaking countries, the difference in accent and meaning of some words, for example, between American English, British and

Australian English, might cause misinterpretation and misunderstanding. With prejudicial attitudes and stereotypes about certain races and ethnicities, people attribute certain traits of service employees to certain types of accents (Rao Hill & Tombs, 2011, p. 651; 2014). Tolerance for the difference is inextricably linked to the issue of translatability; thus, "the more opaque the accents are for the listener, the more negative the representation of the speaker" due to the untranslatability of the accents (Cronin, 2000, p. 14). Therefore, even though less likely to result in a significant communication barrier due to not being able to understand each other, Wang et al. (2015) suggest that the differences in accents might trigger a biased judgment that negatively impacts customers' perception, interpretation, and evaluation of service experience and quality.

Communication Style

Significant differences in communication styles have been extensively recognised between Western and Asian cultures, and understanding these distinctions is essential to enable efficient cross-cultural communication (Hall, 1977; Hall & Hall, 1990). We employ linguistic cues to assign identities to members of our own and other groups, as well as to express feelings of inclusion and exclusion, superiority and inferiority, tolerance and racism. This section discusses Banfield's (1973) 'direct' and 'indirect' communication styles as a result of Hall and Hall's (1990) high vs low-context cultures in brief. Direct communication style, which tends to correlate with task-oriented cultures, is prefered in low-context cultures such as Americans, Germans, Australians, and Anglo Canadians (Hall & Hall, 1990). They place a high value on accuracy, clarity, and efficiency in communication; what you hear is what they mean. Despite that, low-context communicators are often perceived as too direct, abrupt, and, at times, rude or arrogant by high-context communicators. Meanwhile, high-context cultures (for example, Chinese, Japanese, Indians, and Saudi Arabians) communicate in an 'indirect' or 'implicit' manner. Nonverbal communication, particularly gestures and silence, is essential. Politeness is highly valued in high-context cultures. In addition, humour, like direct versus indirect communication style, varies greatly across cultures. What is considered funny varies greatly by culture, and many jokes are untranslatable (Hofstede, 2001). For example, Asians who are unaware that senses of humour differ frequently regard Australians' sense of humour or jokes as rude (God & Zhang, 2019).

2.6.2 The Role of Migrant Workers in Delivering and Maintaining Service Quality in the Australian Tourism Industry

Tourism and migration play an important role in shaping Australia's economy, society and culture. The 374.5 million tourist visitations in 2019 were responsible for 3% of the national GDP and 5% of total employment before suffering from a significant decrease due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which in particular affected the international market (Tourism Research Australia, 2021b, 2021c). Pre-COVID, tourists from China, New Zealand, the USA, Japan and England are the primary international market (Tourism Research Australia, 2021a, 2021c). Meanwhile, although not the primary destination for international tourists visiting Australia, Tourism Western Australia (2020) recorded around 987,700 international visitations to Western Australia in 2019 before the Australian Government closed its international border due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The WA tourism industry contributes to 7% of the State's economy and more than 8% of the State's employment (Tourism Research Australia, 2021b). As shown in Figure 2.6, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2020) recorded growing international visitation, particularly from NESB countries, which accounted for more than 60% of overseas arrivals for the past six years.

Since the first settlement, Australia has demonstrated a strong dependence on overseas migration to address labour shortages and support population growth (Government of Western Australia, 1912). Currently, like many other OECD countries, Australia is still reliant on immigration, with a third of its population born outside of the country, 70% of whom are of working age and more than half of whom are of Asian ancestry (ABS, 2021). The migrant intake has progressively evolved, from providing a pool of unskilled labour for post-war reconstruction projects and other low-barrier entry industries to more diverse skilled migrants (Collins, 1991). During 2019/2020, almost 40% of permanent migrants entered Australia under the skilled migration stream (ABS, 2021). Even so, to this date, the contribution of international migrants to lower-level and unskilled jobs, particularly in a low-barriers industry such as tourism, is still significant and cannot be ignored.

Aligned with Australia overall, Western Australia has relied upon overseas migrants to boost its population for decades, with a third of the WA population being born outside the country and accounting for more than 60% of the state's population growth. Furthermore, addressing the labour shortages, the Australian Bureau of

Statistics (2021) estimated that overseas migrants contribute to over 30% of the State's employment. Compared to the Eastern States, where Asian migrants predominate, WA has a more mixed culture of migrants, primarily from the United Kingdom, New Zealand, South Africa, India, and Malaysia (ABS, 2017). This has a profound impact on the development of a culturally diversified society and workforce in Western Australia.

Figure 2.6

International Arrivals to Western Australia, 2005-2020
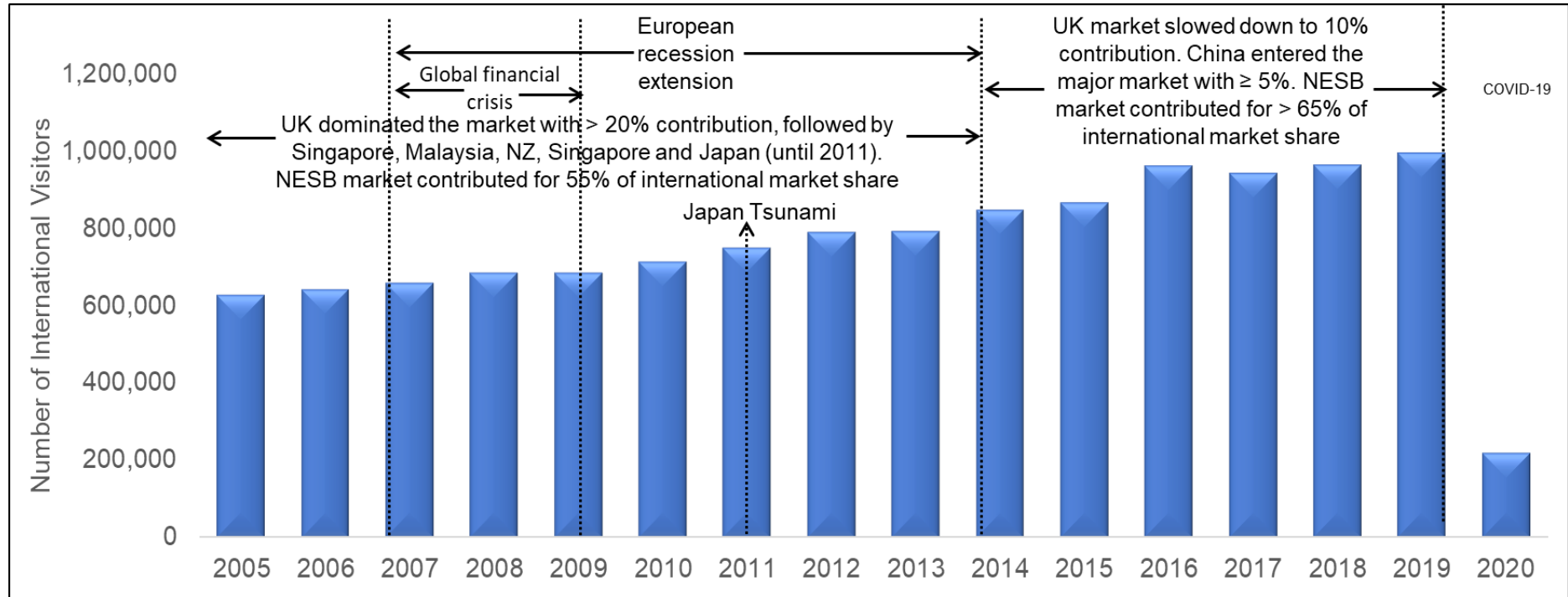
Note. This chart represents the fluctuation and factors that impacted international visitation to Western Australia based on *2005-2021 International Visitor Survey Results: Visitors, nights and average stay by capital/other, state and total Australia*, by Tourism Research Australia, 2019, 2020, and 2021. Own elaboration and illustration.

As one of the sectors with the lowest labour growth rate, the tourism industry experiences challenges in addressing labour shortages and high turnover. Therefore, overseas migrants have played a critical role as a significant tourism labour source for decades, gradually shaping the relationship between migration and tourism in WA (Office of Multicultural Interest, 2012). As a result of the tourism-led migration, the Australian Trade Commission (2015) recorded that a third of tourism sector employees in Western Australia were international migrants, higher than the Australian average of 10%. Moreover, the Office of Multicultural Affairs (2021) estimates that more than 20% of NESB migrants work in the WA tourism industry, adding a cultural diversity perspective to the industry. This study focuses on the accommodation sector as one of the major components of the tourism industry, which contributes $590 million to the state's Gross Value Added (GVA) and directly employs 8,400 people (Tourism WA Strategy and Research, 2021). The role of migrant workers in the Australian tourism, hospitality and accommodation industry can be described as follows:

1) Unskilled migrant workers, many of whom come from NESB and lack local qualifications, are compelled to take entry-level positions in the tourism business, which is considered to have low entry barriers;

2) skilled migrants under the 'transilient' migration scheme, where professionals and managers in major multinational tourism companies move internationally for career development also knowledge and skills transfer;

3) the 'work and holiday' tourists, which contribute by 50%le internationally sourced tourism employment (Australian Trade Commission, 2015), can fill the 'gaps' induced by seasonality and geographical periphery in many outback tourism areas in Australia (Jarvis & Peel, 2013);

4) the skilled temporary graduates, many of whom fill the graduate programs and entry-level positions (Robertson, 2016); and

5) the migrant entrepreneurs who open tourism and hospitality-related businesses.

The Office of Multicultural Interests (2012) argues that the cultural diversity in the WA tourism workforce adds a competitive advantage to the tourism industry in servicing 987,700 international tourists from culturally diverse backgrounds (Tourism Western Australia, 2020). First, the ability to speak guests' languages and understand different tourists' needs and preferences based on their cultural background allows the

provision of adequate service (Office of Multicultural Affairs & Inbound Tourism Organisation of Australia, 1995). Second, previous studies show that overseas-born Australians provide diverse cultural knowledge and linguistic skills to facilitate access to export markets and bring innovation in products and services (Dwyer et al., 2010). In addition, the Australian Government recognises the benefits of tapping into education, language and cultural skills and knowledge of migrants in support of economic development, particularly in the tourism industry (Australian Trade Commission, 2015). Last, the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the Australian Inbound Tourism Organisation (1995) believe that culturally diverse tourism staff are able to be the local representation and introduce the Australian culture to guests in a language and manner that guests understand.

Employees' knowledge and ability to understand and anticipate individual needs and desires are part of the 'Assurance' and 'Empathy' dimensions in measuring accommodation service quality (Cronin & Taylor, 1994; Parasuraman et al., 1988; Patton et al., 1994). In addition, the presence of NESB migrant workers is significant in providing a feeling of 'home' and comfort by speaking guests' language or having a similar dialect while visiting Australia (Office of Multicultural Affairs & Inbound Tourism Organisation of Australia, 1995). This interaction relates to the "Assurance" dimension to make guests feel comfortable and confident, as well as the "Empathy" dimension to make guests feel special (Cronin & Taylor, 1994; Parasuraman et al., 1988; Patton et al., 1994). Thus, the similarity of employee-guest backgrounds stresses the importance of providing assurance and empathy to guests, resulting in service quality and customer satisfaction.

To address the challenges and opportunities from the fast-growing diversity in tourism workforces and markets, mainly due to globalisation and migration, most organisations have responded by implementing workforce diversity management practices. In addition, for the past decades, successive Australian governments have recognised the benefits of tapping into and capitalising on education, language and cultural skills and knowledge of migrants for future economic development, particularly in the tourism sector. However, there are still limitations in data and research in this particular field, specifically for the Western Australia context, which becomes the background of this study. Hence, this research contributes to a better understanding of the significant role of diversity in NESB migrant workers in WA tourism service delivery.

2.7   Chapter Summary and Knowledge Gap

Dwyer et al. (1993; 2010; 2014) emphasise the close interrelationship between migration and tourism in Australia, with limited research focusing on the role of migrant labour in tourism service production (Williams, 2012). Furthermore, so far there is no research conducted with immediate relevance to the Western Australian context, despite the state's rising reliance on migrant workers to cover tourism job vacancies. According to the Australian Trade Commission (2015), more than 20% of migrant workers contribute to the WA tourism workforce, resulting in the high cultural diversity of the workforce. Integration of migrant workers into the local tourism workforce may present opportunities as well as obstacles for the sector and the host culture. Understanding the role of migrant workers in the tourism industry in Western Australia is critical to be able to capitalise on opportunities and address challenges and barriers. However, no research on this subject has been conducted in the Western Australian context, emphasising the critical nature of this research.

The findings from the literature review and previous studies also indicate that cultural diversity affects the accommodation service quality, both in supply and demand, because service dimensions are perceived differently depending on one's cultural background. This is a crucial feature and the cornerstone of the current study. Furthermore, as shown in Figure 2.4, the diversity of culture in the Australian accommodation workforce, particularly with the growing number of NESB employees, may influence employees' communication skills, attitudes, knowledge, and understandings, resulting in the assurance and empathy dimension of service quality. Unfortunately, previous studies on the relationship between cultural diversity and service delivery have primarily focused on the cross-cultural analysis between two countries or between Western and Asian backgrounds (Alzaydi et al., 2018; Cai & Jafari, 2018; Dedeolu et al., 2018; Huang & Crotts, 2019; Kim et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2015). Despite this, there is still a paucity of research on the impact of employees' cultural backgrounds on service quality, emphasising the importance of this study.

Furthermore, Hostede (2005) argues that similar cultural background input and evaluation are important in a cross-cultural context, which is lacking in many cross-cultural studies, addressed in this research. As a result, this study adds to our knowledge of the importance of cultural diversity in NESB migrant workers in accommodation front-desk service delivery, particularly in a WA context, from the viewpoints of both customers and service providers. Hence, this study sheds light on the evaluation of both cross-cultural evaluations, in which MESB individuals review

NESB employees, and similar foreign cultural background evaluations, in which NESB individuals evaluate NESB employees.

Finally, this chapter provides a better understanding and interpretation of related themes, elaborates on knowledge gaps, and evaluates the significance of the research. This chapter is important in formulating the study objectives as it attempts to address the knowledge gaps indicated in this chapter. As detailed in Chapter 1, the main objectives of this qualitative study are: (1) to examine the features in service quality in the WA accommodation sector affected by the cultural diversity of frontline NESB migrant workers from the perspectives of tourists, employees and management; and (2) to explore the relationship between cultural diversity among frontline NESB migrant workers and service quality in the WA accommodation industry, with a focus on cross-cultural communication quality, similar cultural background interaction, and guests' authentic experience. To address these research objectives, this research employs a qualitative exploratory method with a case study approach to address the identified research gaps. The study design and methods, as well as the data collecting, analysis, and validation procedure, are further discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1   Chapter Introduction

The objective of the present study is to explore the relationship between the workforce's cultural diversity and the quality of front-desk service in Australia's accommodation sector. The preceding chapter discussed past research findings and existing literature. Chapter 2 was critical in identifying knowledge gaps that served as the foundation for developing this study. As stated in the second chapter, it is critical to comprehend cultural diversity in service delivery since different cultures have varying traditions for conceptualising service delivery and quality, which has an effect on the overall perceived performance of lodging services. To address those research gaps, this study examines the extent to which the cultural diversity of NESB migrant workers in front-of-house positions affects the quality of service in the Western Australian accommodation industry. It can do so by examining the essential front-desk service attributes influenced by NESB migrant workers' cultural backgrounds, including communication quality, interactions with tourists from a similar background, and local host roles (i.e., the task of representing the destination to tourists).

Developing an effective research design is critical for the success of this study. Thus, this chapter describes the research design and process behind the present study. Furthermore, this chapter explains the research method to be adopted and the instruments to be utilised in collecting and analysing the data. To begin, in Section 3.2 the pragmatism and interpretive social science epistemology, subjectivist ontology, exploratory-qualitative method, and case study strategy employed to conduct this research are discussed, as well as the justifications for utilising those approaches. Well-defined research philosophy and approach are fundamental components in shaping the research design. Figure 3.1, summarises the end-to-end research methodology and strategy of this current study.

In the following three sections the data collection technique and instrumentation are outlined. Section 3.3 presents the rationale for conducting interviews and adopting observations as a research tool in order to elicit valuable insights from diverse stakeholders for this qualitative research. Meanwhile, Section 3.4 outlines the rationale for using semi-structured in-depth interviews as the primary data collection instrument, as well as the recording and transcription processes. Additionally, this

section outlines how to use a journal to record participant observations. As outlined in Section 3.5, this research intends to explore perspectives from various stakeholders, including employees, management, and guests of a prominent apartment-hotel (serviced apartment) chain in Western Australia. Additionally, this part outlines the methods of purposive and snowball sampling used to recruit respondents for the research.

As explained in Section 3.6, this qualitative study is analysed inductively utilising content analysis. The inductive-content analysis method is advantageous for conducting research in areas with little or no prior study. This section delves further into the step-by-step analysis of data gathered through interviews and observations. Following that, Section 3.7 explores the ethical implications of qualitative research, particularly when exploring a particular cultural subject. Finally, the chapter discusses the researcher's role in this research as well as how the current study met the validity and reliability standards.

3.2   Research Design

3.2.1   Research Philosophy and Approach

A well-defined research philosophy and reflections on the researcher's perspective are fundamental elements in determining the overall research design, from choosing the methodology and strategy to data collection and analysis techniques (Saunders et al., 2016). Due to the socio-cultural and experiential nature of tourism, this study embraces subjectivism, which acknowledges that different perceptions and experiences of researchers and other social actors play a significant role in understanding the existence of multiple realities of social phenomena (Saunders et al., 2016). Tourism is a cross-sectoral industry driven by many factors. It is a complex subject and also an ambiguous and somewhat unpredictable subject for research (Ritchie et al., 2005). Therefore, depending on the researcher's interest, research objective, and research root, tourism research can be distinguished into two different approaches, described as "tourism as an industry" and "tourism as a phenomenon" (Burns, 1999). Tourism research that focuses on economic contribution and business management represents tourism as an industry and is often characterised by objectivism and quantitative approaches. In contrast, tourism research that aims to understand tourism as a social and cultural phenomenon tends to follow a subjectivist

approach (Ritchie & Burns, 2005). This research, with an emphasis on the role of migrant workers from non-English-speaking backgrounds, falls under the social and cultural category. In addition, the study's research focus on the quality of hospitality services can be classified under the business management category. Nevertheless, overall this study adheres to the subjectivist approach to tourism as a phenomenon.

This research followed a pragmatist and interpretive social science paradigm in order to address the complexity inherent in research that examines phenomena from a cross-cultural point of view (Jennings, 2010). As Weaver (2018, p. 1287) states, the pragmatic paradigm refers to a worldview that focuses on "what works" rather than what might be considered absolutely and objectively "true" or "real." This research adheres to the pragmatist paradigm, which is guided by the formulation of research questions and objectives. Additionally, this research seeks to build knowledge through the narratives, perceptions, and experiences of the people interviewed. Meanwhile, the interpretive social science perspective provides a generally cohesive understanding of social enquiry that enables researchers to incorporate the benefits of other methodologies while avoiding their drawbacks (Richardson & Fowers, 1998). The interpretivism of this research is shown in how this study focuses on narratives, perceptions and interpretations of various stakeholders to better understand cross-cultural front-desk service encounters in Western Australia (WA) accommodation sector.

Furthermore, with limited existing empirical research on how workforce cultural diversity influences tourism and hospitality service delivery, particularly in the WA context, this study utilised an inductive-exploratory approach. An inductive approach stresses open-minded data collection to explore the phenomenon, identify themes, explain patterns, and generate new or modify existing theories (Saunders et al., 2016). With regard to the exploratory nature of this qualitative study, this method was adopted due to the scarcity of previous research and literature on this subject. As a result, the purpose of this study is to fill a theoretical gap by qualitatively exploring the influence of cultural background on front-desk service quality from the perspectives of various stakeholders. Lastly, this research could be categorised as both value-laden and value-driven research initiated and developed by the researcher's experience and curiosity. The table below summarises the research philosophy and approach of this study.

Table 3.1

Research Philosophy and Approach

	Perspective	Reason
Ontology	Subjectivist	This research reflects multiple realities based on participant knowledge and perceptions.
Epistemology	Pragmatism Interpretive social science	This research focuses on practicality addressing the research questions and objectives; tourism research is based on proportional and transactional knowledge
Approach	Inductive	This research explores participant knowledge to be able to develop theories and hypotheses
Axiology	Value-laden research	The research is initiated and developed by the researcher's beliefs: intrinsic to the research purpose
Methods	Exploratory qualitative-method	This research explores different stakeholders' perspectives qualitatively to be able to generate theories, which then can be quantitatively tested

3.2.2 Research Methodology and Strategy

Figure 3.1 summarises this study's research design, covering the overall data collection strategy and the data analysis approach. First, this research employed a qualitative method as this study aims to explain a phenomenon by relying on the perception of a person's experience in a given situation (Stake, 2010). This research is aligned with the focus of qualitative methodology to inductively explore everyday social phenomena by gathering 'holistic' in-depth empirical materials from the local actors' perceptions via knowledge sharing and observation (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Thus, this research reflected the following attributes of qualitative research (Jennings, 2010; Saunders et al., 2016):

- *interpretive paradigm*, this research followed an interpretive social science paradigm to focus on exploring knowledge based on the narratives, perceptions and experiences of those who are interviewed;
- *inductive approach,* this study inductively explored different stakeholders' perspectives to be able to generate theories;

- *ontology related to multiple realities,* this research adheres to the belief that the world is based on multiple realities;
- subjective relationship between researcher and participant, this research is implemented in a reflexive manner;
- *axiological position is value-laden,* the obtained research findings are based on knowledge sharing and triangulation of different stakeholders' perspectives (guests, employees and management);
- *non-numerical data and 'narrative' written form,* this research employed semi-structured in-depth interviews to collect empirical material in form of the narrative of participants' stories';
- *in-depth material,* the findings of this research are based on the result of multiple interpretations, reconstruction, and triangulation of various themes and ideas on the consequences of a NESB migrant workforces cultural diversity from different perspectives of guests, employees, and management; and
- *non-probability sampling*, this research employed non-probability purposive and snowballing sampling, as explained in Section 3.5.

Secondly, to explore "how" the workforce's cultural diversity influences service quality in the WA accommodation sector from the perspectives of tourists, employees and management, this research employed a single-case study. Yin (2009) argues that a single-case study approach is appropriate when a study is expected to explore a complex social concept and provide in-depth empirical insights with limited resources. The logic in employing the case study approach was due to it being a suitable method to answer the "how" and "why" research questions, particularly in exploratory research (Yin, 2009). Case studies have the advantage of producing in-depth empirical material to explain complex relationships (Beeton, 2005; Jennings, 2010); to triangulate different actors' perspectives from a wide variety of sources (Hoaglin et al., 1982; Yin, 2009); to obtain localised or place-specified experiences (Beeton, 2005); to enable longitudinal research, to not only to study the past and the present but also predict the future (Beeton, 2005; Hoaglin et al., 1982).

This research aims to produce in-depth empirical material to explain the complex relationship between workforce culture diversity and front-desk service quality by triangulating different actors' perspectives from a wide variety of sources. Furthermore, this research focuses on the role of the cultural diversity of NESB migrant workers in the front-desk position within the WA accommodation sector, with

a particular focus on a leading apartment-hotel or serviced apartment group which shows the localised nature of the study. The case study research in this project was limited to the exploratory stage due to the scope of the study and the time limitations. This case study research employed semi-structured qualitative interviews to collect in-depth empirical information and adopted induction-content analysis for data analysis, as further explained in the following sections. The use of the case study as a research design has been a source of contention among academics, with some arguing that it demonstrates a lack of rigour, an inability to make scientific generalisations, an inability to address causal relationships, and an over-simplified yet too specific insight (Yin, 2009). However, the researcher believes that the case study approach best met the research objectives in terms of eliciting deeper and more significant insights from diverse stakeholder viewpoints throughout the limited data collection period.

The case study is a comprehensive research methodology covering the overall process from identifying research questions, collecting and analysing data, to reporting. Yin (2009) suggests the five steps researchers need to follow in establishing a case study research: (1) design the case study by identifying the case and the logic behind it; (2) design the data collection strategy; (3) collect the case study in-depth empirical information; (4) analyse case study findings; (5) report the result of the case study analysis. In designing case study research, Yin (2009, p. 19) acknowledges five essential elements:

- 'the study's questions' acknowledging that the case study strategy is most appropriate to answer "how" and "why"- based research questions;

- 'the study's proportions, conditions and hypotheses' that support the research questions in explanatory research or complement the study's purpose in exploratory research;

- 'the unit(s) of analysis' that represents the "case" to be investigated to address the research questions (e.g., this can be individuals, small groups, organisations or partnerships);

- 'the logic' that guides linking of the data to the proportions in particular in the context of the data analysis techniques, such as pattern matching in content analysis or time-series analysis in descriptive analysis; and

- 'the criteria' for interpreting the findings by setting explicit criteria (possible in statistical analysis) or identifying and addressing rival explanations to justify the significance of the findings.

The unit of analysis of this research is service quality in the context of culturally diverse NESB migrant workers in front-desk positions at a leading apartment-hotel (serviced apartment) chain in WA. The reason for choosing the particular serviced apartment chain in WA was mainly based on the high levels of cultural diversity present among both employees and customers, which are a central focus of the current study. In addition, the characteristics of these properties also attract guests with a more extended period of stay, compared to standard hotels. Such extended stays are likely to result in more service encounters between the guests and front-desk staff.

Third, this study employed semi-structured in-depth interviews to explore the role of workforce cultural diversity in the context of hospitality front-office service quality from three different perspectives: guests, front-office employees, and management (owners/franchisees and managers) at the prominent serviced apartment hotel in Western Australia. The semi-structured in-depth interview approach is seen as the most suitable tool to collect primary data on guests' perceptions and evaluations, employees' reflections and experiences, and management's perspectives and evaluations. Simultaneously, participant observation was employed to gather data on day-to-day cross-cultural front-desk service encounters.

Then, the researcher identified themes, patterns and categories across the different interviews. The interviews were transcribed and qualitatively analysed through the inductive-content analysis method with the assistance of the NVivo software. Next, the findings from interviews and observations were triangulated to generate initial findings. Since the case study may be somewhat sensitive to the researcher's bias, particularly if the objective of the case study is confined within the exploratory phase (Hoaglin et al., 1982), the initial findings were validated by employing follow-up interviews with expert interviewees. Finally, all validated findings and new insights were triangulated and then interpreted against the existing knowledge as captured in the literature review. Details on data collection and analysis are provided in the following sections.

Figure 3.1

Research Design

Case Study - Quest Apartment Hotels in WA

In-depth Qualitative Interview | Participant Observation

Guests (who interact with NESB front-desk staff) — Interview Transcripts — Perceptions, expectations, and evaluations on front-desk services quality

Employees (Front-desk employees) — Interview Transcripts — Perceptions, experience, and self-reflection

Management (Managers, Owner/ Franchisee) — Interview Transcripts — Expectations and evaluations on front-desk services quality

Day to day front-desk service encounters — Observations Journal & Notes — **Interactions** (employee-guest & employee-management)

NVivo Software

Induction-Content Analysis (Identify Key Themes, Patterns, Categories)

Triangulation

Initial FIndings (Front-desk service attributes influenced by cultural background of the NESB front-desk staff)

Validation

Experts Feedback Interview (Academicians, Hospitality HR Professionals)

Interview Transcripts

Feedbacks/validations on initial findings and additonal insights on the identified key themes/ topics

Literature Review

Triangulation

Conclusion

3.3   Data Collection Techniques

The type of data determines the choice of data collection methods. Furthermore, the researcher also needs to consider the research methodology, type of information, characteristics of respondents, and time limitations in choosing the right data collection tools. For example, while a quantitative methodology employs questionnaires and experiments to collect primary data, qualitative research utilises interviews, focus groups, and observation (Jennings, 2010; Saunders et al., 2016). Thus, interviews and observations are appropriate techniques for exploring meaningful insights from various stakeholders for this qualitative research. As stated by Picken (2018, p. 202), "in tourism research, the method of interviewing is most

useful for gaining an in-depth understanding of a topic where differences in perception, attitude, impacts, behaviours and practices are anticipated, possible or important". Further, Saunders et al. (2016) define an interview as the process of asking purposeful questions and carefully listening to the answers to explore further the new key themes identified from the process. Meanwhile, observation plays a significant role in examining the interactions and behaviour of subjects in the real-world setting through the systematic viewing, recording, description, analysis and interpretation of people's behaviours (Jennings, 2010; Saunders et al., 2016).

Interviews can be differentiated according to the level of structure (structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews) and standardisation (standardised and non-standardised interviews). In choosing the suitable type of interview, it is vital to take into account the purpose of the research, the significance of establishing personal contact, the nature of the data collection questions, and the length of time required from those who provide data (Saunders et al., 2016). In collecting different perceptions on the influences of NESB frontline migrant-workers on service quality in accommodations, this research employed semi-structured in-depth qualitative interviews. This technique is able to provide thorough explorations of the respondents' perspectives on a particular topic while either following brief guidelines or a free-flow style when required (Scanlan, 2020). As defined by Longhurst (2009, p. 580), "in-depth, semi-structured interviews are verbal interchanges where one person, the interviewer, attempts to obtain information from another person by asking questions". Therefore, in collecting insights from the guests, employees and management of apartment hotels in WA, as well as for conducting expert interviews, the researcher utilised semi-structured in-depth interviews, as detailed below:

- The guests' interviews compared experiences, expectations and evaluations of accommodation service quality delivered by the frontline migrant workers from different perspectives of NESB versus MESC tourists.
- The frontline employees' interviews compared different perceptions between the non-migrant workers, MESC migrant workers and NESB migrant workers in the front of house positions regarding the influence of workforce cultural diversity on service quality.
- The management interviews, focusing on the managers, explored the expectations on and evaluations of NESB workforce cultural diversity on service quality.

- The expert interviews were conducted to validate the initial findings from interviewing guests, employees and management.

A face-to-face mode has been preferred for this research, as Maccoby and Maccoby (1954, p.499) state that the in-dept interview is "a face-to-face interchange in which one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information or expressions of opinions or belief from another person or persons". However, due to the limitations that surfaced in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, alternative modes (voice-to-voice interactions) were also made possible if preferred by the participants. According to Jennings (2005), an interview is defined as one in which the question is delivered through face-to-face or voice-to-voice exchanges rather than through written text transfer. The voice-to-voice approach, either by video call or telephone, was also utilised to interview respondents who lived outside the Perth Metropolitan region. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the face-to-face interviews had to follow Curtin University's COVID-19 safety guidelines. Furthermore, the setting of the interview followed the participants' preferences.

Simultaneously to the first round of interviews, a participant observation approach was deployed to add to the richness of research data. Saunders et al. (2016) differentiate observation into traditional approaches (e.g. participant observation and structured observation) and technology-mediated approaches (e.g. internet-mediated observation and videography). This qualitative study employed participant observation focusing on the interactions between front-desk employees and guests as well as front-desk employees and management in day-to-day cross-cultural front-desk service encounters. As this research involved investigating the influence of cultural aspects on service quality, participant observation can be conceived as an appropriate tool to gain deeper insights by closely observing interactions, communication patterns, and norms. Blevins (2017, p. 1188) states that "participant observation is the process of entering a group of people with a shared identity to understand their community, […] achieved by gaining knowledge and a deeper understating of the actors, interactions, scenes, and events at the research site". Therefore, the researcher conducting qualitative research with cultural groups must seek rituals, systems, speech patterns, hierarchies, and norms that are present in daily life in order to gain a deeper understanding of the culture (Blevins, 2017).

The participant observation conducted in this research followed Blevins' (2017) directions. First, as an all-rounder employee from one of the apartment-hotels across WA, the researcher observed the day-to-day cross-cultural front-desk service

encounters between employees and guests as well as employees and management, focusing on communication and similar background interaction. Second, the observer took notes on what was going on in those interactions to then eloquently describe and summarise these observations to enrich the findings of the interviews. In adopting a participant observation technique, the researcher must be cognisant of their own position and presence, which may have an effect on data collection and processing (Blevins, 2017). Due to the researcher's active participation in this observation, there is a possibility of researcher bias, as the researcher's values, experiences, and knowledge might have an effect on what the researcher observes in the group. Thus, the findings of this observation only acted as supplementary data for the interview findings, which then were validated through expert interviews.

3.4   Instrumentation

In preparing the interviews, Hancock and Algozzine (2006) suggest that researchers need to identify key participants, develop the interview guidelines, consider the mode and setting, prepare recording devices (and notes), and address ethical considerations. First, the semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted for this study targeted guests, front-desk employees, and management of an apartment-hotel across WA for the initial round, followed by a number of interviews with experts in the hospitality workforce field, as detailed in Section 3.5. Second, a set of questions was developed to address the research objectives and research questions (see Figure 3.2 to Figure 3.4). For the semi-structured interview open-ended questions were used to elicit rich and comprehensive answers from the interviewees. Magnusson and Marecek (2015) suggest that good interview guidelines need to have main questions with follow-up questions in sequence order that sum up the introduction, main body and ending, and they should possess the following attributes: (1) have concise language, avoid using advanced and convoluted grammar or even jargon; (2) represent the interview topics; (3) be phrased as open-ended and sequence questions, asking one question at a time and avoiding leading question; and most importantly (4) demonstrate an understanding of participants' language and background. As with the questionnaire used in quantitative research, the interview questions need to be pre-tested and pilot tested for their auditability to produce a smooth conversation flow resulting in comprehensive empirical data collection, as further discussed in Section 3.6.

Before implementing the interview guideline, a pilot study was conducted with three respondents, one for each role (employee, management, and guest). These pre-test interviews were audio-recorded to ensure the correct use of the recording device. During the exercise, attention was given to the use of words, the speed of speech, body language and non-verbal responses and the manner of asking questions. As the researcher played a critical role in data collection, the pilot study provided initial insight into the phenomenon, increased interviewing experience, and enhanced interpersonal skills. Even though no major change to the interview guideline was required, the results of the pilot interview highlighted that:

- There was a need for more precise pronunciation and concise language, particularly concerning the interviewer's limitation as a non-native speaker.
- The interviewer needed to watch out for the speed of the speech, particularly with the tendency of talking too fast when getting nervous.
- There was a need to avoid excessive hand gestures or other body languages since it might distract or annoy the respondents.
- The interviewer needed to avoid communicating her opinions which might influence the respondents' responses.

Figure 3.2

Topics and Set of Questions for Guest Interviews

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	TOPICS/ THEMES	INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
The features in service quality in the WA accommodation sector affected by the cultural diversity of frontline NESB migrant-workers	Type of front-desk services and experiences Expectations on front-desk service delivery Perceptions on NESB frontline employees' services	Can you elaborate on your front-desk experiences during your stay in this accommodation? • What type of front-desk services that you experienced? • Who served you, and how was the interaction between you and the receptionist(s)? • What is your evaluation of the front-desk services? What do you like and dislike?
	Managing front-desk services quality	In your opinion, what is essential in maintaining a good quality of front-desk services?
	"Authenticity" in representing Australia	In your experience, what is your view/impression of Australia when served by the receptionists from Non-English-Speaking Backgrounds? Does their cultural background affect the "authenticity" of Australia?
The relationship of the frontline NESB migrant-workers' cultural diversity and service quality in the WA accommodation industry	The influence of cultural background on front-desk service quality	What are the influences of cultural background on front-desk services
	The importance of communication skill in delivering quality service	What is the role of receptionist' communication skills in servicing the guests?
The importance of communication skills of NESB migrant workers at the front of house position in delivering quality services, with regard to English proficiency	The importance of English proficiency	What is the importance of English proficiency of the NESB receptionists? What challenges did you encounter related to their English proficiency?
	Influences of foreign accent in communication quality	What are the influences of the foreign accent on communication quality?
	Services preference in cultural background	When you are travelling in Australia, particularly WA, what is your preference on the receptionists' cultural background (e.g. local Australian, European, Asian etc.)? Why? What is your opinion and experience in being served by the receptionist(s) from Non-English- Speaking background in Australian accommodation? What do you like and dislike?
The role of culturally diverse frontline NESB migrants-workers in servicing guests, mainly from the same cultural background	Experience in serving guest from similar background	What is your opinion and experience in being served by the receptionist(s) from your cultural background?

Figure 3.3

Topics and Set of Questions for Employee Interviews

Figure 3.4

Topics and Set of Questions for Management Interviews

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	TOPICS/ THEMES	INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
The features in service quality in the WA accommodation sector affected by the cultural diversity of frontline NESB migrant-workers	Type of front-desk services	Can you elaborate job description of receptionist in this accommodation? What kind of services provided by the front desk??
	Criteria in employing receptionists	What are the criteria in employing a receptionist?
	Motivation on employing NESB migrants	What are your motivation in employing a receptionist from non-Australian background?
	Managing front-desk services quality	In your opinion, what is essential in maintaining a good quality of front-desk services?
	"Authenticity" in representing Australia	To what extend their NESB cultural background affects their role as the representative of Australia and guests' impression of Australia?
The relationship of the frontline NESB migrant-workers' cultural diversity and service quality in the WA accommodation industry	The influence of cultural background on front-desk service quality	What type of front-desk services that might be influenced by the receptionists' cultural background?
		Based on your experience, to what extend the receptionists' cultural background influence front-desk services?
The importance of communication skills of NESB migrant workers at the front of house position in delivering quality services, with regard to English proficiency	The importance of communication skill in delivering quality service	What is the role of receptionist' communication skills in servicing the guests?
	The importance of English proficiency	What is the importance of English proficiency in servicing the guest? What challenges did you encounter related to employees' English proficiency?
	Influences of foreign accent in communication quality	What are the influences of the foreign accent on communication quality?
The role of culturally diverse frontline NESB migrants-workers in servicing guests, mainly from the same cultural background	Cultural diversity in employees and customers	What does the role of workforce cultural diversity in understanding guests from the different cultural background?
		Do you think guests prefer to be served by someone from a similar cultural background? Why?

Third, as previously explained, this study aimed to employ the face-to-face interview mode as a preference, though some interviews were conducted via video call and other online platforms due to externally imposed limitations related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Fourth, the author used a tape recorder (plus another tape recorder as a backup device) and took notes to collect the interview material. Recording and note-taking are techniques to keep the empirical material/data in the context of research interviews. Some scholars argue that the recording is essential in ensuring the credibility of the results and avoiding biased interpretation; note-taking could also interfere with the interview process (Young, 1939, Converse, 1987; Platt, 2002). In contrast, Stake (1995) argues that interviewers should rely on notes, not recording, to explore, interpret and understand more.

Lastly, the author transcribed the interview recordings for further analysis. The initial process of the transcription was completed via automated transcription platforms embedded in Teams and Otter.ai. To ensure the accuracy of the automatically generated transcripts, the researcher then cross-checked the results. In regards to the interview with an Indonesian respondent, the researcher self-transcribed the entire interview recording. Kvale (2007, p. 93) discusses the transcriptions of an interview as "translations from an oral language to a written language, where the constructions on the way involve a series of judgements and decisions". Therefore, as part of the initial analysis, the transcription must be reviewed to be reliable and valid and to avoid misinterpretation (Kvale, 2007).

Regarding the observation instrument, due to the accommodation company's policy and to ensure the respondents' privacy and confidentiality, taking video or voice recordings was not allowed during observation. The observation was conducted as part of the day-to-day role of the researcher as an all-rounder staff member at one of the serviced apartments in WA. Therefore, the researcher utilised a journal to document her observations.

3.5   Research Participants and Sampling Method

Research has different target groups based on the topic, field, and nature of the study: social science, including tourism research, mostly have human participants who play an essential role as the empirical information provider. Based on the Code of Federal Regulation Title 45 Part 46 (United States Congress, 2009, p. 4) "a human subject means living individual about whom an investigator conducting research obtains (1)

data or samples through intervention or interaction with individuals(s) or (2) identifiable private information". Different to quantitative research, where the participants take a more passive role as "subjects", qualitative research emphasises the active involvement and interaction of the participants. Jennings (2005) suggests that the interaction and relationship between researchers and participants, as a sort of co-researchers, are the keys to success in qualitative research and are critical for gaining more in-depth empirical information.

In addressing the research objectives, this qualitative research targets different groups of participants: tourists (guests), employees, and management, as well as experts. First, the guests (tourists) participants comprised of two groups: (1) the guests from the non-English-speaking background, referred to as "NESB guests"; and (2) the guests from the main-English-speaking background, referred to as "MESB guests". In addition, in order to be eligible as participants, the guest respondents also had to have experience in interacting or being serviced by the NESB front-desk staff of serviced apartment hotels in WA. The second group comprised the front-desk officers of a prominent apartment-hotel chain in WA, including non-migrants (Australian), NESB migrants, and MESB migrants. The term 'NESB 'or 'non-English speaking background' in this research is a term to distinguish a cultural background that is different from the main-English-speaking countries (MESC such as the United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, United States of America and South Africa). It does not reflect English fluency or proficiency. The third group comprised the management (supervisors, managers, and owners) of the targeted apartment hotels in WA. Finally, the expert group included academics and professionals with years of experience in the tourism and hospitality workforce field. Table 3.2 below details the selection criteria for the participants in each group.

Table 3.2

Type and Selection Criteria for Groups of Research Respondents

Group	Type of Participants	Age	Residential Status	Position	Country of Origin
1	NESB Guest	≥ 18	Not specified	Not specified	NESB Countries
2	MESB Guest	≥ 18	Not specified	Not specified	MESB Countries
3	Non-Migrant Employee	≥ 18	Non-migrant	Entry-level front desk staff	Australia
4	NESB Migrant Employee	≥ 18	Migrant < 10 years	Entry-level front desk staff	NESB Countries
5	MESB Migrant Employee	≥ 18	Migrant < 10 years	Entry-level front desk staff	MESB Countries
6	Management	≥ 18	Not specified	Supervisor/Manager, Owner	Not specified
7	Expert	≥ 18	Not specified	Academic, professional	Not specified

While quantitative research focuses on random sampling and a rigid standardisation of procedures in determining participants, qualitative research focuses on finding participants who can best answer the research questions to understand better the phenomenon being researched (non-probability purposive sampling; Sargeant, 2012). As such, identifying suitable participants is an essential part of the initial phase of the research process in order to address the research objectives and reflect the theoretical perspectives. It is also important to first define the sampling process and sample size as part of the identification of research participants. Unlike quantitative research, which strives for large sample sizes to assure unbiased data and generalizability of conclusions, qualitative research emphasises information saturation: data collection ceases when consensus is established and no new meaningful insight emerges (Jennings, 2005).

Defining the population is an essential part of the research design. Veal (2005, p. 197) states that the population represents "all study subjects, participants or study units that are the focus of the research project". For example, in tourism research, the participants can be tourists, guests, hosts, family, employees, or management, while study units can be attractions, accommodation facilities, historical sites or even

multimedia reports. Meanwhile, the target population can be defined as "the units in the population that the researchers wish to target for the study" (Neuman, 2014, p. 224). Researchers agree that in most cases, the inclusion of the overall population as a research group is impractical, expensive and time-consuming, which creates demand for sampling (Jennings, 2010; Saunders et al., 2016). While samples refer to the selected subjects or units (out of the overall and target population), sampling is the process to select the subjects or study units (Martínez-Mesa et al., 2016; Sarantakos, 2005). In order to conduct proper sampling, researchers need to consider their research question and strategy, target population (size, characteristics and geographical spread), sample frame, access to respondents, and research resources (Saunders et al., 2016) (see Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5

Population, Target Population, Sample Frame and Sample
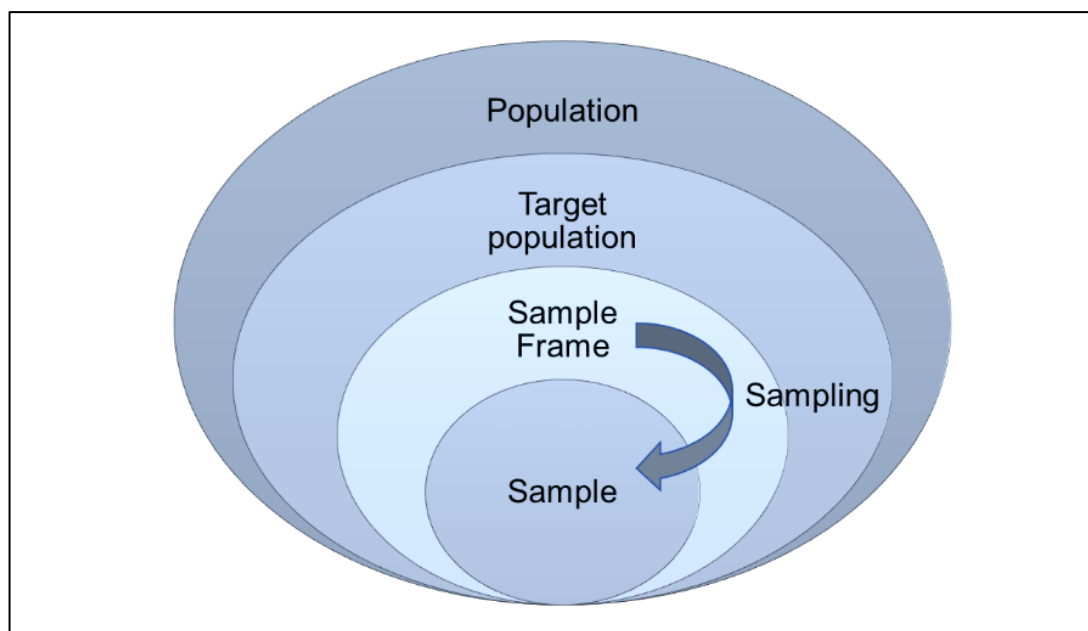
Notes. Adapted from Neuman (2014); Sarantakos (2005); Saunders et al. (2016)

Figure 3.6 shows the sampling process employed in this research. With commercial accommodation in WA as the population of this research, the case study technique resulted in the apartment hotels in WA being identified as the target population for this research. Due to the research objective of exploring diverse perspectives from guests, employees, and management, the sample frame for this study includes a group of guests, front-desk personnel, and management from major apartment hotels in WA. There is no rigid rule in determining the sample size in qualitative research due to its focus on achieving theoretical saturation. As explained by Lincoln and Guba

(1985, pp. 233-234), "a qualitative informational isomorph" is achieved when "redundancy to information" occurs. The analysis should ideally occur concurrently with data collection in an iterative cycle to determine degrees of theoretical saturation, as shown in Table 3.3. This process also allows for the emergence of new themes and perspectives that may otherwise be overlooked. However, the author still targeted interviewing up to 10 respondents for each sample frame for the present study. In total, the researcher managed to interview 31 respondents among guests, employees, and management of serviced apartment hotels across WA. In addition, this research also interviewed five experts for their feedback and validation of the initial findings.

Figure 3.6

Sampling Process of the Current Study
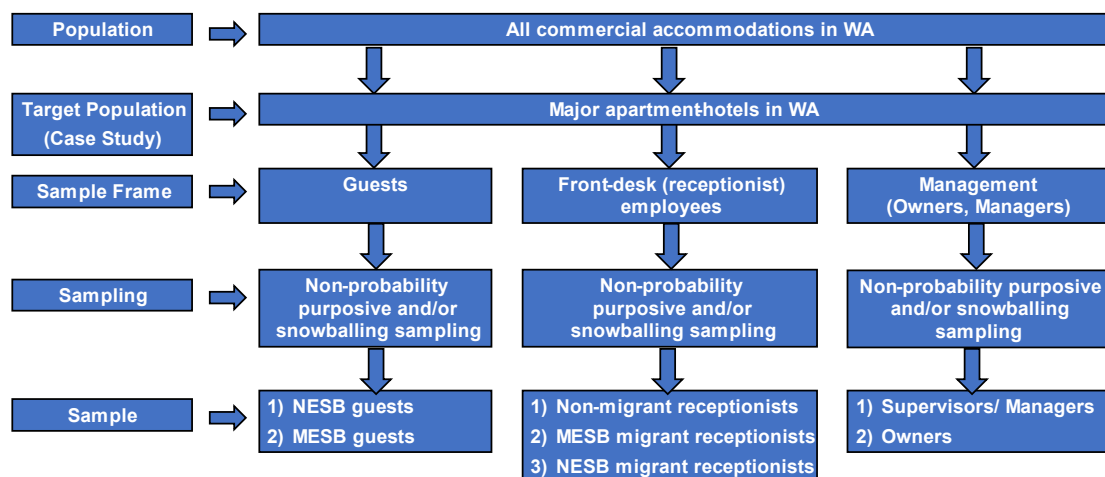
This qualitative research employed purposive non-probability sampling which results in unequal chances for each unit of the target population to be included in the study. In contrast, probability or random sampling emphasises equal chances and randomness of each unit being selected as a sample (Jennings, 2010). As shown in Table 3.3, the first-round participants were selected based on the purposive sampling approach. These participants are selected based on their role to fit the research objectives (Jennings, 2010). These first-round participants are guests, front-desk employees, and management at the case study property where the researcher used to work. As theoretical saturation was not achieved after the first round, the second round of participants was selected based on the snowballing sampling technique, using the referrals from the first-round participants. Snowballing sampling is based on the referral from initial participants to other potential participants: "once the researcher has identified one member of the population, another member is identified by this

member" (Jennings, 2010, p. 140). Lastly, the researcher utilised expert sampling in targeting participants who are "experts" in the field of the topic being studied to validate the initial findings (Jennings, 2010). Table 3.3 below summarises the strategies employed to recruit participants and collect interview data.

Table 3.3

Participant Recruitment and Data Collection Strategy

Period	Strategy
1 week	Pilot interview
2 weeks	1. Contacting the first-round participants in person or by phone/email, from each sample type, based on their role and availability. The first-round participants included management (owner, manager and supervisor), receptionists and guests (past and recent) of the researcher's place of work. In this stage, the researcher also distributed the research information sheet to the target participants. 2. Scheduling the interview
4-6 weeks	1. Interviewing first-round participants 2. Asking for referrals for potential additional participants (management, employees and guests from other apartment hotels in WA) 3. Initial transcription and analysis → assessment of data saturation → As data saturation has not been achieved, the second round of interviews was conducted with the referred participants
4-6 weeks	1. Contacting the second-round participants in person or by phone/email and distributing the research information sheet to target participants. 2. Scheduling the interview 3. Interviewing second-round participants 4. Asking for referral for potential participants 5. Transcription, analysis → assessment of data saturation

3.6   Data Analysis

This research produced qualitative data expressed through words, which resulted in non-standardised data, and was analysed through an inductive approach and conceptualisation. Generally speaking, a qualitative analysis aims to find meaning in non-numerical data, including text, audio and visual data. A qualitative approach interprets and reconstructs empirical materials by exploring, finding, and organising key themes, concepts, and features to generate theories or examine phenomena

(Jennings, 2010; Neuman, 2014). Interpretation and reconstruction of empirical material is the most critical process in qualitative analysis and includes (1) empirical data reduction, which involves identifying categories, themes and concepts; (2) empirical data displays to ideographically present the identified categories, themes, concepts (in the forms of maps, matrices, diagrams, and model); and (3) drawing conclusions in the form of 'theories' and comparing the 'theories' with existing knowledge (Jennings, 2010; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Saunders et al. (2016) identify three types of phases in doing qualitative analysis, condensation of meanings, categorising (grouping) of meanings and structuring (ordering) of meaning using narratives. Concurrently, Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 9) propose an extended sequence as pictured in Figure 3.7 below.

Figure 3.7

The Sequence of Steps in A Qualitative Analysis

Coding	Affixing codes to a set of field notes drawn from observations or interviews
Noting	Noting reflections or other remarks in the margin
Sorting	Sorting and sifting through the materials to identify similar phrases, variables relationship, patterns, themes, distinct differences between subgroups, and common sequences
Isolating & Verifying	Isolating these patterns and processes, commonalities and differences, and taking them out to the field in the next wave of data collection
Elaborating & Generalising	Gradually elaborating a small set of generalisation that cover the consistencies discerned in the database
Generating Theory	Comforting those generalisations with a formalise body of knowledge in the form of constructs or theories

Notes. Adapted from Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 9)

It is essential to understand the nature and characteristics of the qualitative data to be able to analyse it further, as explained by Saunders et al. (2016). Qualitative data typically possesses rich, complex and thorough information derived from words and images with multiple meanings (interpretations) and is likely to be large in volume. Therefore, there is a need to prepare or pre-analyse the qualitative data for the analysis, particularly with qualitative interviews; this pre-analysis includes transcribing, making memos and coding. As shown in Figure 3.1 further above, the

first phase in analysing qualitative data in this research consisted of transcribing the interview recordings. The researcher followed Saunders, Philip, and Adrian's (2016) direction, who stressed the importance of transcribing the audio recordings as soon as possible to aid the researcher in remembering the details of the conversations. The researcher utilised automated transcription services embedded in the Teams and Otter.ai platforms, followed by cross-checking the wording and grammatical errors of the automatically generated transcripts. This step is useful as the first step in In addition, the researcher also utilised memos and journals to assist data interpretation for both semi-structured in-depth interviews and participant observation. The researcher made records of findings and ideas not only during the data collection stage but throughout the entire research journey (Jennings, 2010).

This qualitative research employed inductive-content analysis to analyse the collected interview data. Content analysis is a form of pattern-matching analysis to measure the occurrence of keywords based on the development of the content dictionary (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 608). It is a method of unobtrusively exploring large amounts of textual information to determine trends and patterns in word usage, frequency, relationships, and communication structures and discourses (Gbrich, 2007; Page et al., 2006). The inductive content analysis focuses on generating new theories or expanding existing theories to describe the researched phenomenon (Jennings, 2010). In inductive content analysis, the empirical materials are interpreted to identify categories, themes or concepts, followed by holistically linking parts to be further interpreted/(re)constructed to generate theories (Sarantakos, 2005). The inductive-content analysis is helpful for research efforts in areas with limited to no prior research in the area of interest. The rationale for choosing inductive content analysis is related to the limited existing literature on tourism-led migration themes, particularly the impact of workforce cultural diversity on service quality within the accommodation sector. Also, limited research has been conducted in the Australian context and, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is no related research in the Western Australia context.

In doing the inductive-content analysis (see Figure 3.8), the researcher compiled and interpreted the data from the transcripts and memos into codes and notes with the assistance of NVivo (version 12) software which is fully licensed and supported by Curtin University. Although, in doing the qualitative analysis, the researcher still retained full control over the analysis, including data interpretation and initial theory building (Jennings, 2010). Nevertheless, qualitative analysis software such as NVivo

is helpful in coding, searching, theory building and conceptual networking. As a significant part of content analysis, coding is an iterative process of continuously interpreting, categorising, and organising qualitative data in order to identify different themes and their relationships (Jennings, 2010; Campbell et al., 2013; Stoffelen, 2019). Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 56) define codes as "tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study". Then, data interpretation was facilitated through the creation of groups/ categories through pattern-matching analysis to find key themes, concepts and patterns. In this step, the researcher also focused on finding linkages (relationships) and differences between sub-groups, especially to better comprehend the obtained findings from multiple stakeholders' interviews (guests, employees, management, and experts).

Figure 3.8

The Process of An Inductive Content Analysis
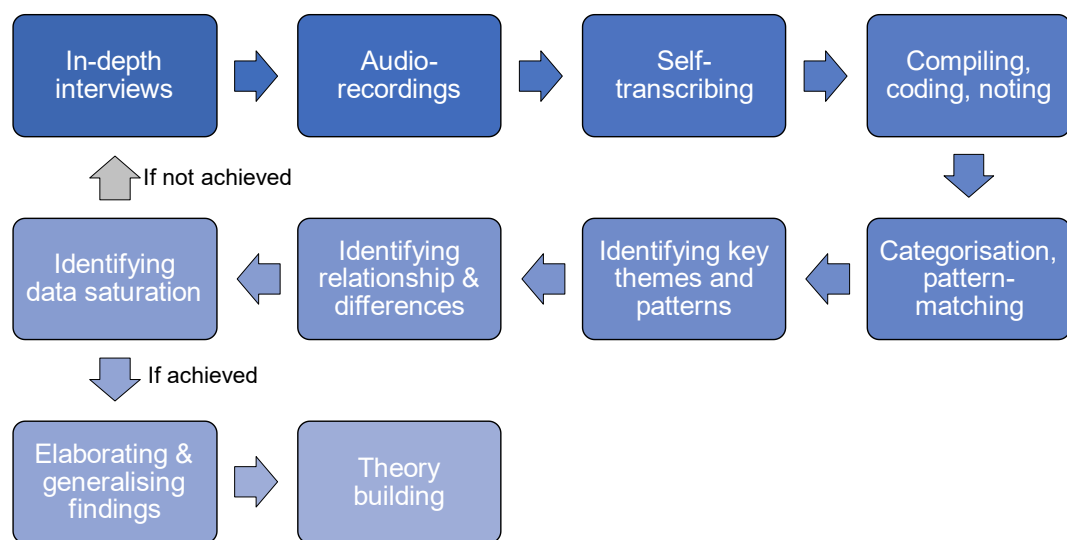
Notes. Adapted from Jennings (2010) and Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 9)

This study's coding process is the interpretation of the combination between Walters' (2016) six phases of coding and Stoffelen's (2019) ten steps of coding/postcoding guide for the interview in tourism research. The comparison between Walter's (2016) and Stoffelen's (2019) coding scheme is summarised in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4

Comparison between Walter's (2016) and Stoffelen's (2019) Coding Scheme

Walter (2016)	Stoffelen (2019)
1. Initial reading of texts to gain familiarity; 2. Repeated readings to code texts; 3. Development of basic themes; 4. Consolidate into organising themes; 5. Derive global themes and networks; and 6. Describe, explore and analyse networks.	**Coding:** 1. Selecting descriptive codes as emerging from the texts; 2. Creating overview pattern coding; 3. Provisional coding based on the literature; 4. Creating a hierarchical coding scheme; and 5. Cyclical coding using the hierarchical coding scheme. **Post-coding:** 1. Careful reading of the content of the nodes; 2. Creating a short summary for each node; 3. Careful reading of the analytical document; 4. Analysis of policy documents; 5. Adding remarks from the field notes; 6. A second round of reading and interpreting the analytical document; 7. Linking the empirical data to the theoretical framework; 8. Identification of key results and gaps in the data; 9. Output-oriented data analysis; and 10. Selecting quotes.

Notes. Adapted from Walter (2016, p.113-116) and Stoffelen (2019, p.2202 - 2207)

The detailed content analysis, including coding strategy, in this qualitative research, is detailed as follows:

Step 1: Initial reading and listening of transcripts to gain familiarity

This step involved uploading automated transcription from Teams and Otter.ai to NVivo to be grammar-checked and text coded. By listening to and reading the transcripts, the researcher gains familiarity with and a better understanding of the respondents' answers to various questions. This step was completed within 7 days to ensure that the researcher was still fully aware of any important aspects of the interview, such as respondent gestures.

Step 2: Intensive reading of transcripts to code the text

Coding is an important part of synthesising 31 interview transcripts ranging in length from 20 to 60 minutes from various stakeholders from diverse backgrounds. As Stoffelen (2019, p. 2200) quotes that coding "restructures the multi-thematic and composite content of the transcripts and documents, thereby ordering them per topic instead of per source". During the coding phase of the initial analysis, each respondent's answers (interview transcripts) were examined for keywords or phrases that best answered the questions, and then manually coded and recorded in a matrix. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) pointed out, each consecutive reading was required to provide additional insights in order to identify the widest possible numbers of codes over the entire data set.

Walters (2016) adds that it is pivotal to utilise the reflexive journal to record the nature and rationale of decision-making as recurring words and data extracts were translated into codes. It is a time-consuming and rigorous exercise to ensure that the codes were applied consistently throughout the coding process. NVivo aided in this process by providing a platform for gathering all of the source data and coding it more systematically in one window, rather than opening multiple files. Coding in NVivo is the process of gathering related material into a container known as a Node, with a node description referring to a code/theme. When you open a node, you can see all of the relevant sections and quotes in the entire data set coded to the node, see Figure 3.9. The process of coding was done manually and separately for each respondent group. Nvivo also helped the researcher analyse the recurrence of the codes to determine the most common words or phrases in a given theme (see the example in Figure 4.7).

Figure 3.9

Example of Coding Exercise at NVivo

In this section of a transcript "familiarity" and "home experience" were referenced twice
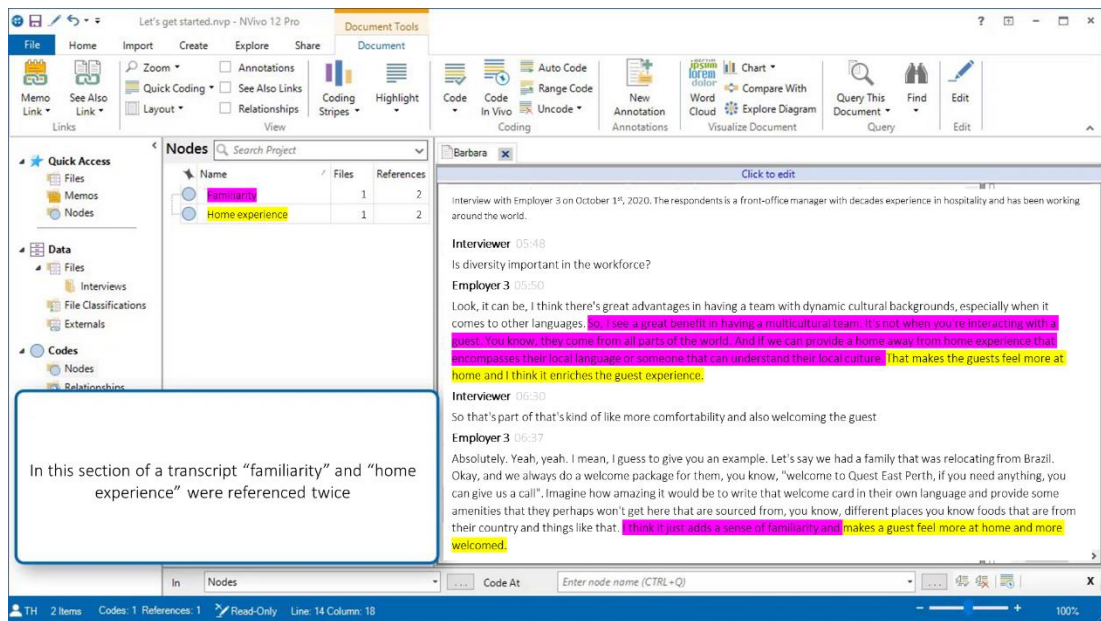
Step 3: Provisional coding based on the literature review

Campbell et al. (2013, p.297) stated that "coding this type of data often involves interpreting what respondents mean in their answers to questions, which requires sufficient background knowledge. In this step, the researcher attempted to identify codes/themes from each topic of interview questions based on the literature review.

Step 4: Development of basic themes by categorisation and patter-matching

The identified codes that share similar meanings or characteristics were then consolidated into basic themes. For example, "familiarity" and "home experience" can be grouped into "positive experience/interaction". According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), this is an important process for providing a means of triangulation to increase the credibility of the analysis. While the previous step rely on theAgain, this step was completed separately for each type of respondent rather than combining them all.

Step 5: Consolidate into organising key themes

Thematic reorganisation of the texts should allow the researcher to identify recurring themes, compare stakeholders' visions and interpretations, and identify similarities, differences, and contestations (Cope, 2010). In this step, codes and basic themes are systematically organised into key themes/topics to better answer the research

objective. For example, "good experience/interaction" and "unpleasant experience/ interaction" were grouped into "similar foreign cultural background interaction", which related to the answer of the research objective "the role of culturally diverse frontline NESB migrants workers in servicing guests, mainly from the same cultural background".

Step 6: Derive global themes and explore networks

In this process, the researcher of this study tried to find alignments and contradictions with the literature review to create a validated global theme. As this research explored the perspectives of guests, employees, and management, triangulation was implemented to merge the different perspectives. Patton (1999) refers to triangulation as using multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena. First, this research utilised triangulation to merge and compare insights from different stakeholders' interviews (i.e., different data sources). Second, the triangulation process was needed to merge findings from interviews and participant observation (i.e., different methods). This was an iterative process involving a 'back and forth' between the codes, themes, and literature review until a cohesive argument was achieved (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Step 7: Achieve data saturation

The next step in doing the qualitative analysis was assessing theoretical saturation in order to be able to move to generalisation and theory building. As shown in Table 3.3, this research underwent two rounds of interviews to reach data saturation, a number of repetitive readings of transcripts were performed until the researcher discovered data saturation, which occurred when no new significant code was generated (Walters, 2016). While the first round of interviews with 18 respondents was deemed to have already achieved data saturation due to research participants providing quite similar answers across a variety of topics, the second round of interviews further demonstrated data saturation by having responses generally conforming to the findings from the first round of interviews. As Punch (2005, p. 214-215) defines theoretical saturation as the cyclical process of empirical material collection and interpretation/ (re)construction (theoretical sampling) that continues until no new insights are gained, with additional data only confirming previous theories.

Step 8: Validate findings and generate theories

First, this research used triangulation to increase validity by comparing findings from initial interviews with guests, employees, and management of leading serviced apartments in Western Australia to participant observation. Second, the expert interviews were utilised to further validate the findings generated from multi-stakeholders interviews and observation. Last, after data saturation was achieved and the findings validated by the experts, the researcher then elaborated the findings to explain and expand existing literature to generate theories.

Step 9: Select quotes

The last step in this process is to select the quotes that best represent the key themes and theories identified in the previous step as well as provide the most impact on the study. Stoffelen (2019) contended that a provocative statement is not always a good quote, and that quote selection should be based on a comprehensive data analysis rather than the narrative of individual text samples.

Quantitative researchers sometimes criticise qualitative approaches due to the lack of objectivity, generalisability, and researcher bias (Saunders et al., 2016). While quantitative methods focus on 'reliability' and 'validity' as quality criteria of a research process and findings, qualitative methodologies emphasise the 'trustworthiness', 'authenticity' and 'goodness of fit' of the in-depth empirical data collection and analysis (Jennings, 2010 p.149). However, the achievement of these attributes might be impacted by research limitations. Thus, expert interviews were conducted to confirm the transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the initial findings. As Lincoln and Guba (1985), as well as Denzin and Lincoln (2005a, p.24), add that trustworthiness in qualitative research involves establishing:

- *credibility*, represents internal validity and refers to how truthful and authentic findings are;
- *transferability*, represent external validity and refers to what extent the research findings applicable in another setting or group;
- *dependability*, represents reliability and seeks the consistency and reproducibility of the results; and
- *confirmability*, represent objectivity and refers to the unbiased findings that others can confirm.

Qualitative data analysis can be presented through various outputs, such as tables of themes, selective use of quotations, and attributing quotations (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The findings of this qualitative research are mainly presented in the form of selective quotations supported by relationship mappings of identified attributes, as shown in Chapter 4.

3.7   Ethical Considerations

Qualitative research, particularly in the social sciences, including tourism, places considerable emphasis on explaining and exploring phenomena that occur in daily life. Understanding, recognising, and applying research ethics are critical when conducting research on human subjects. As stated by NHMRC (2015, p.2) that "being an ethical person or researcher and 'ethical conduct' itself constitutes more than 'simply doing the right thing'". As qualitative researchers, being ethical means being considerate and respectful towards the participants' needs, safety, privacy (and their families) and the researcher themselves (Hillman & Radel, 2018). It poses a significant challenge because human participants in qualitative research are the sources of the empirical materials, which in some cases, make researchers need to choose between reporting the knowledge produced or being ethical (Kvale, 2007).

Following and implementing ethical guidelines in the conduct of research is a must for researchers. These guidelines are essential in protecting the right of human and non-human subjects and are provided by institutionally based 'Human Ethics in Research Committees', for example, the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) in Australia (Jennings, 2010). For example, in researching drug users, the ethical code of conduct would ensure the researchers seal the participant credentials from everyone, including law enforcement. Jennings (2010, p. 99) and Kvale (2007, pp. 25-28) state that the code of ethics in doing research involving human participants typically entails the following key items:

- voluntary participation of the individual;
- provision of information about the research, purpose and process of the data collection (i.e. survey, interview or observation), participant role and rights;
- subjects' informed consent to participate in the study;
- the confidentiality and anonymity of the participant's personal information;

- the right of the participant to refuse to answer any question, as well as to ask questions related to research;

- the right of the participant to withdraw from the research (mainly prior to data analysis);

- the right of the participant not to be deceived and not to be harmed during any stage of the research, as well as after the research has concluded;

- the right of the participant to access the research findings;

- information of any consequence or risk in participating in the research;

- the statement of the research approval by the 'Human Ethics in Research Committees';

- information of researchers' contact information, also the Ethics Committee; and

- if applicable, information about rewards in participating.

This research employed the qualitative approach with a semi-structured in-depth interview strategy, which emphasises human interaction. Furthermore, this research also included the comparison of perceptions among different cultural groups, which sometimes can be a sensitive subject and might add ethical complexity to the research. This research followed the ethics code of conduct from the Human Research Ethics Committee of Curtin University (HREC), which is derived from the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). In conjunction with the data collection strategies, which involved semi-structured interviews with various stakeholders, this research was considered a low-risk project as it would not affect the participants' safety, rights, or welfare and might only cause slight discomfort. Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has approved this study (HREC number HRE2020-0454). The researcher ensured the compliance of each key item mentioned above, particularly the confidentiality of participants, as stated in the consent and information sheet. The research also followed the COVID-19 safety guidelines in collecting data by promoting hygiene and implementing social distancing. This research also underwent an amendment in research design, which resulted in the need to amend the ethical application as well as annual compliance reports to the Human Research Ethics Committee of Curtin University (HREC).

With the fact that the ethical code for research is generalised, while the people interactions are very dynamic, ethical conduct is often left to the researcher's judgment. Thus, the researcher continually has to make on-the-spot decisions about

what implications of an answer to follow-up and what connotations and acts may be too sensitive for the participants to be followed up (Kvale, 2007). In particular, with cross-cultural research, the researcher must acknowledge the customs of the culture being studied. The understanding between researcher and participant is the key success factor in obtaining empirical materials in qualitative research. For semi-structured in-depth interviews, in particular, the relationship and communication quality between interviewer and interviewee determine the success of the overall data collection. Even though this research focused on cross-cultural interactions, there was no particular challenge in complying with and applying ethical conduct.

3.8   Researcher Positionality

A case study approach arguably tends to be subject to researcher's bias, particularly if the objective of the case study is only within the exploratory phase (Hoaglin et al., 1982), although Yin (2009) later comments that the researcher bias can be present in every phase of the research design and is not restricted to the case study method. From a different perspective, Stake (2006) suggests bias in the case study as a positive trait due to the personalised, localised and reflexive nature of the method. The researcher utilised the triangulation approach, as explained in Section 3.6, to minimise any bias affecting the findings in this case study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Jennings, 2010). While Beeton (2005) recommends using independent surveyors/interviewers, evaluators, and even analysts to prevent research bias, the researcher of this study served as the only interviewer and observer in the data collection process, as well as the sole analyst and writer/editor. Despite this, to minimise or even avoid researcher bias, the researcher focused on solely asking the question without providing a counter-response to the respondent's comments throughout the interview, particularly due to the fact that she was a NESB front-desk staff member in one of the targeted organisations. Furthermore, the researcher focused on observing interactions between her coworkers and guests rather than analysing her own experience or interactions with the guests (or her colleagues and employers).

As explained in Section 3.2.1, this study can be categorised as both value-laden and value-driven research, where the research was initiated and developed by the researcher's experience working as a frontline employee in the hospitality business, where many of her coworkers are migrants from non-English-speaking-backgrounds. The researcher's interest in better understanding the drivers and the role of migrant

workers from NESB countries within the hospitality sector motivated the researcher to pursue this research. Although the research focused on the subjective viewpoints of the interviewees, the researcher's stance on this research is reflective while still ensuring the 'trustworthiness' of the findings. Jennings (2005, p. 108) defines reflexivity as "the process by which researchers reflect and consider the impacts of their subjectivity and consequences of their participation in the research process and report on the same in their writings". Reflexivity reflects the researcher's ethical sensibility towards their research and the participants (Fujii, 2017). Furthermore, the researcher acknowledged the risk of her own biases in doing the interview and observation, which might impact the outcomes of this study, due to (1) this research involving issues of minority cultural groups and the researcher also being part of that minority; (2) the researcher's role as the interviewer and observant; and (3) the researcher's existing knowledge and experience due to her role as a NESB front-desk staff. Therefore, the researcher made sure to not impose her values or opinions on the participants during the interviews by leading the respondents' responses. The researcher attempted to set aside her preconceived notions about the subject of the investigation in order to better comprehend and listen to the participants' thoughts.

3.9   Chapter Summary

This study embraces subjectivism, emphasising the concept that the world is comprised of numerous realities. Accordingly, this study employed both pragmatic and interpretive social science perspectives in order to address research questions and objectives and to generate information based on the narratives, perceptions, and experiences of those interviewed. Due to a paucity of empirical research on the impact of workforce cultural diversity on tourism and hospitality service delivery, particularly in Western Australia, this study employed an inductive-exploratory approach. Thus, this research began by amassing data to better understand the phenomenon and identify essential themes and characteristics in order to build new or modify existing theories. The research findings result from several interpretations, reconstructions, and triangulations of diverse themes and concepts about the influences of migrant-workforce cultural variety from various perspectives (guests, employees and management). Thus, the case study is judged as the most appropriate technique for generating in-depth empirical materials that adequately explain the complex relationship between workforce culture diversity and front-desk service quality. Nonetheless, the researcher is aware that adopting a case study approach comes

with limitations. The case study of this qualitative research is a leading apartment-hotel (serviced apartment) chain in WA.

As illustrated in Figure 1.2, this qualitative study began by conducting in-depth interviews to explore information about the varied perspectives, perceptions, and experiences of guests, employees, and management at one of Australia's largest service apartment chains with locations throughout Western Australia, in relation to cross-cultural front-desk service encounters. The interviews with guest respondents examined differing perceptions and evaluations of the quality of service offered by NESB frontline staff between guests from NESB and MESB nations. The interviews with frontline staff elicited diverse perspectives and experiences of non-migrant workers, MESC migrant workers, and NESB migrant workers in front of house jobs and, in particular, elicited thoughts about the impact of their cultural background on the quality of front-desk service. On the other hand, management interviews focused on their respective assessments of frontline NESB migrant workers' service performances. The sampling methods utilised in this qualitative study were non-probability purposive and snowball sampling, with approximately ten people targeted for each responder category. In total, this research manages to interview eight guests, twelve front-desk employes, eleven owners/managers of major apartment hotels in WA as well as five experts in the hospitality human resources field. Additionally, the researcher used participant observation to eavesdrop on daily cross-cultural front-desk service exchanges facilitated by the researcher's position as a front-desk employee.

The interviews were transcribed and qualitatively analysed using the inductive-content analysis method with the assistance of the NVivo software. Following transcription of the interviews, major themes, patterns, and categories were discovered through a triangulation of findings from the perspectives and observations of various stakeholders. The data analysis for this study was conducted using an inductive content analysis method with the assistance of the NVivo program. Third, the reliability and trustworthiness of the initial findings were confirmed by expert interviews with diverse academics and industry specialists familiar with tourism and hospitality workforce management. Finally, the validated findings were compared to existing literature and theories in order to provide theoretical significance to the relationship between worker cultural diversity and service quality in the accommodation industry. The researcher's stance on this research is reflexive while still ensuring the 'trustworthiness' of the findings.

The following chapter summarises the key findings from the study subjects' interviews and participant observations. The findings from the semi-structured interviews and observations managed to address the research objectives. As stated in Chapter 1, the research aims to explore culturally influenced front-desk service attributes as well as the relationship between workforce cultural diversity and front-desk service quality, with a particular emphasis on cross-cultural communication quality, similar cultural interaction, and guests' authentic experience. In addition, Chapter 4 dicusses the experts' feedbacks and validations of the initial findings in how the workforce cultural diversity influences cross-cultural communication quality, similar cultural background interaction, and authentic experience.

CHAPTER 4.   FINDINGS

4.1   Chapter Introduction

This section presents the research findings of this study exploring the relationship between workers' cultural diversity and front-desk service quality with the case study of a WA accommodation. As mentioned in Chapter 1, this qualitative study aims to ascertain the extent to which NESB migrant workers' cultural background influences service quality in the Western Australian accommodation industry by pursuing the following research objectives:

1) To examine the attributes of service quality in the WA accommodation sector affected by the cultural diversity of frontline NESB migrant-workers from the perspectives of tourists, employees and management.

2) To explore the relationship between cultural diversity among frontline NESB migrant workers and service quality in the WA accommodation industry, with a focus on:

    a) the importance of communication skills of NESB migrant workers at the front of house position in delivering quality services, with particular regard to English proficiency;

    b) the role of culturally diverse frontline NESB migrant workers in servicing guests, mainly from the same cultural background; and

    c) the role of culturally diverse frontline NESB migrant workers in representing Australia and contributing to an authentic tourism experience.

These findings are the results of the inductive content analysis of the data gathered from the interviews and participant observation in the context of the case study. As explained in Chapter 3, this qualitative research employed a case study approach of a major apartment-hotel (serviced apartment) chain in Western Australia. By interviewing eleven guests, twelve employees, and eight management at one of Australia's largest serviced apartment chains, this study elicited respondents' perspectives on the effects of the NESB migrant front-desk staff's cultural background on the accommodations service quality. Additionally, participant observation of day-to-day front-desk service encounters was used to supplement the findings obtained

from the interviews. Following triangulation and inductive analysis of these findings, follow-up interviews with five experts were conducted for validation purposes.

As described in Section 4.2, the case study for this qualitative research is a leading apartment hotel chain in Western Australia. As explained in Chapter 2, the apartment-hotel type of property has been chosen as the subject of the case study due to its market diversity. Meanwhile, Section 4.3 provides a brief overview of the respondents to this qualitative study, covering eleven guests, twelve front-desk employees, eight management of the case study apartment hotels, as well as five hospitality workforce management experts. Women slightly outnumber men in this qualitative study. While young adults (18-35 years old) account for the majority of respondents. Furthermore, respondents from various cultural backgrounds, including Asian, Australian, European, Latin American, and African, provide valuable insights into the study.

The findings of the semi-structured interviews have addressed the research objectives in exploring culturally influenced front-desk service attributes and the relationship between workforce cultural diversity and front-desk service quality in the WA accommodation industry, with a particular emphasis on cross-cultural communication quality, similar cultural interaction, an' guests' authentic experience. In Section 4.4, illustrations of tourism-migration interrelationship phenomena in Western Australia are presented. Migrants generate visits from family as a reflection of the migration-led tourism phenomenon, whereas migrant workers in the tourism and hospitality industries represent the tourism-led migration phenomenon. Meanwhile, Sections 4.5 to 4.7 take a deep dive into the hospitality front-desk migrants who work in Western Australia as a result of tourism-led migration. Section 4.5 discusses the wide range of opportunities available in the Western Australian hospitality sector as a major motivator for migrants to work in the industry. Section 4.6 explores workforce diversity as a result of migrants from various cultural backgrounds working in WA apartment-hotels. Meanwhile, Section 4.7 delves into the front-desk services at one of Australia's largest apartment-hotel chains.

Finally, Section 4.8 confirms that the cultural diversity of the NESB staff influences various aspects of WA accommodation front-desk services, particularly communication quality, staff-guest interaction, and guest experience. Meanwhile, the following Section 4.8 sub-sections address the second research objective, which details the relationship between workforce cultural diversity and accommodation service quality, as well as the influence of workforce cultural diversity:

- English proficiency and multilingualism improve communication quality, while foreign accents and Australian slang have a negative impact on cross-cultural communication;

- similar cultural backgrounds improve the interaction between guests and front-desk staff, which helps boost service performance;

- cultural diversity also has an impact on differences in staff attitudes, personalities, and working styles, which corresponds to Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions; and

- the role of NESB migrants in representing local society and providing authentic experiences of multiculturalism in Australia.

4.2 Overview of a Major Apartment-Hotel Chain in Western Australia as the Object of the Case Study

This exploratory research adopted a case study technique to determine whether workforce cultural diversity affects the quality of accommodation front-desk service. As discussed in Chapter 3, the case study technique is judged appropriate for eliciting detailed multi-faceted empirical data from a variety of respondents. The following rationale underpins the selection of a leading apartment-hotel/service apartment network in Western Australia as a case study:

- A leading accommodation provider in WA:

  As a subsidiary of a major international accommodation operator, this leading apartment-hotel chain has established itself as a major player in the Australian hospitality industry, particularly in Western Australia, with a total of 15 properties located throughout Perth's central business district, suburbs, Bunbury, and Kalgoorlie

- The existence of front-desk workforce cultural diversity:

  In accordance with observations and management interviews, the targeted serviced apartments employ a culturally diverse front-desk workforce, with up to two out of every three employees being migrant workers. The migrant workers mainly come from NESB countries and are primarily of Asian origin.

- The market diversity:

  As a serviced apartment that combines the ease of a fully-furnished residence with comprehensive hotel facilities, this sort of property is able to attract a broader market, ranging from vacationers to business travellers staying for extended periods of time. According to the management interviews, the corporate market has accounted for 65% to 80% of all visitation at this serviced apartment over the last three years, with extended-stay corporate guests accounting for up to 40% of the whole corporate market.

The organisation chart for the case study company is displayed in **Error! Reference source not found.**. It is based on the insights gained from the management' and employees' interviews. The franchisee and property manager collaborate to oversee the property's day-to-day operations, which include administrative, marketing, sales, and financial responsibilities. Additionally, they are accountable to the Franchisor and are responsible for operating the business in accordance with the Franchisor's standards. The front-desk department is responsible for a variety of functions including guest service, reception, concierge, administration, non-corporate account sales, and customer service. Meanwhile, the business development section is responsible for corporate sales and partnerships with customers. Finally, the housekeeping department is in charge of the rooms' upkeep and cleanliness.

Figure 4.1

Organisation Chart of Targeted Apartment-Hotel Chain
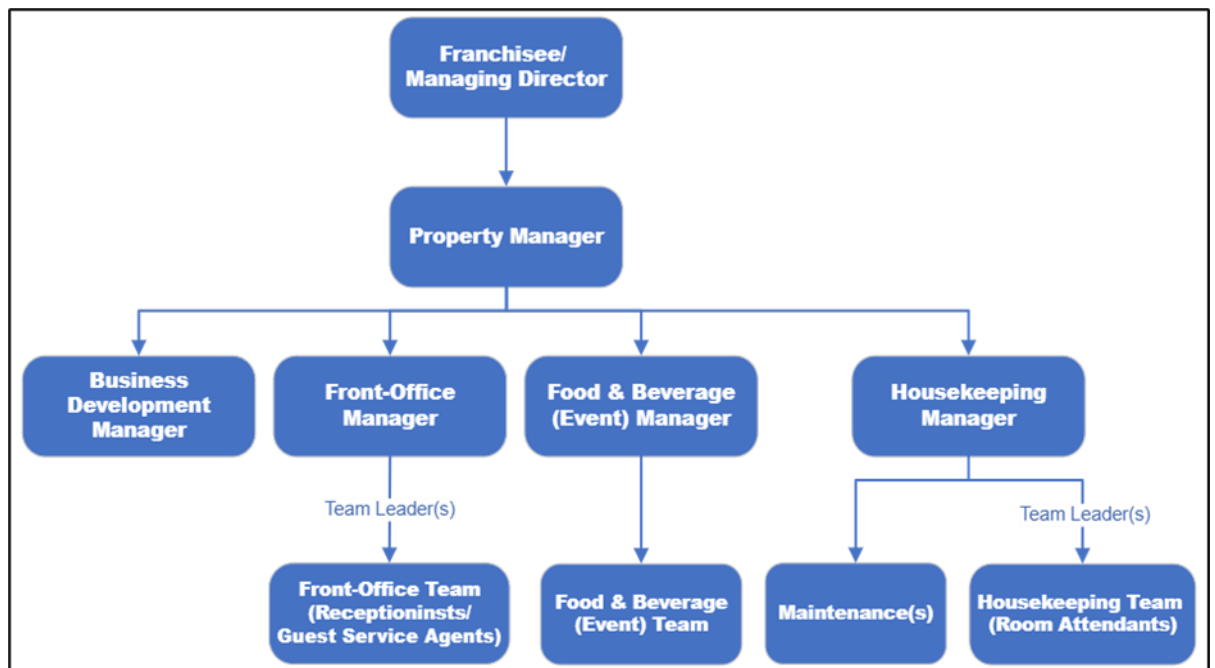
Note. Based on interviews with employee and management respondents, own elaboration

4.3   Overview of the Respondents

As mentioned in Chapter 3, this research explores the influence of a workforce's cultural diversity on front-office service quality from the perspectives of management, front-office employees, and guests of serviced apartments throughout Western Australia, with the findings validated by the tourism and hospitality workforce and human relationship management experts. This research gathered information from eight management, twelve staff, and eleven guests of apartment hotels located across Western Australia. The initial interview findings have then been discussed with five industry professionals in the tourism and hospitality human resource area. Table 4.1 summarises the characteristics of the interview respondents. Females, on average, account for 58% of respondents. Young adults (18–35 years old) account for the majority of respondents (42%), while middle-aged (36–55 years old) and elderly individuals (above 55 years old) account for 39% and 19%, respectively. According to their cultural origins, the majority of respondents, 53%, come from non-English speaking countries, mainly Asia. Australians dominate the native English-speaking population.

Table 4.1

Overview of the Respondents

Type of Respondent	Total Respondent	Gender Ratio (Male:Female)	Characteristics	
			Age Group	**Cultural Background**
Management	8	50:50	Characterised by age group of 36-55 years old by 63%	The majority have Australian background
Employee	12	33:67	Dominated by young adults (18-35 years old) by 67%	An equal proportion of English and non-English speaking background people from Australia, Europe, Asia, Latin America and Africa
Guest	11	36:67	Dominated by young adults (18-35 years old) by 55%	With a majority from non-English speaking backgrounds, particularly from Asia
Expert	5	60:40	Dominated by the age group of 36-55 years old by 60%	The majority have a British/ Australian background

4.3.1 Management Respondents

The management respondents come from a variety of professional backgrounds, with the majority (more than 50%) being front-office managers, whilst others are owners/franchisees and business development managers. The richness of insights is enhanced by the diversity of management respondents' backgrounds. The majority of management respondents in this research (60%) are female, and the majority are middle-aged (36 – 55 years old) and older individuals (> 55 years old).

Figure 4.2

Total Management Respondents by Gender and Age
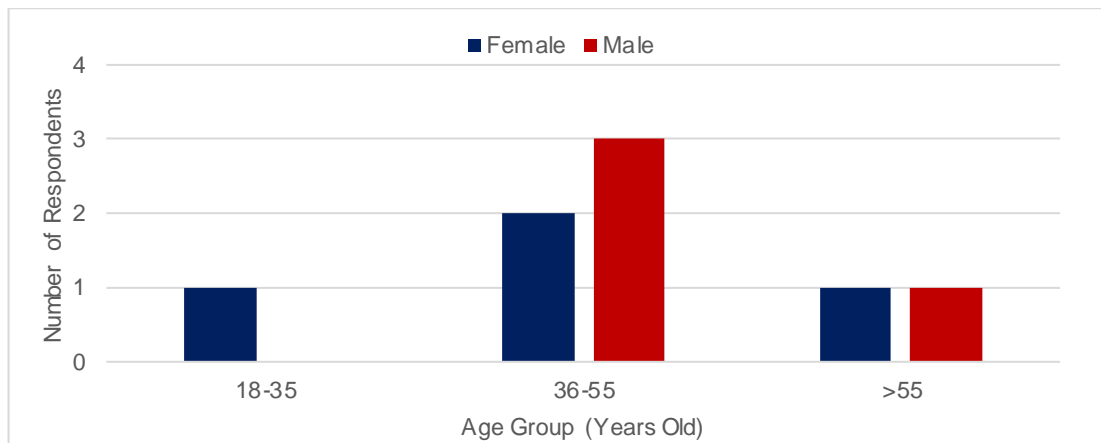
Note. Based on interviews with eight management (managers and franchisees) at apartment hotels across WA.

Based on the cultural background, 63% of the management respondents are native-English speakers with Australian and British backgrounds, while the remaining respondents come from non-English speaking countries, such as Indonesia, the Philippines, and Mauritius. The presence of both NESB and MESB cultural backgrounds in the managerial role provides a better insight into the organisation and overall service performance.

Figure 4.3

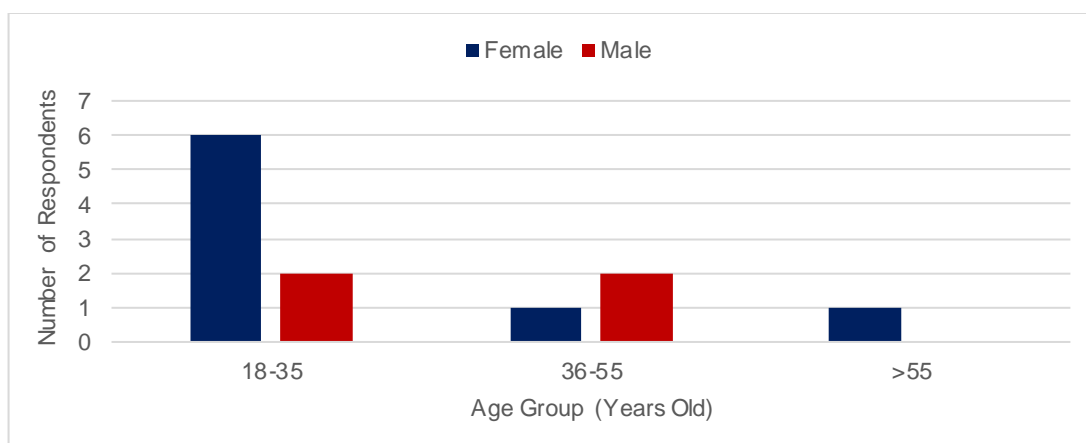*Total Management Respondents by Cultural Background*
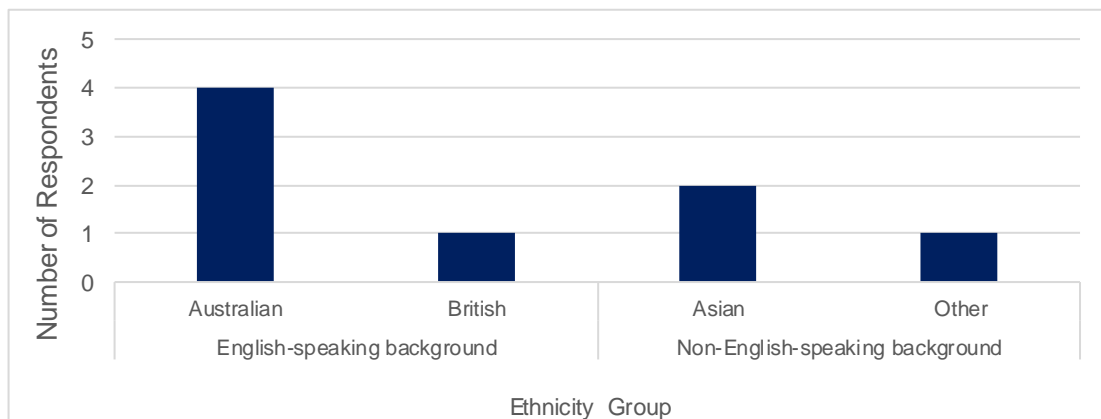
Note. Based on interviews with eight management (managers and franchisees) at apartment hotels across WA.

4.3.2 Employee Respondents

As this study focuses on the front-desk service, the employee respondents for this research are front-desk staff at the leading apartment-hotels across Western Australia, both non-migrants and migrants. The majority (60%) of the total twelve front-office employee respondents are female, which is consistent with the dominance of female workers in the Australian accommodation sector, which accounts for 71% of the workforce (National Skills Commission, 2021). Based on the age group, the majority of front-desk employee respondents are young individuals between the ages of 18 and 35. This finding is consistent with the Australian Labour Market Insight (National Skills Commission, 2021), which showed that a significant proportion of Australian hotel and motel receptionists are between the ages of 25 and 34.

Figure 4.4

Total Employee Respondents by Gender and Age

Note. Based on interviews with 12 front-desk employees at apartment hotels across WA.

As illustrated in Figure 4.5, this research elicits perspectives from migrant employees from seven non-English speaking countries: China, Indonesia, India, Germany, Ghana, Mexico, and Brazil. Meanwhile, the remainder of the local workforce consists of native Australian and British speakers. Additionally, through the interviews, this research was able to examine how individuals from many cultural backgrounds perceive power-distance relationships.

Figure 4.5

Total Employee Respondents by Cultural Background
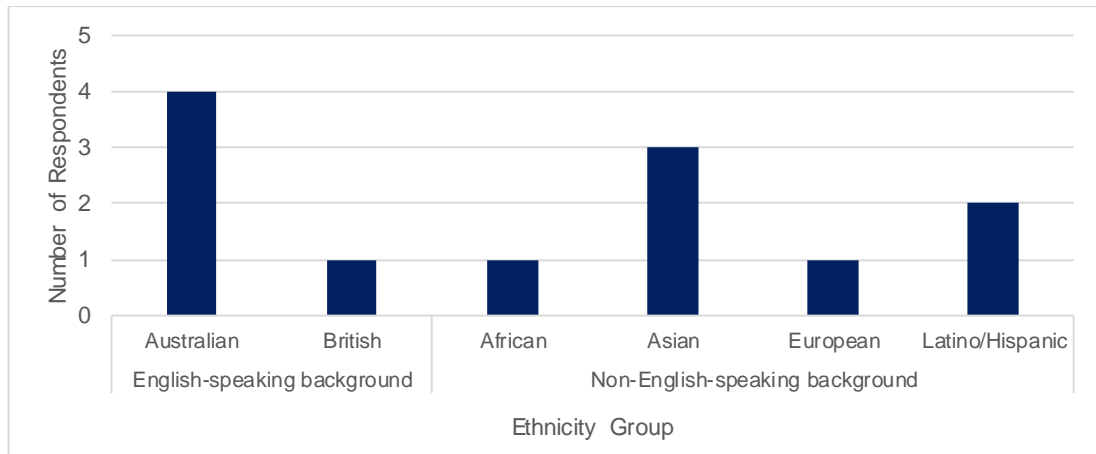
Note. Based on interviews with 12 front-desk employees at apartment hotels across WA.

The majority of the non-migrant staff have less than a decade of combined work experience in the hospitality industry. This correlates with migrant employees, the majority of whom have less than six years of hospitality experience in Australia, having typically (but not exclusively) begun as waiters before being promoted to a front-desk job. Additionally, the minority of them admitted to having little prior experience with hospitality in their native countries. Indeed, several migrant respondents indicated that they had a different job or field of study in their home country, as explained by one of the respondents who graduated with a biology major and ended up working as a waitress and receptionist (Employee 1, NESB Migrant Front-Desk Employee, September 14, 2020). Additionally, they typically mentioned that their first job in Australia was in the hotel sector.

Figure 4.6

Total Employee Respondents by Working Experience in Hospitality Industry
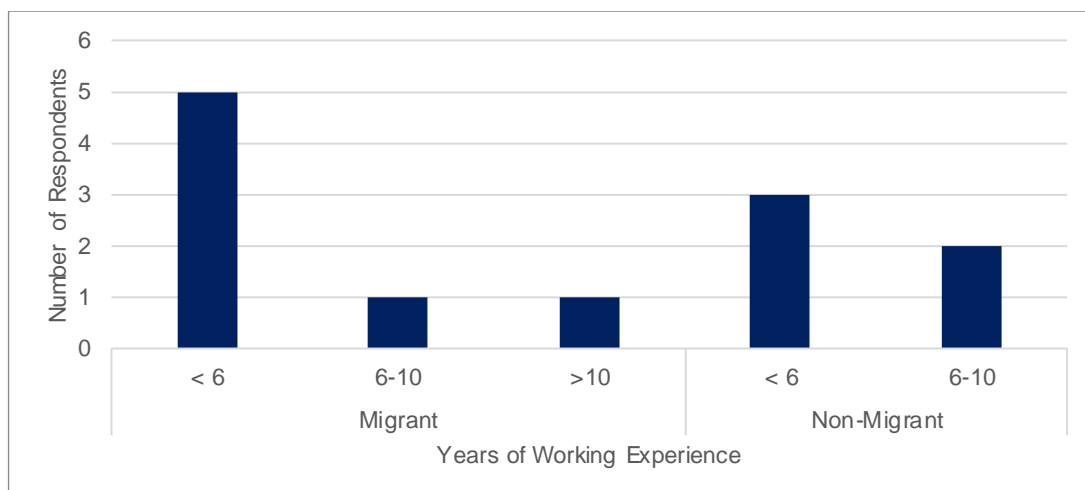
Note. Based on interviews with 12 front-desk employees at apartment hotels across WA.

For migrant employees, the reasons for migrating to Australia, particularly Western Australia, were to be with their spouses, to pursue work possibilities, to gain international experience, and to learn new skills (see Figure 4.7). As a result, the respondents' motivators serve as pull factors for relocating to Australia. Over 20% of respondents indicated that they migrated to Western Australia to join their partners who had already lived or worked in Western Australia. Recurring themes in the motivation of following their partners are 'relationship/marriage' and 'settle down', as one interviewee stated:

> *I met my partner and he and I decided to move here because it was easier. So, he already had like five years living 'ere. He's not from 'ere. He's from England. But, he was already very settled. […] So, for me, it was easier [to come here as well]." (Employee 1, NESB Migrant Front-Desk Employee, September 14, 2020).*

Figure 4.7

Common Themes among the Interviewees' Motivations to Migrate to Australia

Note. This figure shows the most frequent words of the respondents' motivations to migrate to Australia: own data elaboration and analysis, with the aid of NVivo12 software.

After frequently visiting her family in Australia as a child, a migrant respondent opted to permanently migrate to Australia when the opportunity presented itself. Some respondents from non-English speaking backgrounds travel to Australia in order to expand their knowledge and experience, represented by drivers such as to "learn English" and to "broaden knowledge and experience". They also recognise that there are more job prospects in Australia, which results in a better quality of life, as one respondent pointed out::

> *I want to learn English and have the experience of living abroad. […] The main reason was because of the work opportunities back then. I had a friend that is living here as well. So, this guy helped me out with some work. […] Australia is a nice country, has a good employment level. (Employee 3, NESB Migrant Front-Desk Employee, September 23, 2020).*

4.3.3 Guest Respondents

As shown in Figure 4.8, there are four male interviewees and seven female interviewees among the guest respondents. In addition, the majority (55%) of the guest respondents are between the ages of 18 and 35 years, while mature adults and elder people account for 27% and 11%, respectively.

Figure 4.8

Distribution of Guests' Respondents Based on Gender and Age
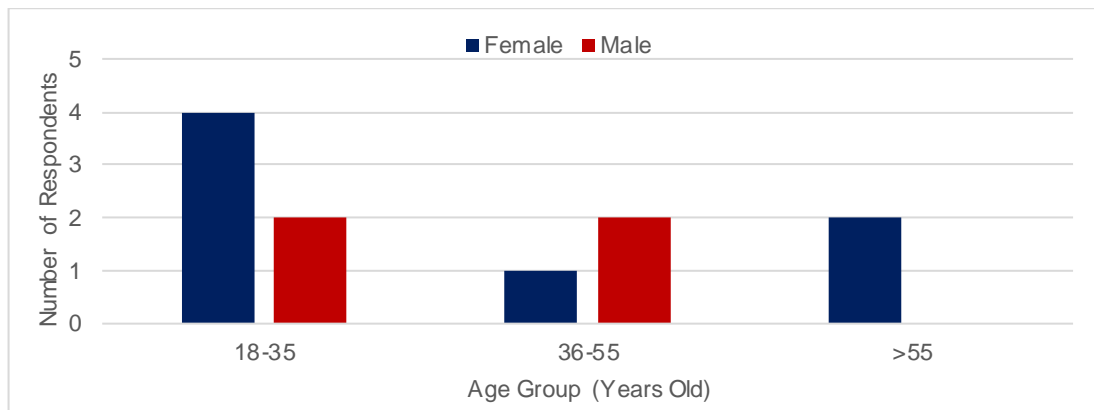
Note. Based on interviews with 11 guests staying at apartment hotels across WA.

Figure 4.9 shows that only two guests are from English-speaking countries: Australia and the United States of America. Meanwhile, the remaining guest respondents are from non-English speaking countries, such as Indonesia, the Philippines, China and Russia. The diversity in guests' cultural backgrounds allows the researcher to observe how guests from different cultural backgrounds perceive services as well as the differences in their needs, expectations, and interactions with the service providers.

Figure 4.9

Total of Guest Respondents by Cultural Background
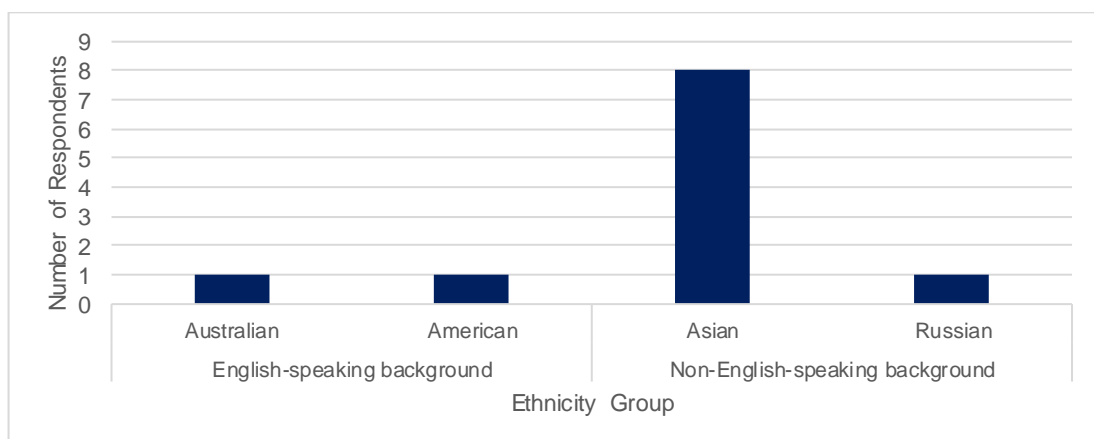
Note. Based on interviews with 11 guests staying at apartment hotels across WA.

The majority of guest respondents travel with their spouses or families. Additionally, the majority of them are seasoned travellers who have visited Australia regularly,

which contributes to their knowledge of Australia and their perspectives on the country. The guest respondents visited Australia for a variety of reasons, including business, family visits, vacations, and hospital visits. For instance, the business guest who stayed for more than a year has resulted in the relocation of his immediate family to Australia. Meanwhile, the parents have frequently visited their daughter to assist her in adjusting to university life in Australia during her first year of study. In another instance, a guest who stayed at the hotel as part of the management team's promotion and to evaluate the property's cleanliness and services, as reflected in the following quote:

> It was like a promotion from my manager to stay overnight with family or by myself, on weekends or weekdays. Yeah, I got a promotion. […] and to observe the feedback, you know, like, the cleanliness of rooms and services and how reception interaction with the guests, so it was like, research purposes as well. (Guest 4, NESB Business Guest, October 15, 2020)

4.3.4 Expert Respondents

The experts interviewed are academics with decades of research expertise in tourism and hospitality, as well as human resource management specialists in the hotel business, with the majority of them being British. Additionally, because some of the experts represent several hotel management chains, their perspectives might reflect their organisations' approach to managing workforce diversity. For instance, one of the professionals interviewed asserts that the global hotel chain he works for is a pioneer in fostering diversity and inclusion values through its well-established diversity management system. Meanwhile, another hotel group employee points out that she is unaware 'f any formal diversity management approach in her workplace and that workforce diversity exists to meet market demand.

4.4 The Interrelationship Between Migration and Tourism (Hospitality)

The interviews demonstrate the entwinement of migration and tourism (hospitality) in Western Australia. From the perspective of migration-led tourism, migrants generate tourist flows stem from hosting family and friends from their home countries or by travelling to their home countries and other tourism destinations. In relation to the 'visiting friends and relatives' (VFR) travel group, the findings from the interviews with the visitors reveal two distinct narratives. For instance, a long-stay business guest (who lives with his immediate family) hosts his family members who frequently visit Australia. Similarly, a guest respondent who has temporarily relocated to Australia for the purpose of studying generates monthly visits from her parents, as the student explains:

> *Like she tried to help me to transition since I'm living here. So, she often visits like this once a month and stays here. But I mostly was the one who dealt with the receptionist and the communication, communicating with them. (Guest 5, NESB VFR/Holiday Guest, October 19, 2020)*

On the other hand, from the perspective of tourism-led migration, several respondents state that they moved to Australia for career opportunities, notably in the tourism and hospitality industry. For example, while one migrant employee respondent first came to Australia to learn English, work possibilities and career opportunities in the hospitality sector drew him to permanently migrate to Australia. For instance, Management 5 states the following:

> *I came here on holiday when I was a ki', and I've got family and living here for the last 50 odd years, and we stayed with them. So, it was always a kid's dream for me to actually come and live here one day. So, when the opportunity came, then I decided to migrate to Australia. […] I moved across to remain in the hospitality industry. (Management 5, MESB Business Development Manager, October 14, 2020)*

4.5 The Motivation of the Migrant Workers to Work in the Accommodation Sector in Australia

The motivations of migrant employees to work in the hospitality sector in Australia, more specifically Western Australia, are summarised in Figure 4.10. Based on the interviews with management and front-desk staff, most respondents indicated that their first jobs in Australia were in the hospitality sector. For them, the primary reasons for working in the hospitality industry in Australia are the abundance of 'job opportunities', 'previous experience', 'welcoming and accessible industry', 'evolving and growing industry', 'long-term career prospects', and their 'people person' personality.

Figure 4.10

Common Themes among the Motivations to Work in the Hospitality Industry in Western Australia

Note. This figure shows the most frequent words of the respondents' motivations to work in the hospitality industry in Western Australia: own data elaboration, analysis, and illustration, with the aid of NVivo12 software.

As mentioned in Section 4.4, many of the respondents migrated to Australia due to job opportunities. The core themes in the context of 'job opportunities' include 'first job' and 'hospitality/ restaurant', outlined as follows:

> *My first job was in a restaurant; that friend gave me a job in his restaurant.*
> *[…] And then I started applying for jobs. That is when I find this job.*
> *(Employee 1, NESB Migrant Front-Desk Employee, September 14, 2020)*

The first job I got offered was hospitality, so then I had the experience that led me to stay in it and then I just got promoted. (Employee 8, MESB Non-Migrant Front-Desk Employee, September 29, 2020)

Prior experience is also a significant motivator for respondents to work in the hospitality sector in (Western) Australia, with the majority of migrant participants referring to prior hospitality experience in their home countries. Nonetheless, many respondents have remained in the hotel business due to the 'ease of work', 'familiarity,' capability, and 'fondness,' as one respondent describes:

I kept doing hospitality jobs because it was easy […] Because it's something I'm very familiar with because it's something I think I'm good at. […] So, when you move here, you want to play safe in the things that you already know because this your first job is important for you to gain experience. So, I wanted to do something that I kind of know how to do it. (Employee 1, NESB Migrant Front-Desk Employee, September 14, 2020)

The hospitality sector in Western Australia is seen as a welcoming and accessible industry, particularly for newcomers and people with little or no previous work experience. It has been described by interviewees that the hospitality sector provides chances for people from all backgrounds, even those who do not have formal qualifications, by providing them with the essential training to begin their careers in this profession, as one explained:

Very much hospitality is how we start the career here, they are welcoming you, and they give you like, even you don't have the basic anything or experience, they are willing for you to try and train you and in the field that you need to be like, as a receptionist. (Employee 4, NESB Migrant Front-Desk Employee, September 25, 2020)

Some respondents also believe that the hospitality industry is one that is constantly evolving and growing, which provides them with solid career prospects that drive them to continue working in this sector. These features enable the development of knowledge and allow for exchanges between guests and staff during their encounters. Additionally, despite being influenced by social, political, and other factors, the hotel /hospitality sector continues to be a fast-growing industry with a constant demand for labour. As a result, migrant respondents believe that the accommodation sector offers long-term employment opportunities. As Management 4 shows, while many

Australians use hospitality positions as a stepping stone before moving on to other sectors, non-English speaking background migrants see working in the hospitality sector as a long-term goal, as illustrated by the following statement:

I think some cultures, I think in Australia working in a hotel, Australians per se that as a job that you do until you find a real job. And it's not taken as a long-term goal or as a vocation they want to stay [in]. And I find that the overseas Europeans and Asians, that to them to work in a hotel, that is their choice to vocation, that's what they want to do. Right through, they're not looking for other things to do. And it's a little bit higher, highly regarded overseas, than there it is in Australia. So, I find that they're also much more professional in the way they manage things. Because to them, it's a real choice of employment. (Management 4, MESB Property Manager, October 8, 2020)

Finally, respondents' personality as a people-person is what encourages them to work in the hotel/accommodation sector, according to the interview findings. Additionally, the hotel industry is a cross-sectoral industry that serves as a melting pot for people from all walks of life, each with its own set of tales and life experiences. Thus, the sector is deemed to be a dynamic and attractive place to work for many people. The core themes in this topic include 'interaction' and 'willingness to serve', as quoted:

It's actually the communication or the meeting with the new people […] and then the knowing, like knowing many cultures and the many stories from them is it's a kind of like motivates me to "Oh, this is cool!" and motivate me to actually go into this career. (Management 2, NESB Front-Desk Manager, September 19, 2020)

I think I'm a people person, you know, I love to make contacts to people. Also, to serve them as guests, which is something is one of the essential things if you want to work in a hotel. You have to have that sense of willing to serve other people. (Employee 2, NESB Migrant Front-Desk Employee, September 18, 2020)

4.6 Front-Desk Workforce Cultural Diversity at Apartment Hotels across Western Australia

According to the interviews and observations, the targeted hotel-apartment chain has a culturally diverse staff, as Management 5 expressed that "the team here is a good mix of different cultural backgrounds. So, we've got German, Korean, Indian, Italian, Mauritian, New Zealand and also British" (Management 5, Business Development Manager, October 14, 2020). The Non-English speaking background employees account for at least 50% of front-desk staff, with many from Asia. Additionally, the native English-speaking staff is culturally varied, with members originating from Australia, the United Kingdom, South Africa, and New Zealand. Non-English speaking staff members fill not only entry-level positions but also some managerial positions.

All interviewees indicated that the cultural diversity of front-desk personnel provides the organisation with a competitive advantage. Management respondents, in particular, strongly believe that culturally diverse personnel will be useful in dealing with culturally diverse guests. In terms of guest service, the key themes found in the interviews regarding workforce cultural diversity are 'speaking guest's language' and 'understanding guest demands'. When dealing with culturally diverse visitors, the language barrier is one of the most significant obstacles in the tourism and hospitality industry. Even though English is widely spoken around the world, there will always be guests who have trouble speaking in English; the presence of multilingual personnel who can speak the guest's language provides an opportunity to overcome any language barrier. Furthermore, staff from various cultural backgrounds may better understand the needs and demands of their customers in relation to their cultural background. Finally, culturally diverse personnel may be able to create a more welcoming and familiar experience, resulting in a more conducive environment. Thus, the cultural diversity in the workplace might promote better service performance and guests' evaluation, as management respondents elaborate:

> *I see a great benefit in having a multicultural team. It's about when you're interacting with a guest. You know, they come from all parts of the world. And if we can provide a home away from home experience that encompasses their local language or someone that can understand their local culture. That makes the guests feel more at home, and I think it enriches the guest experience. (Management 3, MESB Front-Desk Manager, October 1, 2020)*

I think it kind of, for me it really helps with that being able to tailor service to the guests. That's the main thing is being able to have people that speak your language, look like you, understand your culture, or your religion is a huge thing in terms of being able to offer, like a welcoming environment to a lot of different people. And certainly, I think when you've got staff that are also, not necessarily culturally diverse or ethnically diverse, that they have diverse backgrounds, diverse age groups. All of that it means you've just got lots of different experiences and kind of understandings and, sort of, and points of view or feeding into that experience so that everybody can share things that will help someone else. (Management 8, Front-Office Manager, February 22, 2021)

According to interviewees, the presence of NESB staff at the front desk helps to promote the accommodation sector as a diverse institution. As the face of the hotel business, culturally diverse front-desk staff also exemplify Australia's multiculturalism. Additionally, the cultural diversity of the workforce demonstrates that the tourism and hospitality business is a welcoming and accessible industry for migrants, as Management 5 emphasises that "because we are showing that we are a company that is definitely accepting different people from different backgrounds" (Management 5, Business Development Manager, October 14, 2020).

This research indicates that because Australia is a melting pot of diverse cultures, the culturally diverse workplace also serves as a knowledge transmission platform by enabling employees from varied cultural backgrounds to learn and share their experiences, expertise, and understandings of other cultures. As a result, new ideas are generated that may enhance the organisations' operations and development. Interviewees suggest that effective diversity management of a culturally diverse workforce may help foster greater understanding and communication within the team. It may also help in building a unique, resilient, and strong team that becomes a critical asset for the organisation, as discussed as follows:

Our own culture that we brought into the reception; we create like a such a unique team. […] the culture and then the way they behave, that's the more important for us. And then yeah, and for me, it's really an advantage and like, for myself as well. I knew that someone came from another country, not Australia, I also learned so many things from them and it's good as well for us. It's so we knew that the diversity and then we knew that they have their own way to do it. So, for me, it's really an advantage.

[…] many receptions with different cultural backgrounds are really positive ways. So, we can actually add this and that in terms of the operational. (Management 2, NESB Front-Desk Manager, September 19, 2020)

Nonetheless, cultural diversity in the workforce poses challenges, notably in terms of misunderstandings caused by miscommunication. Many respondents stated that when they are unable to comprehend the speaker, a follow-up question or explanation is often sufficient to overcome the communication barrier, as indicated by Management 5 below'

There's not much of an issue that anyone from a different background also is fairly easily understood as for the team that we have here, luckily. So, there could be some thick accents and stuff. At the end of the day, if people don't understand, they just ask again to make sure that they got their information correctly. (Management 5, NESB Business Development Manager, October 14, 2020)

4.7 Front-Desk Service Quality of Apartment Hotels across Western Australia

This study focuses on the front-desk role in one of Australia's leading apartment-hotel chains, specifically in Western Australia. Based on interviews and self-observation as a member of the staff at one of the properties (see Chapter 3), the role of the front-desk employee in this accommodation business includes reception, reservation, concierge, all-rounder administration, customer service, and after-hours service (see Table 4.2). The front-desk staff's various roles also vary in the day-to-day interactions between front-desk staff and guests, as well as with other departments. According to interviews with front-desk employees who have worked in various types of tourism accommodations, front-desk employees at these apartment hotels are expected to deliver multitasking roles, as Employee 2 states: "In serviced apartments, it's a bit different because you have to be really multitasking" (Employee 2, NESB Migrant Front-Desk Employee, September 18, 2020). Conventional hotels, for example, have more specific roles and responsibilities for their personnel, especially those hotels with a larger workforce and market share. As a result, staff in the front-desk department in conventional hotels are only concerned with front-desk/receptionist tasks and are not concerned with concierge, administration, or finance-related tasks.

Table 4.2

The Level of Interaction and Communication of Each Type of Front-Desk Services at Apartment Hotels across WA

Front-desk services	Tasks	Level of Interaction/communication	
		Front-desk staff-guest	**Front-desk staff-management/other department**
Reception	Welcome/ greet guests	High	-
	Check-in/ check-out	High	Moderate
	Pick-up/transfer calls	High	High
	Address emails	Low	Low
	Bridge communication	High	High
Reservation	Assist/advise guests on room/travel choice	High	Moderate
	Make room reservations	High	Moderate
	Process payment	Moderate	Low
	Answer reservation queries	High	Moderate
	Provide other supports to the reservation	High	Moderate
Concierge	Assist in guests' travel plan	High	Moderate
	Assist in guests' queries	High	Moderate
Administration and finance	All-rounder administration	Moderate	Moderate
	PA to managers	-	High
	Bookkeeping	-	Low
	Invoice/account receivable	-	Moderate
	Cash-handling	Moderate	Low
Customer service	Handle complaint	High	High
	Receive and follow-up feedback	High	High
After-hour services	Housekeeping and maintenance	Moderate	Low
	Manager on duties	Moderate	Low
	Other services	Moderate	Low

Note. Own elaboration based on interviews and observations

Error! Reference source not found. summarises the variety of front desk personnel roles and responsibilities at a renowned serviced apartment chain in Western Australia, based on interviews with employees and management. The primary responsibilities of front-desk employees interviewed as receptionists include greeting and assisting guests during the check-in and check-out process, picking up and transferring calls, responding to email inquiries, and bridging communication between guests and management, as well as between departments. The check-in and check-out processes are critical in this function since they represent the first and last encounters between employees and guests. The check-in process is as follows: (1)

greeting guests; (2) collecting guest information (ID, phone number, email address, and other account information); (3) collecting payment information; (4) advising the guest about the hotel's facilities and room amenities; and (5) providing the room's key (including explaining amenities and facilities). Meanwhile, the check-out process entails finalising payment, inspecting the room following their stay, soliciting feedback about guests' stay, and sending off the guest. During the COVID-19 pandemic, front-desk staff at the targeted apartment hotels have additional responsibilities, notably in dealing with self-isolation clients, which includes informing them about the quarantine regulations and meeting their needs while adhering to the COVID-19 pandemic safety protocol. This position emphasises the critical nature of communication skills for front-desk staff. The reception tasks highlight the front-desk personnel's critical function as communicators, as Employee 1 describes:

> *I'm communicating with housekeeping, communicating with the manager, communicating with supervisors, and giving solutions to guests, placing orders now a lot. And it's more likely; you're the main communication point between guests and the other areas of the hotel. (Employee 1, NESB Migrant Front-Desk Employee, September 14, 2020)*

As for the reservation role, in addition to the reservation job, the front-desk staff at these apartment hotels must handle all booking enquiries received via walk-ins, phone calls, emails, and other booking channels. Additionally, the front-desk clerk serves as a concierge, assisting guests with a variety of chores, including food and beverage reservations, travel guides and arrangements, and even shopping queries. Additionally, because administration and finance workers are not present, the front-desk staff is responsible for administrative and finance/accounting tasks such as payment processing, cash handling, bookkeeping, invoicing, and accounts receivable. The front-desk employee's other responsibility in these properties is to provide customer service, mainly in response to guest feedback and complaints. As a result, it is critical that front-desk workers possess the ability and patience necessary to comprehend and meet customers' requests, as well as to resolve their complaints. Finally, they are responsible for after-hours services, which include housekeeping and maintenance duties, as mentioned below:

So, after 5 pm, which is actually the busiest time in service apartments [...], most of the guests, they all are workers [...], and they all come back to the hotel at 5 pm, right? Which is when the maintenance is already gone and the housekeeping is already gone. Then you have to like; you have to be hands-on [...] So, if the guest check-in into a room with the wrong bedding configurations, then you have to go up to the room and change the beds, things like that. If there's a problem with the aircon, you have to go and try to fix it. [...] And also you have to act like a hotel manager because there's no manager on site after 9 pm. (Employee 2, NESB Migrant Front-Desk Employee, September 18, 2020)

Based on interviews with guests, employees, and management of the case study object, Figure 4.11 summarises the essential attributes of maintaining good front-desk service. From the management perspective, communication, attitude and personality, willingness to learn, understanding the guests' needs, good customer service, sound knowledge of the surrounding environments and local events/activities and up-to-date news, being a good listener, and professionalism are the essential attributes in maintaining a high-quality front-desk service. From the employees' perspectives, an outstanding front-desk staff member must be able to communicate and listen well, have positive attitudes and dispositions, understand the needs of customers, provide excellent customer service, have local knowledge, enjoy interacting with people, and be willing to help and serve customers. Meanwhile, guests' feedback emphasises clear communication, a positive attitude and personality (welcoming and friendly), an understanding of guests' needs, a thorough knowledge of the surrounding environments and local events/activities, responsiveness, and professionalism. In conclusion, the respondents agreed that communication, attitude and personality, understanding of visitors' demands, and local expertise are all important in front-desk services. Experts back up this claim, emphasising communication abilities, attitude and charisma, and local expertise.

Figure 4.11

Common Themes among the Essential Attributes to Maintain Front-Desk Service Quality
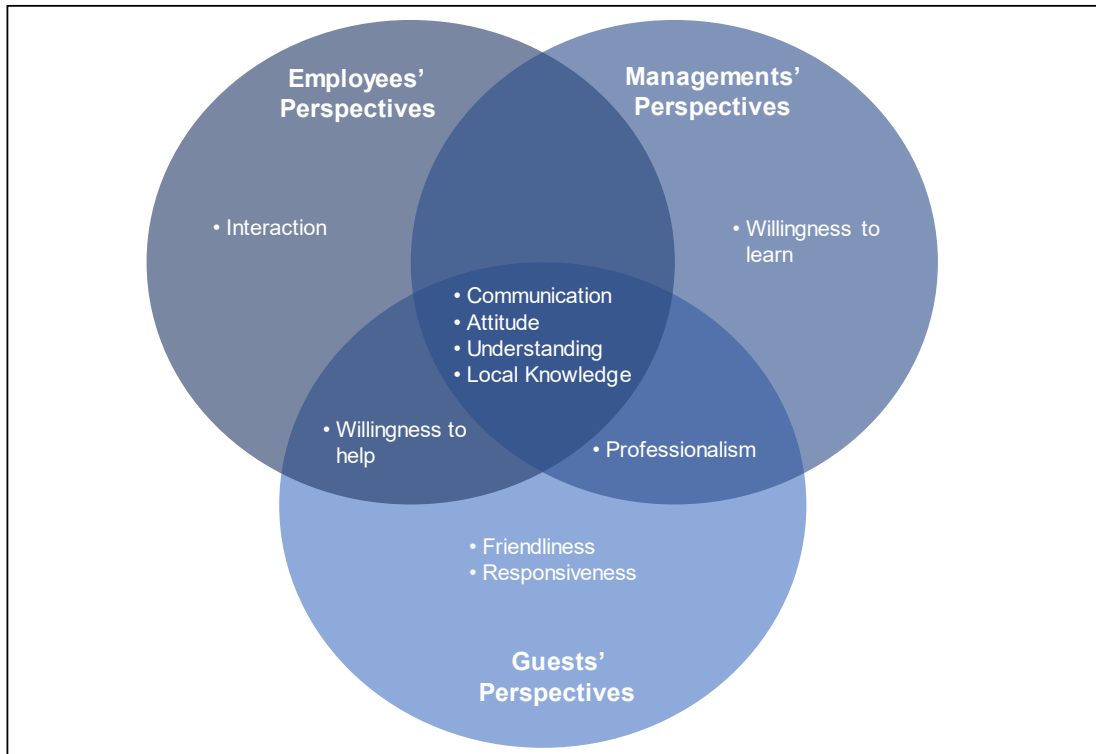
Based on the interview findings, the core themes circling communication are 'English fluency', 'understanding', 'listening', and 'confident speak'. As the first point of contact for many sorts of communication in the accommodation business, the front-office staff must be fluent in speaking, listening, reading and writing in English. Management 1 states that front-desk personnel must be "articulate", "clear", "confident", and "understanding" to give and comprehend information effectively (Management, September 1, 2020). Additionally, front-desk workers must grasp customers' needs through active listening in order to provide appropriate service. As a result, communication is the major tool for improving knowledge transfer, interaction, and relationship building between front-desk personnel and visitors, as well as between front-desk employees and management or other departments. An expert interviewee confirmed the critical nature of communication in providing front-desk services as follows:

> *All forms of communication, not only verbal communication, but also what*
> *you might call nonverbal communication; to smile, and ability to listen,*

ability to engage and find out and talk to your customers. You're not only processing that, but you are also building a relationship on behalf of your company with them, especially that check-in. You're the first person that guest has come into contact with from the company, maybe from the whole society […]. This is your first interaction in Australia. So, it's more than just about doing your job, it's about your whole foot, how you communicate, the voice you use, the smiles you give, your willingness to listen to them, all that is very important. Absolutely. (Expert 1, Academic, May 4, 2021)

According to respondents, the attitudes and personalities of front-desk staff also contribute to the perceived quality of front-desk services. According to interviewees, to provide high-quality front-desk services, it is critical to possess the following personality traits: friendliness, kindness, outgoing/social personality, and patience. The friendliness and warmth of the front-desk staff are critical in making guests feel at ease and welcomed, which is one of the primary goals of accommodation service. Additionally, being courteous and pleasant is an essential component of professionalism for front-desk personnel. Moreover, the front-desk staff must possess an excess of patience due to the nature of the job, which requires regular interaction with people of diverse backgrounds and their varying demands, requirements, and feedback. Finally, being a 'people-person' who is outgoing, social, and enjoys interacting with and connecting with others is critical for providing high-quality front-desk services. This conclusion is supported by Expert 3, a human resource management expert with decades of experience in the hospitality industry, who states:

I used to say "well, I can employ personality and train skills". One cannot employ a skilled and trained personality because personality cannot be trained. And so, I look for people in an employment situation that may have no intentions to have a career, have no intentions to be finding a career path, may have no study behind them; but they have personality, they can interpret what somebody is saying, what they're doing, they have a good understanding of the culture of the people arriving, being able to sense and read that guest. […] This comes into recruitment personality over skill. […] but the big one is people who can interpret and have personality, communicate, and have the right do-attitude. (Expert 3, Human Resource Professional, May 13, 2021)

As previously indicated, the majority of respondents emphasised the critical nature of understanding guests' needs and expectations in order to provide adequate front-desk services and meet guests' expectations, as explained in the following quotes:

> *Not only just listening but understanding what they need. If so we can deliver the best service that we can, and if we're lucky, well we have to we can exceed their expectation. (Management 2, NESB Front-Desk Manager, September 19, 2020)*

> *If a guest has any special needs, we do try to get them, and we always try to go over and beyond to make sure our guests are happy. And they leave, when they leave from here, they do leave as nice feedback as we look up to them. (Employee 5, NESB Front-Desk Employee, September 29, 2020)*

According to respondents, with the front-desk role at the studied accommodation businesses also covering the 'information centre' and 'concierge' functions, the staff should have sound knowledge of the surrounding places (cafés/restaurants, shops, clinics, and even police station), tourism hotspots, transportation choices, as well as events and activities. On top of that, in dealing with diverse guests, front-desk staff also need a general knowledge of different needs based on guests' backgrounds. In addition, to create opportunities for more staff-guest interaction, front-desk staff are encouraged to have up-to-date knowledge about the news worldwide. It is also pivotal for the front-desk employees to know local policy and regulations, particularly concerning the COVID-19 restrictions that keep changing. Finally, Expert 1 emphasised the need for cultural comprehension, emphasising the importance of "reflecting or representing the destination's culture" (Expert 1, Academician, May 4, 2021).

4.8 The Influences of Workforce Cultural Diversity on Front-Desk Service Quality in the Accommodation Sector in Western Australia

This section addresses the study's main objective, which is to determine which front-desk service quality features in the Western Australian accommodation sector are influenced by the cultural diversity of frontline NESB migrant workers. According to the interviews (see Figure 4.12), respondents acknowledged that non-English speaking background (NESB) migrant employees' attitudes, personalities, communication skills, and knowledge may be influenced by their cultural origins. In

relation to communication ability, respondents argued how the cultural background of NESB front-desk personnel may contribute to linguistic hurdles, such as limited English proficiency and a 'thick' accent. Meanwhile, the cultural background of NESB front-desk staff undoubtedly influences their personalities and attitudes, in particular towards friendliness, warmth, and a welcoming attitude. Finally, NESB front-desk personnel are familiar with and understand their home country's culture. Additionally, the level of their local cultural knowledge may influence how they represent the host society and destination to guests. Subsections 4.8.1 to **Error! Reference source not found.** present the findings for each of the attributes in detail.

There are some key features in the context of attitude and personalities mentioned by management respondents that are worth further exploration. To begin with, the findings from the current study suggest that NESB's cultural background, particularly that of Asian origins, has an impact on the approach of staff to seniority and hierarchy. In some of these cultures, younger people are expected to give extensive respect to more senior people. As a result, this cultural trait could affect how a NESB front-desk staff member treats more senior visitors, especially when dealing with people from a similar cultural background. Besides that, the work ethic of NESB front-desk employees, according to some of the management interviewed, may be influenced by their cultural background. Management claimed that, based on their years of experience in the field, NESB employees are more eager to work harder and longer hours, learn new things and accept a variety of duties than their local counterparts. They explained that this may primarily be due to the traditions of some countries, which have more rigid and competitive labour markets, and different work ethics, in comparison to the more laid-back Australian work culture, which values work-life balance. Furthermore, interviewed management stated that while many Australians consider employment in the hospitality sector as a 'side hustle' while they are pursuing other career ambitions, migrants view work in the hospitality sector as a career path, potentially motivating them to work harder.

In contrast to respondents' beliefs that front-desk staff attitudes and personalities are influenced by cultural background, some experts argued that someone's attitude and personality are more likely to be influenced by an individual trait than by their cultural background; there are warm and welcoming people in every culture. They did concur, however, that the front-desk staff's communication abilities and cultural knowledge may be influenced by their cultural background, particularly if they are non-native speakers, as Expert 1 explains:

I think it's very difficult to generalise, and I prefer to look at each person as an individual. When people talk about Thai people being very welcoming and smiling and things like that, and from my own experience of being in Thailand is yes, people do smile, but there also are people who can be grumpy and can give bad service. [...] I think everybody from anywhere in the world can give good service, that somebody from anywhere in the world also can give bad service. So, I think we need to be careful about stereotyping or generalising. (Expert 1, Academic, May 4, 2021)

Figure 4.12

The Essential Attributes of Front-Desk Service Quality Influenced by the Non-English speaking Background Workforce Cultural Diversity
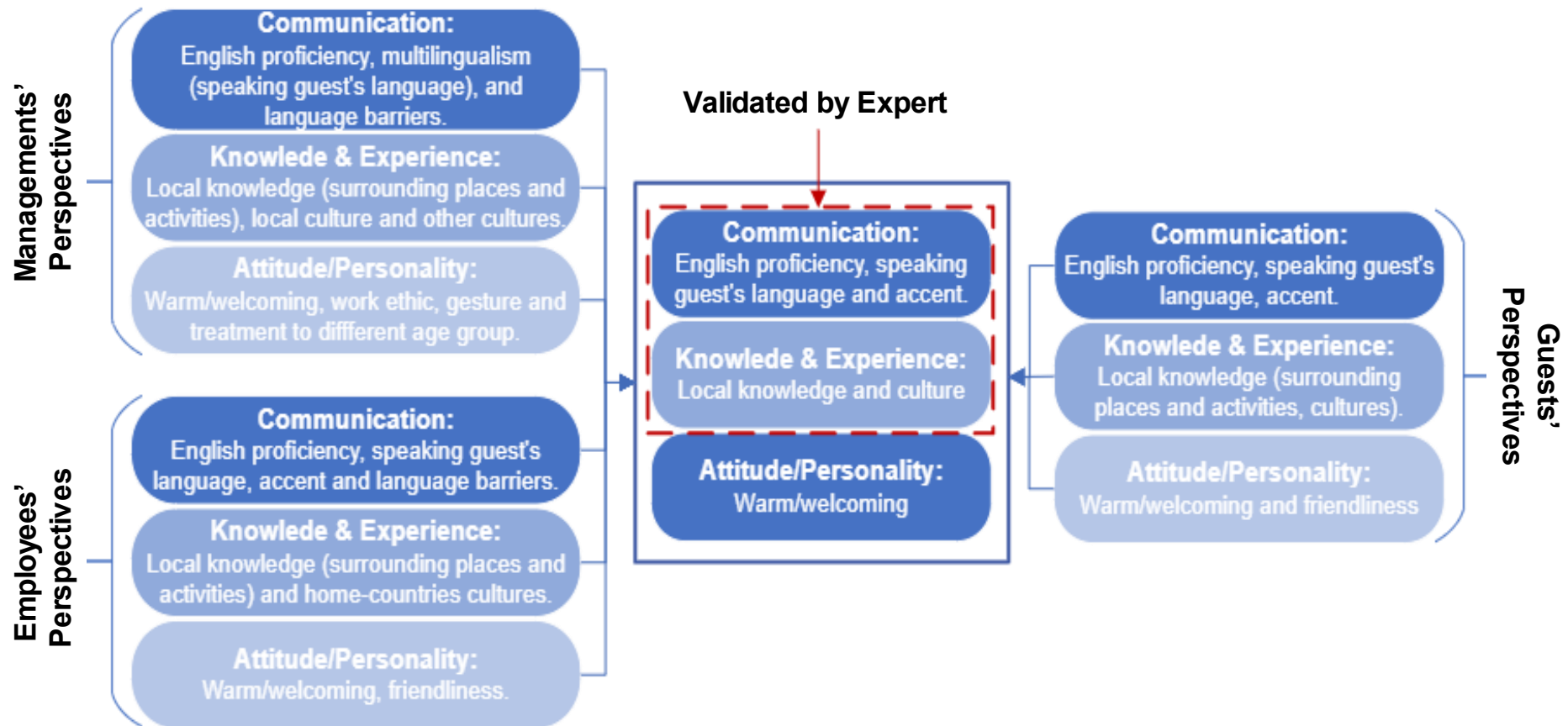
4.8.1 The Influences of Front-Desk Workers' Cultural Diversity on Communication Quality

Based on the results of this qualitative research, the key attributes of the front-desk staff's communication skills that might be influenced by NESB workforce cultural diversity are 'English proficiency', 'understanding', and 'accent', which are further detailed in Subsections 4.8.1.1 to 4.8.1.4. First, from the standpoint of management, 'English fluency', 'understanding', and 'multilingualism' are the front-desk communication attributes impacted by cultural background. One of the management respondents emphasised the language barrier she experienced as a NESB migrant worker:

> *Of course, it's the language barrier. 'o, that's the first challenge. I mean, like, I knew that we speak English every day. But in terms of that, some of the words. But in the beginning, when I moved to Australia it was slightly different. So I learned so much and I learned a lot during that time. My English'even it's not even the best now. So language barrier is my first challenge. And secondly, not only on the conversation or the speaking but also the grammar wise. At the moment, with my job title, I am actually required to not only communicate with our guests but also with our management in writing. And for 'e, that's this little bit of a challenge as well. (Management 2, Front-Desk Manager, September 19, 2020)*

Second, some migrant front-desk employee respondents suggested that the cultural background of the NESB front-desk workers may influence their 'English proficiency', 'understanding', 'multilingualism', 'accent', and 'adaptation to the local communication style', as stated in the following:

> *The first thing is obviously the language. Even when I was working in Mexico, I was working for tourists, and people from other backgrounds. So they were American, basically, American, Canadian, and English, I mean like British people; the accent is thick. The first challenge for me was the Australian accent. […]. So, that was one challenge. Second, not in person, but by the phone, so they spelled differently, even when the guests spelled their name, they don't spell it as I would normally get an American to spell it and that was a big challenge because I got to learn how to spell things and how to get them to spell, how to understand what*

they were trying to say. So the accent is my biggest challenge, by default. (Migrant 1, NESB Migrant Front-Desk Employee, September 19, 2020)

Well, sometimes I feel that the guests have trouble understanding me. Like, it doesn't happen often. But, I know that sometimes, especially maybe the older generation, they be like 'What?' And I have to repeat myself because they have trouble understanding my accent. (Migrant 6, NESB Migrant Front-Desk Employee, February 27, 2021)

Finally, guest respondents agreed that the cultural background of NESB front-desk staff may influence 'English competence', 'understanding', 'accent', and 'similar background communication'. One of the guest responses, for example, emphasised accent and comprehension, as one guest explains:

I think for me, especially as someone who was quite new to the country, it was easier to understand the non-Australian one [staff members]. Maybe because the Australian accent is difficult, especially when we are used to languages that don't really have much: Indonesian doesn't have like differences in accents. In the end, maybe because for non-Australians, they kind of understand, or maybe for people who, whose second language is English, you can understand like towards some people who are not fluent in English. So, I think they have like a broad idea of what you're asking for. (Guest 5, NESB VFR/Holiday Guest, October 19, 2020).

In partially addressing the second objective of this qualitative research (see Chapter 1), the findings obtained from the interviews and the observation indicate the interrelationship between the culturally influenced communication attributes and front-desk service quality, as summarised in Figure 4.13. Generally, English proficiency, mutual understanding, similar background interaction, and the ability to speak more than one language improve communication quality between front-desk personnel and guests, among front-desk team members, as well as between employees and management. On the other hand, strong accents and 'slang' language are considered language barriers, which have a negative impact on the quality of front-desk communication.

Figure 4.13

The Relationship Between the Communication Attributes and Front-Desk Communication Quality
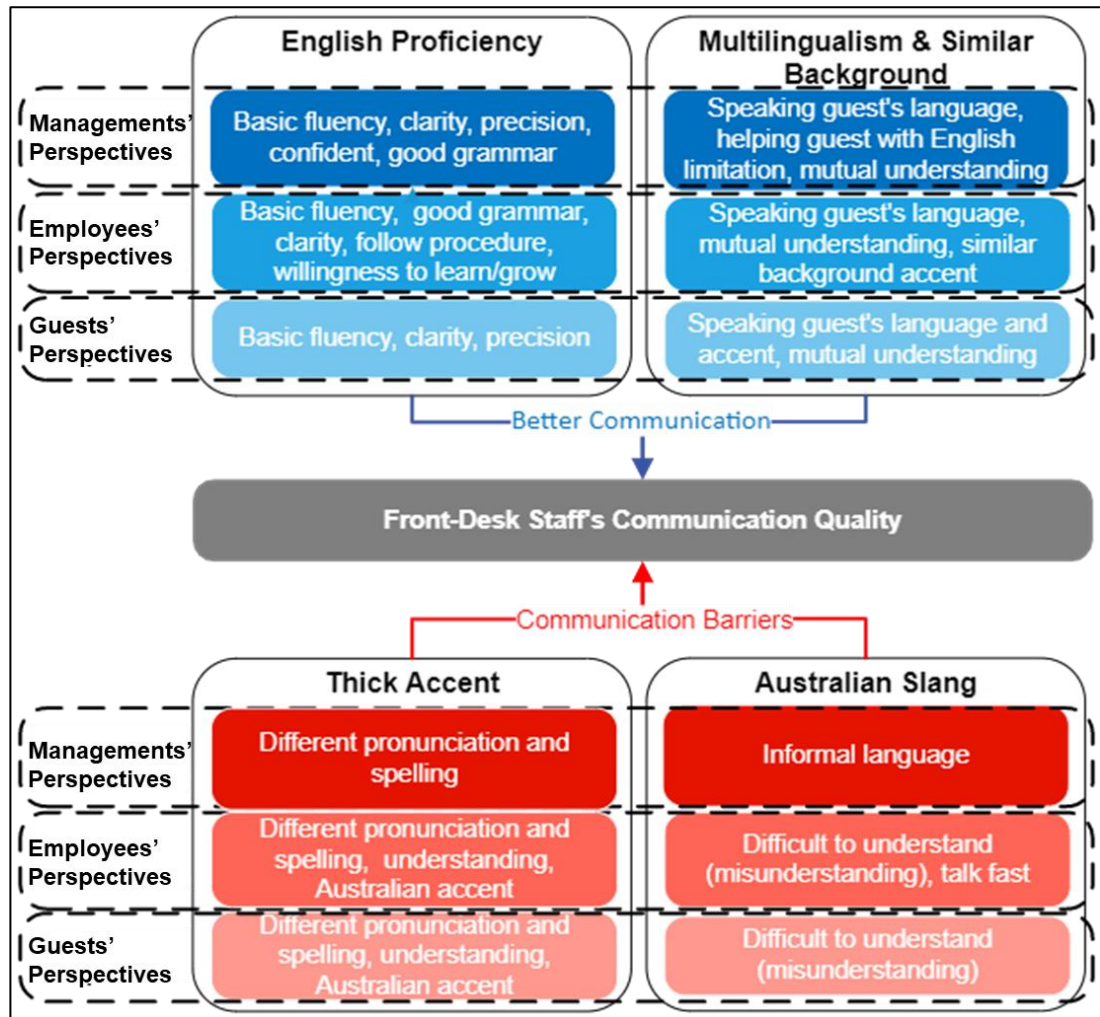
Note. Based on the interviews (management, employees and guests) and self-observation: own data elaboration, analysis, and illustration.

4.8.1.1 English Proficiency

According to the interviews, the primary communication attribute impacted by the cultural background of front-desk personnel is English proficiency. The findings from this study indicate that NESB front-desk staff's English proficiency is critical for providing front-desk services. While the key themes in the English proficiency topic identified by employees and management include 'basic fluency', 'clarity', 'grammar', 'following procedure', and 'continuous learning', guest respondents agreed on 'basic fluency', 'clarity', and 'precision'. As the national language of Australia and a language spoken worldwide, NESB front-desk employees must be fluent in English in order to communicate effectively and connect with guests, as Management 2 emphasises "It will be better if you have like a really well-fluent English, of course. So, when the guest is asking what they need or what they actually want, you do not translate that in a different way" (Management 2, Front-Desk Manager, September 19, 2020). According to the majority of NESB migrant employee respondents, a basic level of English fluency is sufficient to perform well in front-desk jobs, as one employee indicated:

> *It's important, but I know that like I have worked with some girls that don't have fluent English, but I know that they have some issues with the language and face them and it should work as well. So I mean, as long as you have some like level of English that you can communicate well enough. […] But, I do notice that sometimes I have a guest asking for something and I don't know what it means, like some specific words. […] But it's always easy enough to like, just look it up or ask someone if you're not sure. So, I think you are still able to do the job well even if you don't have that perfect English. (Employee 1, NESB Migrant Front-Desk Employee, February 27, 2021)*

Additionally, expert interviews corroborated this finding, noting that the basic skill level is sufficient due to the repetitive nature of the front-desk job, the flexibility to learn on the job, and the availability of training and protocols, as exemplified in the quote further below. Management and employee interviewees argued that front-desk personnel must adhere to certain standards and protocols, ranging from how to greet guests to how to manage complaints. Moreover, despite the 'live' nature of staff-guest interaction, there is room to de-escalate any communication barrier by "asking questions/confirmations" (Employee 1, NESB Front-Desk Employee, September 14, 2020).

I would say it's, you know, 99.5% of the time, basic command of the language is absolutely fine. Because the job is routine in the sense that we know what most customers want, they want checking in, they want to check out, the one showing where the restaurant is, and all that. So a basic understanding and ability to speak would be absolutely fine. […] But, there are needs to be if language, if someone isn't confident in their language, then they need to be scheduled to be shifted with somebody who is. And so if there's a problem, someone else is there to help. And then that's all part of people being able to learn in the workplace and getting more used to dealing with things. But often, language is a confidence thing. And some people whose language is not that great, if they're confident, it's fine. […] But you do need a basic command. But most of its routine, you know, it's people asking the same questions. (Expert 4, Academic, June 2, 2021)

To deliver accurate and timely information and to be understood, it is critical for front-desk personnel to communicate clearly and precisely, despite their commonly occurring limited English fluency. The speaker's clarity is even more important during a phone conversation when there is no body language involved. Additionally, interviewees hold that NESB front-desk workers must be good listeners in order to comprehend visitors' needs, demands, and other critical information, such as personal information and payment details. Additionally, effective responses to email enquiries or reporting obligations require appropriate formal writing abilities and good grammar. The NESB front-desk employees added that even with years of expertise, some individuals still struggle with formal written communication. One management brought up several of these points as follows:

So, you have to be very clear with your speaking so that guests won't get wrong information. And also you're, mostly with the receptionist, we also have to take the incoming calls. So you have to speak with people over the phone, right? So you have to be again very clear and precise in giving the information. And then you also attend emails, you have to reply to all these in email inquiries. So, you also have to know how to write in good English in proper English because when you work in hotels, you are representing the company. So, you have to know how to do correspondence in a formal language. (Management 2, Front-Desk Manager, September 19, 2020)

4.8.1.2 Accent

According to the interviews, more than 80% of front-desk employees and guests believed that the accent is one of the most significant barriers to achieving good quality of communication. The key themes around accent based on guest and employee interviews focus on 'differences in pronunciation and spelling', 'importance of mutual understanding', 'Australian accent', and 'similar background accent'. In comparison, the results of management interviews, with a majority of native English speakers, indicated that accent has little to no effect on the quality of communication. 'Different pronunciation and spelling' are the primary themes that emerged from the management interviews. Thus, respondents commonly acknowledged that the 'difference in pronunciation and spelling' is the major contributor to why the accent is perceived as a communication barrier.

Each cultural background has its own communication style, gestures, pronunciation, spelling, and usage and meaning of certain words, all of which affect the quality of cross-cultural communication (Javier et al., 2020). For instance, the significant differences in American, British, and Australian accents may result in communication barriers due to differences in spelling and pronunciation, with Employee 1 stating that "they spelled differently, even when the guests spelling their name, they don't spell it as I would normally get an American to spell it and that was a big challenge. So, the accent is my biggest challenge, by default" (Employee 1, NESB Front-Desk Employee, September 14, 2020). Several expert interviews corroborate this finding, as one expert explains:

> If someone's first language isn't English, and they're speaking English, as a native English speaker, you can usually tell where they learned their language, because they and they will either have a British accent or they'll have an American accent, and use those terms exactly, as you say. And then what's interesting, because it's Australia is kind of neither, you know, so if you've, if you've learned, if you've learned English in Australia, then you've got a whole different set of vocabulary. (Expert 4, Academician, June 2, 2021)

In addition, according to the interviews, a 'thick' or heavy accent makes communication more difficult, and even more so in cross-cultural interactions involving non-English speakers with limited English vocabulary. Many employee

respondents also raise issues about how the accent-related communication barrier could be exacerbated when dealing with older customers, as is explained below:

> *I know that sometimes, especially maybe the older generation, they be like 'What?' And I have to repeat myself because they have trouble understanding my accent. But yeah, it doesn't happen a lot. I just noticed that a few times it happened. Like, yeah, people basically just have trouble understanding me sometimes, but I do try to explain better than or I talk more clearly. Other than that, there's not many like challenges just relating to me being from Germany itself. (Employee 6, NESB Migrant Employee, February 27, 2021)*

Mutual understanding is essential for maintaining successful communication and interaction. While the 'accent' may present a challenge/barrier in cross-cultural communication, there is also a level of acceptance of this issue among people from different cultural backgrounds. We learned from the interviews and observations that communication barriers can be reduced by reconfirming both parties' understanding or by asking for clarification. For example, Guest 6 stated that she does not mind other people's accents as long as she has the opportunity to ask questions when things are difficult to understand (Guest 6, NESB Guest, October 19, 2020). Additionally, interview findings indicate that the communication issue and misunderstandings caused by an accent can be de-escalated by the presence of cultural background similarities between the guest and staff. According to the interviews with NESB guests, despite not being from the same country, the NESB people have a mutual understanding of each other's accents and communication styles, including communication challenges. For example, Guest 7 (NESB Business Guest, February 15, 2021) expressed his preference for speaking with a receptionist with a similar background so they can understand each other's accents and communicate effectively.

While accents may pose a challenge in cross-cultural communication, experts believe they do not inherently impair communication quality. Indeed, as a cultural identity, accent diversity reflects a culturally diverse society; it can add depth to conversations and provide an opportunity to learn about other cultures. Nonetheless, an expert argued that the impact of accent on cross-cultural communication is determined by the receiver's perception of the foreign accent and their openness to other cultures. On the one hand, when the communicator is receptive to diversity, a foreign accent can be perceived positively. On the other hand, regardless of how fluent the NESB

staff's English is, if the guest is close-minded and unreceptive to cultural diversity, a foreign accent of the NESB staff may be perceived negatively and may consequently negatively impact communication quality, as Expert 2 indicates:

I don't think accent would impact. Again, I think if anything, it's probably a positive thing where, you know, it gives thing people like to engage with individuals with different accents, it makes people interesting, it's different. It's giving you a, you know, there's a novelty around that. I guess, it depends on the receiver of that accent as well, though, and their attitude and openness to diversity. So, you know, certainly, there will be individuals who might be, you know, quite discriminatory, maybe in nature or less open to difference and less open to having that diversity in it, perhaps in their workplace or as a customer or kind of a willingness to be acceptance of an accent that might be slightly more difficult to, to hear. […] Look, again, I think overall, from the angle of that diversity in the workplace, I think again, it brings a richness in a diversity which can make a workplace more interesting and novel to work in. (Expert 2, Academic, May 6, 2021)

4.8.1.3 Australian 'Slang'

This section builds on the previous subsection on accent, observing how the Australian communication style, particularly slang, affects the quality of front-desk communication. Australian slang is a colloquial language that evolved within Australia and serves as an extension of the Australian accent. The key theme emerging from the triangulation of findings from management, employee, and guest interviews is "difficult to understand". The majority of respondents agree that the presence of slang language in front-desk communication degrades communication quality, particularly for NESB staff and guests who are new to Australia. According to many, the difficulty in understanding Australian slang is primarily due to the presence of a strong accent, the variety of words they use, as well as the tone and speed of their speech, as is explained below:

Language barrier. Yeah. That's very much for me. And I guess, in Australia, they use this slang language, which is quite hard. In the beginning, I could not understand what they're talking about, what the meaning of the slang language and sometimes how they speak is really

fast. […] It's just part of the conversation, I guess for them, but for us not really. (Employee 1, NESB Front-Desk Employee, September 25, 2020)

Australian, you know, especially from like Outback, I can't understand because the language is that: first of all, they've got their own accent, they actually cutting like half of words. (Guest 4, NESB Guest, October 15, 2020)

Based on the results of the interviews, the managements agree that Australian slang could lead to misunderstandings, especially when communicating with non-Australians. As a result, they recommended that Australian slang be avoided in formal settings when dealing with guests. In some cases, they had seen NESB staff who were new to Australia struggle to properly grasp the guests' queries due to the presence of Australian slang, as is explained below:

Australian slang is horrendous. Australians have butchered the English language, but it is a challenge because we take for granted that the person that we're speaking to knows exactly what it is we're saying, and I have found through my own learnings that if somebody is of non, is where English isn't their native, their first language, they may not feel confident enough to ask me. […] Personally, I try to remove it where possible. But then again, it's up to the individual when they're speaking with a guest if the guest is using slang, yeah. They need to be able to quiz the guest on what it is they're actually asking. (Management 3, MESB Front-Desk Manager, October 1, 2020)

Similar to the accent issue, Australian slang may be a communication barrier, especially if the communicators are limited in their ability to speak and understand English. Experts, on the other hand, argued that Australian slang reflects the identity of the Australian language and culture. As a result, learning slang may facilitate migrants' learning of local culture, allowing them to better integrate into local society and improve communication and interaction with Australian visitors and colleagues. Finally, Expert 3 contends that the "Australian accent can seem almost like a lack of care, but an actual fact, it is a heck of a lot of care, they're just the nature" (Expert 3, Hospitality HR Professional, May 13, 2021).

4.8.1.4 The Influences of NESB Staff's Multilingualism on Front-Desk Services

The majority of respondents agree that one of the primary benefits of employing NESB front-desk personnel is having multilingual staff who are fluent in English and their native language(s). The NESB staff's ability to communicate in other languages may prove advantageous when dealing with NESB guests from similar backgrounds, as it enables them to communicate in the guests' language and better understand their needs. As a result, a greater level of communication and interaction between staff and guests is possible, as well as the provision of high-quality services. The key themes that emerged from the interviews were 'assisting guests', 'speaking the guest's language', and 'improving understanding'. In conclusion, respondents agree that the presence of NESB front-desk staff aids in better understanding and communicating with the NESB guests, particularly those with limited English proficiency, as quoted:

> *So, I had Brazilian guests as well, it is nice because you can speak in your language. We talk in Portuguese when there are some Brazilian guests. And some of them, because not all of Brazilians speaking English. English is not mandatory over there. So, most of them do not speak or don't understand. So, that was a good thing about me speaking Portuguese, because it could help them, you know, taking up something because they couldn't speak English. […] you have more opportunities to communicate with someone that doesn't speak English and also doesn't have that relevant information. (Employee 3, NESB Migrant Front-Desk Employee, September 23, 2020)*

On the other hand, while the presence of multilingual front-desk workers is viewed as a competitive advantage for the sector, a minority of respondents argue that their role is less critical now that English is widely spoken. Additionally, the advancement of translation equipment and technology has gradually reduced the need for multilingual staff, as is further explained below:

> *Sometimes they're not speaking English at all, and they don't read, and they don't write English. So, but now we have Google and all these steps and they have their phone that is talking to us. So they speak on the phone and the phone talking to us. Technologies make everything easy. (Employee 4, NESB Migrant Front-Desk Employee, September 25, 2020)*

There was a time when people working in hospitality needed to have a second language. And it was seen as an attractive trait. It still is for me, but it's not something that's seen as being so necessary now because English is so wide spoken. (Management 3, MESB Property Manager, October 1, 2020)

Nonetheless, the initial findings of this qualitative research indicate that multilingualism among staff members as a result of workforce cultural diversity has a positive effect on the quality of accommodation front-desk service. This finding is also supported by the observation that recognises the value of multilingual staff, particularly in the hospitality industry, which deals with customers from diverse backgrounds and with varying levels of English proficiency. The larger the NESB market, the greater the demand for multilingual NESB staff. The expert interviews reaffirm the critical role of multilingual staff in enhancing the organisation's competitive advantage in response to the growing NESB market, as detailed in the following quote:

When you think of tourists, for example, that come here to Australia, many of them and to an increasing degree are coming from Asian backgrounds, for example, and China, Indonesia, and so on. So, I think absolutely having workers that, as you say, at the front desk, that can communicate with guests that may be coming from that background and struggling with the English language, having people that have different language capabilities and skills that can absolutely add value to your business and support the service that is being delivered. (Expert 2, Academician, May 6, 2021)

4.8.2   Similar Cultural Background Interaction

According to the content analysis, similar cultural background interaction is a key theme that emerged when exploring the relationship between workforce cultural diversity and accommodation service quality. This section summarises the role of NESB front-desk employees in encounters with guests from similar cultural backgrounds, not just those from the same country, but also those from similar broader cultural groups. From both an employee and management perspective, the NESB front-desk staff's presence is critical for similar cultural background interaction. From a supply perspective, the key aspects of similar cultural background interactions

between NESB front-desk employees and guests are 'speaking the same language', 'understanding', 'familiarity', 'welcoming', and 'comfortability'. From a demand perspective, guests feel more understood because NESB front-desk employees, particularly those from similar backgrounds, speak the same language, understand their needs, and appear more friendly and kind.

This section is consistent with previous discussions on multilingualism (see Subsection 4.8.1.4), in which respondents indicated that the critical role of multilingual staff is related to their ability to communicate in the guest language and interact with guests of similar cultural backgrounds. Thus, the overarching theme of the similar background front-desk staff-guest interactions is 'speaking the same language'. By communicating in the same language, both parties can develop mutual understanding and engage in more frequent and meaningful interactions. For NESB guests, particularly those with limited English proficiency, interactions with front-desk staff from similar backgrounds who speak the same language enable them to obtain additional information and enrich their experience, as pointed out:

> *I stayed in one of the hotels; then the receptionist was Indonesian. When with her, of course, she would've just spoken in Indonesian […] because we also had more interactions if it was with Indonesian. So, for example, if we have certain needs, like where the halal places to eat around the area, we asked the receptionist. If the receptionist wasn't Indonesian, would hesitate to ask. For example, if coincidentally the receptionist is Indonesian, asking questions like the coffee shop around the area, anything interesting around, how to travel with bus all-around. Then, when we met that Indonesian, our room was also upgraded. (Guest 6, NESB Guest, September 19, 2020)*

Additionally, similar background interactions, which include but are not limited to similar country interactions, are capable of fostering a more conducive environment as a result of mutual understanding. By communicating in the same language, NESB employees are able to exchange pertinent information and better accommodate guests' needs, resulting in the provision of high-quality services. On the other hand, from the guests' perspective, they are able to communicate their needs and comprehend the information presented to them, resulting in a more positive experience and a sense of security, as explained by two of the respondents below:

When people come in from Asia or from a different country or when they could not speak English, I always help them you know to understand. Because when you come for the first time to Australia, it's very hard to understand the people, the local people here, because the slang is very different. […] It's a bit different to understand when they speak to someone whose English is their second language, for them it's bit easier to explain or I would say understand. So, I think yeah, it does affect our guests (from NESB) experience while they come to the English-speaking country. (Employee 5, NESB Migrant Front-Desk Employee, September 29, 2020)

And I think it automatically puts people at ease if they can deal or interact with people that might speak the same language as them or maybe don't speak the same language, but they look the same, or you know, or they're dressed in a similar sort of way whether it's wearing a headscarf or a turban or you know. (Management 7, MESB Front-Desk Manager, February 22, 2021)

Finally, the respondents agreed that the presence of the NESB front-desk staff creates a sense of familiarity, comfortability, and welcoming atmosphere for the NESB guests, which is amplified in a same-country staff-guest interaction. By communicating in their language and anticipating their needs, the NESB front-desk staff can create a familiar 'home away from home' environment for NESB guests. Additionally, guests feel more secure knowing they can communicate with, trust, and 'lean on' someone. Additionally, NESB guests feel more welcomed by NESB front-desk staff because of their friendliness, kindness, and willingness to assist. The findings on the similar cultural background interaction in front-desk service encounters are summarised in Figure 4.14 and the following statements:

I would say even though there were some people from (other) Asian backgrounds (in the front-office), I would say Indian background they actually waited for me rather than speak to someone else. As I said because they do feel more welcoming and they can speak in Hindi, which is sometimes if people from overseas come they probably not very good in English, so they speak in their mother language. They're always looking for someone who can speak to them in the mother language or even though you're speaking in English, they may feel very comfortable." (Employee 5, NESB Migrant Employee, September 29, 2020)

You know, because we all miss our home. If it's such a little thing could remind you, it's great. […] it feels more homey, more friendly." (Guest 4, NESB Guest, October 15, 2020)

Management interviews revealed that the presence of NESB staff at the front desk may assist in de-escalating any service failure when dealing with guests of similar cultural backgrounds. As previously noted, cultural similarity is an excellent tool for de-escalating service failures because it enables more effective information transfer and facilitates mutual understanding between staff and guests who speak the same language. Additionally, the presence of front-desk staff with similar cultural backgrounds may provide guests with comfort and ease, resulting in a more positive environment that may mitigate or even eliminate any misunderstandings and service dissatisfaction, as explained:

I think it just adds a sense of familiarity and makes a guest feel more at home and more welcomed. […] I will lean on a member of my team that's of the same background to assist sometimes that adds a bit of you know, a bit of comfort. It's certainly a great tool in de-escalating service failures. (Management 3, MESB Front-Office Manager, October 1, 2020)

According to the guest interviews, we discovered that familiarity is a key dimension in determining service quality. The result from the content analysis suggests that guests' familiarity with the service provider's 'brand' and staff profiles plays a significant role in selecting an accommodation provider. A fascinating finding from the guest interviews is that some guests choose accommodation providers based on the presence of front-desk staff with a similar cultural background. This is especially true when older generations are involved who have limited to no ability to communicate in English, as one of our guests of Indonesian origin explains:

If there is, I want to be served by Indonesian again. I mean, it's great. Indonesian people again because it's nice to chat or tell stories with them. Yeah, maybe they also like to find friends from a similar background to talk to, perhaps. For example, chat about their hometown and other things, just chit-chat. And then, if you bring parents, sort of, I mean, parents sometimes asking little things that sometimes. Back then, the thing is, in the 2000s something, when we visited Perth for the first time, googling wasn't that informative, I mean there were not many options, for example, want this and that. And then with the family, parents ask a lot of

things like "In this area, where's the closest place to eat?" right? That's the good thing in meeting an Indonesian receptionist. So, if we could meet Indonesian again, it would be better with Indonesian again. […] And at that time, I booked from Agoda back then, when I saw the review, it was like, there's a review mentioned that the receptionist was Indonesian people. So, there was a reference for choosing a hotel because oh there was an Indonesian receptionist, so I chose that hotel. And then, coincidentally it was also near the centre. (Guest 2, NESB Guest, September 19, 2020)

Thus, the initial findings indicate that the presence of NESB staff is likely to have a positive effect on the quality of front-desk service, particularly when dealing with NESB guests. This finding was validated by experts, with the majority agreeing that cultural similarity between staff and guests has a positive influence on the quality of accommodation services. Some experts mentioned that for many years, the tourism and hospitality industries have embraced diversity practices to cater to a more diverse market. Oftentimes, particularly in larger chains, they hire individuals with excellent English skills as well as the ability to communicate in the guest's native language in order to meet guest needs and pique market interest, as one detailed:

I think it's interesting because it's fairly complex. In terms of what the industry has done is really, you know. If you think of guests, and you think of shifting markets, usually what happens in a hotel is if they start to see changes in the nationality of the guests that are arriving, they will generally make some attempts to get people with from who can speak the same language, essentially, you know. So, we saw this in the UK, when we first had an influence of Eastern European guests. We saw it when we first had Russians come in. We saw it when we first had Chinese coming. But the hotels that were in a position to do that, therefore, the bigger chains, were all recruiting native language speakers to satisfy those guests who had very few English language skills. So, definitely, the industry responds to that. (Expert 4, Academic, June 2, 2021)

Figure 4.14

The Interactions between Front-Desk Staff and Guests from Similar Cultural Backgrounds
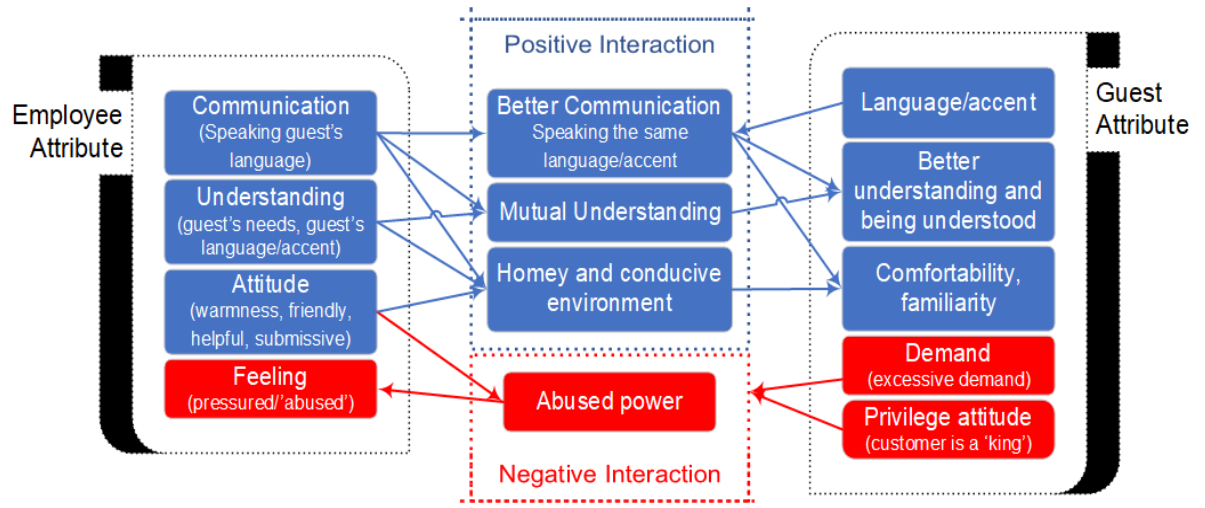
Note. Based on the interviews (management, employees and guests) and self-observation: own data elaboration, analysis, and illustration.

Despite the fact that the majority of respondents reported that similar cultural backgrounds result in positive interactions between front-desk staff and guests as a result of shared language, mutual understanding, and the presence of comfort and familiarity, a minority of NESB front-desk staff reported the opposite. For instance, a receptionist with Asian origins suggested that, as a result of Asian staff's adoption of subservient attitudes towards customers ('customer is king') and seniors, some of the privileged Asian guests abused their power to demand more and/or better services, putting the staff member under pressure or causing discomfort (Employee 4, NESB Migrant Front-Desk Employee, September 25, 2021). This conclusion is supported by participant observation which also led to the interpretation that some occurrences are different from simply dealing with demanding guests; when guests from similar cultural backgrounds become too friendly and familiar, they tend to talk excessively to the point of interfering with the staff's workflow. Furthermore, Expert 2 adds that "there is a lack of respect shown between employee and guest" as the cause of the "subservient" attitude (Expert 2, Academic, May 6, 2021). This finding is aligned with some expert interviews:

> There can be situations where it can be a disadvantage. For example, if
> you were working in reception, and you were faced with a very demanding

Indonesian guest who was a lot older. For example, a man in their 60s who are getting vary, you might find it more difficult to handle. […] it may put pressure on because perhaps the guest will assume that you'll be able to do things for them. Maybe give them an upgrade or something like that which you cannot sell. (Expert 1, Academic, May 4, 2021)

You come across research whereby you're right in it, and it's in the Chinese context, where Chinese front-office employees were being made to feel very uncomfortable by Chinese guests because they were having no boundaries, no, in terms of not knowing what was culturally acceptable. […] there's a further complexity to that, which is that that sort of guest and host relationship whereby some cultures you know, don't see people serving as being equal. And so that is another level of difficulty, is not quite the right word. But there's another thing going on there, which is the customer might be from a background whereby, culturally, it's okay to make assumptions about somebody who's serving you. Because as the customer, you know, 'you're king' and 'you're superior'. Yeah, so that relationship is also made more complex by cultural diversity. (Expert 4, Academic, June 2, 2021)

4.8.3 The Influences of Cultural Background on Attitudes, Personalities, and Work Ethics of Non-English Speaking Background Front-Desk Staff

As discussed in Section **Error! Reference source not found.**, attitude and personality play a critical role in providing high-quality front-desk services, with all management respondents stating that personality is more important than skills when recruiting employees. For example, Guest 7 emphasises the importance of front-desk staff politeness and friendliness when dealing with guests in order to facilitate better interaction and a positive guest experience (Guest 7, NESB Guest, February 15, 2021). Staff are also expected to be "welcoming", "make the guest comfortable", "willing to help", "display a caring attitude", and "demonstrate emotional engagement" which might be impacted by their cultural norms and values (Expert 1, Academic, May 4, 2021). This section examines the impact of cultural background on attitudes, personalities, gestures, and work ethics, as well as the intersection with the NESB front-desk employees' communication style.

Some NESB migrant employees, particularly those from Asian backgrounds, stated that Asian people have "warmer," "friendlier," "kinder," and "more polite" personalities, especially when dealing with guests. As previously explained, these attributes might be influenced by the subservient trait of many Asian cultures, where Asians highly respect customers and older people (Ref). Furthermore, some managements believe that migrants in the hospitality industry have a better work ethic than their Australian counterparts, as stated by the following interviewee:

> *Well, the thing is with Indonesian culture, I believe that we are warm. Like we are recognised as being you know, like a warm people, probably because we live in a warm weather. […] I believe the reason why Thailand and Indonesian become very successful in tourism is because the people. If we go to other countries within Southeast Asia, there's actually some other places that have like, how to say, like a nice landscape or nice cultures to be like a good tourism spot. But those places can never beat Bali or Phuket. It's not only because of the landscape or the culture, but I believe it's more because of the people. (Employee 2, NESB Migrant Front-Desk Employee, September 18, 2020)*

On the other hand, other cultures, such as Germans, appear to have a more rigid, direct, and formal approach to guests, which can be perceived as less friendly or even cold in comparison to Asian or even Australian gestures, as one respondent details:

> *In general, German communication, I think, is very direct. […] But, also, it's a big difference in the German culture to what Australian is this like the small talk like asking 'How are you and stuff?'. […] You know, the small talk like that, that's rare, they don't do that. So that's something I guess I had to get used to doing. Now, so, because of it, whenever I go back home now, and I go to the shop in Germany, people are so rude, you know, they don't say "Hello! How are you going?" They just, really like, do what they have to do for the job, but they don't actually talk to you other than that, like other than what they have to. So I think there's a bit of difference between Germany and here. Like, it's more friendly. (Employee 6, NESB migrant front-desk employee)*

Additionally, this qualitative research reveals that guests may have varying perceptions and expectations regarding acceptable and favourable attitudes and personalities when it comes to service delivery, depending on their cultural

background. Asians, for example, may anticipate personalised service and 'royalty-like' treatment, whereas Australians prefer a more relaxed approach. Due to the fact that guests have varying needs, wants, and service expectations, front-desk staff must be adaptable and tailor their service to their guests' cultural backgrounds. As a result of the significant growth of a particular market, for example, the growing Chinese market in Australia pre-Covid, many Australian tourism and hospitality staff are required to obtain training that enables them to better understand the Chinese customers' particular needs and to be able to service and cater to their specific demand, such as 'Chinese ready' training, as explained:

> *A lot of us in Western Australia have done like the kind of China ready training so that we're aware of things that Chinese travellers may expect and kind of things with their behaviour that we might not expect so everybody's aware of, like, how to behave in a way that's not going to, you know, surprise or cause upset or things like that. […] There's a huge amount of stuff that you have to be aware of. In terms of tailoring just sort of service, sort of to cultural as well as social kind of expectations. (Management 6, February 18, 2021)*

Additionally, as explained in Subsection 4.8, the initial findings from employee and management interviews indicate that the NESB front-desk staff's cultural background may have an impact on their work ethic. To begin, some cultures, such as the Japanese and Chinese, are known for their more rigid, competitive, and hardworking work attitude, in contrast to the more laid-back Australian work attitude, which values work-life balance. Management respondents acknowledged that NESB employees are more willing to work harder and longer hours, learn new skills and accept a variety of duties than their local counterparts. Second, they stated that while many Australians view work in the hospitality industry as a stepping stone, migrants view it as a career path, motivating them to work harder. Two respondents elaborated on this subject further during their interviews, as follows:

> *I think some cultures, I think in Australia working in a hotel, Australians per se that as a job that you do until you find a real job. And it's not taken as a long-term goal or as a vocational they want to stay. And I find that the overseas Europeans and Asians, that to them to work in a hotel, that is their choice to vocation, that's what they want to do. Right through, they're not looking for other things to do. And it's a little bit more highly regarded overseas than there it is in Australia. So I find that they're also*

much more professional in the way they manage things. Because to them, it's, it's a real, a real choice of employment. (Management 4, MESB Property Manager, October 8, 2021)

I've seen in Germany like the work ethic is quite high. […] I guess it's like standards that we learn when we grow up. So, like, more efficient as I can. Yeah, be hardworking and like do my best when I am at work. (Employee 6, NESB migrant front-desk employee)

The initial findings around this topic were validated by some of the experts, as one of them discovered that the NESB staff "potentially seems to have a warmer culture in terms of you know, that presence that they might have at a front desk and that welcoming nature and service orientated kind of attitude towards giving a positive experience to the customer" (Expert 2, Academic, May 6, 2021). However, in contrast to respondents' perceptions that NESB front-desk staff attitudes and personalities are influenced by their cultural background, some experts argued that attitudes and personalities are a complex subject, and it is difficult to determine whether or not they are influenced by culture. According to some of them, an individual's attitude and personality are more likely to be shaped by an individual trait than by their cultural background. They contended that in every country or culture, there are both warm people and cold ones, as one expert states:

I think it's very difficult to generalise, and I prefer to look at each person as an individual. When people talk about Thai people being very welcoming and smiling and things like that, and from my own experience of being in Thailand is yes, people do smile, but there also are people who can be grumpy and can give bad service. I think we need to; I'm not sure about culture. I think everybody from anywhere in the world can give good service, that somebody from anywhere in the world also can give bad service. So, I think we need to be careful about stereotyping or generalising. (Expert 1, Academician, May 4, 2021)

4.8.4 The Role of non-English Speaking Background Front-Desk Staff as Local Representatives and Their Influence on Guests' Authenticity Experience

This section addresses the final objective of this qualitative research (see Chapter 1), which is to explore the NESB front-desk staff's role in representing Australia and providing authentic experiences in the Western Australian accommodation industry. To begin, the majority of respondents agree that having NESB front-desk employees ensures a good representation of Australia's culturally diverse society. Second, this qualitative study demonstrates how the NESB staff at an Australian accommodation property is able to provide guests with an authentic Australian experience. Management respondents argue that the key themes generated in this topic are 'multicultural' and 'reflection of local society'. Meanwhile, employees and guest respondents state that the presence of culturally diverse staff enables the transfer of knowledge about other cultures to guests due to guests' curiosity on the staff's cultural background. Due to the fact that the majority of guests interviewed are seasoned travellers who have visited Australia numerous times and have a thorough understanding and knowledge of Australia as a multicultural country, the presence of culturally diverse staff at the front desk reflects the guests' expectations of Australia's multiculturalism, as is stated below:

> *The first impression was as expected because perhaps, in relation to Australian background, we already know that it's multicultural. So, when we meet people with non-Australian backgrounds, it's normal because we already know." (Guest 1, NESB Guest, September 18, 2020)*

> *I think it certainly presents Australia as a very multicultural place, which I think a lot of people that travel here are expecting, so, I think to that, in that respect. If they arrive at a hotel and there's a mix of people at the front desk or not just front desk but potentially like on the door, and yeah, I think a lot of times it fits with what they might expect to Australia. (Management 7, MESB Front-Desk Manager, February 22, 2021)*

Based on some of the employees' and management's experiences, the presence of NESB staff at the front desk also opens up a conversation window on cultural diversity in Australia. Furthermore, their presence may pique guests' interest in other cultures, as well as the NESB front-desk employees' journeys to work and live in Australia, explained as follows:

I think a lot of guests like having cultural differences. Like, one day, you know, you might be checked in by a non-Australian and then be checked out by an Australian. It opens up more options for conversation. Like, you know, where are you from? What are your experiences? How did you come to Australia and things like that? Where have you worked? I think it's certainly is a positive (representation). I think it reflects Australia, the different cultural differences. Because we're not all just want Australians anymore, it isn't really an array of conscious now." (Management 3, MESB Front-Desk Manager, October 1, 20)

The debate over 'local representation' and 'authentic experience' also centres on 'local knowledge,' or how knowledgeable the NESB staff is about local culture and destinations in order to be good local representatives and to provide authentic local experiences. Despite the fact that the majority of respondents agree that NESB staff are mostly equipped with knowledge of local surroundings, local culture, local activities, and local tourism destinations despite their non-Australian backgrounds, a minority of respondents still believe that 'local' Australians have more local knowledge and cultural understanding. Experts also have differing viewpoints on the subject. Two experts argue that even if NESB employees have local knowledge, they will lack adequate cultural knowledge. The rest of the experts, on the other hand, agree with the finding that most migrants have sufficient, if not greater, knowledge and understanding of local destinations and culture to represent the host country, as one expert explains:

I tend to find that people who travel from other countries to work here actually have a better knowledge of what's going on. They travel our country; they go to distances and destinations that locals don't. I don't know how many times I've heard and seen examples where people talk about the visitors, working visas, student visas, who are working in our industry, are talking about destinations that locals have never been to. […] It might be different to others, but I've seen examples, great examples, where people who are international migrants, students and employees in our lives who have had better knowledge, simply because they've travelled and done the distance. They've taken the knowledge and the care they know more about our history than we do in some cases. So, I certainly don't think it's a bad representation. (Expert 3, Hospitality HR Professional, May 13, 2021)

Finally, one expert argues that authentic experience is contingent on guest knowledge, explaining that for a guest who is unaware of the cultural diversity of the Australian society and views Australia more as depicted in the "Crocodile Dundee" film, "the perception of what Australia is that kind of that Outback," having NESB people at the front-desk position may give them an unexpected impression of Australia (Expert 2, Academic, May 6, 2021). In the context of authenticity, one of the academic experts explains that an authentic experience could be perceived differently depending on the cultural distinction of the destination countries, but that in most cases, the local people remain ambassadors of the local culture, as detailed below:

> *The culture because in many ways when you go to a destination, with people you meet in a hotel, you go to Indonesia, for example, they represent a culture. You interact with them and they are ambassadors for the culture. Now, if those ambassadors are in fact foreigners who represent the culture, that can be a problem. But I had a conversation this morning with some colleagues in Japan, where culture is very important where (Japanese) people are the representation of Japan, and for foreigners to represent local culture can be very difficult. Likewise, a couple of years ago, I was at a conference in Bali and there is something there's an expectation that the welcome you get as a guest has to be Balinese, not International. And it comes down to the aesthetics, the people, the dress, the culture, the greetings. So maybe in an international chain hotel in Western Australia, these are not the most important considerations because Australian culture is less specifically defined, but it's still a consideration. (Expert 1, Academic, May 4, 2021)*

4.9 Chapter Summary

The findings with reference to the relationship between workers' cultural diversity and the quality of accommodation front-desk service with Western Australia as a case in point are presented in this section. As stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this qualitative study is to determine the extent to which the cultural background of NESB migrant workers influences service quality in the Western Australian accommodation industry. The initial findings of this case study are based on inductive content analysis of data gathered from interviews with 31 respondents and participant observation. The initial findings were then validated by experts through follow-up expert interviews

to generate a conclusion of this research. This chapter is divided into several sections, each of which addresses a different aspect of the research objectives.

Section 4.2 outlines the case study object of this qualitative research. Due to the unique characteristics of the type of accommodation provider and the larger market segment served by this type of property, this study focused on leading apartment hotels throughout Western Australia. Additionally, Section 4.3 offers details on the interview respondents of this research. As previously stated, information was gathered from eight managers/owners, twelve employees, and eleven guests of apartment hotels located throughout Western Australia. Meanwhile, five industry professionals from a tourism, hospitality and human resources context evaluate the initial interview findings. The characteristics of the interviewees are varied, with a good balance of gender and age group representation. According to their cultural origins, the majority of respondents, 53%, come from non-English speaking countries in Asia, Latin America, Europe, and Africa, while Australians constitute the majority of the native English-speaking population.

This study's findings establish a link between the tourism and migration phenomena in Western Australia. As discussed in Section 4.4, migrants generated tourist flows at one point by hosting family and friends from their home countries or by travelling between their home countries and other tourism destinations. On the other hand, in terms of migration-driven tourism, several respondents stated that they came to Australia for career opportunities, particularly in the tourism and hospitality industry. Additionally, Section 4.6 delves into the cultural diversity within the Western Australian hospitality industry, particularly in the front-desk department, as a result of migrants' integration into the local hospitality workforce. In general, this study concludes that having a culturally diverse front-desk workforce benefits the industry's competitiveness. Additionally, this section demonstrates the critical role of NESB migrants in providing high-quality front-desk service and servicing the growing NESB market.

Section 4.7 offers detailed information on the front-desk position at one of Australia's largest apartment-hotel chains, with a focus on Western Australia. According to the interviews and self-observation, the front-desk employee's responsibilities include reception, reservation, concierge, all-around administration, customer service, and after-hours service in this type of accommodation provider. The various roles of front-desk staff also influence the daily interactions between front-desk staff and guests, as well as with other departments. Their roles and responsibilities emphasise the critical

nature of front-desk staff communication skills. According to the findings of the interviews, effective communication, a positive attitude and personality, an ability to understand the guests' needs, as well as a thorough knowledge of the local culture, surroundings, events/activities, and current news, are all necessary characteristics for providing a high-quality front-desk service. First, according to the interview findings, the primary communication themes are 'English fluency,' 'understanding,' 'listening,' and 'confident speak'. Second, respondents indicated that it is critical to possess the following personality traits in order to provide high-quality front-desk services: friendliness, kindness, an outgoing/social personality, and patience. Finally, because the front-desk role encompasses the 'information centre' and 'concierge' functions in the accommodation sector, staff should have a thorough understanding of the area's essential locations (cafés/restaurants, shops, clinics, and even police station), tourism hotspots, transportation options, and current events in the city/state/country. Additionally, as the face of the industry and host country, experts emphasised the importance of cultural awareness regarding the local culture and the home-country's culture.

The findings of this qualitative study indicate that there is a correlation between workforce cultural diversity and hospitality service quality. Section 4.8 recognised that the cultural background of NESB migrant employees influences various aspects of front-desk service quality, most notably the staff's communication skills, attitudes, personalities, and local knowledge. In terms of communication ability, respondents discussed how the cultural background of NESB front-desk staff may contribute to communication barriers such as limited English proficiency and a strong accent. Meanwhile, the cultural background of NESB front-desk staff undoubtedly influences their personalities and attitudes, particularly in terms of friendliness and warm attitude. Finally, NESB front-desk staff are familiar with and understands the culture of their home country. Additionally, their knowledge of the local culture may influence how they represent the host society and destination.

Subsection 4.8.1 concludes that the cultural background of the NESB staff may have an effect on communication skills' attributes, particularly English fluency, foreign accent, and multilingual ability. While proficiency in English and multilingualism can facilitate effective cross-cultural communication, the presence of a foreign accent can create a communication barrier. While English proficiency does not seem to be a significant barrier in face-to-face interactions, many NESB employees struggle with phone communication and formal writing. Second, respondents and experts agree

that the presence of a strong foreign accent, including Australian slang, creates a barrier to cross-cultural communication due to misunderstandings, differences in word pronunciation and usage, and speech tone/speed. Finally, the NESB staff's ability to communicate in English and their native language (or another language) may be advantageous when dealing with guests from similar cultural backgrounds who are not fluent in English.

Section 4.8.2 emphasises the critical role of NESB personnel in servicing the NESB market's growth, which underlines the similar cultural background interaction theme. According to the interview results, the key aspects of interactions between NESB front-desk employees and guests with similar cultural backgrounds are 'speaking the same language', 'understanding', 'familiarity', 'welcoming', and 'comfortability'. By communicating in the same language, both parties can develop mutual understanding and engage in more accurate communication and meaningful interactions; NESB employees can exchange pertinent information and more effectively accommodate guests' needs, while guests can communicate their needs and comprehend the information presented to them. Finally, respondents agreed that the presence of NESB front-desk staff fosters a sense of familiarity, comfort, and welcome for NESB guests, all of which are critical dimensions in determining the quality of accommodation service. On the other hand, a minority of NESB front-desk staff reported having unpleasant interactions, particularly with people of Asian origin who live in societies with a higher power distance, where staff adopt subservient attitudes and guests believe they have more power than the staff.

Section 4.8.3 focuses on how the NESB staff's attitude and personality are influenced by their cultural backgrounds, which are important factors in providing high-quality front-desk service. According to the interview findings, the NESB staff's politeness, friendliness, and warmth may be influenced by their cultural norms and values. As previously stated, the subservient trait linked to the understanding of service in some cultures may influence these characteristics. In addition, depending on their cultural background, guests may have different perceptions and expectations when it comes to acceptable and favourable attitudes and personalities in regards to service delivery. Finally, one's cultural background may have an impact on work ethics, with some countries favouring a strict and hardworking work attitude while others favouring a more relaxed approach. In addition, some managements believe that migrants in the hospitality industry have a better work ethic than Australians. Some experts, however, argue that attitudes and personalities are a complicated subject, and that determining

whether or not they are influenced by culture is difficult because an individual's attitude and personality are more likely to be shaped by an individual trait than by their cultural background.

The final subsection emphasises the role of NESB front-desk staff in representing Australia and providing authentic experiences in the Western Australian accommodation industry. The majority of respondents agree that the NESB front-desk employee represents a positive image of Australia's culturally diverse society. Respondents agree that the presence of culturally diverse individuals at the front desk reflects guests' expectations of Australia's multiculturalism. It is important to note that the outcome of this study may be influenced by the fact that the majority of guests interviewed are seasoned travellers who have visited Australia numerous times and have a broad understanding of Australia as a multicultural country. Second, this qualitative study demonstrates how NESB staff are able to provide guests with an authentic Australian experience, because despite their non-Australian origins, NESB staff are typically well-versed in local culture, surroundings, activities, and tourism destinations. Additionally, their presence may serve as a catalyst for discussion about diversity and pique guests' interest in other cultures.

The following chapter serves as the thesis's conclusion, discussing the findings and implications of this qualitative research in greater detail. The following chapter will present the theoretical implications of the research findings and how they relate to existing theory and literature. Additionally, Chapter 5 will outline the practical implications of the research's findings. The remaining sections of Chapter 5 point the study's limitations and suggested directions for future research. How the study's findings have addressed the research objectives and made a contribution to general knowledge is stated in the final part of this concluding chapter.

CHAPTER 5.   DISCUSSION

5.1   Chapter Introduction

The preceding chapter presents the comprehensive findings from expert-validated qualitative interviews with 31 respondents and a limited participant observatory. Based on a case study of leading apartment hotels throughout Western Australia (WA), the results of this qualitative research lead to the conclusion that the cultural background of non-English speaking (NESB) front-desk staff influences different attributes of WA accommodation service quality. Chapter 4 outlined how the cultural diversity of the workforce may affect the front-desk service attributes of communication skills, attitudes, and personalities, as well as cultural knowledge. First, the findings indicate that NESB cultural diversity may have an effect on the quality of cross-cultural communication due to differences in English fluency and accent, the presence of Australian slang, and multilingualism. Second, because each culture has its own set of norms and values, the NESB staff's personalities and attitudes, particularly their warmth and friendliness, may be influenced by their cultural heritage. Third, interviewees generally agreed that NESB front-desk staff is knowledgeable about and understands not only their native country's culture but also the host destination. Thus, the findings of this exploratory study enable us to address the primary research question of whether the cultural diversity of the NESB front-desk staff has an effect on the quality of accommodation service in Western Australia.

The extent to which workforce cultural diversity affects these various attributes is reflected in the dynamic of the staff-guest interaction and communication, as well as in how NESB staff perform their role in presenting and representing the local destination. The current study's findings indicate that a lack of English proficiency, combined with a strong foreign accent and unreflective use of Australian slang, may create barriers to cross-cultural communication. On the other hand, the N'SB staff's multilingual ability may be advantageous when dealing with guests from similar cultural backgrounds, as it enables staff to communicate in the guests' native tongues and understand their needs. Finally, interviewees suggested NESB staff are able to be effective local representatives due to their often extensive knowledge of the local environment, local culture, local events, and local tourism hotspots, in addition to being potentially familiar with the guests' culture. This research indicates that the

presence of a culturally diverse workforce at the Western Australian accommodation front desk is an accurate reflection of Australia's culturally diverse society. Thus, despite the fact that communication barriers and misunderstandings might be present in cross-cultural interactions when managed well, the cultural diversity of the NESB workforce is more likely to be beneficial in improving the accommodation service quality.

This chapter delves into the preceding findings to determine their relevance and significance to existing theory, as well as practical implications for hospitality players. This chapter is broken down into three parts. First, in Section 5.2, the objectives and methodology of this study are briefly restated. Second, in Section 5.3, the findings are summarised and discussed in relation to the research objectives, as well as their theoretical and practical implications significance. While the theoretical significance of this study refers to the qualitative research findings' relationship to established theories, the practical implications highlight the findings' practical insights into better managing the tourism and hospitality industry. Finally, in the final portion, the chapter summary is presented.

5.2   Summary of Study Objectives and Methodology

This study is rooted in the phenomenon of tourism-induced migration, with a particular emphasis on culturally diverse migrant workers in the tourism industry. The growing reliance of Western Australia's tourism and hospitality industries on migrant workers, particularly non-English-speaking (NESB) people, is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, cultural diversity among the hospitality and tourism workforce enables organisations to gain a competitive edge by comprehending diverse market segments and providing adequate service to meet diverse needs (Elshaer & Marzouk, 2019; Office of Multicultural Affairs & Inbound Tourism Organisation of Australia, 1995). On the other hand, Baum, Hearns, and Divine (2008) argue that the growing presence of NESB migrant workers in the tourism and hospitality industries may pose challenges, including communication barriers (Australian Trade Commission, 2015) and misrepresentation of the host destination, resulting in an inauthentic experience (Janta et al., 2011; Vassou et al., 2017).

It is critical to understand the influence of cultural diversity in delivering service quality because different cultures have varying traditions for conceptualising service delivery and quality (Dimanche & Reisinger, 2011). Thus, the findings in the preceding

chapter examine the influences of the cultural diversity of NESB migrant workers on WA's hospitality service quality from the perspectives of tourists, employees, and management. By utilising an exploratory qualitative approach and a case study of a major apartment hotel chain in Western Australia, this study aims to determine the extent to which the cultural diversity of NESB migrant workers in front of house positions influences the service quality in the Western Australian accommodation industry. This study employed the following research objectives:

1) to examine the features in service quality in the WA accommodation sector affected by the cultural diversity of frontline NESB migrant workers from the perspectives of tourists/ guests, employees, and management, and

2) to explore the relationship between frontline NESB migrant workers' cultural diversity and service quality in the WA accommodation industry, focusing on communication quality and similar background interaction.

Due to an absence of research on the effects of workforce cultural diversity on tourism and hospitality service delivery, particularly in the context of Western Australia, this study employed an inductive-exploratory approach. Thus, these research findings are the result of a sequential exploratory qualitative method that involved conducting in-depth interviews to elicit detailed data and information about the influence of frontline workforce cultural diversity on service quality from a variety of perspectives. Additionally, this study utilised a case study approach, with a leading apartment hotel chain in Western Australia serving as the case subject. To begin, this research gathered input from tourists/ hotel guests, hotel employees, and hotel management to explore the key features in the relationship between workforce cultural diversity and accommodation service quality. Additionally, the participant observation method was used to supplement the findings, as it was based on the primary researcher's day-to-day work experience as a front-desk employee. To generate initial findings, the identified key themes, patterns, and categories from multiple stakeholders' interviews and observations were triangulated. Finally, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with experts in the hospitality and human resource management (HRM) field to determine the dependability, transferability, credibility, confirmability, and authenticity of the initial findings.

Figure 5.1

Summary of the Research Methodology
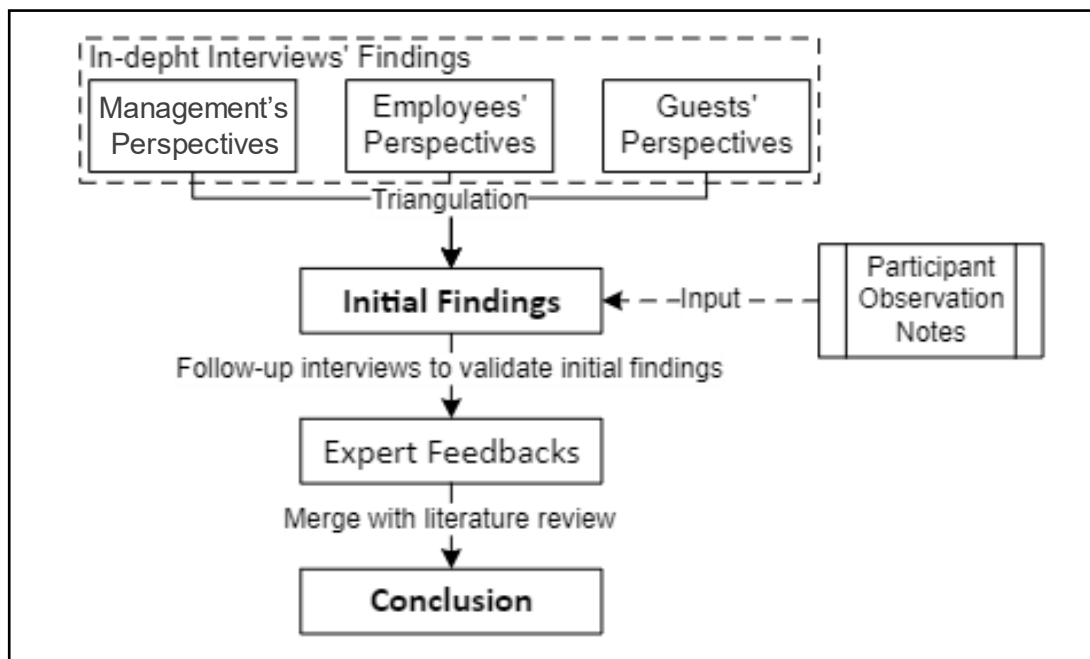
5.3   Discussions and Implications

The findings from over 30 interviews have addressed the research problems of this study and provide insights into the role of cultural diversity in delivering quality service in the WA tourism and hospitality industry. While a series of studies by Dwyer, Forsyth, King and Seetaram (1993; 2010; 2014) focus more on the migration-led tourism phenomenon, this study explores the side of the tourism-led migration relationship, focusing on the role of culturally diverse migrant workers in the Western Australian tourism and hospitality industry. Aligned with the Australian Tourism Labour Force Report by the Australian Trade and Investment Commission (2016), the migrant-employee respondents in this study point to the accessibility of the industry as the main factor in entering the tourism and hospitality workforce.

In addition, past studies on the relationship between cultural diversity and hospitality service quality have mostly concentrated on using quantitative analysis to establish the correlation between customer satisfaction and national backgrounds (Dedeoğlu et al., 2018; Huang & Crotts, 2019; Zhang et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2015). This research provides new insight into the interrelationship between employees' cultural backgrounds and service quality, particularly with respect to the accommodation front-desk services. Thus, in answering the first research objective, the results suggest that

the key attributes of service quality in the WA accommodation sector that are affected by the cultural diversity of frontline NESB migrant workers are as follows:

- communication quality, as the result of language proficiency, foreign accent, and ability to speak multiple languages;
- attitude, personality, and work ethic, as different cultures have different customs and societal values;
- knowledge of local culture in relation to the ability to represent the local destination; and
- a better understanding of guests' needs based on their cultural background.

Subsection 5.3.1 discusses the existence of workforce cultural diversity in the Western Australian accommodation sector and how workforce cultural diversity can benefit the Western Australian accommodation sector, particularly in light of the growing NESB tourist market. As previously stated in Section 4.6, all respondents agreed on the critical role of NESB staff in providing adequate service to NESB guests. This finding is consistent with the existing literature on diversity management in the tourism and hospitality industry, which emphasises the importance of cultural diversity in providing a competitive advantage for the business (Baum, 2006, 2012; Cox, 1993; ILO, 2014; Wil'iams & O'Reilly, 1998). Lastly, the outcome of this qualitative research emphasises the significance of having an inclusive and diverse workforce in the Australian tourism and hospitality industry.

Subsection 5.3.2 delves into the significance of front-desk staff in providing various accommodation services and as a primary factor in delivering service quality. This subsection expands on the findings presented in Section 4.7 regarding the essential features of the NESB front-desk staff in providing high-quality service. Respondents emphasised the importance of good communication skills, a 'can-do' attitude, positive personalities, understanding of guests' needs, and adequate local knowledge in providing front-desk services. Furthermore, this subsection indicates how these attributes align with the SERVQUAL dimensions (Parasuraman et al., 1988) discussed in Chapter 2. Finally, the subsection outlines the current study's practical implications of the role of NESB migrant front-desk staff in providing high-quality front-desk service.

The following subsections discuss in detail how cultural diversity affects key front-desk service quality attributes and how they relate to existing theories and literature.

Subsection 5.3.3 presents the conclusions from Subsection 4.8 on how the cultural background of NESB migrant front-desk employees affects various aspects of their communication skills when performing front-desk services and interacting with guests, most notably English proficiency, accent, and multilingualism. Additionally, this section discusses the findings' alignment with existing theories, particularly Barna's (1994) six stumbling blocks of intercultural communication. Finally, this study's practical implications demonstrate various scenarios of cross-cultural communication between staff and guests at the front desk encounter and how to overcome any communication barrier.

Subsection 5.3.4 contributes to a better understanding of how culturally diverse NESB migrant front-office employees can better serve NESB guests, especially those from similar cultural backgrounds. The alignment of the positive similar background interaction with the cultural congruence and similarity-attraction theories is discussed in this subsection. On the other hand, the findings of this study show how Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimension provides insight into negative similar background front-desk interactions between staff and guests. Finally, in the practical implications section, the importance of having NESB staff at the front desk of a hotel is addressed in more detail.

The next section explains how the findings back up Dimanche and Reisinger's (2011) assertion that each culture has its own set of standards for service and how to deliver it, including different attitudes, work ethics, gestures, and treatment of guests. In addition, Subsection 5.3.5 examines the effect of Hofstede's cultural dimensions on differences in individuals' behaviour, attitudes, and interactions. As a result, this study helps to gain a better understanding of why some NESB employees are more subservient than others. Finally, a better understanding of how cultural background influences behaviour, attitude, and work ethic has practical implications for hoteliers in managing and maximising workforce diversity in order to provide services to a diverse range of customers.

Finally, Subsection 5.3.6 summarises the findings from Chapter 4 regarding how NESB front-desk staff represent Australia and provide authentic experiences. This subsection also delves deeper into the objective and subjective nature of authentic experience. In addition, this section discusses how the findings of this study may contribute to more debates about the authenticity concept in tourism theory. Finally, the findings of this qualitative study may provide practical insight into the role of NESB staff in providing an authentic Australian experience to culturally diverse guests.

5.3.1 The Role of Workforce Cultural Diversity in Providing Competitive Advantages to the Australian Tourism and Hospitality Industry

This section expands on the practice of worker cultural diversity in Western Australian apartment hotels. Furthermore, this section discusses how workforce cultural diversity can provide organisations with a competitive advantage. In terms of theoretical significance, this section outlines how the findings of this qualitative study on workforce cultural diversity are aligned with existing diversity literature and theories, particularly cognitive diversity theories (Baum, 2006, 2012; Cox, 1993; ILO, 2014; Wil'iams & O'Reilly, 1998). Finally, this section discusses the practical implications of having a culturally diverse workforce, particularly when dealing with a diverse tourist market.

5.3.1.1 Discussion and Significance

According to interviews and observations, the targeted hotel apartments have a culturally diverse front-desk staff, with up to 50% NESB employees. According to the findings of this qualitative study, the organisation benefits from the cultural diversity of front-desk employees. Findings are thus in line with what International Labour Organization (2014, p.V) states: "employing a diverse workforce − and managing it effectively − not only satisfies legal and ethical obligations but is also beneficial for business". This study looks at cultural diversity in terms of differences in attitudes, values, beliefs, and communication styles as a result of cultural background, rather than just surface-level differences like race and skin colour. This finding corresponds with Cox's (2013) Interactional Model of Cultural Diversity (IMCD), which suggests that the presence of diversity, when properly managed, creates a resource that can improve organisational performance. Furthermore, the findings of this study back up key diversity theories, particularly the cognitive diversity hypothesis, which claims that multiple perspectives resulting from cultural differences among the group or organisational members lead to creative problem-solving and innovation (Bright et al., 2019). This research concludes that cultural diversity in the workforce improves the organisation's competitive advantage in a variety of areas, including image, talent pool, transfer of knowledge and information, innovation and creativity, as well as performance, as further detailed in the following paragraphs.

In terms of image, this study's findings indicate that integrating NESB front-desk personnel into the local workforce, resulting in a culturally varied workplace, reflects

well on the organisations and the Western Australian hospitality sector as a whole as an inclusive and diverse industry. Indeed, with a third of Western Australia's population being foreign-born (ABS, 2021), the presence of cultural diversity at the front desk reflects Australia's multicultural society. For more than a decade, many organisations have prioritised diversity and inclusion agendas in the workplace. This study corroborates Milliken and Martins' (1996) insights on "symbolic effects", which emphasise the importance of a diverse workforce as a symbol of equality and exerts a significant impact on an organisation's reputation. Additionally, this finding confirms prior research by Mazur (2010), which suggests that businesses gain the most from having a diverse staff due to the organization's improved image (Mazur, 2010; Milliken & Martins, 1996).

Second, the results from management interviews emphasise the critical role of NESB employees in strengthening the talent pool. Based on management interviews, NESB employees demonstrate a higher level of knowledge and capabilities, a willingness to learn, the ability to work harder and longer hours, and loyalty to the organisation. This study corroborates the research of Cox et al. (1991), who assert that multicultural organisations have an edge in attracting and maintaining top personnel. By projecting an inclusive and diversified image, that highlights the tourism and hospitality business as a welcoming and accessible industry for migrants, the organisation increases its chances of attracting diverse top talent (Mazur, 2010). Thus, it can be inferred that having a culturally diverse workplace is critical for maintaining a sustainable pool of human resources and human resource turnover within the organisation, both of which may contribute to the organisation's improved performance, as detailed below:

> *I think some cultures, I think in Australia working in a hotel, Australians per se that as a job that you do until you find a real job. And it's not taken as a long-term goal or as a vocational they want to stay. And I find that the overseas Europeans and Asians, that to them to work in a hotel, that is their choice to vocation, that's what they want to do. Right through, they're not looking for other things to do. And it's a little bit more highly regarded overseas than there it is in Australia. So I find that they're also much more professional in the way they manage things. Because to them, it's, it's a real, a real choice of employment. (Management 4, MESB Property Manager, October 8, 2021)*

Hofstede (2005, p. 4) views culture as "mind software" or the shared patterns of thought, emotion, and action that distinguish one group from. In the workplace, cultural diversity influences a range of perspectives, knowledge, experience, and other cognitive characteristics. As a result of the qualitative interviews and employee feedback, this study's findings emphasise the importance of a culturally diverse workforce in creating new ideas and providing organisations with more inventive and creative solutions as a result of cognitive diversity, as one of the respondents summarised:

> *I think for any sector, really, that it is good to have diversity of various ranges, whether it be by culture, by gender, and so on. I think these are attributes which enrich your workplace. You have new ideas that can emerge from that experiences that people bring from their own their own countries, and maybe from the tourist industries there that we can learn from and take on board here. So I think, absolutely, there's, there's a richness there. (Expert 2, Academic, May 6, 2021)*

This finding is consistent with the assertions of past research that demographic diversity benefits performance by allowing team members to contribute unique cognitive attributes based on their demographic experiences, resulting in the generation of creative insights and new ideas, which contribute to a competitive and creative work environment (Baum, 2012; Cox et al., 1991; Watson et al., 1993; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). As Milliken and Martins (1996) suggested, organisational diversity may result in "cognitive outcomes," which they defined as an increase in creativity and invention as a result of the team's ability to absorb and process information from diverse perspectives. Thus, this qualitative research supports the cognitive diversity hypothesis, which asserts that diverse viewpoints engendered by workplace cultural diversity result in creative problem solving and innovation, which improves an organisation's efficiency (Bright et al., 2019; Cox, 1993; Cox, 2013; Cox et al., 1991).

Following that, this qualitative research indicates that a culturally diverse workplace functions as a knowledge transmission platform by allowing employees from various cultural backgrounds to learn and share their experiences, expertise, and understandings of other cultures, as one explained:

> *Our own culture that we brought into the reception; we create like a such a unique team. […] the culture and then the way they behave, that's the*

more important for us. And then yeah, and for me, it's really an advantage and like, for myself as well. I knew that someone came from another country, not Australia, I also learned so many things from them, and it's good as well for us. It's so we knew that the diversity and then we knew that they have their own way to do it. So, for me, it's really an advantage. […] many receptions with different cultural backgrounds are really positive way. So, we can actually add this and that in terms of the operational. (Management 2, NESB Front-Desk Manager, September 19, 2020)

This finding is consistent with prior research suggesting that cultural diversity may contribute to the reproduction of cross-cultural norms and values through contact with coworkers, consumers, and host communities from various backgrounds (Baum, 2012; Janta et al., 2012). Thus, the findings regarding transfer knowledge support the transformative learning theory in relation to the adult learning process, emphasising that cultural diversity at the workplace opens conversation windows among people from different backgrounds, allowing for a better understanding and knowledge of other cultures (Mezirow,1997).

Finally, as indicated in Section 4.6, the majority of respondents agreed on the pivotal role of culturally diverse personnel in providing adequate service to culturally diverse visitors, a point emphasised strongly by management respondents, as one quoted:

I think it kind of, for me it really helps with that being able to tailor service to the guests. That's the main thing is being able to have people that speak your language, look like you, understand your culture, or your religion is a huge thing in terms of being able to offer, like a welcoming environment to a lot of different people. (Management 8, Front-Office Manager, February 22, 2021)

This finding is consistent with the existing research (see Chapter 2), which emphasises the significance of having culturally diverse employees, particularly those with NESB ancestry, in satisfying the needs of the growing NESB market and enhancing industry performance (Office of Multicultural Affairs & Inbound Tourism Organisation of Australia, 1995). Additionally, because culturally diverse organisations possess diverse cognitive attributes as a result of their cultural heritage, they are better equipped to serve a diverse clientele in an increasingly global market, as they have a better understanding of the requirements and needs of foreign guests (Adler, 2003). Thus, the diverse staff is capable of better comprehending and

serving a diverse market (Armstrong et al., 1997; Elshaer & Marzouk, 2019; Mok et al., 2001). Thus, workplace cultural diversity may contribute to a higher level of customer satisfaction and overall service quality.

5.3.1.2 Practical Contribution

This research provides practitioners with a greater knowledge of the significant contribution of a culturally diverse staff and the presence of NESB personnel in delivering adequate service to diverse guests and enhancing organisational performance, as outlined below:

i. It is critical to have a culturally diverse staff in order to establish the organisation's image as an inclusive and diverse provider. The presence of culturally diverse staff at the front desk is a positive reflection of Australia's multicultural society.

ii. By hiring culturally diverse employees, particularly from NESB origins, businesses may create a welcoming and approachable image to migrants, increasing their chances of acquiring diverse top talent. Additionally, because of migrants' high work ethic and commitment, a culturally diverse workplace enables the establishment of a sustainable pool of resources and the maintenance of a low turnover rate, which benefits the firm.

iii. A diverse workforce contributes a range of ideas, insights, views, expertise, and experience to the workplace, potentially resulting in innovation and enhancing creativity. Additionally, workforce cultural diversity provides a forum for information transfer and experience exchange amongst individuals from varied backgrounds, thereby enriching their understanding and expanding their knowledge. These characteristics enable the heterogeneous organisation to operate more efficiently.

iv. Culturally diverse employees in the tourism and hospitality industry possess an understanding of different cultures, which is extremely advantageous when dealing with an increasingly diversified market. This is achieved by culturally varied staff's capacity to communicate in the customer's native language and gain a better

understanding of the customer's demands, resulting in the provision of bespoke service that meets customer expectations.

v.   It is critical to recognise that in order to reap the benefits of a culturally diverse workplace, the organisation must practise good diversity management, encourage employees to appreciate and express themselves, and embrace and respect diversity. Additionally, companies must enable conversation and knowledge transfer among team members.

5.3.2   The Key Attributes of Non-English Speaking Background Front-Desk Staff in Delivering High-Quality Service

This part looks into the key attributes of the NESB front-desk workers that contribute to the provision of high-quality service. As detailed in Section 4.7, this study emphasises the contribution of front-desk workers in terms of communication skills, exhibiting a positive attitude and personality, an understanding of guests' demands, and adequate local knowledge which are all important features when it comes to offering high-quality services. Additionally, this segment indicates how these characteristics coincide with the SERVQUAL dimensions developed by Parasutaman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) and Martin's (1986) procedural and convivial dimensions addressed in Chapter 2. Finally, this subchapter provides practical guidance to hoteliers on the necessary characteristics to possess in order to provide high-quality front-desk service.

5.3.2.1   Discussion and Significance

The findings from interviews and self-observation suggest that reception, reservation, concierge, general administration, customer service, and after-hours service are among the responsibilities of front-desk employees in WA apartment hotels. The many functions of front-desk personnel also have an impact on daily interactions between front-desk staff and guests, as well as interactions with other departments. This position exemplifies the core role of front-desk communication skills, as well as the aptitude and patience required to understand and meet the needs of customers. This study supports Schneider's (1990) conclusion that employees, particularly those in frontline roles, are critical to successful service delivery, not just as service providers, but also as service evaluation receivers. This qualitative study's findings

emphasise the importance of good communication skills, a can-do attitude, and a pleasant personality, as well as awareness and understanding of visitors' needs and local experience, in offering high-quality front-desk services. These attributes are also addressed in Parasutaman, Zeithaml, and Berry's (1985, p.47) ten dimensions of service quality, which include tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, communication, credibility, security, competence, courtesy, understanding/knowing the customer, and access. The found traits are also consistent with Martin's (1986) convivial dimension of service, which suggest that the customer reacts to the service provider's attitudes, body language, tone of voice, tact, ability to naming names, attentiveness, guidance, suggestive selling, and problem-solving skill.

According to the findings of the interviews, as detailed in below quote, communication is the most critical factor in delivering high-quality service. As the first point of contact of communication, it is important for NESB front-office workers to be proficient in English or even in the guest's first language in order to engage with visitors and provide appropriate services and information. Additionally, the significance of being a good listener is emphasised in this research, particularly in terms of comprehending customer demands and giving outstanding service. This research quite literally supports the communication dimension of Parasutaman, Zeithaml, and Berry's (1985, p.47) SERVQUAL model, which highlights "the importance of keeping customers informed in a language they can understand and listening to them". Additionally, the findings of this study corroborate existing literature focusing on the role of frontline personnel as a communication hub, serving as the first and last point of contact for guests, as well as the 'nerve centre' and 'focal point' for guests' activities and employees contacts, highlighting the critical role of communication for front office employees (Cook et al., 2018). The importance of the communication dimension in service quality is emphasised in Martin's (1986, p. 35) procedural dimension that states "service cannot possibly be of high quality without clear and concise communication between service people and customers, among service team members, and between servers and their boss".

> All forms of communication, not only verbal communication, but also what you might call nonverbal communication; to smile, and ability to listen, ability to engage and find out and talk to your customers. You're not only processing that, but you are also building a relationship on behalf of your company with them, especially that check-in. You're the first person that guest has come into contact with from the company, maybe from the

whole society [...]. This is your first interaction in Australia. So, it's more than just about doing your job, it's about your whole foot, how you communicate, the voice you use, the smiles you give, your willingness to listen to them, all that is very important. Absolutely. (Expert 1, Academic, May 4, 2021)

As hospitality is a people-oriented service sector, attitude and personality play a significant role in providing exceptional service to accommodation guests. Respondents agreed that it is necessary for front-desk workers to exhibit attributes such as friendliness, politeness, attentiveness, outgoing/social nature, and patience in order to give high-quality front-desk services, as one of the employee respondents emphasised:

I think I'm a people person, you know, I love to make contact with people. Also, to serve them as guests, which is something is one of the essential things if you want to work in a hotel. You have to have that sense of willing to serve other people. (Employee 2, NESB Migrant Front-Desk Employee, September 18, 2020)

Positive interaction between workers and guests is achieved as a result, and guests feel at ease and welcomed, which is one of the key aims of accommodation service. These particular traits cannot be more emphasised in Martin's (1986) convivial dimensions, in particular the "attentiveness" dimension, which suggests positive attitude and attentiveness (polite, friendly, and respectful) are among the critical attributes for the provision of quality service to the customer. Furthermore, this finding supports the "courtesy" dimension of Parasutaman, Zeithaml, and Berry's (1985, p.47) ten dimensions of service quality, which highlights the significance of politeness, respect, consideration, and friendliness of personnel.

The majority of respondents emphasised the importance of understanding guests' needs and expectations in order to deliver sufficient front-desk services and meet guests' expectations, as previously detailed in Chapter 4. Additionally, because the accommodation front-desk role encompasses the 'information centre' and 'concierge' functions, staff should have a thorough understanding of the local essentials (cafés/restaurants, shops, clinics, and even police station), tourism hotspots, transportation options, and current events in the city/state/country, as well as a thorough understanding of diverse cultural needs. It is also critical to be aware of current information, protocols, and regulations about the COVID-19 pandemic in this

post-pandemic 'new normal'. These features are addressed under the "guidance" dimension in Martin's (1986) convivial dimensions, which emphasise the significance of knowing customers' needs and having a thorough knowledge of products and services in order to deliver to provide helpful guidance and adequate service and information to the customers. Furthermore, this component is highlighted in Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry's (1985, p.47) ten dimensions of service quality in the "understanding/knowing" dimension, which entails knowing the customer's specific requirements and delivering personalised treatment. Again, this qualitative research stresses the ability of service providers to understand guests' needs and provide tailored service based on those needs is critical in achieving excellent customer experience and improving the service quality, as one respondent summarised in the following quote.

I see a great benefit in having a multicultural team. It's about when you're interacting with a guest. You know, they come from all parts of the world. And if we can provide a home away from home experience that encompasses their local language or someone that can understand their local culture. That makes the guests feel more at home, and I think it enriches the guest experience. (Management 3, MESB Front-Desk Manager, October 1, 2020)

In conclusion, this qualitative research provides us with a more thorough understanding of the key attributes associated with providing high-quality hotel front-desk service. To begin, this study examines the significance of communication skills and language proficiency as they correspond to the "communication" dimension in Martin's (1986, p. 35) procedural dimensions and Parasutaman, Zeithaml, and Berry's (1985, p. 47) SERVQUAL dimensions. Additionally, the interview data underscore the critical role of staff attitudes and personalities in creating a more welcoming and comfortable environment for customers, which strongly supports Martin's (1986) convivial dimensions. Finally, respondents provide insight into the importance of having a thorough understanding and knowledge of guests' needs and expectations in order to provide a high-quality service, which corroborates previous research findings emphasising the importance of understanding and knowing the customer's specific requirements and providing individualised treatment (Martin, 1986; Parasuraman et al., 1985).

5.3.2.2 Practical Contribution

This research contributes to the provision of practical insights to tourism and hospitality stakeholders, particularly management, regarding the most critical traits required of front-desk staff in order to give high-quality service, which includes the following:

    i.   Strong communication skills and language competence, emphasising the capacity to speak concisely in order to effectively convey information and services, to actively engage in conversation in order to foster positive interaction and to listen well in order to capture guests' inquiries.

    ii.   A 'can-do' attitude and positive personality encompassing the characteristics of friendliness, politeness, attentiveness, outgoing/social nature, and patience, which are critical in not only creating a positive work atmosphere, but also in making guests feel welcomed, comfortable, and at ease.

    iii.   A profound grasp and knowledge of guests' needs and requirements, which complements staff knowledge of local necessities, tourism (popular) hotspots, transportation options, current events, rules, and regulations, as well as a thorough knowledge of diverse cultural needs.

    iv.   The flexibility to tailor and personalise services based on the needs of guests as well as an understanding, awareness and familiarity with guest demand.

    v.   The ability to comprehend and adhere to protocols, standards, rules, and regulations, particularly in light of the continually changing COVID-19 protocols and regulations.

5.3.3 The Influence of Non-English Speaking Cultural Background on Front Desk Staff's Communication Quality

This section facilitates a more profound understanding of the second part of the research objectives, which explores the importance of communication skills of NESB migrant workers at the front-of-house in delivering quality services. Furthermore, this section discusses how the NESB staff's cultural background influences communication quality, which in turn impacts the quality of accommodation services. Additionally, this section discusses the findings' alignment with existing literature and

theories on cross-cultural communication. The final part discusses the findings' implications and contribution to closing knowledge gaps, as well as provides some practical insights for practitioners.

5.3.3.1 Discussion and Significance

The employee and management respondents confirmed the importance of communication skills of NESB migrant workers in the front of house position in delivering quality services. This result is in line with previous studies that stress the significance of communication skills in tourism and hospitality performance and productivity, particularly as the primary tool in delivering services and facilitating interactions between employee-customer (Bakker et al., 2005; Madera et al., 2014). Moreover, this study identifies how the cultural background of NESB migrant front-desk employees manifests differences in language proficiencies, accents, and multilingual skills, and how this affects communication and interaction quality, which directly influences service quality in the WA accommodation sector. Table 5.1 below summarises the findings and discussion of the relationship between the cultural diversity of frontline NESB migrant workers and various aspects of communication quality.

Table 5.1

Influence of workforce cultural diversity on communication quality as service quality attribute: Literature review versus research findings

Topic/Theme	Literature Review	Research Findings
Language proficiency	Main communication challenges	Adequate proficiency Follow protocol/ standard
Accent	Bias due to stereotyping	Misunderstandings due to different use of wordings and pronunciations
Similar language	Cultural congruency	Cultural congruency
Australian slang	Communication barrier	Communication barriers and misunderstanding
Multilingualism	Plays a significant role in servicing guests from a similar background	Less significant due to widespread knowledge of English and availability of technology

First, the findings suggest that the communication barriers in front-desk encounters resulting from the lack of English proficiency of the NESB front-desk staff are a rare occurrence in the studied WA apartment hotels, in contrast with previous research that suggests language proficiency as the most prominent challenge in employing NESB migrant workers (Australian Trade Commission, 2015; Baum, 2006; Madera et al., 2014). This study's findings indicate that front-desk employees (in Australia), regardless of their cultural background, must be proficient in English in order to perform their job. As a result, English proficiency is a criterion for hiring front-desk staff in Western Australia. Additionally, this research demonstrates how communication barriers caused by insufficient language proficiency can be minimised by requiring front-desk staff to adhere to certain protocols and service standards, such as how to greet guests, how to explain information about their stay, and how to handle complaints. However, respondents agree that a lack of language proficiency continues to be an issue in positions with lower barriers to entry such as housekeeping, where English proficiency is not the determinant criteria to perform the role, as one respondent explained:

> *Yeah, it's important, but I know that like I have worked with some girls that haven't had fluent English, but I know that they have some issues with the language and face them and it should work as well. So I mean, as long as you have some like level of English that you can communicate well enough. […] But, I do notice that sometimes I have a guest asking for something and I don't know what it means, like some specific words. […] But it's always easy enough to like, just look it up or ask someone if you're not sure. So, I think you are still able to do the job well even if you don't have that perfect English. (Employee 1, NESB Migrant Front-Desk Employee, February 27, 2021)*

Second, this study sheds further light on the effect of foreign accents on cross-cultural communication quality. This study concludes that the presence of a 'thick' foreign accent is one of the most significant intercultural communication barriers that can lead to misunderstandings in Australia. Accent diversity implies a difference in linguistic code and communication style, as well as what is acceptable and how to say it, as a result of ethnic identification (Javier et al., 2020; Kramsch, 1998). In contrast to previous research by Rao Hill and Tombs (2011;2014), which identified accent-related communication barriers as a product of bias and stereotyping, this qualitative study found that different word usage and pronunciations are the causes of accent-related

miscommunication. This is especially true when NESB staff who speak American English interact with guests who speak British or Australian English, as one respondent explained: "They spelt differently, even when the guests spelling their name, they don't spell it as I would normally get an American to spell it, and that was a big challenge. So, the accent is my biggest challenge, by default" (Employee 1, NESB Front-Desk Employee, September 14, 2020). This remark extends Barna's (1994) 'language differences' hypothesis, which explains that even when people from diverse cultural backgrounds use the same language, there can be inconsistencies because some words have distinct meanings in different settings, nations, or cultures.

However, according to interviews with two NESB front-desk staff with Anglo-Saxon heritage, guests or even coworkers are frequently surprised and begin to question their origin because of their accent, which in certain circumstances generates a different dynamic that leads to communication and interaction difficulties. This finding supports Barna's (1994, p. 337) "assumption of similarities" theory, which states that misunderstanding in cross-cultural communication occurs primarily because people assume we are similar simply because we share some trait similarities, such as skin colour, and when someone differs, we have a tendency to develop a negative view. Additionally, as Barna (1994, p. 341) stated in *Stumbling Blocks in Intercultural Communication,* "stereotypes are stumbling blocks for communication because they interfere with objective viewing of stimuli – the sensitive search for cues to guide the imagination toward the other person's reality". One of the migrant employee respondents stated that after explaining her origins, the visitors began to 'compliment' her on how superior she is to the rest of the people from her origin and began treating her unequally, as detailed as follows:

> *I get more curiosity, but he's not really like treating me differently, but they do notice that I'm different. So, I cannot stop it to be like that because they notice. Even if they don't see me, they know that I have an accent. And they just, usually it's just curiosity what they have, and they, some people don't know how to react to something different. So, I guess when I got like bad jokes about my nationality, which of course come with label when you say Mexican, there's a lot of labelling there. […] Like, I had a guest told me once like "You're too good for a Mexican" which is like rude. (Employee 1, NESB Migrant Front-Desk Employee, February 27, 2021)*

The presence of cultural background similarities between guests and staff, on the other hand, appears to de-escalate the communication issue and misunderstandings

induced by an accent. According to interviews with NESB guests, despite not being from the same country, the NESB people have a mutual understanding of each other's accents and communication styles, as explained by one of the NESB migrant staff in the quote below. This is consistent with earlier research on cultural congruency theory (Alden et al., 2010; Caligiuri et al., 2001; Cargile, 2000; Patterson et al., 2006), as discussed in Section 5.3.4. In addition, the NESB respondents demonstrate their effort to adapt to the host destination language in order to minimise any language difficulties, which is in line with the cultural adaptation theory (Bennett, 1998). When communication difficulties arise, particularly in cross-cultural interactions, this study discovers a degree of acceptance and an effort to improve mutual understanding through information cross-checking. Aligned with Rao Hill and Tombs's (2011) findings, the communication problems affected by accent can be diminished by a better understanding of guests' needs based on cultural background. The present research also finds that this seems to be less often the case for the elderly native-speaker guests, who tend to be less understanding when being serviced by the NESB staff.

Sometimes I feel that the guests having trouble to understand me. Like, it doesn't happen often, but I know that sometimes, especially maybe the older generation, they be like 'What?' And I have to repeat myself because they have trouble understanding my accent. […] people basically just have trouble to understand me sometimes, but I do try to explain better than or I talk more clearly. […] I know that before COVID we had some people come in, a lot of people come in travelling from Asia, and places like that. And it's okay because I know how to talk like easy English, you know, make sure they understand what I'm saying. Because sometimes they don't have very good English. But then, yeah, I only noticed that sometimes, like Australian, sort of "Say that again!", like "What do you mean?", you know, because I have like a funny accent. (Employee 6, NESB Migrant Employee, February 27, 2021)

While accents can be an impediment to cross-cultural communication, experts believe they do not degrade communication quality inherently, as stated in the quote below. Indeed, accent diversity as a cultural identity reflects a culturally diverse society; it can add depth to conversations and serve as a vehicle for learning about other cultures. Nonetheless, an interviewed expert argued that the effect of accent on cross-cultural communication is determined by the receiver's perception of the foreign accent and

their receptivity to other cultures. This conclusion is consistent with Crandall and Eshleman's (2003) justification-suppression model (JSM), which asserts that all persons have prejudices of some kind and that "real" prejudices are not expressed explicitly but are constrained by suppressing beliefs, values, and norms. Additionally, factors such as empathy, compassion, or personal convictions about how others should be treated, as well as societal pressures, may influence the attempt to repress such prejudices. For instance, in this study's case, a foreign accent can be perceived positively when the communicator is receptive to diversity. On the other hand, regardless of how fluent the NESB staff's English is, if the guest is closed-minded and intolerant of cultural diversity, a foreign accent of the NESB staff may be perceived negatively and have a detrimental effect on communication quality.

> *I don't think accent would impact. Again, I think if anything, it's probably a positive thing where, you know, it gives thing people like to engage with individuals with different accents, it makes people interesting, it's different. It's giving you a, you know, there's a novelty around that. I guess, it depends on the receiver of that accent as well, though, and their attitude and openness to diversity. So, you know, certainly, there will be individuals who might be, you know, quite discriminatory, maybe in nature or less open to difference and less open to having that diversity in it, perhaps in their workplace or as a customer or kind of a willingness to be acceptance of an accent that might be slightly more difficult to, to hear. […] Look, again, I think overall, from the angle of that diversity in the workplace, I think again, it brings a richness in a diversity which can make a workplace more interesting and novel to work in. (Expert 2, Academic, May 6, 2021)*

Thirdly, another theme that evolved as a result of the discussion of the impact of accent is the role of Australian slang. This study indicates that Australian slang, as a specific form of verbalised local identity, can contribute to communication problems and misunderstandings in cross-cultural service encounters due to the shortening of words and the relatively rapid rate of speech. This finding is consistent with a prior study on the intercultural challenges faced by Chinese students in Australia, which discovered that Australian slang is one of the communication barriers impeding intercultural engagement between Australians and non-Native speakers (God & Zhang, 2019). This research adds to our understanding of how Australian slang, which is intended to be a friendly gesture, may cause misunderstandings for non-native

speakers. While Australian slang is not a formal language and should be avoided in cross-cultural encounters, knowing and utilising it may also assist NESB migrant workers in developing deeper interactions with Australian guests and assisting in their integration into local society.

Finally, communication difficulties may arise in cross-cultural or cross-linguistic meetings, particularly when there is limited linguistic proficiency in a common language (Bailey, 1997). In Barna's (1994) six stumbling blocks, cross-cultural problems in cross-cultural communication arise when one party is unable to understand what the other is saying due to different languages being spoken. As a result of hiring NESB migrant workers, staff with multilingual abilities play a critical role in de-escalating communication challenges in cross-cultural service encounters (Chu & Choi, 2000; Jang et al., 2018; Kidwell, 2000). According to the findings of this qualitative study, the multilingual skills of NESB staff may indeed be advantageous when dealing with visitors from similar cultural backgrounds, particularly when a lack of English competence is present. Despite the fact that respondents agreed that multilingual staff could provide a competitive advantage to the organisation, the widely used English language and advanced translation devices diminish the importance of multilingual skills, which aligned with findings from a previous study by Bowen and Morosan (2018).

While previous research on the quality of hospitality services has focused exclusively on the customer perspective, this study triangulates insights from employees, management, guests, and experts, resulting in more wholesome findings. In conclusion, this qualitative study indicates that cultural background may influence a variety of aspects of NESB staff's communication skills, most notably language proficiency, accents, and multilingual abilities. First, this study's findings indicate that NESB's front-desk role, particularly in the Australian accommodation context, requires a high level of English language proficiency. While existing literature indicates that English proficiency remains the most significant barrier to hiring NESB staff in the Australian tourism and hospitality industries (Australian Trade Commission, 2015), this study discovered little to no evidence to support the previous study's conclusion. In contrast, in terms of language proficiency, this study emphasises the importance of the procedural dimension of performing front-desk staff adhering to specific protocols and service standards. Second, this qualitative research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the role of foreign accents and Australian slang as both identity features and communication barriers. This study suggests that accents and

slang can potentially result in communication-harming differences in word usage and pronunciation (God & Zhang, 2019), rather than stereotyping (Barna, 1994; Rao Hill & Tombs, 2011, 2014). Finally, this study suggests that multilingual ability is less significant now that English is more widely used and advanced technology is widely available. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, this research supports the applicability of cultural adaptation theory (Bennett, 1998), which captures the ability of NESB staff to adapt to the host destination language, as well as the presence of some levels of acceptance that communication problems may arise and an effort to improve mutual understanding in cross-cultural communication.

5.1.1.2 Practical Contribution

The findings of this study are critical for practitioners because they provide insight into developing protocol and service standards in a cross-cultural service environment and managing workforce diversity. This research provides practical guidance to hospitality and tourism industry stakeholders on how to overcome communication barriers caused by cultural diversity, as detailed below:

i. Employing front-desk staff with adequate English proficiency and providing a well-developed protocol and service standard tailored for cross-cultural service encounters support delivering service quality in the accommodation sector.

ii. This research stresses the critical role of front-desk staff in communicating concisely and adhering to the organisation's protocols and service standards.

iii. It is essential to provide some form of training for example on a learning platform for NESB migrant workers to help them improve their knowledge of the local culture, including language and communication style.

iv. Because previous research has shown that communicating with native speakers can be difficult and intimidating for non-native speakers (Sovic, 2009), the presence of culturally diverse NESB migrant workers is critical in serving culturally diverse guests, particularly guests from similar cultural backgrounds. This holds not only because of NESB staff's ability to potentially speak the guests' language, but also to

provide comfort to NESB guests more in general and to aid in de-escalating communication problems.

v. According to cultural adaptation theory, it is critical for NESB staff to adapt to the language and communication style of both the host destination and the guest with whom they are communicating (Bennett, 1998). Furthermore, employees should be encouraged to ask questions and confirm their understanding with guests in order to improve mutual understanding in cross-cultural communication.

vi. While using Australian slang in cross-cultural service encounters and formal forums should be avoided, knowing and using it can help NESB migrant workers develop deeper interactions with Australian guests and aid in their integration into local society. Providing platforms for culturally diverse migrant workers to exchange cultural knowledge, languages, and ideas is pivotal in better understanding and serving guests from various cultural backgrounds. A more robust understanding of different cultural and social perspectives is essential in delivering adequate services.

5.3.4 The Role of Similarity in Non-English Speaking Cultural Background in Front-Desk Service Interaction Between Staff and Guest

This section addresses one of the final research objectives on the role of culturally diverse frontline NESB migrant workers in serving guests, some of whom are from the same cultural background. The similar cultural backgrounds explored in this research are not limited to the same country background, but also include a broader cultural group such as non-English speaking backgrounds and main-English speaking backgrounds. This section also looks at how the positive similar background interaction fits in with the cultural congruency and similarity-attraction theories, as well as how perceived power distance (Hofstede, 1980) influences front-desk interactions between staff and guests. The first section summarises the research findings' interpretation and their relationship to previous studies, followed by a discussion of their practical implications.

5.3.4.1 Discussion and Significance

The findings depict the opposing sides of similar background interactions between front-desk staff and guests in case study apartment hotels. On the one hand, this research provides better insights into the findings' alignment with cultural congruency theory, which proposes that similarities in cultural aspects, such as language, habits, beliefs, or values, tend to support a better and deeper interaction between the service provider and customer, facilitating better service provision and evaluation (Alden et al., 2010; Rao Hill & Tombs, 2011). Furthermore, the findings of this qualitative study also support the similarity-attraction theory, which states that people are drawn to others who share similar attitudes and beliefs (Byrne, 1971). On the other hand, several experts and Asian migrant staff suggested that cultural similarity could be disadvantageous in the staff-guest interaction, particularly in Asian cultures where the guest is regarded as having a higher status than the staff. This result is consistent with Hofstede's (1980) power distance theory, which suggests that countries with greater power distance, such as those in Asia, tend to place a higher priority on the consumer than the service provider.

To begin with, this research indicates that there is a chance that front-desk staff can better understand guests' needs and provide adequate service when they speak the same language or have the same accent, dialect, and communication style as their guests. Simultaneously, guests may find it easier to communicate their needs and receive accurate information and service. Thus, similar cultural backgrounds can enable front-desk staff to have a more robust understanding of guests' cultural backgrounds, facilitating staff to provide adequate service that meets guests' needs and behave appropriately in light of the guests' customs and values. These findings corroborate previous research indicating that by speaking the same language and having a similar accent or dialect, communication difficulties and problems can be alleviated (Caligiuri et al., 2001), mutual understanding can be achieved (Rao Hill & Tombs, 2011), and consumer knowledge and confidence in service quality can be strengthened (Alden et al., 2010; Kogut & Singh, 1988). The significance of speaking the same language cannot be overstated in relation to the language differences dimension of Barna's (1994) six stumbling blocks of cross-cultural communication, which indicates that communication difficulties caused by language differences may result in service failure.

Furthermore, the current study shows that the presence of NESB front-desk staff enhances a sense of familiarity, comfortability, and welcomeness for NESB guests,

which is amplified in similar country staff-guest interaction. This is consistent with previous research, which finds that cultural similarity increases perceived productive familiarity, which leads to positive attitudes towards products and services (Grier et al., 2006). Furthermore, as one of the manager respondents explained in the below quote, the presence of NESB front-desk staff is capable of de-escalating incidents and service failures and providing faster recovery when dealing with NESB guests, which is consistent with Patterson et al. (2006) research findings. The presence of NESB personnel at the front-desk positions provides familiarity and comfort to NESB guests while also stimulating confidence and assurance in the service provided. This is in line with the argument made by the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the Inbound Tourism Organisation of Australia (1995) which holds that the NESB migrant workforce provides a significant advantage to Australia's tourism industry because of their ability to culturally connect with guests and introduce Australian culture in the guest's language and terms.

> *I think it just adds a sense of familiarity and makes a guest feel more at home and more welcomed. […] I will lean on a member of my team that's of the same background to assist sometimes that adds a bit of you know, a bit of comfort. It's certainly a great tool in de-escalating service failures. (Management 3, MESB Front-Office Manager, October 1, 2020)*

In addition, this study discovers different outcomes of the similar background interaction of front-desk staff and guests, particularly regarding the cultural backgrounds (or countries) with higher power distance societies such as many Asian societies. As previously explained, power distance can be understood as "the extent to which the members of a society accept that power in institutions and organisations is distributed unequally" (Hofstede, 1980, p. 103; 1985, p. 347). According to the below quote, Asian guests sometimes exploit similar background front-desk staff in order to obtain their demand, putting pressure on the front-desk staff. This is in line with Hofstede's (1980; 1985) Power Distance Theory, in which customers in societies with large power distance believe they have more power than service providers, while service providers tend to and are expected to exhibit subservient behaviour. The findings also suggest that the front-desk staff's subservient tendencies may make them feel obligated to provide additional services to guests of similar cultural backgrounds as a welcoming and friendly gesture.

> *You come across research whereby you're right in it, and it's in the Chinese context, where Chinese front-office employees were being made*

to feel very uncomfortable by Chinese guests because they were having
no boundaries, no, in terms of not knowing what was culturally acceptable.
[…] there's a further complexity to that, which is that that sort of guest and
host relationship whereby some cultures you know, don't see people
serving as being equal. And so that is another level of difficulty, is not quite
the right word. But there's another thing going on there, which is the
customer might be from a background whereby, culturally, it's okay to
make assumptions about somebody who's serving you. Because as the
customer, you know, "you're king" and "you're superior". Yeah, so that
relationship is also made more complex by cultural diversity. (Expert 4,
Academic, June 2, 2021)

One of NESB staff respondents indicated that the majority of less desirable similar background interactions occurred with leisure and senior guests (vs business guests), which is detailed in the below quote. Hence, this study expands our understanding of how the purpose of a guest's travel influences the varied outcomes of a similar background interaction between front-desk staff and guests. For instance, as representatives of organisations, business guests exhibit a more formal demeanour and a more moderate level of demand and interaction, which results in more positive interaction. By contrast, leisure guests are more demanding in order to maximise their enjoyment during their stay, which can result in less desirable forms of interaction. Additionally, the study's findings suggest that guests' ages may influence the outcome of interactions, as the elderly appear to be more closed-minded than younger generations.

The leisure guests, they asking so many things. They use the room like,
when they come here, nonstop on the phone asking they want this, they
want that. It's the one thing that being demanding and they're wanting that
free of course. While the business guests, they just come, sleep, go
shower, go work, come back, just very easy to look up into. (Employee 4,
NESB Migrant Front-Desk Employee, September 25, 2020)

In conclusion, the findings underscore the critical role of NESB front-desk staff in serving NESB guests, particularly those with similar cultural backgrounds. The study explores the alignment of positive similar cultural background interactions with cultural congruence theory as a result of a service provider's ability to understand guests' cultural needs and provide adequate service (Alden et al., 2010; Rao Hill & Tombs,

2011). The study's findings can also be compared to similarity-attraction theory, which explains how cultural similarity influences how people are drawn to one another (Byrne, 1971). Additionally, this research provides insights into how the power distance dimension can negatively affect similar background front-desk interactions, demonstrating that the greater the power distance, the more likely a less desirable interaction can occur.

5.3.4.2 Practical Contribution

For practitioners, the key findings in similar background service encounters might support the understanding of the following:

i. NESB migrant workers in front-office positions play an important role in providing a more welcoming, familiar, and comfortable environment for NESB guests because the staff can communicate in the guests' language (or accent/dialect) and may be able to understand their needs better. As Sovic (2009) notes, communicating and interacting with native speakers can be exceedingly difficult and intimidating for non-native speakers, resulting in less desirable interaction and failure to satisfy guests.

ii. While tailoring services to guests' backgrounds and needs is critical to ensuring their satisfaction, adhering to protocol and service standards is critical to avoiding less desirable interactions, power abuse, and service failure. Regardless of their cultural background, it is critical to treat all guests equally and to provide an equal level of service.

5.3.5 The Influences of Cultural Background on Attitudes, Personalities and Work Ethics

Although not directly addressed in the research problems, this section provides additional insight into the diverse attitudes and personal traits of front-desk employees as a function of their cultural background, as well as their relation with front-desk employees' communication styles, and how these are perceived differently by culturally diverse guests. Moreover, this part provides insights into how Hofstede's cultural dimensions affect behaviour, attitudes, and work ethic. Finally, a deeper knowledge of how cultural background affects behaviour, attitude, and work ethic has practical consequences for hoteliers in terms of managing and optimising workforce diversity in order to serve a diverse range of consumers.

5.3.5.1 Discussion and Significance

This study validates Hofstede's (1980, 1985) work on organisational value systems in diverse cultural backgrounds and their intersection with service provision and evaluation. Hofstede's work focused on how a trait might be desired in one culture but despised in another. Despite the fact that some expert respondents argued that the differences in attitudes are not the result of cultural diversity, the overall findings suggest that cultural background may influence front-desk employee upbringing and work ethic with the latter being a reflection of custom and social value systems. Respondents, for example, felt that NESB employees from Asian and Latin American backgrounds tend to be warmer, more welcoming, friendlier, and more respectful than Australians, who are more laid-back. Furthermore, an employee of German origin confessed that her upbringing was more rigid and straightforward than that of her Australian and Asian coworkers. The quotes below go into greater detail about how different cultural backgrounds can influence attitudes, personalities, and work ethics.

> Well, the thing is with Indonesian culture, I believe that we are warm. Like we are recognised as being you know, like a warm people, probably because we live in warm weather. […] I believe the reason why Thailand and Indonesia become very successful in tourism is because the people. If we go to other countries within Southeast Asia, there's actually some other places that have like, how to say, like a nice landscape or nice cultures to be like a good tourism spot. But those places can never beat Bali or Phuket. It's not only because of the landscape or the culture, but I believe it's more because of the people. (Employee 2, NESB Migrant Front-Desk Employee, September 18, 2020)

> I've seen in Germany like the work ethic is quite high. […] I guess it's like standards that we learn when we grow up. So, like, more efficient as I can. Yeah, be hardworking and like do my best when I am at work. (Employee 6, NESB migrant front-desk employee)

Those disparities could be attributed to different organisational value systems in their home countries, as specifically covered in Hofstede's (1985) Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance theories. Asian and Latin American people may tend to exhibit subservient tendencies, where service providers regard consumers as a 'king or queen' (Hofstede, 1985), resulting in a warmer, more polite, and more courteous attitude. Furthermore, Asian culture is largely based on Confucianism, which requires

individuals to be extremely respectful of older people, particularly the elderly (Tu, 1998). Hofstede (1985), on the other hand, portrays Germany as a country with low Power Distance and high Uncertainty Avoidance, which leads to impersonal bureaucracy, resulting in a more rigid and straightforward upbringing and high-efficiency work culture. Meanwhile, Australia, the United Kingdom, and other Anglo-Nordic countries have small Power Distance and weak Uncertainty Avoidance organisational values, which results in an adhocratic approach – "more flexible, adaptive, and a lack of formal structure of organisational values" (Hofstede, 1985, p. 353).

From the perspective of service evaluation, guests may have diverse perceptions and expectations about acceptable and favourable attitudes and personalities in service delivery. For example, one culture within the larger Power Distance category may expect superior service and treatment, whereas others choose a more laid-back approach. Furthermore, the Masculinity dimension (Hofstede, 1980, 1985) influences service evaluation. While visitors from more "masculine" cultures emphasise tangibles, reliability, and assertiveness, resulting in a more critical evaluation, guests from "feminine" cultures tend to provide a more moderate evaluation (Armstrong et al., 1997; Huang & Crotts, 2019). Finally, Dimanche and Reisinger (2011) summarise that service quality is perceived differently depending on cultural background; what is considered good quality service in one culture may not necessarily be considered so in another.

5.3.5.2 Practical Contribution

This research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how NES' front-desk staff's cultural background influences their attitudes, values, and work ethics, which may affect how they perform and deliver front-desk service. The practical implications of these research findings are as follows:

    i.   The study stresses the importance of properly understanding and recognising guests' needs and requirements in light of their cultural background and the organisational values that are predominant in their respective cultures.

    ii.   The ability to adapt to the guests' native customs and values, as well as knowledge of the guests' cultural customs and values, is critical for

NESB staff to provide adequate service to guests and perform the local representation role;

iii.   Specific cultural training to prepare staff in handling certain major market segments is needed, mainly when those markets possess specific cultural traits and needs. For example, implementing the 'Chinese Ready Program' is essential for Australian tourism and hospitality personnel to prepare them to serve Chinese guests by understanding their customs, values, needs, and expectations and delivering the services accordingly (Expert 4, Academic, June 2, 2021).

iv.   Again, this study stresses the significance of providing a knowledge transfer platform and implementing workforce diversity management to uplift intercultural competencies and mutual understanding, empathy, trust, and cooperation between team members.

5.3.6 The Role of Non-English Speaking Background Front-Desk Staff as Local Representatives

Finally, the final part of Section 5.3 summarises the findings from Section **Error! Reference source not found.** regarding how NESB front-desk employees represent Australia and provide authentic experiences. This section also goes into greater detail about the objective and subjective nature of authentic experience. Furthermore, this section discusses how the study's findings may contribute to further debates about the authenticity concept in tourism theory. Finally, the findings of this qualitative study may provide practical insight into the role of NESB staff in providing culturally diverse guests with an authentic Australian experience.

5.3.6.1 Discussion and Significance

According to previous research, migrant workers in front-of-house positions, who serve as the 'local host,' are arguably capable of misrepresenting the host destination and providing an 'inauthentic' experience (Baum, 2006; Janta, 2011). On this basis, Karayilan and Cetin (2016, p. 72) argue that local hosts are a "conditio sine qua non" for authenticity and the necessary interaction with tourists. In contrast to this existing research, this study suggests that the presence of NESB migrants at the front-desk position serves as an accurate representation of Australian culture and enables the

provision of an authentic experience to guests. All guest respondents were well-informed and experienced travellers who have had multiple exposures to Australian culture, they are aware of the cultural diversity within Australian society. Therefore, guest respondents showed a positive perception and expectation of the presence of NESB migrants at front-desk positions as a representation of Australian multiculturalism, as explained in the below quote. This finding emphasises the subjective nature of authentic experience, which, as Brown (2013) suggests, is interpretative in nature. As a result, what is conceived to be authentic may be influenced by tourists' knowledge and perceptions of the host destination and its culture.

> *The first impression was as expected because perhaps, in relation to Australian background, we already know that it's multicultural. So, when we meet people with non-Australian backgrounds, it's normal because we already know." (Guest 1, NESB Guest, September 18, 2020)*

Additionally, the findings contradict previous research that argues that misrepresentation and inauthentic experience are often the results of NESB migrant workers' lack of knowledge and understanding of the host culture and destination (Baum et al., 2008). In contrast, interestingly, this research finds that the majority of NESB migrant front-desk staff seem to have an equal or greater understanding of their local destinations, including their customs and values. Due to their efforts to adapt and integrate into local societies, migrant workers are frequently shown to travel to more local destinations, be more informed about local events and activities, and have greater exposure to particular aspects of local culture than locals themselves, as suggested by an Australian hospitality expert in below quote. Additionally, NESB migrant employees are likely to be familiar with and understand the cultural values of their guests. As a result, they often have the ability to introduce Australia in the 'language' and preferences of guests, thereby positively impacting their experience.

> *I tend to find that people who travel from other countries to work here actually have a better knowledge of what's going on. They travel our country; they go to distances and destinations that locals don't. I don't know how many times I've heard and seen examples where people talk about the visitors, working visas, student visas, who are working in our industry, are talking about destinations that locals have never been to. […] It might be different to others, but I've seen examples, great examples, where people who are international migrants, students and employees in*

our lives who have had better knowledge, simply because they've travelled and done the distance. They've taken the knowledge and the care they know more about our history than we do in some cases. So, I certainly don't think it's a bad representation. (Expert 3, Hospitality HR Professional, May 13, 2021)

Baum, Herns, and Devine (2008) argue that the significant increase in migrant workers may have an effect on tourism products, services, and experiences, as well as the perceived destination image, as is expected in culturally diverse societies. Australia is widely regarded as a country built by immigrants, with more than a third of the population born outside the country (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021). As a result, cultural assimilation is both expected and inevitable as a result of international migrants' integration into local society. Additionally, when migrants are integrated into the host society, a shift in local cultural values is expected. Thus, what has been considered a typical Australian experience during the early settlement era is distinct from what is considered an authentic Australian experience today.

Authenticity is a broad and vague concept. On the one hand, it is somewhat subjective and interpretive, depending on the observer (Brown, 2013). As explained further in the constructive authenticity paradigm, authenticity is defined as the reflection of an individual's perceived value in relation to their expectations, preferences, and beliefs (Su et al., 2021). Authentic Australian culture, according to one expert respondent, can refer to different things, such as 'Crocodile Dundee,' the outback experience, or it can refer to the day-to-day life of a culturally diverse society, depending on the guests' knowledge and expectations. In contrast, from an objectivist standpoint, authenticity is an inherent quality of tourism objects or destinations (Su et al., 2021). As Baum, Hearns, and Devine (2008) suggest, authentic experiences vary according to the degree to which host cultures are precisely defined. One expert highlighted the difference between authentic experiences in countries with a well-defined culture, such as Japan, where the society is relatively homogeneous and indigenous (or long-residing) people and their distinct traditions play a critical role in representing authentic Japanese experience, as opposed to Australia, which has a more heterogeneous society and a less defined culture (Expert 1, Academic, May 4, 2021). Thus, while having non-Australian front-desk staff may be regarded as an appropriate representation of the Australian experience, the same would not necessarily be said of foreigners representing Japan.

Another key theme that emerged from this topic is that the presence of NESB representatives at the front desk opens up a discussion window about diversity, in response to guests' curiosity about migrant staff cultural backgrounds and journeys to Australia as suggested by one of the respondents in the below quote. With the advancement of knowledge and experience of one culture or destination, the perception, experiences, and perceived destination image of the host destination also expands or shifts, influencing how guests define an authentic experience. As a result, a first-time visitor with limited knowledge of the host destination may perceive authenticity differently than an experienced and well-informed traveller. This study also discovers that the age of the guests plays a role in defining authentic experience. Older generations are perceived as more rigid, inflexible, and closed-minded, which affects their perception of authenticity and ability to evaluate the experience.

> *They're very interesting to know also where we come from, and what brings us here and how long we work here and what, what they thinking about Australia and all this stuff, so we have always have some conversation with them, which is good. (Management 4, MESB Property Manager, October 8, 2021)*

The topic of 'authenticity experience' is an ongoing 'hot' topic in cross-cultural tourism research because authenticity can be defined from both subjective and objective perspectives. This exploratory study concludes that the presence of NESB staff in front-desk positions in accommodation is considered to be a good representation of Australia's culturally diverse society and is thus aligned with previous research on the constructive authenticity paradigm (Su et al., 2021). The current study provides a better understanding of the roles of guests 'subjectivity' and destination 'objectivity' in determining authentic experience. While the subjective nature of Australian authentic experience refers to guests' perceptions and perceived destination image of Australia, which can be expanded or even shifted based on their knowledge and exposure, the objective nature of Australian authentic experience refers to the less distinction of Australian culture due to the heterogeneous society. This study also broadens our understanding of the importance of having proper local culture knowledge in order to perform the role of local representation.

5.3.6.2 Practical Contribution

The findings of this qualitative study shed light on how NESB staff members conduct themselves in their role as a local hosts and provide an authentic Australian experience for culturally diverse guests, as detailed below:

   i.   In order to effectively perform the local host role, front-desk staff must have a thorough understanding of local culture and society, extensive tourism experience in Australia, as well as an understanding of guests' culture and familiarity with guests' perceptions and expectations regarding their perceived Australian image.

   ii.   It is also critical to provide an authentic experience for guests that is tailored to guests' needs and expectations in order to be perceived as high-quality service and satisfy the guest. As Brown (2013) suggests, tourists' knowledge and perceptions of the host destination and its culture may affect how authentic experiences are perceived.

   iii. The study findings stress the importance of providing platforms through training and protocol development to equip NESB front-desk staff with knowledge of the surrounding areas and destinations, as well as local cultural knowledge.

5.4   Chapter Summary

This chapter deep dives into the significance and relevance of the findings identified in Chapter 4 to existing theories of workforce cultural diversity, cross-cultural communication, and service quality. The first section of this chapter represents an overview of the study's objectives and methodology. This qualitative study seeks to determine the extent to which the cultural background of NESB migrant workers influences service quality in the Western Australian accommodation industry, focusing on cross-cultural communication, interaction with individuals of similar NESB cultural backgrounds, and local representation role dimensions. The initial findings of this case study are based on an inductive content analysis of data collected from 31 interviews and participant observation. In order to generate a conclusion for this research, the initial findings were validated by experts through subsequent expert interviews. The significance and practical implications of this study, as presented in Subchapter 5.3 are summarised in the following section.

In terms of theoretical significance, Section 5.3.1 identifies how the findings of this qualitative study on workforce cultural diversity align with existing diversity literature and theories, particularly cognitive diversity theories (Baum, 2006, 2012; Cox, 1993; ILO, 2014; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998) that a properly managed culturally diverse workforce provides the organisation's competitive advantage in a variety of areas, such as image, talent pool, transfer of knowledge, and transfer of skills. This is the result of a greater variety of perspectives, knowledge, experience, and other cognitive traits among a pool of individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. As stated by the Office of Multicultural Affairs & Inbound Tourism Organisation of Australia, having a culturally diverse workforce is pivotal in order to provide the appropriate service and a better understanding of culturally diverse customers in the Australian tourism and hospitality sector (1995). The most important practical implication from this section is that for businesses to reap the benefits of a culturally diverse workplace, they must practise good diversity management, encourage employees to embrace and respect diversity.

Section 5.3.2 explores the essential characteristics of NESB front-desk employees who provide quality service. First, this study identifies communication skills, a positive attitude and personality, an understanding of guests' needs, and sufficient local knowledge as essential qualities for front-desk staff to possess in order to provide excellent service. The finding is consistent with the SERVQUAL dimensions developed by Parasutaman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) and Martin's (1986) procedural and convivial dimensions. From all of these attributes, communication skills are the most important in providing front-desk services because front-desk personnel serve as the communication hub, the first and last point of contact for guests, as well as the 'nerve centre' and 'focal point' for guests' activities and employee contacts (Cook et al., 2018). Finally, as a practical insight, in this 'new normal,' the importance of staff communication skills and flexibility in tailoring services to guests' needs cannot be overstated.

Section 5.3.3 delves into how the cultural backgrounds of NESB migrant front-desk employees manifest differences in language proficiency, accents, and multilingual skills, and how this affects communication and interaction quality, which has a direct impact on service quality in the WA accommodation sector. First, communication barriers are unavoidable in cross-cultural communication situations due to misunderstanding and incorrect interpretations, because our communication style is culturally embedded, shaped by an ethnic group's attitudes, beliefs, customs, and

specific expectations, and influenced by context, knowledge, and emotion (Albu, 2015; Hall & Hall, 1990; Hofstede, 1980, 2001). Second, the main cross-cultural communication barriers, particularly in the Australian context, including different accents and the presence of Australian slang; with the accent being the most significant communication barrier in cross-cultural service encounters (God & Zhang, 2019; Nagai et al., 2020). Meanwhile, while previous research has pointed to English proficiency as the primary cause of cross-cultural communication barriers (Australian Trade Commission, 2015; Baum, 2006; Madera et al., 2014), this study discovered that this is not the case in cross-cultural communication between front-desk staff and guests in case study organisations. Finally, this study discovered that the ability of staff to speak guest "language" (including communication style) and a well-developed service protocol/standard are critical in front-desk service.

Section 5.3.4 discusses the role of culturally diverse NESB frontline migrant workers in serving guests of similar cultural backgrounds. In similar NESB cultural background interactions between front-desk staff and guests, there are two sides to the coin. First, this study is consistent with cultural congruency theory, which states that cultural similarities tend to support a better and deeper interaction and mutual understanding between the service provider and the customer, resulting in better service provision and evaluation (Rao Hill & Tombs, 2011). Unpleasant interaction, on the other hand, may result from demanding guests who put pressure on the staff to provide special treatment because they come from similar backgrounds, especially with guests from cultures with a higher power distance. According to Hofstede's cultural dimension (1980) on power distance, customers from societies with greater power distances, such as Asian countries, believe they have more power than service providers, while service providers exhibit subservient behaviour. Finally, this section highlights the importance of NESB front-desk staff in providing a more welcoming, familiar, and comfortable environment for NESB guests because the staff can communicate in the guests' language (or accent/dialect) and may be able to better understand their needs.

Section 5.3.5 delves deeper into the diverse attitudes and personal traits of front-desk employees based on their cultural background, how these are perceived differently by culturally diverse guests and their relationship to Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Though it could be argued that attitudes are more of a personal trait than a cultural trait, this study finds that staff from Asian and Latin American countries are more polite and submissive, whereas an interview with a German staff reveals that they are more direct, rigid, and sometimes considered rude. This outcome is consistent with

Hofstede's (1985) cultural dimensions, specifically "Power Distance" and "Uncertainty Avoidance." Again, catering to guests' cultural backgrounds while adhering to standards/protocols, as well as providing diversity management and training, are critical for the service industry.

Section 5.3.6 digs deeper into the role of NESB front-desk personnel as an Australian 'local' representative who provides authentic local experience. In contrast to Baum, Hearns, and Devine (2008) and Janta (2011), this study finds that, in the case of Australia, NESB migrants at the front-desk position can represent and introduce the culture of the destination country in the context of providing an authentic experience. Furthermore, because the interviewed tourists were aware of the cultural diversity in Australian society, they saw the presence of NESB migrants at front desk positions as a representation of Australian multiculturalism. This study also discovered that NESB migrant front-desk staff frequently end up with a deeper and more reflective understanding of the destination country, including its customs and values. Furthermore, NESB migrant employees have been shown to better understand the cultural values of their guests. As a result, they can introduce Australia in guests 'language' and preferences, positively influencing guests' authentic experience. The study's findings emphasise the importance of training to provide NESB front-desk staff with adequate local knowledge.

The final chapter serves as the thesis's overarching conclusion. First, Section.6.2 delves into the current study's limitations and gaps. Section 6.3 then recommends future research directions based on the knowledge gaps identified in this study. Furthermore, based on the practical implications explored in Chapter 5, this part provides insights into the policy and management of the hospitality workforce. Finally, the thesis concludes by summarising how the study's findings addressed the research objectives and contributed to general knowledge.

CHAPTER 6.   CONCLUSION

6.1   Chapter Introduction

The preceding chapter discusses the theoretical importance of this study as well as its practical contribution to tourism and hospitality research, businesses, and stakeholders. Based on the findings of 31 interviews, which were then validated by experts, Chapter 5 concludes that the cultural background of NESB migrant front-desk staff influences the key attributes of front-desk service at WA apartment hotels, particularly communication skills, knowledge, and attitude; these attributes affect the quality of the employee-guest interaction as well as the guests' perceived authenticity. First, this study adds to existing research on how different accents and the use of colloquial language ('slang') create communication barriers due to misunderstandings caused by different pronunciations and word usage (God & Zhang, 2019; Rao Hill & Tombs, 2011, 2014). Second, the findings show how, in some cases, having the same cultural background as guests and employees can lead to guests (unpleasantly) expecting an overly subservient attitude that would otherwise not be expected from Australian hospitality employees, which aligned with Hofstede's cultural dimension. Finally, depending on the destination country, this study adds new insights into tourists' shifting perspectives and expectations of authenticity. The main practical contributions identified in Chapter 5 revolve primarily around the importance of maintaining good communication (the ability to speak the "language" of the guests), the provision of well-developed service standards/protocols, and the flexibility in tailoring services based on the needs of the guests.

The overarching conclusion of the thesis can be found in this final chapter. To begin, Section.6.2 delves into the limitations and gaps that the current study has, the majority of which are caused by the case study methodology and limitations of the number and type of respondents. Following that, Section 6.3 Section 6.3 then recommends future research directions based on the knowledge gaps identified in this study. In addition, this section offers insights into the policy and management of the hospitality workforce diversity management, which are based on the practical implications discussed in Chapter 5. The concluding remarks section will provide a summary of how the findings of the study contributed to general knowledge and how they addressed the research objectives.

6.2   Limitation of the Current Study

The study's limitations are primarily due to the constraints in the research methodology and data collection, as detailed below:

i.   This qualitative research employed an inductive-exploratory method, which, while capable of addressing the research objective, yields somewhat ambiguous conclusions in some areas. Additional validation via more specific qualitative or quantitative research is necessary to obtain a more accurate outcome.

ii.   The findings of this study are not necessarily generalizable due to the case study approach and the small sample size used to collect data. As such, this study only represents the relationship between workforce cultural diversity and front-desk service quality in target apartment hotels across Western Australia.

iii. The methodological choices were limited by the complexity inherent in research that examines phenomena from a cross-cultural and service quality perspective, the time available, and the scarcity of specific literature.

iv.   The moderate sample size and limited type of guest respondents are a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in very limited international leisure travel due to the border closure, as well as a shrinking workforce due to the slowing economy (ABS, 2021). This study interviewed 31 respondents but received limited input from international leisure guests, particularly first-time travellers or NESB guests with limited English proficiency, who could provide a unique perspective on some aspects of this study, particularly the authentic experience and communication themes. This study concentrated on long-stay business guests and intrastate visitors who are familiar with and have been exposed to Australian culture before.

v.   The interviewed experts are primarily native speakers from academic and English backgrounds. The researchers believed that additional perspectives from experts in tourism and hospitality human resource management would add depth and validation to the findings.

vi.   The findings on the 'authentic experience' theme are limited to guests who primarily stay in urban areas. As a result, this research is devoid

of input from guests who travel to more rural (outback) destinations, which would contribute to a more comprehensive study outcome.

vii. The researcher's active role as an interviewer and observer from a non-English speaking background might exhibit some bias and subjectivity. Additionally, respondents may alter their responses to be polite, owing to the sensitive nature of the culturally related topic, particularly when Australian respondents were asked for their evaluation of NESB staff.

6.3 Future Research, Policies, and Management on Hospitality's Workforce Cultural Diversity and Service Quality

This study contributed to our understanding of the effect of workforce cultural diversity on the quality of accommodation service quality as a result of NESB migrants' integration into the local tourism workforce. Additionally, this qualitative study produced some intriguing findings that necessitated additional investigation, thereby opening doors for future research in the identified area, as outlined below:

i. This study explores the relationship between workforce cultural diversity and service quality in the accommodation sector by employing a case study of an apartment-hotel chain in Western Australia, primarily located in the metropolitan area. It is recommended to conduct a similar study with a few other institutions, particularly with a bigger hotel chain with a significant international leisure market and outback accommodations, to examine if the key themes and relationships identified are still relevant.

ii. Due to the limitations of the case study and the inductive-qualitative approach, the findings' reliability and generalisability are somewhat limited. However, the researcher interviewed five experts to increase the reliability and dependability of the initial findings. Nevertheless, a follow-up study employing quantitative approaches is required to test the dependability of communication, attitude, and knowledge/ experience as key attributes in front-desk services influenced by cultural diversity.

iii. This study concludes that NESB staff already have adequate language proficiency to perform front-desk roles in WA apartment hotels. As a result, language proficiency is not necessarily a communication barrier

for NESB front-desk staff. However, in general, the Australian Trade Commission (2015) asserts that limited English proficiency is still a significant barrier to employment for migrant workers in the tourism and hospitality industries. A more in-depth exploration of this topic, focusing on the roles of room attendants, wait staff, and other low-barrier entry positions, may provide a more robust understanding of how English proficiency affects tourism service quality.

iv. The research identifies several cross-cultural communication phenomena that merit further investigation. For example, additional research into the influence of foreign accents on cross-cultural communication via telephone may be recommended in response to some respondents experiencing more cross-cultural communication via phone call than through face-to-face or written communication. Second, this study discovers that when the older generation is involved, cross-cultural communication also becomes more intense, and this is unrelated to hearing problems. As a result, research into the extent to which different ages of customers respond in cross-cultural communication is recommended to mitigate service failures related to the tourism industry's growing senior market.

v. Further research is needed to explore the role of the Power Distance dimension in cross-cultural tourism service encounters. Hofstede (1980) states that this particular cultural dimension plays a significant role in individual behaviour and interaction with others. The perceived superiority of customers versus the expected subservient attitude of service providers, which affect the delivery and evaluation of service, merit further research attention.

vi. Due to relatively homogenous guest respondents, mostly are Australian residents, the findings on authenticity are limited to the role of NESB migrants at the front-desk position as a representative of Australian multiculturalism. Future studies should consider targeting more diverse markets, particularly first-time traveller, to get more comprehensive insights into the authenticity theme.

There are four main recommendations for the practitioners in regards to optimising the role of workforce cultural diversity in delivering front-desk service quality, as follows:

i. Organisations are recommended to provide adequate inclusive policies and diversity management as well as proactively implement induction initiatives and diversity training to enhance intercultural understanding in order to maintain workplace harmony and bost employee performance (Zopiatis et al., 2014; Joppe, 2012; Mor Barak, 2011; McMahon, 2010; Devine et al., 2007). Unfortunately, these initiatives are yet to be implemented by many tourism and hospitality organisations in Australia.

ii. Knowledge and understanding of different cultures are pivotal in order to understand guests' needs and deliver adequate service. Therefore, a program, training, or course to prepare the employees (and management) to serve international guests, for example, the 'China Ready Program', will contribute to organisations' competitive advantages, personnels' competencies, and guests' satisfaction.

iii. To recognise and embrace the cultural diversity in the workplace and to provide a platform for knowledge and information transfer so that employees can leverage their cultural background to the benefit of the business.

iv. The presence of both native and NESB front-desk staff are proven to boost service performance, limit communication barriers, and de-escalate service failure.

6.4   Concluding Remarks

This research aims to answer the extent to which the cultural diversity of NESB migrant-workers in the front of house positions influences the quality of service delivery in WA's accommodation industry, with a focus on the quality of cross-cultural communication, interactions with tourists from a similar cultural background, and guests' perceived authentic experience in being served by NESB front-desk staffs. Based on the triangulated qualitative analysis of over 30 respondents, it can be concluded that the cultural background of NESB migrant front desk staff has an effect on key front-desk service attributes in apartment hotels throughout Western Australia, particularly communication (language) skill, knowledge and experience, and attitude, all of which affect the quality and interaction of employee-guest communication and interaction, as well as the authentic experie'ce of guests. The study's key findings and significance are summarised below.

i.   Communication attributes, particularly language proficiency, accent, and multilingualism, are influenced by the migrant workforce's cultural diversity, as language is not only a primary communication tool but also a feature of cultural identity. According to the findings, NESB employees' cultural backgrounds does not seem to have a particularly heavy bearing on their English proficiency, which is a criterion in hiring front-desk employees, but it does have an impact on their accent and ability to speak other languages. While a heavy accent frequently leads to communication breakdowns and service failures, the ability to communicate in the guests' native language may help to mitigate or de-escalate those breakdowns.

ii. The front-desk workforce's cultural diversity is proven to add competitive advantages in servicing culturally diverse guests, particularly guests with similar cultural backgrounds. By speaking the guest's language and understanding their cultural values, customs, and needs, the NESB front-desk staff is able to provide an adequate service that boosts service quality. However, in some cases, when their origin shows a larger Power Distance dimension, for example, in Asian background, there might be a less desirable outcome due to the customers' perceived superiority.

iii. Hofstede's (1980,1985) cultural dimensions, particularly Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Masculinity, are useful to guide research on how cultural values might influence an individual's behaviour, attitude, and view of others. These cultural dimensions seem to influence whether front-desk staff tend to show subservient attitudes and guests develop superiority attitudes, resulting in a cross-cultural interaction dynamic that affects service delivery and perceived service quality.

iv. Despite the fact that the guest segment interviewed was somewhat limited, the results of this study refute the hypothesis that NESB migrant workers who serve as the local host may likely misrepresent the destination and fail to provide authentic experiences to guests (in Australia). The respondents agreed that the presence of NESB personnel at the front desk accurately reflects Australia's multicultural society. Additionally, the NESB front-desk staff is perceived to be able to provide an authentic experience due to their knowledge,

understanding, and experience of the local culture and host destination.

The findings of this qualitative research emphasise the importance of understanding and embracing cultural diversity in cross-cultural service encounters in order to improve service quality, as cultural backgrounds influence how individuals deliver, perceive, and evaluate services. Thus, practitioners must manage cultural diversity in their workforce to maximise their advantages and mitigate any potential problems and challenges. Despite its limitations, this study contributes to a more robust understanding of the relationship between workforce cultural diversity and front-desk service quality in accommodations and lays the groundwork for future research in this area.

LIST OF REFERENCES

Abbas, J., Mubeen, R., Iorember, P. T., Raza, S., & Mamirkulova, G. (2021). Exploring the impact of COVID-19 on tourism: Transformational potential and implications for a sustainable recovery of the travel and leisure industry. *Current Research in Behavioral Sciences, 2,* 100033. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.crbeha.2021.100033

Akbaba, A. (2006). Measuring service quality in the hotel industry: A study in a business hotel in Turkey. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 25*(2), 170-192. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2005.08.006

Albu, C. E. (2015). Intercultural communication in tourism. *Cross - Cultural Management Journal*, 17(1). https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/intercultural-communication-tourism/docview/2300649775/se-2

Alden, D. L., He, Y., & Chen, Q. (2010). Service recommendations and customer evaluations in the international marketplace: Cultural and situational contingencies. *Journal of Business Research, 63*(1), 38-44. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2009.01.009

Alzaydi, Z. M., Al-Hajla, A., Nguyen, B., & Jayawardhena, C. (2018). A review of service quality and service delivery: Towards a customer co-production and customer-integration approach. *Business Process Management Journal, 24*(1), 295-328. https://doi.org/10.1108/BPMJ-09-2016-0185

Armstrong, R. W., Mok, C., Go, F. M., & Chan, A. (1997). The importance of cross-cultural expectations in the measurement of service quality perceptions in the hotel industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 16*(2), 181-190. https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-0031161156&partnerID=40&md5=bee80059657bfd54d4142ad151945564

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2014). *Australian national accounts: Tourism satellite account, 2013-14* (5249.0). Australian Bureau of Statistics. https://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs@.nsf/Previousproducts/5249.0Appendix12013-14?opendocument&tabname=Notes&prodno=5249.0&issue=2013-14&num=&view=

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2017, June 27, 2017). *Western Australia is home to Australia's fastest growing region - again!* Australian Bureau of Statistics. https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mediareleasesbyReleaseDate/27CAE1A5F7F2BC90CA258148000A4331?OpenDocument

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2020). *Short-term movement, visitors arriving - selected countries of residence.* Australian Bureau of Statistics. https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/3401.0Main+Features1Nov%202019?OpenDocument

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021, April 23, 2021). *Migration, Australia:'Statistics on Australia's international migration, internal migration (interstate and intrastate), and the population by country of birth*. Australian Bureau of Statistics. Retrieved April 24, 2021, from

https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/migration-australia/latest-release#australia-s-population-by-country-of-birth

Australian Trade Commission. (2015). *Australian tourism labour force report: 2015-2020.* (Deloitte Access Economics, Ed. 1 ed.) https://www.tra.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/185/Australian_Tourism_Labour_Force_FINAL.PDF.aspx

Australian Trade and Investment Commission. (2016). *Literature review - Tourism and hospitality careers international benchmarking.* https://www.austrade.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/5499/Tourism-and-hospitality-Careers-International-Benchmarking-Report.pdf.aspx

Australian Trade and Investment Commission. (2019). *Tourism education and training.* Commonwealth of Australia. https://www.austrade.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/5185/Australia%20Tourism%20Edu_Training%20ICR_ENG.pdf.aspx?Embed=Y

Azarova, O. A., Goryacheva, E. N., Ilkevich, S. V., Sevryukova, O. I., & Stakhova, L. V. (2019). Development of Cross-Cultural Communication in International Tourism. *Journal of Environmental Management & Tourism*, 10(6(38)), 1376-1381. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.14505/jemt.v10.6(38).20

Bakker, A. B., Demerouti, E., & Euwema, M. C. (2005). Job resources buffer the impact of job demands on burnout. *J Occup Health Psychol, 10*(2), 170-180. https://doi.org/10.1037/1076-8998.10.2.170

Bailey, B. (1997). Communication of respect in interethnic service encounters. *Language in Society, 26*(3), 327-356. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404500019497

Banfield, A. (1973). Narrative Style and the Grammar of Direct and Indirect Speech. *Foundations of Language*, 10(1), 1-39. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25000702

Bardi, J. A. (2003). *Hotel front office management* (3rd ed.). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Barna, L. M. (1994). Stumbling blocks in intercultural communication. *Intercultural communication: A reader, 6*, 345-353.

Barrington, M. N., & Olsen, M. D. (1987). Concept of service in the hospitality industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 6*(3), 131-138. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/0278-4319(87)90047-8

Basala, S. L., & Klenosky, D. B. (2001). Travel-Style Preferences for Visiting a Novel Destination: A Conjoint Investigation across the Novelty-Familiarity Continuum. Journal of Travel Research, 40(2), 172–182. https://doi.org/10.1177/004728750104000208

Baum, T. (1994). The development and implementation of national tourism policies. *Tourism Management, 15*(3), 185-192.

Baum, T. (2002). Skills and training for the hospitality sector: a review of issues. *Journal of vocational Education and Training, 54*(3), 343-364.

Baum, T. (2006). *Human resource management for tourism, hospitality and leisure: an international perspective* London: Thomson Learning.

Baum, T. (2012). *Migrant workers in the international hotel industry* (International Migration Paper No. 112). International Labour Office. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/publication/wcms_180596.pdf

Baum, T., Hearns, N., & Devine, F. (2008). Place branding and the representation of people at work: Exploring issues of tourism imagery and migrant labour in the Republic of Ireland. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy, 4*(1), 45-60. https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.pb.6000083

Beeton, S. (2005). The case study in tourism research: A multi-method case study approach. In B. W. Ritchie, P. Burns, & C. Palmer (Eds.), *Tourism research methods : Integrating theory with practice*. CABI. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/curtin/detail.action?docID=289665

Blevins, M. D. (2017). Participant observation. In M. Allen (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*. SAGE Publications, Inc. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483381411

Bowen, J., & Morosan, C. (2018). Beware hospitality industry: The robots are coming. *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes, 10*(6), 726-733. https://doi.org/10.1108/WHATT-07-2018-0045

Bright, D., Cortes, A., Hartmann, E., Parboteeah, K. P., Pierce, J. L., Reece, M., Shah, A., Terjesen, S., Weiss, J., White, M. A., Gardner, D. G., Lambert, J., Leduc, L. M., Leopold, J., Muldoon, J., & O'Rourke, J. S. (2019). Diversity in organizations. In *Principle of management* (pp. 369-396). OpenStax. https://assets.openstax.org/oscms-prodcms/media/documents/PrinciplesofManagement-OP_mGBMvoU.pdf

Brown, L. (2013). Tourism: A catalyst for existential authenticity. *Annals of Tourism Research, 40*, 176-190. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2012.08.004

Burns, P. (1999). *An introduction to tourism and anthropology* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203201510

Caligiuri, P., Phillips, J., Lazarova, M., Tarique, I., & Burgi, P. (2001). The theory of met expectations applied to expatriate adjustment: the role of crosscultural training. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 12*(3), 357-372. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585190121711

Campbell, J. L., Quincy, C., Osserman, J., & Pedersen, O. K. (2013). Coding In-depth Semistructured Interviews: Problems of Unitization and Intercoder Reliability and Agreement. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 42(3), 294-320. https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124113500475

Cargile, A. C. (2000). Evaluations of employment suitability: Does accent always matter? *Journal of Employment Counseling, 37*(3), 165-177.

Carson, D., Carson, D., & Tremblay, P. (2010). The Economic Geography of Remote Tourism: The Problem of Connection Seeking. *Tourism Analysis, 15*, 125-137. https://doi.org/10.3727/108354210X12724734537551

Carson, D., & Harwood, S. (2007). Tourism development in rural and remote areas: build it and they may not come! *Queensland Planner, 47*, 18-22.

Castelli, F. (2018). Drivers of migration: why do people move? *Journal of Travel Medicine, 25*(1). https://doi.org/10.1093/jtm/tay040

Chase, R. B., & Hayes, R. H. (1991). Beefing up operations in Service Firms. *Management Review, 33*(1), 15.

Choi, J.-G., Woods, R. H., & Murrmann, S. K. (2000). International labor markets and the migration of labor forces as an alternative solution for labor shortages in the hospitality industry. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 12*(1), 61-67. https://doi.org/10.1108/09596110010305154

Chu, R. K. S., & Choi, T. (2000). An importance-performance analysis of hotel selection factors in the Hong Kong hotel industry: A comparison of business and leisure travellers. *Tourism Management, 21*(4), 363-377. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(99)00070-9

Cohen, E. (1985). The tourist guide: The origins, structure and dynamics of a role. Annals of Tourism Research, 12(1), 5-29. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(85)90037-4

Cohen, E. (2012). Globalization, global crises and tourism. *Tourism Recreation Research, 37*(2), 103-111. https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2012.11081695

Cohen, E., & Cooper, R. L. (1986). Language and tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 13(4), 533-563. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(86)90002-2

Collier, A. (2011). *Principle of tourism: A New Zealand perspective* (8th ed.). Pearson

Commission, E. (2016). *Service standard*. Retrieved April 14, 2021, from https://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/services/service-standards_en

Commons, J., & Page— S. (2001). Chapter 10 - Managing seasonality in peripheral tourism regions: The case of Northland, New Zealand. In T. Baum & S. Lundtorp (Eds.), *Seasonality in Tourism* (pp. 153-172). Pergamon. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-043674-6.50013-1

Cook, R. A., Hsu, C. H. C., & Taylor, L. L. (2018). *Tourism: The business of hospitality and travel* (global 6th ed.). Pearson.

Cope, M. (2010). Coding qualitative data. In U. Flick, V. E. Kardoff, & I. Steinke (Eds.), *A companion to qualitative research* (pp. 279–294). Sage Publications.

Cox, T. (1993). Cultural diversity in organizations: Theory, research, and practice. Berrett-Koehler.

Cox, T. (2013). Interactional model of cultural diversity. In E. Kessssler (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of management theory* (Vol. 1, pp. 390-394). SAGE Publications, Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452276090

Cox, T. H., Lobel, S. A., & McLeod, P. L. (1991). Effects of Ethnic Group Cultural Differences on Cooperative and Competitive Behavior on a Group Task. *The Academy of Management Journal*, 34(4), 827-847. https://doi.org/10.2307/256391

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. SAGE Publications. https://books.google.com.au/books?id=YcdlPWPJRBcC

Cronin, J. J., & Taylor, S. A. (1994). SERVPERF versus SERVQUAL: Reconciling performance-based and perceptions-minus-expectations measurement of service quality. *Journal of Marketing, 58*(1), 125-131. https://doi.org/10.2307/1252256

Dedeoğlu, B. B., Balikçioğlu Dedeoğlu, S., & Küçükergin, K. G. (2018). The moderating role of nationality on destination experience. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality and Tourism, 19*(2), 217-242. https://doi.org/10.1080/1528008X.2017.1363010

Desiderio, V., & Mestres-Domènech, J. (2011). *Migrant Entrepreneurship in OECD Countries*. http://www.oecd.org/els/mig/Part%20II_Entrepreneurs_engl.pdf

Dicken, P. (2007). *Global shift: Mapping the changing contours ᵒf the world economy* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Dimanche, F., & Reisinger, Y. (2011). *International tourism: Cultures and behavior*. Routledge. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/curtin/detail.action?docID=534936

Dragolea, L., & Cotirlea, D. (2011). The influence of brain drain phenomenon on tourism sector. *International Journal of Economic Practices and Theories, 1*, 20-27.

Duffy, J. A. M., & Ketchand, A. A. (1998). Examining the role of service quality In overall service satisfaction. *Journal of Managerial Issues, 10*(2), 240-255. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40604195

Dwyer, L. (1993). *Economic impacts of migration induced inbound tourism*. Faculty of Business and Technology, University of Western Sydney.

Dwyer, L., Forsyth, P., King, B., & Seetaram, N. (2010). *Migration-related determinants of Australian inbound and outbound tourism flows*. Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre https://sustain.pata.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/80068-Dwyer-Migration-Tourism-Flows-WEB.pdf

Dwyer, L., Seetaram, N., Forsyth, P., & King, B. (2014). Is the migration-tourism relationship only about VFR? *Annals of Tourism Research, 46*(C), 130-143. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2014.03.009

Elshaer, A. M., & Marzouk, A. M. (2019). *Labor in tourism and hospitality industry: Skills, ethics, issues, and rights*. Apple Academic Press. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/curtin/detail.action?docID=5780624

Frances, C., & Margee, H. (2015). Advancing the global perspective of tourism by examining core and peripheral destinations. In A. C. Angelo (Ed.), *Handbook of Research on Global Hospitality and Tourism Management* (pp. 37-53). IGI Global. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-4666-8606-9.ch004

Fujii, L. A. (2017). *Interviewing in social science research: A relational approach*. Routledge. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203756065

Garofano, N., Martins, A., Olsen, M., Chai, A., Hutchings, K., & McLennan, C.-L. (2017). *Developing the tourism workforce of the future in the APEC Region* (APEC#216-TO-01.25). APEC Secretariat. https://www.griffith.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0023/90905/217_TWG_-Developing-the-Tourism-Workforce-of-the-Future.pdf

God, Y. T., & Zhang, H. (2019). Intercultural challenges, intracultural practices: How Chinese and Australian students understand and experience intercultural communication at an Australian university. *Higher Education, 78*(2), 305-322. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-018-0344-0

Gold, S. J., & Nawyn, S. J. (2013). *Routledge international handbook of migration studies*. Routledge. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/curtin/detail.action?docID=1105871

Government of Western Australia. (1912). Western Australia for the immigrant. In *The official handbook of Western Australia* (pp. 293-301). Government of Western Australia

Gbrich C. Qualitative *Data Analysis: An Introduction* (1st edn). London: Sage Publications, 2007.

Greenwood, M. J. (1985). Human migration: Theory, models, and empirical studies. *Journal of regional Science, 25*(4), 521-544.

Grier, S. A., Brumbaugh, A. M., & Thornton, C. G. (2006). Crossover dreams: Consumer responses to ethnic-oriented products. *Journal of Marketing, 70*(2), 35-51. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30162084

Grobelna, A., & Skrzeszewska, K. (2019). Seasonality: Is it a problem or challenge facing future tourism employment? Implications for management. *Journal of Entrepreneurship, Management and Innovation, 15*(1), 205-230. https://doi.org/10.7341/20191518

Gruber, T., Abosag, I., Reppel, A., Szmigin, I., & Löfgren, M. (2013). Does culture impact preferred employee attributes in complaint-handling encounters? *Total Quality Management & Business Excellence, 24*(11-12), 1301-1315. https://doi.org/10.1080/14783363.2013.822664

Hall, C. M., Page, S. J., & Hall, C. M. (1999). *Geography of tourism and recreation: Environment, place and space*. Taylor & Francis Group. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/curtin/detail.action?docID=168586

Hall, E. T. (1977). *Beyond culture*. Anchor Pr.

Hall, E. T., & Hall, M. R. (1990). *Understanding cultural differences.* Intercultural Press.

Hancock, D. R., & Algozzine, B. (2006). *Doing case study research: A practical guide for beginning researchers*. Teachers College Press.

Heller, M. (2003). Globalization, the new economy, and the commodification of language and identity. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 7(4), 473–492. https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1467-9841.2003.00238.X

Heyes, A. (2017). Hotel front office management. In R. C. Wood (Ed.), *Hotel Accommodation Management* (pp. 57-69). Taylor & Francis Group. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/curtin/detail.action?docID=5101491

Hillman, W., & Radel, K. (Eds.). (2018). *Qualitative methods in tourism research: Theory and practice*. Ringgold Inc. https://doi.org/10.21832/9781845416416

Hoaglin, D. C., J., L. R., McPeek, B., Mosteller, F., & Stoto, M. A. (1982). *Data for decisions: Information strategies for policymakers*. Abt Books.

Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values*. SAGE Publications.

Hofstede, G. (1985). The interaction between national and organizational value system [1]. *Journal of Management Studies, 22*(4), 347-357. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.1985.tb00001.x

Hofstede, G. (2005). *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind* (Rev. and expanded 2nd ed.). McGraw-Hill. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/curtin/detail.action?docID=1209491

Holland, J., & Gentry, J. W. (1999). Ethnic consumer reaction to targeted marketing: a theory of intercultural accommodation. *Journal of Advertising, 28*(1), 65-77. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1999.10673577

Huang, S. S., & Crotts, J. (2019). Relationships between Hofstede's cultural dimensions and tourist satisfaction: A cross-country cross-sample examination. *Tourism Management, 72*, 232-241. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2018.12.001

Hurn, B., & Tomalin, B. (2013). Cross-cultural communication : Theory and practice. Palgrave Macmillan UK.

International Organization for Migration. (2019). *The world migration report 2020*. International Organization for Migration.

International Labour Organization. (2018). *International labour standards on migrant workers*. Retrieved March 2, 2020, from https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-sta—ards/migrant-workers/lang--en/index.htm

International Organization for Migration. (2019). *Migration*. United Nations. https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/migration/index.html

Jang, S., Liu, T., Kang, J. H., & Yang, H. (2018). Understanding important hotel attributes from the consumer perspective over time. *Australasian Marketing Journal (AMJ), 26*(1), 23-30. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ausmj.2018.02.001

Janta, H. (2011). Polish migrant workers in the UK hospitality industry. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 23*(6), 803-819. https://doi.org/10.1108/09596111111153484

Janta, H., Brown, L., Lugosi, P., & Ladkin, A. (2011). Migrant relationships and tourism employment. *Annals of Tourism Research, 38*(4), 1322-1343. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2011.03.004

Janta, H., & Ladkin, A. (2009). Polish migrant labor in the hospitality workforce: Implications for recruitment and retention. *Tourism Culture & Communication, 9*, 5-15. https://doi.org/10.3727/109830409787556693

Janta, H., Lugosi, P., Brown, L., & Ladkin, A. (2012). Migrant networks, language learning and tourism employment. *Tourism Management, 33*(2), 431-439. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2011.05.004

Jarvis, J., & Peel, V. (2013). Tourists for hire: International working holidaymakers in a work based destination in regional Australia. *Tourism Management, 37*, 114-124. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2012.10.014

Jaworski, A., & Pritchard, A. (2005). *Discourse, communication and tourism*. Channel View Publications, Limited. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/curtin/detail.action?docID=255743

Jaworski, A. (2009). Greetings in tourist-host encounters. *The New Sociolinguistics Reader*, 662–679. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-92299-4_45

Javier, R. A., Faber, A., Lamela, M., & Amrami, Y. (2020). Introduction to special issue on language and culture. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research, 49*(4), 509-510. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10936-020-09724-5

Jennings, G. (2005). Interviewing: A focus on qualitative techniques. In B. W. Ritchie, P. Burns, & C. Palmer (Eds.), *Tourism research methods : Integrating theory with practice*. CABI. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/curtin/detail.action?docID=289665

Jennings, G. (2010). *Tourism research* (2nd ed.). John Wiley & Sons Australia.

Johnston, R., & Clark, G. (2008). *Service operations management: Improving service delivery* (3rd ed.). FT Prentice Hall.

Jolliffe, L., & Farnsworth, R. (2003). Seasonality in tourism employment: human resource challenges. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 15*(6), 312-316. https://doi.org/10.1108/09596110310488140

Jones, P., & Lockwood, A. (1998). Operations management research in the hospitality industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 17*(2), 183-202.

Joppe, M. (2012). Migrant workers: Challenges and opportunities in addressing tourism labour shortages. *Tourism Management*, 33(3), 662-671. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2011.07.009

Karayilan, E., & Cetin, G. (2016). Tourism destination: Design of experiences. In S. Marios & G. Dogan (Eds.), *The Handbook of Managing and Marketing Tourism Experiences* (pp. 65-83). Emerald Group Publishing Limited. https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-78635-290-320161004

Karpestam, P., & Anderson, F. N. G. (2013). Economic perspectives on migration. In *Routledge international handbook of migration studies* (pp. 12-27). http://ebookcentral.proquest.com

Kidwell, M. (2000). Common ground in cross-cultural communication: Sequential and institutional contexts in front desk service encounters. *Issues in Applied Linguistics, 11*(1).

Kogut, B., & Singh, H. (1988). The effect of national culture on the choice of entry mode. *Journal of International Business Studies, 19*(3), 411-432. https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.jibs.8490394

Kooi, S. (2013). Front office management. In R.C. Wood (Ed.), *Key Concepts in Hospitality Management* (pp. 46-49). Sage.

Kosinski, L. A., & Prothero, R. M. (1975). *People on the move: Studies on internal migration.* Harper & Row.

Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). *Marketing management* (15 ed.). Pearson.

Kramsch, C. (2009). *Language and culture*. Oxford University Press.

Kusluvan, S. (2003). *Managing employee attitudes and behaviors in the tourism and hospitality industry*. Nova Science Publishers.

Kvale, S. (2007). *Doing interviews*. SAGE Publications. https://doi.org/https://dx-doi-org.dbgw.lis.curtin.edu.au/10.4135/9781849208963

Lardies, R. (1999). Migration and tourism entrepreneurship: North-European immigrants in Cataluna and Languedoc. *International Journal Population Geography, 5*(6), 477-491. https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-1220(199911/12)5:6<477::AID-IJPG167>3.0.CO;2-U

Lee, E. S. (1966). A Theory of migration. *Demography, 3*(1), 47-57. https://doi.org/10.2307/2060063

Lee, G., & Tussyadiah, I. P. (2012). Exploring Familiarity and Destination Choice in International Tourism. Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research, 17(2), 133-145. https://doi.org/10.1080/10941665.2011.616906 Leiper, N. (1979). The framework of tourism: Towards a definition of tourism, tourist, and the tourist industry. *Annals of tourism research, 6*(4), 390-407.

Lemaître, G., Liebig, T., Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2007). *Labour market integration in Australia, Denmark, Germany and Sweden*. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Lincoln, Yvonna S. & Guba, Egon G. (1985). Naturalistic inquiry. SAGE Publications.

Lovelock, C., & Wright, L. (2010). *Principles of Service Marketing and Management* (2nd ed.). Prentice Hall.

Lu, C., Berchoux, C., Marek, M. W., & Chen, B. (2015). Service quality and customer satisfaction: Qualitative research implications for luxury hotels. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research, 9*(2), 168-182. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCTHR-10-2014-0087

Lundtorp, S. (2001). Measuring tourism seasonality. In T. Baum & S. Lundtorp (Eds.), *Seasonality in Tourism* (pp. 23-50). Pergamon. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-043674-6.50006-4

MacCannell, D. (1976). *The tourist: A new theory of the leisure class*. Macmillan.

Mackey, W., Coates, B., & Sherrell, H. (2022). Migrants in the Australian workforce: A guidebook for policy makers. Grattan Institute. https://grattan.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Migrants-in-the-Australian-workforce.pdf

Madera, J. M., Dawson, M., & Neal, J. A. (2014). Managing language barriers in the workplace: The roles of job demands and resources on turnover intentions. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 42*, 117-125. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2014.06.004

Magnusson, E., & Marecek, J. (Eds.). (2015). *Doing interview-based qualitative research: A learner's guide*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107449893.005

Martínez-Mesa, J., González-Chica, D. A., Duquia, R. P., Bonamigo, R. R., & Bastos, J. L. (2016). Sampling: How to select participants in my research study? *Anais Brasileiros de Dermatologia, 91*, 326-330. https://doi.org/https://dx.doi.org/10.1590%2Fabd1806-4841.20165254

Martin, W. B. (1986). Defining What Quality Service Is For You. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly, 26*(4), 32-38. https://doi.org/10.1177/001088048602600414

March, R. (2003). *Tourism industry as a service industry: An australian perspective*. inbound tourism studies centre. Retrieved 2021, January 20, from http://www.inboundtourism.com.au/article_three.html

Mathieson, A., & Wall, G. (1982). *Tourism: Economic, physical, and social impacts*. Longman.

Maylor, H., & Blackmon, K. L. (2005). *Researching business and management.* Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/https://doi-org.dbgw.lis.curtin.edu.au/10.1007/978-1-137-11022-0

Mazur, B. (2010). Cultural diversity in organisational theory and practice. Journal of Intercultural Management, 2, 5-15.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Miller, S. L., Zielaskowski, K., & Plant, E. A. (2012). The Basis of Shooter Biases:Beyond Cultural Stereotypes. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 38(10), 1358-1366. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167212450516

Mills, P. K. (1986). *Managing service industries: Organizational practices in a postindustrial economy.* Cambridge (Mass.): Ballinger. http://lib.ugent.be/catalog/rug01:000101915

Mok, C. (2001). Cross-cultural issues in service quality. In C. Mok, B. Sparks, & J. Kandampully (Eds.), *Service Quality Management in Hospitality, Tourism, and Leisure* (pp. 269-280). Routledge. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/curtin/detail.action?docID=1112529

Mok, C., Sparks, B., & Kandampully, J. (Eds.). (2001). *Service quality management in hospitality, tourism, and leisure*. Routledge. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/curtin/detail.action?docID=1112529

Mor Barak, M. (2011). *Managing diversity: Toward a globally inclusive workplace.*

Nagai, H., Tkaczynski, A., & Benckendorff, P. J. (2020). Exploring the role of language proficiency and cultural adaptation in travel risk perception: A study of Asian working holiday makers in Australia. Journal of Vacation Marketing, 26(2), 166–181. https://doi.org/10.1177/1356766719880249

Neuman, W. L. (2014). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (7th ed.). Pearson. http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1418029&site=ehost-live

Netto, A. P. (2009). Chapter 3. What is Tourism? Definitions, Theoretical Phases and Principles. In T. John (Ed.), Philosophical Issues in Tourism (pp. 43-61). Channel View Publications. https://doi.org/doi:10.21832/9781845410988-004

Nishimura, S., Nevgi, A., & Tella, S. (2008). Communication style and cultural features in high/low context communication cultures: A case study of Finland, Japan and India. Teoksessa A. Kallioniemi (toim.), Uudistuva ja kehittyvä ainedidaktiikka. Ainedidaktinen symposiumi, 8(2008), 783-796.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2001). *Innovations in Labour Market Policies*. https://doi.org/doi:https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264194502-en

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2007). *Jobs for immigrants (Vol. 1): Labour market integration in Australia, Denmark, Germany and Sweden*. Paris: OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264033603-en

Office of Multicultural Affairs, & Inbound Tourism Organisation of Australia. (1995). *Productive diversity in the tourism industry: Capitalising on the language and cultural skills of Australians of non-English speaking backgrounds*. Office of Multicultural Affairs

Office of Multicultural Interest. (2012). *The economic and social contribution of migrants to Western Australia*. Office of Multicultural Interests.

https://www.omi.wa.gov.au/StatsInfoGuides/Documents/lga_guides/Economic_Social_Contributions_MigrantsWA_Full_Report.pdf

Parasuraman, A. P., Zeithaml, V., & Berry, L. (1985). A conceptual model of service quality and its implication for future research (SERVQUAL). *The Journal of Marketing, 49*, 41-50. https://doi.org/10.2307/1251430

Parasuraman, A., Berry, L. L., & Zeithaml, V. A. (1991). Refinement and Reassessment of the SERVQUAL Scale. *Journal of Retailing, 67*(4), 420. https://search.proquest.com/docview/228675435?accountid=10382

Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A., & Berry, L. L. (1988). Servqual: A Multiple-Item Scale For Measuring Consumer Perc. *Journal of Retailing, 64*(1), 12. https://search.proquest.com/docview/228609374?accountid=10382

Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A., & Berry, L. L. (1994). Reassessment of expectations as a comparison standard in measuring service quality: Implications for further research. *Journal of Marketing, 58*(1), 111-124. https://doi.org/10.2307/1252255

Patterson, P. G., Cowley, E., & Prasongsukarn, K. (2006). Service failure recovery: The moderating impact of individual-level cultural value orientation on perceptions of justice. *International Journal of Research in Marketing, 23*(3), 263-277. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2006.02.004

Patton, M., Stevens, P., & Knutson, B. J. (1994). Internationalizing LODGSERV as a measurement tool. *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing, 2*(2), 39-55. https://doi.org/10.1300/J150v02n02_05

Patton, M. Q. (1999). Enhancing the quality and credibility of qualitative analysis. *Health services research, 34*(5 Pt 2), 1189-1208. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/10591279

Pechlaner, H., Dal Bò, G., & Volgger, M. (2012). What makes tourism an attractive industry for new minority entrepreneurs: Results from an exploratory qualitative study. *Tourism Review, 67*(1), 11-22. https://doi.org/10.1108/16605371211216332

Picken, F. (2018). The interview in tourism research. In W. Hillman & K. Radel (Eds.), *Qualitative Methods in Tourism Research: Theory and Practice*. Channel View Publications.

Quinlan, M., & Lever-Tracy, C. (1990). From labour market exclusion to industrial solidarity: Australian trade union responses to Asian workers, 1830–1988. *Cambridge Journal of Economics, 14*(2), 159-181. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.cje.a035124

Rao Hill, S., & Tombs, A. (2011). The effect of accent of service employee on customer service evaluation. *Managing Service Quality: An International Journal, 21*(6), 649-666. https://doi.org/10.1108/09604521111185637

Rao Hill, S., & Tombs, A. (2014). The effect of service employees' accent on customer reactions. *European Journal of Marketing, 48*(11/12), 2051-2070. https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-03-2013-0115

Reisinger, Y. (2001). Concepts of tourism, hospitality, and leisure services. In C. Mok, B. Sparks, & J. Kandampully (Eds.), *Service Quality Management in Hospitality, Tourism, and Leisure* (pp. 1-14). Routledge. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/curtin/detail.action?docID=1112529

Richmond, A. H. (1969). *Sociology of migration in industrial and post-industrial societies* (J. A. Jackson, Ed. In J.A. Jackson (ed.) *MIgration* ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Richmond, A. H. (2002). Socio-demographic aspects of globalization: Canadian perspectives on migration. *Canadian Studies in Population*, 123-149.

Riley, M. (2002). *Tourism employment: Analysis and planning.* Channel View Publications.

Richardson, F., & Fowers, B. (1998). Interpretive Social Science:An Overview. *American Behavioral Scientist, 41*(4), 465-495. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764298041004003

Ritchie, B., & Burns, P. (Eds.). (2005). *Tourism research methods: Integrating theory with practice.* https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/curtin/detail.action?docID=289665.

Ritchie, B. W., Burns, P., & Palmer, C. (2005). Introduction: Reflections on the practice of research. In B. W. Ritchie, P. Burns, & C. Palmer (Eds.), *Tourism research methods: Integrating theory with practice*. CABI. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/curtin/detail.action?docID=289665

Robertson, S. (2016). *Intertwined mobilities of education, tourism and labour: The consequences of 417 and 485 visas in Australia*. ANU Press.

Rogers, A., Anderson, B., & Clark, N. (2009). *Recession, vulnerable workers and immigration*. Centre on Migration, Policy and Society. https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/PR-2009-Recession_Vulnerable_Workers.pdf

Salazar, A., Costa, J., & Rita, P. (2010). A service quality evaluation scale for the hospitality sector: Dimensions, attributes and behavioural intentions. *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes, 2*(4), 383-397. https://doi.org/10.1108/17554211011074047

Sarantakos, S. (2005). *Social research* (3rd ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.

Sargeant, J. (2012). Qualitative research part II: Participants, analysis, and quality assurance. *Journal of Graduate Medical Education, 4*(1), 1-3. https://doi.org/10.4300/JGME-D-11-00307.1

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2016). *Research methods for business students* (7th ed.). Pearson

Saunders, P. (2003). *Social theory and the urban question*. Routledge.

Seetaram, N., & Dwyer, L. (2009). Immigration and Tourism Demand in Australia: A Panel Data Analysis. *Anatolia, 20*(1), 212-222. https://doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2009.10518905

Seeteram, N. (2010). *A dynamic panel data analysis of the immigration and tourism nexus* (Monash Economics Working Papers, Issue 39-10). Monash University, Department of Economics.

Shostack, G. L. (1987). Service Positioning through Structural Change. *Journal of Marketing, 51*(1), 34-43. https://doi.org/10.2307/1251142

Sinha, B. (2005). Human migration: concepts and approaches. *Foldrajzi Ertesito, 3*, 403-414.

Solomon, M. R., Surprenant, C., Czepiel, J. A., & Gutman, E. G. (1985). A role theory perspective on dyadic interactions: the service encounter. *Journal of marketing, 49*(1), 99-111.

Song, H., Li, G., & Cao, Z. (2018). Tourism and economic globalization: An emerging research agenda. *Journal of Travel Research, 57*(8), 999-1011. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287517734943

Sovic, S. (2009). Hi-bye friends and the herd instinct: International and home students in the creative arts. *Higher Education, 58*(6), 747. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-009-9223-z

Stake, R. E. (2006). *Multiple case study analysis*. The Guilford Press.

Steiner, C. J., & Reisinger, Y. (2006). Understanding existential authenticity. *Annals of Tourism Research, 33*(2), 299-318. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2005.08.002

Stoffelen, A. (2019). Disentangling the tourism sector's fragmentation: a hands-on coding/post-coding guide for interview and policy document analysis in tourism. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 22(18), 2197-2210. https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2018.1441268

Szivas, E., & Riley, M. (1999). Tourism employment during economic transition. *Annals of Tourism Research, 26*(4), 747-771. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(99)00035-3

Titz, K. (2001). The impact of people, process, and physical evidence on tourism, hospitality and leisure service quality. In C. Mok, B. Sparks, & J. Kandampully (Eds.), *Service Quality Management in Hospitality, Tourism, and Leisure* (pp. 67-84). Routledge. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/curtin/detail.action?docID=1112529

Tourism Research Australia. (2021a). *IVS tourism results year ending December 2020*

Tourism Research Australia. (2021b). *National Tourism Satellite Account 2019–20*. Retrieved March 20, 2021, from https://www.tra.gov.au/data-and-research/reports/national-tourism-satellite-account-2019-20/national-tourism-satellite-account-2019-20

Tourism Research Australia. (2021c). *Travel by Australians: Year ending December 2020*. The Australian Trade and Investment Commission.

https://www.tra.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/185/TRA_NVS_December_2020.pdf.aspx

Tourism WA Strategy and Research. (2021). *State tourism satellite account 2019-20: Topline results for WA*. Tourism Western Australia. https://www.tourism.wa.gov.au/Publications%20Library/Markets%20and%20research/2021/Ad%20hoc/State%20Tourism%20State%20Satellite%20Account%202019-20%20WA%20Summary.pdf

Tourism Western Australia. (2020). *International visitation - Fast fact, year ending September 2019*. Tourism Western Australia. https://www.tourism.wa.gov.au/Publications%20Library/Research%20and%20reports/2019/YE%20Sep%202019/IVS%20Fast%20Facts%20YE%20Sep%202019.pdf

Towner, J., & Wall, G. (1991). History and tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research, 18*(1), 71-84. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(91)90040-l

Treuren, G. J. M., Manoharan, A., & Vishnu, V. (2021). The hospitality sector as an employer of skill discounted migrants. Evidence from Australia. *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events, 13*(1), 20-35. https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2019.1655859

Tsang, N. K.-F., & Ap, J. (2007). Tourists' perceptions of relational quality service attributes: A cross-cultural study. *Journal of Travel Research, 45*(3), 355-363. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287506295911

Tu, W. M. (1998). Probing the 'three bonds' and 'five relationships' in Confucian humanism. *Confucianism and the family*, 121-136.

United Nations, Commission of the European Communities, World Tourism Organization, & Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2010). *Tourism satellite account: Recommended methodological framework 2008* (ST/ESA/STAT/SER.F/80/Rev.1). United Nations. https://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/Seriesf/SeriesF_80rev1e.pdf

United Nations World Tourism Organization. (2010). *International recommendations for tourism statistics 2008* (ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/83/Rev.1). United Nations. https://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/Seriesm/SeriesM_83rev1e.pdf

United Nations World Tourism Organization. (2019). *International tourism highlights, 2019 edition*. https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/abs/10.18111/9789284421152

United Nations World Tourism Organization. (2019). *Glossary of tourism terms*. Retrieved April 23, 2020, from https://www.unwto.org/glossary-tourism-terms

United Nations World Tourism Organization. (2009). *Tourism and migration: Exploring the relationship between two global phenomena*. https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284413140

United Nations World Tourism Organization. (2021). *International tourism highlight, 2020 edition*. https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284422456

United Nations World Tourism Organization, International Labour Organization. (2014). *Measuring employment in the tourism industries – Guide with best practices.* https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284416158

Uriely, N. (2001). 'Travelling workers' and 'working tourists': variations across the interaction between work and tourism. *International Journal of Tourism Research, 3*(1), 1-8. https://doi.org/10.1002/1522-1970(200101/02)3:1<1::AID-JTR241>3.0.CO;2-M

Urry, J. (1990). The `Consumption' of Tourism. *Sociology*, 24(1), 23-35. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038590024001004

Vassou, C., Zopiatis, A., & Theocharous, A. L. (2017). Intercultural workplace relationships in the hospitality industry: Beyond the tip of the iceberg. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 61*, 14-25. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2016.11.001

Veal, A. J. (2005). *Business research methods: A managerial approach* (2nd ed.). Pearson Addison Wesley.

Wang, C.-Y., Miao, L., & Mattila, A. S. (2015). Customer responses to intercultural communication accommodation strategies in hospitality service encounters. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 51*, 96-104. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2015.09.001

Walters, T. (2016). Using Thematic Analysis in Tourism Research. *Tourism Analysis*, 21, 107-116. https://doi.org/10.3727/108354216X14537459509017

Weaver, K. (2018). Pragmatic paradigm. In B. B. Frey (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Educational Research, Measurement, and Evaluation*. SAGE Publications. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781506326139

White, M. J. (2016). *International handbook of migration and population distribution* (1st ed.). Springer.

Williams, A. M. (2012). Tourism, migration and human capital: knowledge and skills at the intersection of flows. In C. H. C. Hsu & W. C. Gartner (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Tourism Research* (pp. 251-264). Routledge.

Williams, A. M., & Hall, C. M. (2000). Tourism and migration: New relationships between production and consumption. *Tourism Geographies, 2*(1), 5-27. https://doi.org/10.1080/146166800363420

Williams, A. M., King, R., Warnes, A., & Patterson, G. (2000). Tourism and international retirement migration: New forms of an old relationship in southern Europe. *Tourism Geographies, 2*(1), 28-49. https://doi.org/10.1080/146166800363439

Wong, A., Dean, A. M., & White, C. J. (1999). Analysing service quality in the hospitality industry. *Managing Service Quality: An International Journal, 9*(2), 136-143. https://doi.org/10.1108/09604529910257920

World Travel and Tourism Council. (2015). *Global talent trends and issues for the travel & tourism sector*. World Travel and Tourism Council. http://www.wttc.org/-/media/382bb1e90c374262bc951226a6618201

World Travel and Tourism Council. (2021). *Economic impact reports*. WTTC. Retrieved August 21, 2021, from https://wttc.org/Research/Economic-Impact

Wu, H.-C., & Ko, Y. J. (2013). Assessment of service quality in the hotel industry. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism, 14*(3), 218-244. https://doi.org/10.1080/1528008X.2013.802557

Wuest, B. (2001). Service quality concepts and dimensions pertinent to tourism, hospitality, and leisure services. In C. Mok, B. Sparks, & J. Kandampully (Eds.), *Service Quality Management in Hospitality, Tourism, and Leisure* (pp. 51-66). Routledge. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/curtin/detail.action?docID=1112529

Yaghi, M. (2018). 175Coding in Qualitative Research. In J. A. Clark & F. Cavatorta (Eds.), *Political Science Research in the Middle East and North Africa: Methodological and Ethical Challenges* (pp. 0). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190882969.003.0015

Yang, C.-C., Jou, Y.-T., & Cheng, L.-Y. (2011). Using integrated quality assessment for hotel service quality. *Quality & Quantity, 45*(2), 349-364. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-009-9301-4

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/239700221202600101

Zeithaml, V. A., Berry, L. L., & Parasuraman, A. (1988). Communication and control processes in the delivery of service quality. *Journal of Marketing, 52*(2), 35-48. https://doi.org/10.2307/1251263

Zhang, Y., Shao, W., & Thaichon, P. (2021). Investigating tourist post-travel evaluation and behavioural intention: a cultural intelligence perspective. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics, 33*(10), 2037-2053. https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-08-2020-0584

Zhang, Z., Li, H., & Law, R. (2015). Differences and similarities in perceptions of hotel experience: The role of national cultures. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing, 32(sup1)*, S2-S14. https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2014.959153

Zopiatis, A., Constanti, P., & Theocharous, A. L. (2014). Job involvement, commitment, satisfaction and turnover: Evidence from hotel employees in Cyprus. *Tourism Management, 41*, 129-140. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2013.09.013