

“We Feel Their Genuine Kindness”:

An Intercultural Approach to Japanese Tourist Satisfaction
with Finnish Service Encounters

Master's Thesis

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<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Asian tourists constitute an influential part of international tourism and exploring their service satisfaction is therefore important. Western tourism marketers seem to have problems studying Asian tourist service satisfaction employing the dominating, “expectations approaches”. This explorative study offers an alternative, intercultural approach to the phenomenon. The focus of the study is on the Japanese tourists’ perceptions of the intercultural service encounters between themselves and the Finnish service providers.</p> <p>The study has the following three aims: (1) to highlight some of the problems involved with the dominating tourist service satisfaction methodology, (2) to show how an intercultural communication approach could contribute to improving tourist service satisfaction studies, and (3) to increase the understanding of Japanese tourist satisfaction with Finnish service.</p> <p>A qualitative research design was applied to meet the aims. The data was obtained through semi-structured, face-to-face interviews of ten Japanese tourists. The interviews were conducted in Japanese. A general inductive approach was used to analyse the data. Six key themes emerged as a result of this process. The themes were discussed following the review of tourism, marketing and intercultural communication literature. On the basis of the findings and subsequent discussion, a framework of Japanese tourist service satisfaction in a Finnish service setting was proposed.</p> <p>The findings of this study implied that the participants were relatively satisfied with Finnish service. The communication behaviours of the Finnish service providers seemed to contribute to the tourist service satisfaction. The impacts of the communication behaviours of the Japanese tourists appeared to be more inconsistent in this regard. It seemed that the Japanese tourist service satisfaction was created through a complex process, in which the intercultural competency of both participants played an important role.</p>	
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Tiivistelmä – Abstract	
<p>Aasialaisten matkailijoiden merkitys kansainvälisessä matkailussa on suuri. Sen vuoksi on tärkeää selvittää matkailijoiden tyytyväisyyttä länsimaiseen palveluun. Matkailijoiden palvelutyytyväisyyttä on usein mitattu matkailijoiden odotuksiin perustuvan menetelmän avulla. Aasialaisten matkailijoiden kohdalla nämä menetelmät eivät kuitenkaan ole näyttäneet antavan luotettavia tuloksia, ja niinpä uusia näkökulmia tarvitaan. Tämän kartoittavan tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli esitellä kulttuurienvälisen viestinnän näkökulma matkailijoiden palvelutyytyväisyyden tarkasteluun. Tutkimus kohdistui japanilaisten matkailijoiden palvelutyytyväisyyteen suomalaisessa palvelukontekstissa.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli: (1) nostaa esiin matkailijoiden palvelutyytyväisyyden tutkimukseen perinteisesti käytetyn lähestymistavan ongelmakohtia, (2) perustella kulttuurienvälisen viestinnän näkökulman hyödyllisyyttä matkailijoiden palvelutyytyväisyyden tutkimuksessa, sekä (3) lisätä ymmärrystä japanilaisten matkailijoiden palvelutyytyväisyyden rakentumisesta suomalaisessa palvelukontekstissa. Tämän kvalitatiivisen tutkimuksen aineisto kerättiin puolistrukturoiduilla teemahaastatteluilta, jotka toteutettiin japanin kielellä. Tutkimusta varten haastateltiin kymmentä japanilaista matkailijaa. Aineisto analysoitiin induktiivista menetelmää käyttäen. Analyysissa esille nousi kuusi pääteemaa, joiden tulkinnassa käytettiin kirjallisuutta matkailun, markkinoinnin sekä kulttuurienvälisen viestinnän aloilta.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittivat, että japanilaiset matkailijat olivat melko tyytyväisiä saamaansa palveluun Suomessa. Suomalaisten palveluntarjoajien viestintäkäyttäytymisellä näytti olevan positiivinen vaikutus matkailijoiden palvelutyytyväisyyteen. Japanilaisten matkailijoiden viestintäkäyttäytymisellä sen sijaan näytti olevan ristiriitaisia vaikutuksia ilmiöön. Japanilaisten matkailijoiden palvelutyytyväisyyden muodostumisessa molempien osapuolten kulttuurienvälisellä kompetenssilla näytti olevan merkittävä rooli.</p>	
Asiasanat – Keywords Kulttuurienvälinen viestintä, palvelukohtaaminen, matkailijat, palvelutyytyväisyys, Suomi, Japani	
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CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	9
1.1	Rationale of this study.....	12
1.2	Structure of this study	14
2	TOURIST SATISFACTION RESEARCH	18
2.1	Approaches to tourist satisfaction studies	18
2.2	Tourism services	20
2.2.1	Intangibility.....	22
2.2.2	Inseparability	22
2.2.3	Heterogeneity.....	23
2.3	Dominating approach to tourist service satisfaction: The SERVQUAL methodology.....	24
2.4	Problems involved with the SERVQUAL methodology	28
2.4.1	Comparing expectations to perceptions.....	28
2.4.2	Relationship between perceived service quality and satisfaction.....	29
2.4.3	Service quality dimensions	31
2.4.4	Quantitative methodology	34
2.4.5	Human interaction dimension.....	35
2.5	Conclusion.....	37
3	INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION.....	39
3.1	Culture definition	39
3.2	Culture operationalisation	41
3.2.1	Level of cultural group membership of the participants.....	41
3.2.2	Social context.....	44
3.2.3	Channel	45
3.3	Intercultural communication and cross-cultural communication.....	46
3.4	Dimensions of cultural variability.....	47
3.4.1	High versus low context communication	49
3.4.2	Individualism versus collectivism	49
3.4.3	Power distance	50
3.4.4	Masculinity versus femininity	50
3.4.5	Uncertainty avoidance	50

3.4.6 Long- versus short term orientation.....	51
3.5 Hofstede and critique	51
3.6 Culture, communication and perception	53
3.6.1 Misperception	56
3.6.2 Misinterpretation.....	57
3.6.3 Misevaluation	58
3.7 Conclusion.....	59
4 CONTRIBUTIONS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION	60
4.1 Research paradigms.....	60
4.1.1 Ontological question.....	61
4.1.2 Epistemological question.....	63
4.1.3 Methodological question	64
4.2 Previous intercultural studies in tourism field.....	65
4.3 Tourist service satisfaction as a culturally driven phenomenon.....	68
4.4 Problems with cross-cultural studies	74
4.5 Intercultural approach to tourist service satisfaction studies	75
4.6 Benefits of mixed methodology	79
4.7 Conclusion.....	80
5 METHODOLOGY	82
5.1 Qualitative interviews as a data collection method.....	82
5.2 Avoiding biases	83
5.3 Scene and procedure.....	86
5.4 Research questions and semi-structured interviews	87
5.5 Transcribing	90
5.6 General inductive approach to data analysis	91
5.7 Trustworthiness	95
5.8 Ethics.....	96
6 SIX KEY THEMES AND DISCUSSION.....	98
6.1 Data presentation.....	98
6.2 First key theme: “proxemics”	100
6.3 Second key theme: “style of speaking”	103
6.4 Third key theme: “indirectness /other-directness”	108
6.5 Fourth key theme: “knowledge”	117

6.6 Fifth key theme: “consideration”	121
6.7 Sixth key theme: “reassurance”.....	124
7 GENERAL DISCUSSION	128
7.1 Intercultural competency studies.....	128
7.1.1 Intercultural competency of the service provider	129
7.1.2 Intercultural competency of the tourist.....	135
7.2 Relationship between perceived service quality and service satisfaction	141
7.3 New framework of Japanese tourist service satisfaction	142
7.4 Implications on the tourism industry.....	144
8 CONCLUSION.....	147
8.1 Meeting the aims	148
8.2 Limitations of the study.....	151
8.3 Suggestions for future research	153
8.4 Final words	155

REFERENCES

APPENDIX

LIST OF FIGURES

1	Structure of this study	17
2	Perceived service quality (adapted from Zeithaml et al., 1990: 23)	26
3	Service quality dimensions (adapted from Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry, 1990: 23; Zeithaml & Bitner, 1996: 123).	27
4	Cultural model of conceptual relationships (Reisinger & Turner, 2003: 283)	70
5	Concept map for combined approach	81
6	Coding process in inductive analysis (Creswell 2002 quoted in Thomas, 2003: 6)	95
7	Six key themes and upper-level categories	99
8	New framework of Japanese tourist service satisfaction in Finnish service setting	144

Preface

As the following notions by Hall (1989: 58-59) reveals, intercultural service encounters in tourism may engender deep emotions and cultural reflection in a traveller:

"A few years ago, I became involved in a sequence of events in Japan that completely mystified me, and only later did I learn how an overt act seen from vantage point of one's own culture can have an entirely different meaning when looked at in the context of the foreign culture. I had been staying at a hotel in downtown Tokyo that had European as well as Japanese-type rooms. The clientele included a few Europeans but was predominantly Japanese. I had been a guest for about ten days and was returning to my room in the middle of an afternoon. Asking for my key at the desk, I took the elevator to my floor. Entering the room, immediately sensed that something was wrong. Out of place. Different. I was in the wrong room! Someone else's things were distributed around the head of the bed and the table. Somebody else's toilet articles (those of a Japanese male) were in the bathroom. My first thoughts were, "What if I am discovered here? How do I explain my presence to a Japanese who may not even speak English?"

I was close to panic as I realized how incredibly territorial we in the West are. I checked my key again. Yes, it really was mine. Clearly they had moved somebody else into my room. But where was my room now? And where were my belongings? Baffled and mystified, I took the elevator to the lobby. Why hadn't they told me at the desk, instead of letting me risk embarrassment and loss of face by being caught in somebody else's room? Why had they moved me in the first place? It was a nice room and, being sensitive to spaces and how they work, I was loath to give it up. After all, I had told them I would be in the hotel for almost a month. Why this business of moving me around like someone who has been squeezed in without a reservation? Nothing made sense.

At the desk I was told by the clerk, as he sucked in his breath in deference (and embarrassment?) that indeed they moved me. My particular room had been reserved in advance by somebody else. I was given the key to my new room and discovered that all my personal effects were distributed around the new room almost as though I had done it myself. This produced a fleeting and strange feeling that maybe I wasn't myself. How could somebody else do all those hundred and one little things just the way I did?"

(Hall, 1989: 58-59)

1 INTRODUCTION

Hall's (1989: 58-59) experiences in a Japanese hotel described in the preface, relates closely to the current phenomenon this study investigates. Intercultural service encounters in tourism may "mystify and baffle" or even drive tourists "on a verge to panic", as illustrated in the opening story. According to Stauss and Mang (1999), intercultural service encounters often cause irritation, uneasiness, and stress in tourists because tourists' ideas of service are culturally-biased. This means that tourists have certain assumptions about how service should be based on their service experiences in their home countries. As tourism services differ to a great extent from culture to culture, tourists' culturally-biased service ideas are likely to cause problems. Reisinger and Turner (2003: 54) note that tourists may find adjusting their behaviours according to the service setting as well as interpreting the behaviours of the culturally dissimilar service provider difficult. Cultural-bias also plays a role in a tourist's service evaluation process (Stauss & Mang, 1999).

This study contributes to the research of service satisfaction within an intercultural tourism framework. Along with the growth in international travel, intercultural service encounters in tourism have become commonplace. Intercultural service encounters, which can be defined as service situations where customers and service providers from different cultures meet have received relatively little attention so far (Stauss & Mang, 1999). Particularly, the influences of participants' culture and communication on the outcomes of such an interaction remain somewhat unexplored (Sharma, Tam & Kim, 2009). This study gives special attention to the role of culture and communication in the creation of tourist service satisfaction as it proposes an intercultural approach to the phenomenon.

An intercultural approach has rarely been applied in tourism studies (Jack & Phipps, 2005: 6). Ward (2008) points out intercultural encounters in tourism provide an often-ignored, but valuable scene for intercultural communication researchers. She believes that intercultural communication researchers could benefit from testing and extending their theories in the tourism field. Also

tourism studies could gain from an intercultural communication approach. As implications of cultural differences are particularly important to the tourism industry (Reisinger & Turner, 2003: 32). While some tourism researchers, such as Hottola (2004) and Yu, Weiler and Ham (2001) have acknowledged the benefits of an interdisciplinary approach, there seems to be a lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity in the tourism literature compiled (Reisinger & Turner, 2003: xii).

Cultural awareness is particularly needed in the area of tourist service satisfaction studies (Crotts & Erdmann, 2000; Weiermair, 2000). Overlooking the effects of culture in the creation of the service satisfaction of an international tourist can be seen as one of the major shortcomings of the tourist service satisfaction literature (Reisinger & Turner, 2003). Currently, the study of tourist service satisfaction faces other challenges as well. There seems to be a general lack of consensus on how tourist satisfaction should be approached (Dmitrovic et al., 2009). One reason for this is the dominating approaches taken in the study of tourist service satisfaction have been found problematic (Pearce, Filep & Ross, 2011: 35). In particular, the SERVQUAL instrument, which is a frequently used tourist satisfaction framework under the expectations approaches, seems to be subject to wide-spread criticism (see e.g. Buttle, 1996).

Due to the problems involved with the dominating approach to the study of tourist service satisfaction, alternative approaches have been suggested (Pearce et al. 2011: 31). Pearce et al. (2011: 41) argue that creativity and new methodologies are needed in measuring the complex phenomenon of tourist satisfaction. The intercultural approach this study proposes differs substantially from the dominating approach and therefore can be considered as an alternative approach to the study of tourist service satisfaction. Intercultural approach makes use of a mixture of methodologies to better understand how cultural differences between participants influence the interaction and the outcomes of that encounter (Salo-Lee, 2009). As many of the problems in the area of tourist service satisfaction studies stem from failure to acknowledge the effects of culture and communication to the phenomenon (Reisinger & Turner, 2003), proposing an intercultural approach seems reasonable.

Western tourism researchers are facing difficulties particularly in defining, conceptualising and studying the service satisfaction of Asian tourists (Reisinger & Turner, 2002a). According to Pearce (2005: 166), one reason for this might be that Asian tourists tend to give overly positive appraisals for tourism services and may appear approving even when dissatisfied with the service. Reisinger and Turner (2003: 284) point out that as Asian tourists are one of the most influential sources of international tourism; it is paramount that Western tourism marketers find efficient ways to study Asian tourist service satisfaction.

This study focuses on Japanese tourists' service satisfaction. According to Reisinger and Turner (2003: 284), the Japanese market is the biggest single source of international tourists. Swarbrook and Horner (2007: 209) contend that it is particularly important that actors in the tourism field understand the culturally driven perceptions and evaluations of Japanese tourists. Several service researchers (Winsted, 1997; Mattila, 1999; Crofts & Erdmann, 2000; Reisinger & Turner, 2002; Reimann, Lunemann & Chase, 2008) seem to agree with Horner (2007) as they have made efforts to understand the antecedents of Japanese service satisfaction. Despite these endeavours, Japanese tourist service satisfaction still seems to remain as a phenomenon not fully understood by the Western tourism researchers.

Japanese tourist service satisfaction in a Finnish service context also calls for further attention. This is because Japanese tourists contribute to an important part of the Finnish tourism market. In 2009, for instance, Finland received 142 000 Japanese tourists, which is 36 percent more than the year before (Finnish Tourist Board [MEK], 2010). Finnish service providers should therefore aim to increase their knowledge and understanding of Japanese tourists' service perceptions. By understanding how Japanese tourists formulate their service evaluations, the Finnish service providers have better possibilities of providing satisfying services. Satisfied tourists benefit the service providers in the form of added revenues (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007: 213). Therefore, one important motivation for this study is to produce knowledge that benefits the actors in the Finnish tourism field.

1.1 Rationale of this study

As already mentioned above, this study proposes an alternative, intercultural approach to the study of tourist service satisfaction. Subsequently, this research looks into culture and communication as important components of a tourist service satisfaction framework. This study follows particularly the views on tourist satisfaction presented by Pearce (2005) and Reisinger and Turner (2003). According to Pearce (2005: 163), tourist satisfaction should be seen as a “socially-negotiated account of sometimes deeply felt attitudes that lie at the heart of the topic”. This notion emphasises the importance of communication in the creation of tourist service satisfaction. Reisinger and Turner (2003) follow a similar line of thinking and, in addition, emphasise the role of culture in the phenomenon. Tourist service satisfaction is a complex, culturally driven phenomenon as it is deeply influenced by the cultural values of both of the participants in the service interaction. (Reisinger & Turner, 2003: 283.) Hence, there is reason to believe that both culture and communication play an important role in the interaction between the tourists and the service providers and the resulting tourist service satisfaction.

This study attempts to access and understand the phenomenon by focusing on the communication between tourists and service providers. According to Jaworski and Pritchard (2005: 3), communication between tourists and the hosts is a vital prism through which phenomena in tourism can be explored. Reisinger and Turner (2003: 196) believe that tourist service satisfaction is determined by the success of the interpersonal interaction between the tourist and the service provider. Therefore, focusing on communicational aspects of the service seems to be important when aiming to understand tourist service satisfaction.

Following a phenomenological approach, throughout this study, the subject is approached through perceptions of the individuals who have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 1998: 54). Hence, this research explores Japanese tourist service satisfaction through their perceptions of service. According to Reisinger and Turner (2003: 192), “service perceptions and, in particular, the perceptions of a customer-service provider interaction in the process of service delivery and satisfaction with this interaction have still not received enough

research attention in the area of tourism”. Also the views provided by Chen (2002) support the choice of studying tourist service satisfaction through tourists’ perceptions of service interaction. She contends that interactants’ perceptions of intercultural communication indicate interactants’ satisfaction with that intercultural interaction. This notion implies that tourists’ positive perceptions of the communication in the service interaction are good indicators of their satisfaction within that service interaction. This study follows this line of thinking and approaches service satisfaction through tourists’ perceptions of the communication behaviours in the service interaction.

As previously noted, researches into the use of intercultural communication theories to study tourist service satisfaction remain scarce (Sharma et al., 2009). Therefore, there seems to be a gap in knowledge of the research area. The main scientific motivation of this study is to address this gap by bringing together two fields of study that rarely have been combined before, the tourism service satisfaction studies and the intercultural communication studies. Subsequently, this study is explorative in nature. According to Collis and Hussey (2009), an exploratory research can be chosen when little or no previous studies on a topic exist, and therefore, there is not much a researcher can refer to. Exploratory research looks for ideas or hypotheses and aims to gain an insight and understanding of the subject area by taking an open approach. This type of study does not usually provide decisive answers to problems. (Collis & Hussey, 2009: 5.)

The main research problem of this study is to assess how Japanese tourist service satisfaction could be better approached and understood. Considering the scope of the issues surrounding the topic, this study does not attempt to offer a conclusive answer to the research problem. Rather, the purpose of this study is to discuss the phenomenon from multiple sides, which should evoke some important questions. This study has, however, the following three aims:

- (1) To highlight some of the problems involved with the dominating approach to the study of tourist satisfaction
- (2) To show how an intercultural communication approach could

contribute to improving tourism service satisfaction studies by offering a new perspective to the phenomenon

- (3) To increase the understanding of Japanese tourist service satisfaction with Finnish service by investigating tourists' perceptions of communication behaviours in service interactions between the Japanese tourists themselves and Finnish service providers

1.2 Structure of this study

This study begins with a tourism marketing literature review. The purpose of the literature review is to examine whether the existing concepts and theories could be used to explore the phenomenon. This part of the study is assigned to meet the first aim of the study. The intercultural communication literature review will follow the tourism marketing literature review. This part of the study introduces intercultural communication to the reader. The understanding of the intercultural approach is further deepened in the following section where the rationale for the intercultural communication approach to the study of tourist service satisfaction is presented. In this section, some of the closely related previous studies will also be reviewed. Hence, the literature review in this study encompasses the fields of tourism, marketing and intercultural communication. A wide literature review was designed in order to get a broad perspective to the phenomenon. A broad perspective is needed as this research approaches tourist service satisfaction from a new perspective. In this study, the literature review will also function as research data through which the first and the second aims of the study will be addressed.

Following the literature review, an empirical study will be conducted. It is important to note that in this research, the empirical study was conducted prior to a more specific literature review. Punch (1998: 43) states that delaying the use of more specific literature can be done in such cases where the researcher has prior knowledge on the research subject area, which can be used as a starting point in the research. In this study, my educational background in tourism and business studies functions as a starting point in the research.

According to Punch (1998: 43-44), delaying the use of more specific literature may be beneficial when the study attempts to approach a phenomenon from a new perspective. According to him, this is because the use of literature inevitably influences the researcher and may prevent some new ways from developing. Due to the various problems involved with the dominating tourist satisfaction methodology, delaying the use of more specific literature is seen particularly profitable.

In the empirical part of the study, the perceptions of Japanese tourists on the interaction with Finnish service providers will be explored. I will concentrate on the communication aspects of these interactions and investigate how culture seems to have been manifested in the communication behaviours of the participants. Therefore, the empirical part of this study is designed to meet the third research aim. As already mentioned above, the third aim of the study is to increase the understanding of Japanese tourist service satisfaction with Finnish service by investigating the tourist perceptions of communication behaviours in service interactions between the Japanese tourists themselves and Finnish service providers. The following three research questions were developed to meet the third aim of the study:

- RQ1 How do Japanese tourists perceive Finnish service providers communication behaviour in service encounters?

- RQ2 What kind of notions, if any, do Japanese tourists make of their own communication behaviour in service encounters?

- RQ3 How do Japanese tourists perceive the nature of the intercultural service encounters?

The empirical part of the study follows an inductive research design. An inductive approach moves from specific observations into broader generalisations and theories (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara, 2005: 248). Inductive research, as opposed to deductive research, does not test a theoretical structure by empirical observations but aims to develop a theory (Collis &

Hussey, 2009: 8). Various reasons support the selection of an inductive approach in this study. A major reason is the lack of consensus surrounding the phenomenon of Japanese tourist service satisfaction and the problems involved with the dominating tourist service satisfaction methodology. There seems to be a need for allowing new topics and themes to emerge, rather than to continue the attempts to apply the existing concepts and methods to study the phenomenon. This study makes use of a rich and varied data obtained through qualitative interviews. As this type of data differs vastly from the data frequently used in tourist service satisfaction studies, applying existing service satisfaction frameworks is not reasonable in the context of this study. For these reasons, I believe that an inductive research design serves well the purposes of this study.

In the inductive research, theories and concepts are brought into the study towards the end of the analysis to support the findings of the researcher (Alasuutari, 1993: 26). The findings of this study imply that six key themes play a role in the creation of Japanese tourist service satisfaction in a Finnish service setting. Following an inductive research design, these six themes will be discussed following the review of tourism, marketing and intercultural communication literature. As this study belongs to the field of intercultural communication, the literature from that field will be used in particular. Hence, the empirical part of the study will, besides yield an insight on Japanese tourist service satisfaction, increase the understanding of the way intercultural communication could contribute to improving tourism service satisfaction studies. Thus, the empirical part of this study will address both the first and the second aim of the research.

In the last chapter before the conclusion, I will discuss the findings of this study in a broader intercultural framework. This discussion will evolve around intercultural competency literature. I will also present a new framework of communicative factors influencing Japanese tourist service satisfaction in a Finnish service setting. This framework draws on all the phases of this research and thus is influenced by the broad literature review in the beginning of the research as well as the findings of the empirical part of the study and the subsequent discussion. The research finishes with a conclusions chapter, where

I discuss the limitations of the study and identify areas of future research. The structure of the research is depicted in Figure 1.

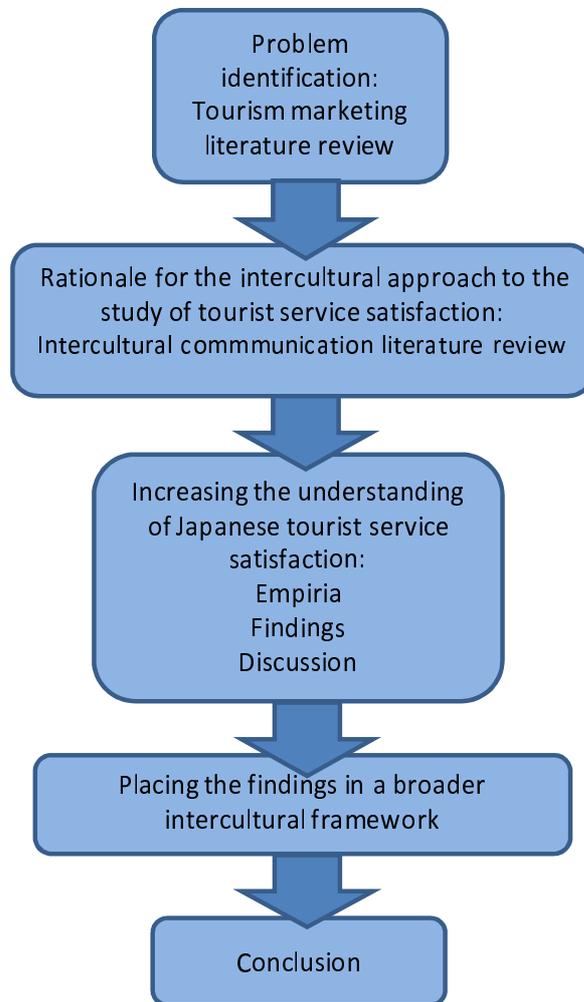


Figure 1. Structure of this study.

2 TOURIST SATISFACTION RESEARCH

This chapter provides the reader with knowledge needed to understand the subject of this study and the problems associated with the methodology that is currently used. This part of the research is also designed to meet the first aim of the study which is to highlight some of the problems involved with dominating approach to tourist service satisfaction.

2.1 Approaches to tourist satisfaction studies

Pearce et al. (2011) distinguish three approaches to tourist satisfaction studies: the expectations approaches, the qualitative approaches and the experience approaches. Expectations approaches have been the dominating approach and examine tourist satisfaction by comparing tourists' expectations of the vacation attributes to their perceptions of them. The qualitative approach is different from the dominating approach as it does not emphasise the role of expectations of the tourists in tourist satisfaction but concentrates on performance-only measures. The experience approaches to tourist satisfaction are fundamentally different as they address many problems associated with the other two approaches. Experience approaches study tourist satisfaction through the experiences of the tourists. Tourist experiences in this context refer to e.g. the sensations or knowledge obtained from tourism activities. (Pearce et al., 2011: 31-35.)

According to Pearce et al. (2011: 31), experience approaches to tourist satisfaction differ from the other two approaches to tourist satisfaction majorly as it takes the perspective of the tourist to the phenomenon. Researchers who take the experiences approach to tourist satisfaction believe that understanding psychological processes of the tourists, such as skill development, enjoyment and learning contributes to the operationalisation and measurement of tourist satisfaction. Therefore, while marketing approaches make use of marketing theories, experience approaches make use of theories in psychology. (Pearce et al., 2011: 31-35.) This study adopts an experience approach to tourist satisfaction. Experience approaches are not discussed in this chapter; however, as the purpose is to present the prevailing approach to tourist satisfaction and

the problems associated with it. The discussion in this chapter focuses on the expectations approaches. The discussion here will lead the way for chapters three and four, where I describe the approach the present study takes on tourist satisfaction.

Reisinger and Turner (2003: 196) distinguish two approaches to service satisfaction studies. They state, that tourist satisfaction can be studied either by studying the overall tourist satisfaction with the vacation or studying tourist satisfaction with each of the components that constitute the overall holiday satisfaction separately. According to Williams and Buswell (2003: 66), the overall tourist vacation satisfaction refers to the holistic evaluation of all those various events and elements that together constitute the holiday experience. These elements and events include but are not restricted to: in-resort transportation systems, destination restaurants, hotel attributes, weather during the holiday, activities available and destination scenery (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007: 213). Tourists tend to evaluate all these components holistically even though they are also capable of making judgements on satisfaction with each of the component of holiday satisfaction separately (Weiermair, 2000).

Reisinger and Turner (2003: 194) state, that while tourists have a tendency to experience tourist satisfaction holistically, it is important that the tourism researchers attempt to study each component of the overall tourist satisfaction separately. This is because tourism service providers are not able to improve their performance if they do not know which components of the tourism product require improvement. The present study does not attempt to examine tourists overall holiday satisfaction but focuses on one important component of tourists overall holiday satisfaction: tourist satisfaction with service. According to Reisinger and Turner (2003: 196), tourist satisfaction with service is a major element in the overall tourist satisfaction.

2.2 Tourism services

Tourism is a service driven industry as the main idea of tourism is to provide services for people when they visit places other than their place of residence (Christou, 2006: 1). Tourism services can be seen as processes that constitute several different stages and activities that tourists go through (Buswell & Williams, 2003: 100). Tourism services, thus, can refer to operations occurring before, during or after the holiday. There are a variety of ways the service provider can interact with tourists before and after the holidays: such as phone, email, marketing brochures, Internet and other communications channels (Grönroos, 2007: 36). This study concentrates on tourism service that take place during the holidays and not on the services that take place before or after the holidays. It is acknowledged, that interactions occurring between the customer and the service provider before and after might influence the ways customer experiences the tourism services taking place at the destination. However, these interactions are not the focus of the present study.

Tourism services are provided for the tourists during their holiday by the residents of the visited country. Reisinger and Turner (2003) refer to these people as hosts. They state that a host is “national of the visited country who is employed in the tourism industry and provides a service to tourists such as hotelier, front office employee, waiter, shop assistant, custom official, tour guide, tour manager, taxi and bus driver” (Reisinger & Turner, 2003: 38). In this study, these people are referred as service providers. Even though the tourism service providers, such as the hotelier or the tour guide, have frequently direct contact with the tourist, they may sometimes provide services to the tourist without actually encountering them. For instance, when tourists use room service, it is possible that the service takes place without the service provider and the tourists encountering each other. These service situations are not the focus of this study.

Service situations where the tourists actually meet and interact with the service providers are often called service encounters (Williams & Buswell, 2003: 71; Grönroos, 2007: 73). Some researchers, such as Shostack (1985 quoted in Stauss & Mang, 1999) adapt a broad definition of service encounter which

encompasses besides customer contacts with the service providers, contacts with the other customers, the physical service facilities and the service system. This study follows a more selective view of service encounter provided by Surprenant and Solomon (1987). These authors define service encounters as “the dyadic interaction between a customer and service provider” (Surprenant & Solomon, 1987: 87). In my view, this definition of service encounter seems to have many of the very same elements as the theory of interpersonal communication. I will return to the definitions of interpersonal communication later in this study (p. 45). Service encounters can be called intercultural, when the service provider and the customer come from different cultures (Stauss & Mang, 1999). This study focuses on the tourist service satisfaction with intercultural service encounters. This study uses terms social interaction, social contact, service interaction and service contact interchangeably with the term service encounter.

Before starting the discussion on the SERVQUAL instrument which frequently applied to study tourist satisfaction under the dominating, expectations approaches, there is a need to consider the universal characteristics of tourism services. Tourism services are intangible, inseparable and heterogeneous. These service characteristics affect the way services are perceived and evaluated. (Reisinger, 2001: 17-19.) These three characteristics of service apply to all services and not only tourism services (Gilmore, 2003: 10-11). This explains why studies outside the tourism field are frequently considered within the present study. Common characteristics of service are not limited to the three characteristic considered here, however, intangibility, inseparability and heterogeneity are often considered universal characteristics of service and perhaps the most influential ones with respect to the service perceptions, interpretations and evaluations of a international tourist.

2.2.1 Intangibility

Tourism services are primarily intangible even though they often include tangible elements as well (Reisinger, 2001: 17). According to Reisinger (2009), tangible elements refer to the products that support the activities and experience provided to the tourists. A meal offered to the tourist in a restaurant or a room provided to the tourist in a hotel are examples of tangible elements of service. Intangible elements of service include the atmosphere at the restaurant or the friendliness of the hotel receptionists. (Reisinger, 2009: 235.)

Tourism services are intangible because they cannot be seen, smelled, tasted or touched (Evans, Campbell & Stonehouse, 2003: 28). The intangible nature of services has implications on service perceptions and evaluations. Grönroos (2007: 54) sees intangibility as the most important feature of service. He states that because of the intangible nature of services they cannot be evaluated objectively in similar ways products can. Also Gilmore (2003: 10) notes that as services are intangible, customers often find the evaluation of services difficult. It could be reasoned that objective evaluation of tourism services is further impeded by the misperceptions, misinterpretations and misevaluations that are likely to occur. According to Adler and Gundersen (2008: 72), the chances for misperception, misinterpretation and misevaluation are even greater in intercultural encounters. By the same token, customers in intercultural service encounters may find the evaluations of service even more difficult due to the intangibility. This issue will be discussed more in depth in chapter three (p. 56).

2.2.2 Inseparability

Tourism services are inseparable as the production of the service and the consumption of the service cannot be separated from each other (Evans et al, 2003: 29). Grönroos (2007: 54) describes this by stating that services are “processes consisting of series of activities –which are produced and consumed simultaneously”. Evans et al. (2003: 29) point out that because services are both produced and consumed at the same place and at the same time, it is more demanding to create satisfied customers with service than it is with products. This is because the customers base their judgements on various elements at the

service situation and the service provider rarely has a chance to correct their mistakes in the service performance.

Gilmore (2003: 11) states that because of the inseparable nature of services, services often require involvement to some extent from the customer. Different services require different levels of participation from a customer. Customer participation in a doctor's appointment, for instance, is crucial because providing accurate information on medical history and symptoms is a prerequisite for the service to be successful. It has been suggested, that customer participation in tourism industry is especially important (Williams & Buswell, 2003: 106). Customer participation in service might have special implications on the service satisfaction. This is because, especially in intercultural service encounters, customers are likely to differ in their willingness and abilities to participate in the service interaction (see e.g. Mattila, 1999).

The inseparable nature of services also refers to the fact that services consist of series of activities that may involve a number of people and different kind of physical resources (Grönroos, 2007: 54). This also has implications on the ways customer perceive and evaluate service. Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry (1990: 15-16) state that customers evaluate the service based on all the various processes involved with the service and not only the outcome of the service. Furthermore, as service often takes place in a setting where potentially a number of service providers are present and various service elements are included, customers' service perceptions, interpretations and evaluations may become a rather complex process.

2.2.3 Heterogeneity

Services are always to some extent heterogeneous. According to Reisinger (2001), tourism services "vary in standard and quality over time because they are delivered by people to people and are function of human performance". She continues to state that each service is always different as they differ with respect to the service provider and the customer involved (Reisinger, 2001: 18-19). This means that nature and quality of service are heterogeneous rather than

homogenous or standardised. Williams and Buswell (2003: 90) state that the service personnel often have a major effect on the service because they are highly involved in the service delivery process. Reisinger and Turner (2003: 182) acknowledge that the heterogeneous nature of tourism services complicate the service evaluation process of tourists.

To conclude the discussion on the three universal characteristics of services, it seems that intangibility, inseparability and heterogeneity of services influence tourists' service perceptions, interpretations and evaluations in many ways. Understanding the universal characteristics of service is therefore paramount to the tourist satisfaction researcher. The universal characteristics of service shed a light on the difficulties that the tourists might face when formulating perceptions and evaluation of services.

2.3 Dominating approach to tourist service satisfaction: The SERVQUAL methodology

As already mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the dominant approach to tourist satisfaction has been the expectation-based approach (Pearce et al., 2011: 31-34). The expectation-based approach is interested in tourist satisfaction from the managerial point of view (Pearce, 2005: 165). This means that tourist satisfaction is examined with respect to the benefits the phenomenon could bring to the tourism destination, the tourism service providers, the tourism marketers and other actors in the tourism industry. Swarbrooke and Horner (2007: 213) state that tourist satisfaction is important for the tourism industry for the following main reasons:

- It leads to positive word-of-mouth recommendation of the product to friends and relatives, which in turn brings new customers.
- Creating a repeat customer by satisfying them with their first use of product brings a steady source of income with no need for extra marketing expenditure.
- Dealing with complaints is expensive, time-consuming and bad for the organisation's reputation. Furthermore, it can bring direct costs through compensation payments. (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007: 213.)

Pearce et al. (2011) state that the expectations approaches to tourist service satisfaction build on a disconfirmation paradigm. The disconfirmation paradigm states that customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction occurs when tourists compare their service expectations to their service perceptions of the actual service. In most simplistic terms this means that customers are likely to be satisfied with the service when their perceptions of the actual service meets or exceeds their expectations. In contrast, if the perceptions of actual service fail to meet the expectations of the customer, the customer is likely to be dissatisfied with the service. (Pearce et al., 2011: 32.)

One frequently used methodology to study tourist satisfaction with service under the disconfirmation paradigm is the SERVQUAL service quality framework developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988). According to Cooper et al. (2008: 535), the SERVQUAL instrument is a useful tool for tourism marketers. They believe that it is well suited to indicate the problem areas of service and can serve as logical basis for service improvement. However, the SERVQUAL methodology has been found problematic (e.g. Buttle, 1996). Many authors, such as Winsted (1997) and Imrie, Cadogan and McNaughton (2002) criticise the use of the SERVQUAL instrument in intercultural service settings. The present study also strongly questions the applicability of this methodology to study tourism service satisfaction. In order to indicate the problems involved with this approach and to be able to suggest an alternative approach, I will first introduce the SERVQUAL methodology.

The developers of the SERVQUAL instrument, Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry are researchers in the field of service marketing and consumer behaviour research. Their views on service quality and satisfaction have spread across industries, including the tourism industry. The SERVQUAL, service quality framework, is often found in tourism literature as an approach to conceptualise, study and improve tourist service satisfaction (e.g. Laws, 2004: 87). Moreover, the SERVQUAL methodology has been widely used by both tourism researchers and tourism practitioners (see Pearce et al., 2011: 32).

Following the disconfirmation paradigm, Zeithaml et al. (1990) argue that customers evaluate service by comparing their prior service expectations to their perceptions of the actual service. The result of this comparison is called perceived service quality. In other words, perceived service quality is the outcome of the comparison that customers make between expected service quality and experienced service quality. According to this view, perceived service quality is an antecedent of customer service satisfaction. Good perceived service quality is achieved when the service attributes are perceived as equal or better than the customer expects. When the customer perceives the service quality good, customers are expected to be satisfied with the service. In contrast, if the expectations of service are higher than the perceptions of service and therefore the expectations and the perceptions of service do not match, the perceived service is likely to be low. In such a situation, the customer is expected to be dissatisfied with the service. (Zeithaml et al., 1990: 18-19.) The perceived service quality model is depicted in Figure 2.

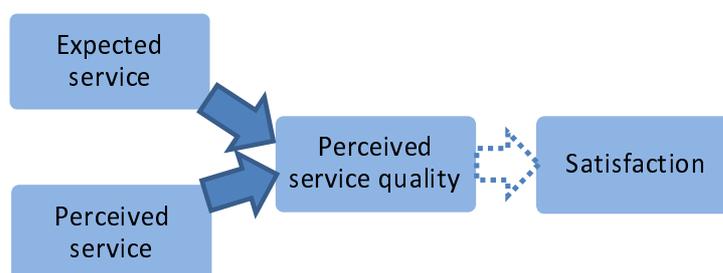


Figure 2. Perceived service quality (adapted from Zeithaml et al., 1990: 23)

According to Zeithaml et al. (1990), customers form their expectations and their perceptions of service along the dimensions that can be called service quality dimensions. They distinguish between five service quality dimensions and name them: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Tangibles refer to the products that support the service delivery, such as the equipment the service provider or the customer needs in the service encounter. Tangibles can also refer to the appearances of the facilities or service provider.

The other four service quality dimensions refer to the characteristic of the service provider. Reliability refers the service provider's ability to perform the service dependably and accurately; responsiveness refers to the service provider's willingness to help the customer; assurance refers to security and perceived competence of the service provider and empathy refers to the service provider's ability to communicate with and understand the customer. Customers are seen to hold expectations on each of these five dimensions of service and form their perceptions also along these service quality dimensions. (Zeithaml et al., 1990: 20-26.) Consequently, the comparisons of the expectations and perceptions along these five service quality dimensions together constitute the perceived service quality. This is depicted in Figure 3.

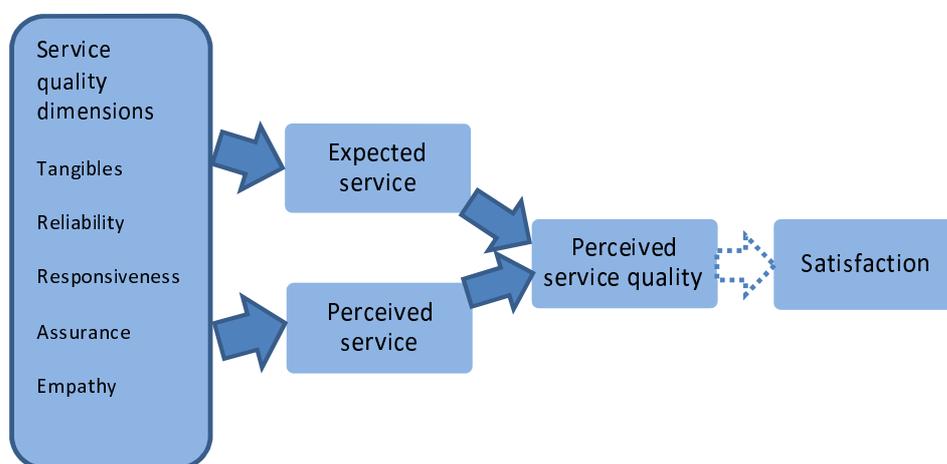


Figure 3. Service quality dimensions (adapted from Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry, 1990: 23; Zeithaml & Bitner, 1996: 123)

Based on this conceptualisation of service quality and customer satisfaction, Zeithaml et al. (1990) developed the SERVQUAL instrument to study perceived service quality. The SERVQUAL instrument is a structured questionnaire consisting of 22 statements that are based on the above described five service quality dimensions. Customer are asked to rate their expectations and their perceptions along a 7-point Likert scale from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. The customers are first asked to rate their general expectations related to a certain service attribute, such as appearance of the personnel. The customers are then asked to rate the appearance of the personnel of a given company. Discrepancies between the expectations and

perceptions can be then calculated. If the expectations ratings and the perceptions ratings match, the customer is expected to be satisfied with the service. If the expectations are given a higher rating than the perceptions, the customer is assumed to be unsatisfied fit the service. (Zeithaml et al., 1990: 23-26.) Features of the SERVQUAL methodology are further illustrated as I now turn to consider the problems involved with the methodology.

2.4 Problems involved with the SERVQUAL methodology

The SERVQUAL instrument seemingly has both operational and theoretical limitations (Buttle, 1996). I will consider the problems involved with: (1) the comparison of expectations to perceptions, (2) the relationship between perceived service quality and satisfaction, (3) the service quality dimensions, (4) the quantitative methodology and (5) the value placed on the interpersonal interaction.

2.4.1 Comparing expectations to perceptions

There is a reason to believe that the idea of studying customer satisfaction by comparing customer expectations to customer perceptions is fundamentally flawed, especially when this idea is applied to study tourist satisfaction (Pearce, 2005: 168). This is because the SERVQUAL methodology assumes that customers have expectations about the service they are about to experience. These expectations are seen to be based on the marketing activities of a tourism company or previous history that the customer has with the company, for instance (Zeithaml et al., 1990: 20). It seems however, that the SERVQUAL instrument fails to capture the nature of tourist expectations.

According to Pearce (2005), comparing tourist expectations to tourist perceptions is not a well equipped approach for studying tourist satisfaction because of the nature of expectations in tourism. He believes that tourist expectations related to service are likely to be ambiguous, vague and their relevancy can be therefore questioned (Pearce, 2005: 168). This might be because tourists often do not have previous history with the tourism service and they might have not heard recommendations of a particular service from their friends or relatives. They may hold some expectations as a result of the marketing activities of tourism companies, but these expectations might not be

realistic. Tourist expectations might be partly based on their prior experiences with the service in different countries, but as Baum and Kokkranikal (2005: 87) point out, there is no such thing as typical tourism organisation. This means that the tourism services, especially in different countries, are likely to vary substantially. Consequently, also tourist service expectations are likely to vary vastly.

Hughes (1991, quoted in Reisinger & Turner, 2003: 177) points out that customer satisfaction should not be studied by comparing expectations to perceptions when the service in question is only experienced occasionally and when the service is considerably different from what the customer is used to. He points out that tourist might be satisfied with the service even though they did not know what to expect. Reisinger and Turner (2003: 177) highlight perhaps the most pressing reason for not studying tourist satisfaction by comparing tourist expectations of service with tourist perceptions of service by stating that the most satisfying experiences might be those that are not expected. Hence, it seems that the role of expectations in the service satisfaction of tourists can be questioned.

2.4.2 Relationship between perceived service quality and satisfaction

The relationship between perceived service quality and satisfaction may not be as straightforward as the SERVQUAL methodology proposes. This relationship between perceived service quality and customer satisfaction is a frequently discussed topic in the marketing literature (see e.g. Cronin and Taylor, 1992). Perceived service quality and customer satisfaction seem to be closely related concepts but considerably different kinds of views has been proposed on the exact nature of the relationship between the terms. Some authors, such as Zeithaml et al. (1988) and Grönroos (2007) find the contemplation on this issue somewhat unnecessary. They believe that perceived service quality is a good indicator of customer satisfaction. Parasuraman et al. (1988), for instance, state that customers use the same service quality criteria to evaluate both the service quality and satisfaction. Therefore, they do not seem to make a clear distinction between the two terms. Also Grönroos (2007: 89) sees the debate on the differences between the two terms rather unnecessary. He states that “a logical analysis clearly shows that a

perception of service quality comes first, followed by a perception of satisfaction with this quality". Many researchers, such as Alamgir and Shamsuddoha (2004) take a similar standpoint as Grönroos (2007) and Parasuraman et al. (1988) and thus believe that relationship between the two concepts exists and that a higher service quality contributes to customer satisfaction.

Not all service researchers, however, agree with the views presented above. Brady and Cronin (2001: 45), for instance, take a rather critical standpoint on issue by stating that "there is a notable lack of discriminant validity between measures of perceived service quality and customer satisfaction". According to Randall and Senior (1996 quoted in Williams & Buswell 2003: 59), it is possible that the customers perceive the service quality as good and still be unsatisfied with service. Oliver (1980) seems to see the relationship between perceived service quality and customer satisfaction from a different perspective than most authors. He believes that customer satisfaction affects perceived service quality, and not the other way around. These notions seem to suggest that studying customer satisfaction through perceived service quality is problematic as the perceived service quality is not perhaps a good indicator of customer satisfaction.

There is also a reason to believe that culture might influence the possible relationship between perceived service quality and customer satisfaction. The results of a study conducted by Reimann et al. (2008) point towards this issue. They examined service delivery time perceptions and service satisfaction of culturally dissimilar customers of a global gas company. In this study, the 'perceived service quality' constituted of the discrepancy between the standard precise delivery time (240h) and the actual delivery time (<240h or >240h). The respondents were asked to rate how satisfied they were with the service considering the perceived delivery time on 5-point Likert scale. The results of the study indicated that the respondents from different cultures varied in their satisfaction levels, even though they have perceived the service quality in similar ways. In other words, customers from different cultures may perceive the quality of service similarly but experience different levels of satisfaction with the service. The results of the study conducted by Reimann et al. (2008)

thus indicate that culture may moderate the possible relationship between perceived service quality and customer satisfaction. Consequently, studying satisfaction of culturally dissimilar customer through perceived service quality might be problematic.

Currently, there seems to be not enough information on the ways culture might moderate the possible relationship between perceived service quality and customer satisfaction in intercultural service encounters. Therefore, it seems that even if the SERVQUAL instrument manages to measure how customer perceives the quality of service, another study should be then conducted to find out how satisfied culturally dissimilar customers are with the service. While further analysis on the relationship between perceived service quality and customer satisfaction as well as possible factors that might influence this relationship is out of scope of the present study, I believe that it is important to make a distinction between these two concepts when studying tourist satisfaction with intercultural service.

2.4.3 Service quality dimensions

As already mentioned when introducing the SERVQUAL methodology (p. 24), the instrument distinguished between five service quality dimensions; tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. The SERVQUAL methodology holds that all the customers form their expectations and perceptions of a service along these five service quality dimensions. (Zeithaml et al., 1990: 20.) The fact that the SERVQUAL does not consider any alternative dimensions of service quality seems to be problematic when applying the instrument in different service settings. Grönroos (2007) states that the SERVQUAL instrument should be used with caution when applied across industries and always modified to fit the service environment that is being investigated. This is because services are fundamentally different in nature and therefore constitute different dimensions. The five service quality dimensions of the SERVQUAL instrument may not be equipped to capture the nature of all different kinds of services. (Grönroos, 2007: 86-88.)

While Grönroos's (2007: 86-88) notions suggests that the SERVQUAL instrument should not be applied across service industries without

consideration, there is also a reason to believe that the SERVQUAL framework should not be used without consideration across cultures. Swarbrooke and Horner (2007: 221) state that people from different cultures form their service expectations and perceptions using different kind of service quality framework. Also Williams and Buswell (2003: 62) point this out by stating culturally dissimilar tourists are likely to have different kinds of service standards. Several tourism researchers such as Mattila (1999) acknowledge that culturally dissimilar tourists might vary on their service standards. The results of the studies conducted by Winsted (1997) and Imrie et al. (2002) further illustrate this point.

Winsted (1997) examined service quality evaluations of Japanese and American customers by conducting a focus group study. The results of this indicated that even if the customers seemingly use similar service quality construct to evaluate service, they are likely to understand different things with same service quality dimensions. The findings of this study also pointed out that the service quality criteria used by Japanese customers and American customers is likely to vary to some extent. According to this study, Japanese customers, for instance, judge service quality based on a new service quality dimension called “conversation”. This service quality dimension was not identified to be used by the American customers. (Winsted, 1997.)

Imrie et al. (2002) studied service quality accounts of Taiwanese consumers and found out that Taiwanese customers perceive the service quality dimensions of the SERVQUAL instrument hierarchically and thus place more value on some dimensions than others. This study also identified service quality dimensions outside the SERVQUAL framework. Taiwanese customers seemed to judge service along dimensions that Imrie et al. (2002) named as “politeness”, “generosity” and “courtesy”. Even though some of these dimensions can be argued to be included in the SERVQUAL instrument, the breadth and depth of these dimensions seem to fall short as the meaning of these dimensions was found to be fundamentally different for the Taiwanese customers (Imrie et al., 2002). Studies conducted by Winsted (1997) and Imrie et al. (2002) are just two examples of studies that question the cross-cultural

applicability of the service quality dimensions proposed by the SERVQUAL instrument. For instance, Smith and Reynolds (2001) also points towards this issue by stating that there seems to be little consensus on the service quality dimensions and that the service quality dimensions suggested by Zeithaml et al. (1990: 26) appear not to be exclusive.

To further illustrate the problem with different service quality constructs, I find an example provided by Usunier (2000) useful. He states, that Japanese and Europeans are used to different kinds of pace of service in restaurants. Good service in a Japanese restaurant means fast service, whereas in the European restaurants it is considered highly important to leave the guest enough time to engage in conversation between the dishes. Therefore, when Japanese tourist makes perceptions on the service quality in the European restaurants, problems might emerge. The Japanese may perceive slower service easily as a cue for low quality of service. Similarly, when a European tourist visits Japanese restaurant they might perceive the quality of the Japanese service as low because it does not allow enough time for socializing. (Usunier, 2000: 293.) More problems with the service evaluations might emerge as Japanese customers and European customers are likely to understand different things with same service quality dimensions (see e.g. Winsted, 1997; Imrie et al., 2002). Japanese customers' expectations and perceptions on competent service personnel could mean deferential and discreet service personnel while European customer might perceive service personnel who are personal and informal more competent.

A conclusion at this point of this discussion can be made that the five service quality dimension that the SERVQUAL methodology proposes seem not to be well equipped to study perceived service quality across services. Furthermore, there is a reason to believe that member of different cultures evaluate service against different kind of criteria and therefore the SERVQUAL instrument should not be applied cross-culturally without critical considerations. While the SERVQUAL instrument might be better suited to investigate service quality perceptions of Western customers (Smith & Reynolds, 2001), the methodology has been found especially problematic when applied in Asian cultures

(Winsted, 1997; Imrie et al., 2002). It seems to be clear that service quality construct is not universally agreed and academics have differing views on what exactly service quality constitutes of. While numerous attempts has been made to conceptualize service quality substantial debate regarding the basic service quality dimensions exists (e.g. Alamgir & Shamsuddoha, 2004). Therefore caution must be exercised when applying the SERVQUAL instrument across service industries and cultures.

2.4.4 Quantitative methodology

As earlier described, the SERVQUAL instrument consists of structured questionnaire with 22 service related statements that are derived from the five service quality dimensions. Customers are asked to state their opinions with respect to these statements along a 7-point Likert scale. (Zeithaml et al., 1990: 24.) Pearce (2005) argues that quantitative methodology, such as the SERVQUAL instrument, is not well equipped to study tourist satisfaction. According to him, tourist satisfaction is a post-experience attitude and attitudes cannot be studied through structured questionnaires. He believes that quantitative tourist satisfaction methodology ignores this important starting point. Pearce states that it is not meaningful to study attitudes using structured questionnaires as they force the responded to consider the complex phenomenon along the lines of tangible parameters. (Pearce, 2005: 163.) Williams and Buswell (2003: 60) also point this out by stating that structured questionnaires only show the superficial layer of attitudes and behaviour and not the roots. Reisinger and Turner (2003: 185) state that studying superficial layers of tourist satisfaction is not enough and researchers should strive to understand the concept of tourist satisfaction.

Hazelrigg and Hardy (2000) point out another important problem involved with quantitative tourist service satisfaction methodology. They state that language that is used in the quantitative questionnaires is already problematic. The respondents are usually asked to state their evaluation on a certain dimension of service by choosing from few reply options. According to them, differences between answer options such as “quite satisfied” and “somewhat satisfied” are not perhaps clear to consumers coming from different cultures. Furthermore,

being “quite satisfied” with the evening show at the hotel is different from being “quite satisfied” with a five-hour-long bus journey. (Hazelrigg & Hardy, 2000.)

I believe that above depicted views on research methodology are especially important when studying tourist satisfaction with intercultural service encounters. As tourist satisfaction is such a highly complex phenomenon, data obtained through quantitative methods, such as the SERVQUAL instrument, may result in an erroneous conceptualisation of the phenomenon. This issue will be further discussed in chapter four (p.73).

2.4.5 Human interaction dimension

While Zeithaml et al. (1990: 15) acknowledge that service quality occurs in the interaction between the customer and the service provider, the SERVQUAL instrument does not seem to include interaction between the service provider and the customer as a factor that influences perceived service quality. White and Gill (2006) point out that even though services are often seen as interactive processes, current perceived service quality methodology seem to have ignored the interactive processes involved with production and consumption of services. They conducted a study on client perceptions of health care services. The results of their study pointed towards the importance of “interactional quality”. They state that the understanding of the factors that influence the interactive processes of the participants in service is the key to understand the way service quality is formed. (White & Gill, 2006.)

The importance of “interactional quality” has been also acknowledged in the field of tourism services studies. As already mentioned earlier, Reisinger and Turner (2003) contend that the interpersonal interaction between the service provider and the tourist is the most important aspect of service satisfaction. According to them, service satisfaction is largely dependent on the quality of the interaction between tourist and the service provider. They state that tourist “perceptions of the interpersonal element of service are extremely important because they may compensate for the low mechanistic process of service delivery, and result in high satisfaction” (Reisinger & Turner, 2003: 196). This

means that a tourist who delivers a meal to the hotel room from the room service and perceives the delivery time too long, for instance, is less likely to be dissatisfied with the service if he or she is satisfied with the interpersonal interaction with the room servant who delivers the meal to the room. Pearce (2005: 163) places even greater importance on interpersonal interaction between the tourist and service provider with respect to tourist satisfaction by stating that tourist satisfaction should be seen as “socially-negotiated account”. Pearce’s (2005) views on tourist satisfaction seem to differ fundamentally from those of the developers the SERVQUAL methodology. This issue will be further elaborated in chapter four in the context of the discussion on research paradigms (p. 60).

If the role of interpersonal interaction between the service provider and the tourists in tourist satisfaction is emphasised to the extent that Reisinger and Turner (2003) and Pearce (2005) seem to emphasise it, the interaction between the tourist and the service provider should be seen as a key component in conceptualisations of tourist service satisfaction. With this respect, the SERVQUAL methodology to study tourist satisfaction seems to fall short. While the SERVQUAL methodology seemingly places importance on the human element of the service by including several service quality dimensions that deal with the characteristics of service personnel to the framework, interaction element seems to be missing from the framework. This means communication behaviours of the service personnel are seen as something that contributes to the perceived service quality and satisfaction of a customer, but according to this view, the interaction between the customer and the service provider would not play an important role in customer’s service quality evaluations.

As tourist satisfaction might be largely dependent on the quality of interaction between the service provider and the tourist satisfaction studies should, in my opinion, concentrate on the communication characteristic of such interaction. The present study therefore, follows Reisinger and Turner’s (2003) as well as Pearce’s (2005) line of thinking and focuses on the interpersonal element of service. As the interpersonal element is seemingly the most influential

component of tourist service satisfaction, focusing on it is reasonable. In addition, as this study is interested in the effects of culture on tourist service satisfaction, focusing on the interpersonal interaction between the tourists and the service provider is justified. This is because the quality of the interpersonal interaction between the service provider and the tourist is likely to be influenced by the cultural differences between the participants (Reisinger & Turner, 2003: 48).

2.5 Conclusion

The main purpose of this discussion has been to introduce the subject of this study to the reader and highlight some of the problems with the dominating research methodology on the tourist service satisfaction field. Several problems associated with the SERVQUAL instrument were identified and discussed in this chapter. These included: (1) problems with comparing expectations to perceptions, (2) problems with the relationship between perceived service quality and satisfaction, (3) problems involved with the service quality dimensions, (4) problems involved with quantitative methodology and (5) problems with not focusing on the human interaction dimension.

For the purposes of this study, it has been necessary to concentrate on the problems associated with the SERVQUAL methodology. Despite various problems described in this chapter, the SERVQUAL instrument also has its advantages. Laws (2004: 89), for instance, acknowledges the shortcomings of the instrument but takes the opinion that the SERVQUAL methodology is useful as it emphasises the importance of quality in services and the complexity involved with achieving it. Another advantage of the SERVQUAL methodology is its easy applicability (Pearce et al., 2011: 32).

Currently, there seems to be little consensus on how tourist satisfaction should be approached (Dmitrovic et al., 2009). The discussion in this chapter has indicated several problems involved with the dominating approach to study of tourist service satisfaction. As already mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, Pearce et al. (2011: 31) call alternative approaches, designed to address the shortcomings of the dominating “expectations approaches” to the

study of tourist satisfaction, as “experience approaches”. Following Pearce et al.’s (2011) line of thinking, this study can be categorized under the “experience approaches”. This is because this study questions the applicability of the expectations approaches to study of tourist satisfaction and approaches the phenomenon from a new perspective.

Pearce et al. (2011: 41) argue for new methodologies, creativity and greater diversity in measuring the complex phenomenon of tourist satisfaction. I attempt to bring this diversity in tourist satisfaction studies by applying intercultural communication methodology. The discussion in this chapter has already indicated that many problems involved with the applicability of the SERVQUAL methodology seem to stem from the failure to acknowledge the effects of culture on the phenomenon. Culture was found to influence the service quality construct as well as the relationship between perceptions of service quality and customer satisfaction. Therefore there is a reason to believe that cultural understanding would benefit the tourist service satisfaction researchers. An even more pressing reason for suggesting the intercultural communication approach to tourist service satisfaction studies is the emphasis that some researchers place on interpersonal interaction between the service provider and the tourist to the service satisfaction appraisals. If the interpersonal interaction between the service provider and the tourist and the “interaction quality” is seen as central to tourist service satisfaction, it can be reasoned, that the communication behaviours of the participants are important to the service satisfaction.

In intercultural service encounters, the communication between the service provider and the tourists is subject to various stumbling blocks (see e.g. Barna, 1997: 370). The next chapter is assigned to provide information on the issues that might influence the interpersonal interaction between culturally dissimilar service providers and the tourist. This discussion will further lead the way for the discussion on intercultural communications approach to tourist service satisfaction, which will be discussed in chapter four.

3 INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce intercultural communication to the reader. Intercultural communication is about communication between people from different cultures, and thus cannot be understood without understanding culture. Therefore this chapter begins with a discussion on culture.

3.1 Culture definition

The ways to approach and therefore to define culture are seemingly endless and I will present only those definitions that, to my understanding, contribute to the understanding of intercultural communication. I will begin by definitions created by intercultural communication pioneers, Hall (1990b) and Hofstede (1997).

Hall (1990b) believed that communicative practises of societies are key in understanding cultural differences. His simple, yet all encompassing definition; “culture is communication and communication is culture” (Hall, 1990b: 186) was inspired by Hall’s work as an anthropologist. This early definition of culture is highly abstract and perhaps that is one of the reasons it remains as one of the most often quoted definitions of culture by intercultural communication academics. For instance, Salo-Lee (2007a: 76) takes a similar approach to culture by stating that communication and culture are so closely intertwined that the communicators do not even notice. Also, Hall (1990b) points out the fact that culture is blinding to its members. This is reflected in his other famous statement; “culture hides more than it reveals and strangely enough what it hides most, it hides from its own participants” (Hall, 1990b: 29).

Geert Hofstede (1997), another intercultural communication pioneer, defines culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another”. By stating that “culture is the collective programming of the mind”, he refers to the psychological and cognitive processes that are culturally learned (Hofstede, 1997: 9). It can be argued that Hofstede’s life’s work changed the focus of

intercultural communication studies from anthropology to psychology and laid the foundation for the paradigm that has pervaded the intercultural communication research the past three decades (Salo-Lee, 2009).

As perception is a central concept in the present study, it is important to consider other cognitive approaches to intercultural communication. Singer (1998) argues that “a pattern of learned, group-related perceptions –including both verbal and nonverbal language, attitudes, values, belief systems, disbelief systems, and behaviours –that is accepted and expected by an identity group is called a culture” (Singer, 1998: 5-6). Forgas (1988) contends that “culture exists in the minds of individuals, and it is individual perceptions, interpretations, and representations of culture, which in their innumerable daily manifestations help to maintain or change our stable sense of the relevant knowledge structures shared by individuals” (Forgas, 1988: 188). According to Novinger (2001: 23), culture can be seen as a matrix where perceptions develop. As these definitions imply, there is a close relationship between perceptions and culture (Samovar & Porter, 1997: 15; Chen & Starosta, 1998: 35). The impacts of culture on perceptions are discussed at the end of this chapter.

To conclude on the definitions, it can easily be stated that a universally agreed definition of culture does not exist (Lustig & Koester, 2003: 25). Additionally, the notion of culture is rarely understood coherently even within the same discipline (Sarangi, 1995). While there is no “right” or “wrong” definition of culture, every intercultural communication research should convey what kind of standpoint it takes on culture. In other words, to be able to conduct an intercultural study, culture needs to be operationalised (Kim, 1984: 17). I will next define the operational meaning of culture for the purposes of the present study.

3.2 Culture operationalisation

Kim (1984: 17) states that to be able to conduct intercultural communication research culture needs to be operationalised. This means that the operational meaning of culture with respect to intercultural communication has to be defined. According to her, culture needs to be operationalised with respect to three dimensions. These three dimensions are: the level of cultural group membership of the participants, the social context in which the participants encounter each other, and the channel which is used to transmit messages between the participants. I will use Kim's (1984) framework to operationalise culture for the purposes of this research. I will first discuss, what is meant by each of these dimensions and present the way culture is operationalised in this study. I will start with the level of cultural group membership of the participants.

3.2.1 Level of cultural group membership of the participants

According to Kim (1984), this dimension refers to the issues of how the scope of culture is understood. In intercultural communication research, culture can refer to a world region (such as Western culture), a world sub region (such as Europe) or national culture (such as Japanese culture). The word "nation" has been one of the most often used referent of culture. (Kim, 1984: 17.) Many intercultural communication academics, such as Gudykunst (1998) and Hofstede (1980) have operationalised culture to mean nations. They have therefore taken the standpoint that culture follows the borders of nations. Subsequently, the members of a certain nation possess certain characteristics that distinguish them from members of another nation.

In intercultural communication research, culture can be also be operationalised by subgroups (Kim, 1984: 17). "Subgroups are groups within a culture whose members share many of the values of the culture, but also have some values that differ from the larger culture" (Gudykunst, 1998: 43). Subgroups can for example, be categorised by ethnicity, gender or social class (Kim, 1984: 17). Multiple subcultures can usually be identified within the boundaries of a nation (Lustig & Koester, 2003: 31). Some researchers, such as Singer (1998b: 103) believe that intercultural communication studies that operationalise culture to

mean subcultures have more analytical utility. According to him, it is better to conduct the research on subcultures than consider these subcultures as deviations from the national cultures. Gudykunst (1998: 43) argues that while subcultures within a nation have certain values that deviate from the larger culture, at the same time, they share a considerable number of the values of the larger culture. According to him, national boundaries of countries usually coincide with the boundaries of culture. Schwartz (2004) also argues that substantial cultural unity within nations usually does exist. He grounds this argument on the results of separate studies, where he first treated nations as cultural units and then subcultures as cultural units. Both of these studies yielded similar results.

In the field of cross-cultural tourism studies, the existence of subcultures has recently received some attention. It has been questioned if nationality should be used as the explaining variable in tourism studies (Dann 1993 quoted in Pearce, 2005: 32). Pearce (2005: 32-34) believes there are pragmatic arguments for using the construct of nationality in tourism behaviour studies. He states that cultural variable most often taken into consideration in tourism studies continues to be nationality. Also Reisinger and Turner (2003: 30) state that the construct of nationality should be considered in tourism studies. This is because their review on several cross-cultural tourism studies indicates that national culture influences the behaviour of the tourist as well as the behaviour of the host. Besides Reisinger and Turner (2003), several other researchers argue for the continued use of nationality in tourism studies. For instance, Swarbrooke and Horner (2007: 59) and Pizam and Sussmann (1995) support the notions made by Reisinger and Turner (2003: 30). They believe that nationality of the tourist has a major impact on tourism behaviour. In particular, nationality seems to affect tourist requirements and expectations (Weiermair, 2000), tourist evaluations (Mattila, 1999; Crofts & Erdmann 2000) as well as tourist satisfaction (Reisinger & Turner, 2002).

Nationality of the tourists seems to also influence the behaviour of the host. For instance, Thyne, Lawson and Todd (2006) suggest that the nationality of the tourist notably influences the perceptions hosts have on tourists. According to

them, the nationality of the tourist seems to have a stronger influence on the hosts' perceptions than other characteristics of the tourist, such as the age or the type of tourist visiting. Their study revealed that hosts seem to prefer those tourists that are culturally similar to them. The results of the study conducted by Thyne et al. (2006) as well as the results of the studies considered above seem to argue for employing the concept of nationality to study tourism behaviour.

Some nations appear to be culturally more heterogeneous than others. In other words, some nations can be seen to contain more subgroups than others (see e.g. Hofstede, 1997: 11-12). The concerns related to the studies considering nations as a unit of analysis can perhaps be seen less when the study focuses on nations where substantial homogeneity can be seen to exist. Various researchers, such as Gannon (1994: 255) and Berger (2010: 17) point out that Japan can be considered culturally relatively homogeneous. These authors believe that distinctive Japanese national character and mindset have developed over the centuries of long isolation from the rest of the world. According to them, Japan continues to be relatively homogenous as a nation, despite the emerging changes. Donahue (1998: 130) acknowledges this by stating that the "Japanese population is one of the most homogeneous in the world". While Japan can thus be considered a homogenous nation, Finland also still to date remains relatively homogeneous (Salo-Lee, 2007b). According to Lewis (2005: 23), geographical, historical and linguistic factors have led to cultural separateness of the Finns. He believes that Finns have a unique mindset and describes Finland therefore as a "cultural lone wolf".

Thus both Finland and Japan can be considered culturally relatively homogeneous. Therefore it is believed that in the context of this study, national cultures can be used to describe and explain the communication behaviours of the participants. Several tourism researches argue for employing the concept of nationality to study tourism behaviour, making this choice reasonable. This study thus takes a similar standpoint on national culture as the studies conducted by Reisinger and Turner (2002a; 2003), for instance. This means that while acknowledging that sub-cultures exist within every nation, it is

believed that the phenomenon under a study in the present research is influenced to a considerable extent by national cultures of the participants. In other words, it is believed that national cultures of both tourists and the hosts influence the communication behaviours in the intercultural service interactions. Subsequently, national cultures of the participants of the service interaction can be seen to affect participants' perceptions and satisfaction with that interaction.

To conclude, in the context of the present study culture is operationalised to mean nation. While acknowledging, that nation and culture are not equivalent terms, this study treats these two concepts interchangeably. Subcultures of the tourist and the subculture of the service provider may have an impact on the phenomenon under investigation in the present study; however the consideration of the effects of subcultures is out of the scope of the present study.

3.2.2 Social context

According to Kim (1984), when operationalising culture for the purposes of intercultural communication research, social context refers to different settings that intercultural communication can take place. She believes that intercultural communication is affected by the context in which the communication occurs. The specific role relationships, expectations as well as behavioural rules and norms provide for the intercultural communicators vary from social context to another. (Kim, 1984: 18.) This means that in a business context, for instance, intercultural communication is subject to different kinds of the behavioural rules and expectations than it is in the context of intercultural romantic relationships.

This study considers intercultural communication in a tourism service context. Weiermair (2000) suggests that the encounters between the tourist and the service provider take place in a complex cultural setting. According to him, this setting consist of the national culture of the tourist, subcultures of the tourist, national culture of the host and the organisational culture of the tourism company. He argues that it is difficult to say, which of the possible cultural

variance and to what extent contributes to the evaluations made by the tourist. In other words, he believes that it is difficult to examine how national culture affects the evaluations made by the tourists. Several researchers disagree with Weiermair (2000). Reisinger and Turner (2003) acknowledge that the “tourism culture” may alter the behaviours of the tourists as well hosts. However, they believe, that both participants in tourist-host contact retain a residue of their national cultures when they interact. They state that cultural differences in tourist behaviour can be explained in relation to these “residual cultures”, which mirror the national cultures of the participants (Reisinger & Turner, 2003: 10). While acknowledging that tourist behaviour may be to some extent influenced by the “tourism culture”, I believe that national characteristics are reflected in the behaviours of tourists and the existence of the tourism culture does not preclude the examination of the influences of the national culture on tourism behaviour.

3.2.3 Channel

Kim (1984: 19) classifies communication channels into two main groups; interpersonal and mass media. According to her, the outcomes of intercultural communication are influenced by the communication channel used. This study focuses on intercultural interpersonal communication. Kim (1984: 20) states that the effects of interpersonal communication can be seen to be more intense than the effects of communication that is channelled through mass media.

Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988) state that boundaries of interpersonal communication are not clear. They distinguish between interpersonal and intergroup communication. According to them, intergroup communication occurs when the social identities prevail among the interactants. Interpersonal communication, in contrast, occurs when personal identities of interactants dominate in the interaction. (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988: 17-24.) Lustig and Koester (2003: 18) define interpersonal communication as “a form of communication that involves a small number of individuals who are interacting exclusively with one another and who therefore have the ability both to adapt their messages specifically for those others and to obtain immediate interpretations from them” (Lustig & Koester, 2003:18). This study follows a

somewhat broader definition of interpersonal communication provided by West and Turner (2009). They see interpersonal communication “as the process of message transaction between people to create and sustain shared meaning” (West & Turner, 2009: 10). This definition suits the purposes of the present study as it allows various types of communication situations to be considered as interpersonal communication and does not pose a limitation with respect to the number of interactants, for instance.

3.3 Intercultural communication and cross-cultural communication

Intercultural communication research is sometimes confused with cross-cultural research. Intercultural communication and cross-cultural communication differ from each other on various aspects (Gudykunst & Lee, 2003: 7). Intercultural communication refers to the communication between members of different cultures (Gudykunst, 2003a: 163). Kim (1984) offers a more specific definition for intercultural communication. She states that intercultural communication “refers to the communication phenomena in which participants, different in cultural backgrounds, come into direct or indirect contact with one another” (Kim, 1984: 16). Intercultural communication research focuses on understanding the actual encounters between participants from different cultures (Sarangi, 1995: 22). In contrast, cross-cultural communication refers to communication across cultures. Cross-cultural communication studies usually involve comparisons of the cultures as they aspire to explain how communication differs from culture to culture. (Gudykunst & Lee, 2003: 7.)

Bennett (1998) distinguishes between culture-specific approaches and culture-general approaches. According to him, when applying culture-specific approaches, cultural differences are examined for their influences on communication between members of those cultures. When applying culture-general approaches, the focus is on sources of miscommunication that apply for many intercultural situations. (Bennett, 1998: 9.) Bhawuk and Triandis (1996) state that the cultural-specific approach, also called the emic approach, is often used together with ethnographic research methods such as in-depth interviews and observations. The culture-general approach, also called the etic approach,

often makes use of mixed or quantitative approaches. (Bhawuk & Triandis, 1996: 31.) Even though these methodological perspectives that are, thus, seemingly contradictory, they could be seen as complementary to each other's limitations (Kim, 1984: 27). This study takes a culture-specific approach to intercultural communication, however, the findings of this study are also considered from a culture-general perspective.

Intercultural and cross-cultural researches are thus closely related. Subsequently, not all researchers seem to distinguish between the terms intercultural and cross-cultural. For instance, Reisinger and Turner (2003: 54) use the term "cross-cultural encounter" to refer a situation where members from different cultures meet and interact. In the light of the discussion on intercultural communication and cross-cultural communication provided above, such interaction falls into the category of intercultural communication rather than cross-cultural communication. Following Gudykunst and Lee's (2003: 7) line of thinking, the present study treats intercultural communication and cross-cultural communication as separate terms. Several cross-cultural researches will be considered for the purposes of the present intercultural study. This is because cross-cultural studies can complement intercultural studies (Kim, 1984: 27). Additionally, some researches that label themselves as cross-cultural, but seem to have in fact some characteristics of intercultural research will be considered within this study.

3.4 Dimensions of cultural variability

Cultures differ from each other in various ways. In an attempt to distinguish between cultures and understand the differences between them, researchers have treated culture as a theoretical construct and identified dimensions of cultural variability. (Gudykunst & Lee, 2003: 7.) A number of different dimensions of cultural variability have been identified. Before considering few dimensions of cultural variability in detail, there is a need to explain what is meant by dimensions of cultural variability.

According to Schwartz (2004), cultural value orientations provide an efficient way to characterise cultures. He sees cultural values as the most distinct

features of a culture. He states that cultural values as cultural ideals that “empress shared conceptions of what is good and desirable in the culture”. Hofstede (1980: 19) views cultural values as the most basic manifestation of culture and defines them as “broad tendencies to prefer a certain state of affairs over others”. According to both Schwartz (2004) and Hofstede (1980), cultural values have an effect on the members of that culture. Schwartz (2004) states that prevailing cultural values of a society are expressed in the actions, beliefs and goals of individuals as well as in the policies, norms, every day practises and institutional arrangements of the culture.

Dimensions of cultural variability can be depicted by value continuums. Value continuums place cultures on a segment of a line according to the prevailing tendencies with respect to the cultural variability the continuum depicts. This indicates the prevailing tendency of that society with respect to that particular cultural value of the continuum. (see e.g. Schwartz, 2004.) This does not mean that all members of that culture have similar tendencies with respect to that particular cultural value. In every culture there are individuals that are placed all along the value continuum (Samovar, Porter & McDaniel, 2010: 198). To illustrate this, I will consider the individualism-collectivism orientation, a cultural value continuum identified by Hofstede (1980), and Japanese culture. Along this continuum, Japan is placed near to the collectivism end of the spectrum (Hofstede, 1997: 53). This does not mean that all Japanese people would tend towards collectivism. While a tendency towards collectivism prevails in Japan, individual Japanese people can also tend towards individualism. In other words, as individual differences always exist inside any cultural grouping, both individualism and collectivism orientations exist in Japanese culture. However, in every culture, either individualistic or collectivistic tendencies tend to predominate (Gudykunst, 1998: 53). Collectivistic tendencies thus predominate in Japan.

Based on the extensive literature review on cross-cultural tourism studies conducted by Reisinger and Turner (2003), five dimensions of cultural variables seem to be most influential to tourism behaviour (see Pearce, 2005: 132). These dimensions of cultural variability are high versus low context

(Hall, 1989), individualism versus collectivism, high versus low power distance, masculinity-femininity and uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1980). For the purposes of this study, I will consider these five dimensions and how Finnish culture and Japanese culture seemingly differ along these dimensions. Besides these dimensions, I feel that it is important to consider long versus short term orientation (Hofstede, 2001). I will start the discussion with the cultural variable labelled high-versus-low context (Hall, 1989).

3.4.1 High versus low context communication

Hall (1989) categorises cultures into high-context cultures and low-context cultures according to the cultural tendencies towards high-context communication or low-context communication. In high-context communication, very little information is coded into explicit messages as a lot of information can be found from the context or internalised in interactants. In contrast, in low-context communication, majority of the information is coded in the messages. This means that communication in high context cultures is largely dependent on the context in which it occurs. Communication in low context cultures does not place such a high emphasis on context as the messages contain the majority of the information that is needed for understanding. (Hall, 1989: 86-91.)

According to Hall (1989: 91), Japan is a high-context culture, whereas Finland, as a Scandinavian country, leans towards low-context communication. Finland has been later found to have characteristics of both high-context culture, and low context culture (see Salo-Lee, Malmberg & Halinoja, 1998: 60).

3.4.2 Individualism versus collectivism

Individualism versus collectivism dimension identified by Hofstede (1980) is sometimes seen as the most influential dimension when explaining differences between cultures (Gudykunst & Lee, 2003: 7). According to Hofstede (1997: 51), “individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family”. According to him, collectivism, in contrast, “pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive ingroups, which throughout people’s lifetime continue to protect them

in exchange for unquestioning loyalty” (Hofstede, 1997: 51). Along this continuum, Japan is seen as a collectivistic country whereas Finland is seen to have more individualistic than collectivistic characteristics (Hofstede, 1997: 53).

3.4.3 Power distance

Hofstede (1997: 28) defines power distance as “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally”. According to him, members from high power distance cultures accept that power is distributed inequally in society and that those who have more power have more privileges. Members from low power distance cultures believe in equal rights and interdependence should prevail in the society. (Hofstede, 1997: 37- 43.)

Finland is considered as a rather low power distance culture; whereas Japan is considered to be high in power distance (Hofstede, 1997: 26). According to Hofstede (1997: 40), Japanese people however, moderate the use of power by a sense of obligation.

3.4.4 Masculinity versus femininity

According to Hofstede (1997), masculinity pertains to societies where distinct social gender roles exist, whereas femininity pertains to societies in which social gender roles overlap. Members of a masculine culture tend to value wealth, determination, efficiency and distinct gender roles, for instance, whereas members of a feminine culture tend to value solidarity, cooperation, modesty and sympathy. Japan is considered as having a highly masculine culture whereas Finland is considered to have a rather feminine culture. (Hofstede, 1997: 82-85.)

3.4.5 Uncertainty avoidance

Hofstede (1997: 113) defines the uncertainty avoidance orientation as “the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain and unknown situations”. According to him, uncertainty is a natural part of human life. People are intrinsically uncertain about what will happen tomorrow, for instance. Even though feelings of uncertainty are highly personal, according to

Hofstede, they are also acquired and learned. Subsequently, differences between cultures with respect to uncertainty avoidance exist. Hofstede sees Japan as a high uncertainty avoidance country, whereas Finland is placed somewhere in the middle of the uncertainty avoidance continuum. (Hofstede, 1997: 109-114.)

3.4.6 Long- versus short term orientation

Hofstede (2001: 359) contends that “long term orientation stands for the fostering of virtues oriented towards future rewards”, whereas “short term orientation stands for the fostering of virtues related to the past and present”. Cultures with high long term orientation value long-term commitment, thrift and equality. Traditions in these cultures are adapted to the present day. Cultures with low long term orientation value short-term results, spending and meritocracy. These cultures sanctify traditions. (Hofstede, 2001: 366-367.)

According to Hofstede (2001), on the long versus short term orientation continuum, Finland and Japan are placed relatively far apart from each other. Long term orientation prevails in Japan as the country’s score on the long term orientation is among the highest in the world. In contrast, Finns demonstrate considerably lower long term orientation compared to Japan, as Finland is ranked relatively low on the long versus short term orientation continuum. (Hofstede, 2001: 355-357.)

3.5 Hofstede and critique

As the discussion above indicated, a major contribution to studies on cultural value orientations has come from Hofstede (1980, 1997, 2001). However, Hofstede’s cultural value orientations have been widely criticised (see e.g. McSweeney, 2002). According to Samovar et al. (2010: 207), the Western bias that Hofstede (1980) used in the data collection is one of the most pressing criticism concerning his original work on cultural dimensions where the following four dimensions were identified: individualism versus collectivism, high versus low power distance, masculinity-femininity and uncertainty avoidance. Hofstede answered to the criticism dealing with the Western bias by conducting an additional study together with Bond (Hofstede & Bond, 1988). Their study added the long versus short term orientation as a fifth dimension to

complement the other four dimensions. According to Hofstede (2001: 352), this fifth dimension addresses the criticism concerning the Western bias in his original work on as Eastern bias was introduced to the study.

Hofstede's (1980) original work on cultural dimensions can be criticized also because the starting point of his research may have been flawed (McSweeney, 2002). Namely, Hofstede (1980) arrived to the four original cultural dimensions by conducting a study on employees of International Business Machines (IBM). The data used in the study was derived from a survey that was distributed to 116 00 employees of IBM in 72 countries (Hofstede, 2001: 41). By focusing on workers of a single company, Hofstede (1997: 13) claimed to be able to distinguish cultural differences among the nations. This is because, he believed that the individuals investigated were members of the same organisational culture and therefore only differed from each other with respect to national cultures. McSweeney (2002) strongly questions, if such a strong organisational culture among the workers of IBM exists.

While criticism on Hofstede's (1980) research might partly be justified, later work on cultural variables has also found support for Hofstede's findings. For instance, Schwartz (2004) identified a cultural value orientation that is to a large extent similar to the individualism-collectivism orientation identified by Hofstede (1980). Schwartz (2004) named this orientation as embeddedness-autonomy dimension. According to him, in cultures that has emphasis on embeddedness, people are seen as a part of a collective whole and expected to restrain from actions that might affect the group in negative ways. Cultures that emphasise embeddedness view social relationships as major contributors to the quality of life and value social order, security and obedience, for instance. In cultures that emphasise autonomy, people are seen as autonomous and expected to present their own ideas, feelings and preferences even if they would disrupt the group. Cultures with an emphasis on autonomy value issues such as curiosity and creativity (intellectual autonomy) or pleasure and exciting life (affective autonomy). (Schwartz, 2004.)

Cultural value orientations identified by Hofstede have been widely applied in services studies, (e.g. Furrer et al., 2000; Smith & Reynolds, 2001). These cultural value orientations have also been employed in the field of tourism studies (e.g. Mattila, 1999; Reisinger & Turner, 2002). As Hofstede's (1980) cultural values dimensions have been found applicable in the field of service studies as well as in the field of tourism studies, I believe that they should be considered in this study as well. However, I also acknowledge that Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions are subject to a wide criticism and therefore take a cautionary perspective to his theorems. This means that when behaviour of the tourists under investigation in this study are being analysed and interpreted, I will attempt to do so in the light of other cultural theories and not only those provided by Hofstede (1980).

3.6 Culture, communication and perception

Perception of reality may have more power in the reactions and actions of an individual than the actual reality. Singer (1998) states that "it is not the stimulus itself that produces specific human reactions and/or actions but rather how the stimulus is perceived by the individual that matters most for human behaviour. It is perhaps the most basic law of human behaviour that people act or react on the basis of the way in which they perceive the external world" (Singer, 1998: 10). This means that the way we perceive another person or situation may determine our reactions to the situation at hand. In other words, the actual behaviours of another person or the actual state of the situation may be subsidiary to our perceptions of them. This notion has implications on the phenomenon under an investigation and in this present study as well. As perceptions of reality have the most power in the minds of the tourists and not the reality per se, then in tourist service satisfaction research, studying tourist satisfaction through perceptions of tourists might yield more meaningful results than for instance observation.

As already mentioned in the context of the definition of culture in the beginning of this chapter, (p. 40) the effects of culture on perception are pervasive (Samovar & Porter, 1997: 15; Chen & Starosta, 1998: 35). To understand how culture affects the interpersonal interaction as well as

interactants perceptions of that interaction, it is necessary to consider the communication process and perception process in more detail. I will first consider the communication process. Bennett (1998: 10-11) defines a communication process as “the mutual creation of meaning –the verbal and nonverbal behaviour of communicating and the interpretations that are made of that behaviour”. Lustig and Koester (2003: 10) take a similar standpoint to the matter as they define communication as a “symbolic, interpretive, transactional, contextual process in which people create shared meanings”.

Gudykunst (1998) states that two processes are needed for communication: exchange of messages and creation of meaning. According to him, the exchange of messages takes place between the communicators, which means that one person can send messages to another person. Creation of meaning however refers to the process that happens in the mind of the receiver of the message. This means that people can not transmit meanings: they can only transmit messages. (Gudykunst, 1998: 9.) Singer (1998) views the communication process similarly but uses different terms to describe this process. He states that only symbols can be transmitted and decoded, not meanings (Singer, 1998: 160). Singer (1998) thus talks about symbols and decoding when Gudykunst (1998) talks about messages and the creation of meaning.

The creation of meaning is a process strongly affected by culture (Gudykunst, 1998: 8-9). As mentioned above, Singer (1998: 160) calls this process as “decoding of symbols”. He states that in order to decode symbols, individuals use their personal databanks to determine what meanings they attach to a particular symbol. According to him, these databanks contain everything the individual has learned during their life (Singer, 1998: 11). Gudykunst (1998: 8) takes a similar standpoint on the issue by stating that individuals use their life experiences, individual experiences but also cultural experiences to make sense of a message. This means that the creation of meaning is a cultural process.

Many kinds of meanings are created between the service providers and the tourists in intercultural service encounters. The creation of shared meaning is

important for the success of the service interaction and creation of tourist service satisfaction. Creation of shared meaning may help to reduce the various types of psychological risks associated with tourism (see Ryan, 1995: 44-45). Furthermore, the service encounters in tourism may involve even physical risks. (Arnould & Price, 1993) Therefore, it is of utmost importance that the service provider and the tourist are able to create shared meanings when they communicate. For instance, many tourists in Finnish's Lapland take part in snowmobile safaris. In these safaris, tourists are often given their own snowmobiles to ride. Considering that some of the tourists taking part in this activity might have not even have seen snow before, let alone driven a snow mobile, many types of risks are potentially involved. It is therefore paramount that the service provider and the tourists are able to understand each other for instance when the instructions for riding the snowmobile are given. Service providers need to be aware that simply transmitting messages is not enough; they should also make sure that tourists are able to interpret these messages as the service providers intended.

The creation of shared meanings in intercultural service encounters such as the one described above, is not however, simple. While many problems may occur in the meaning creation process in intracultural service encounters, the challenges are even greater in intercultural interaction. To understand how meanings are created and what kinds of problems may occur in the meaning creation process in intercultural communication it is necessary to consider the perception process in more detail. Perception process refers to the process that takes place in the minds of the interactants when meanings are created. Chen and Starosta (1998) define this as "a process by which we make what we sense into a meaningful experience by selecting, categorising, and interpreting internal and external stimuli to form our view of world". By external stimuli they mean the sensations obtained by seeing, smelling, touching, hearing and tasting. The inside stimuli refers to our nervous system, interests, desires and motivations. (Chen & Starosta, 1998: 33.)

Singer (1998) states three different kinds of determinants that can have an effect on the perception process. These three determinants are physical,

environmental and learned. The physical determinants refer to our sensory receptors, such as the visual sensors or the auditory sensors. The environmental determinants refer to outside conditions such as the amount of light in the room. Learned determinants of perception refer to culture. (Singer, 1998: 14-16.) All these determinants might influence tourist satisfaction with service. For instance, a tourist with decreased hearing ability might be less satisfied with the service in a noisy restaurant just because it is too loud for them to hear the service provider without a considerable amount of efforts. While acknowledging that physical and environmental determinants of perceptions might influence tourist satisfaction, this study focuses on the impacts of learned determinants of perception, which Singer (1998: 19) sees as culture. Adler and Gundersen (2008: 72) state that problems with perception in cross-cultural interaction often occur because of misperception, misinterpretation and misevaluation.

3.6.1 Misperception

Adler and Gundersen (2008: 73) contend that problems with perception in intercultural encounters occur because perceptions are selective, learned and culturally determined.

People often think that they are in charge of what they perceive. According Samovar and Porter (1997: 15) this is an erroneous thought because culture has taught us the way to notice, reflect on and to respond to the stimuli in our environment. This means that, to a certain extent, individuals lack the power to influence what cues, messages and symbols they perceive from the environment. In other words, culture directs us towards certain elements in our environment (Chen & Starosta, 1998: 35). This means that the cues and messages the interactants perceive in intercultural interaction may vary substantially and that interactants may not be in charge of what cues they perceive.

Bennett (1998: 20) points out that in intercultural interaction, the interactants often perceive an appearance of a cue even though there is actually none. This means that the participants in intercultural interaction may perceive something

in the communication behaviour of each other as cues or messages even though the other person did not intend them as messages.

This is largely because people make perceptions on each other all of the time (Singer, 1998: 112). This means that as people cannot “stop communicating” people cannot “stop perceiving” even if they try to. As both communication and perception are continuous processes, it is no wonder that people sometimes make a perception of a cue even though none was intended. As Adler and Gundersen (2008: 73) point out perceptions are often inaccurate. They state that people “see things that do not exist and do not see things that do exist”.

3.6.2 Misinterpretation

Interpretation is what happens when we make sense out of the perceptions (Adler & Gundersen, 2008: 75). As already mentioned before, the meaning we give to the perception is strongly influenced by culture (e.g. Chen and Starosta, 1998: 35). As Singer (1998: 11) states, individuals use their personal unique databanks in the interpretation process. From this it follows that also the interpretations are unique.

According to Chen and Starosta (1998), the problem that often occurs in interpersonal interaction concerns the attribution process. They state that attribution basically refers to the process through which we interpret others behaviour according to our own past experiences. (Chen & Starosta, 1998: 36.) People always attribute attitudes and motives on other peoples' behaviour and many times the assumptions on the attitudes and motivations are erroneous (Singer, 1998: 177). Attribution error thus refers to the situations where the interactant misinterpret the communication behaviour of the other. According to Gudykunst (1998: 146), attributions are people's attempts to explain another person's behaviours. Gudykunst (1998: 15-17) further states, that while people aspire to explain and predict another person's attitudes in an intercultural encounter, the interactants are not often capable of making the right explanation and predictions. As people tend to make these predictions nevertheless, miscommunication often occurs.

Adler and Gundersen (2008: 75) contend that the purpose of interpretation is to guide the behaviour by organising the perceptions. For this purpose, according to them, people tend to create mental categories. It seems that these mental categories often cause problems in intercultural interaction. Namely, people often categorise people based on their perceptions of them and do not consider that their perceptions might be erroneous (Dimpleby & Burton, 1998: 70). Chen and Starosta (1998: 39-41) point out that this categorising of people is often called stereotyping in the context of intercultural communication. According to them, stereotypes may easily develop into prejudices which are attitudes towards a group of people based on erroneous preconceptions or beliefs.

3.6.3 Misevaluation

Adler and Gundersen (2008) contend that problem with evaluation in intercultural encounters is, that people use their own culture as a standard of evaluation. They state:

“Even more than perception and interpretation, cultural conditioning strongly affects evaluation. Evaluation involves judging whether someone or something is good or bad. Cross-culturally, we use our own culture as a standard of measurement, judging that which is like our own culture as normal and good and that which is different as abnormal and bad”. (Adler & Gundersen, 2008: 83.)

Misevaluation is thus closely ethnocentrism. Samovar and Porter (1997: 15) describe ethnocentrism as “the perceptual window through which a culture interprets and judges all other cultures”. Culture teaches us our worldview and therefore people are intrinsically ethnocentric (Lustig & Koester, 2003: 149). If interactants are not aware of their intrinsic ethnocentrism, intercultural interaction is likely to be impeded by various problems involved with misevaluation.

To conclude, in this discussion, perception process has been divided into three stages; perception, interpretation and evaluation. As the perception process is

automatic, in reality people are not aware of the different stages of the perception process. This means that we normally cannot make a distinction where the perception begins, where the interpretation starts and in what stage we start to evaluate (Singer, 1998: 177; Lustig & Koester, 2003: 76.) In other words, the perception, interpretation, and evaluation processes often mix in the minds of the individuals. Lustig and Koester (2003: 164) state that intercultural encounters often cause some amount of stress in most individuals. It might be that the higher stress levels in addition to the various potential problems involved with perception increase the likelihood for different stages of the perception process to be merged together in the minds of the participants' in intercultural encounters. According to Lustig and Koester (2003: 76), problems in intercultural interaction often occur as people are not able to distinguish between the interpretation and evaluation. They continue to state that the problems involved with intercultural communication can be considerably decreased if people learn to make distinctions between the different stages of perception process.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter was designed to introduce the intercultural communication approach. Definitions of culture and the operational meaning of culture were first discussed. This discussion showed that intercultural communication research is interdisciplinary in nature. This discussion will continue and deepen in chapter four. This chapter showed that cultures differ from each other along several cultural value continuums. Knowledge on cultural value continuums will be explored particularly in chapter six, where the interview data will be analysed. Discussion on the communication process and the perception process illustrated that intercultural communication is subject to various types of communication errors.

4 CONTRIBUTIONS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

The purpose of this chapter is to further deepen the understanding of the intercultural approach and to show how this approach could contribute to improving tourist service satisfaction studies. I will start the discussion by considering research paradigms.

4.1 Research paradigms

The main and fundamental difference between a tourism marketing approach and the intercultural communication approach can be found in the research paradigms. A research paradigm is the general way of thinking of a phenomenon at a particular time (Salo-Lee, 2009). A research paradigm, also identified as a research philosophy, affects the research in all its levels. Moreover, research paradigm guides the choice of concepts, methods and theories in the study. (Collis & Hussey, 2009: 73.) The philosophical choices mentioned above should be discussed in every academic study. In particular this discussion is needed since this study discusses an alternative perspective to tourist service satisfaction studies.

While several different research paradigms can be distinguished, they can all be categorized under two main research paradigms: positivist paradigm and phenomenological paradigm (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara, 2005: 121). The relationship between these two paradigms can be understood when they are imagined at the opposite ends of a continuum. All the other research paradigms can be situated along this continuum according to their similarity with either of the two main paradigms. (Morgan & Smircich 1980 quoted in Collis & Hussey, 2009: 57.)

The positivist paradigm has been the dominating approach in the field of marketing (Collis & Hussey, 2009: 73). The SERVQUAL methodology, as discussed in chapter two, has derived from the field of service marketing and consumer behaviour to tourism behaviour studies. As this method is frequently used to study tourist satisfaction, it follows, that tourist service satisfaction has often been considered from a positivistic perspective. This study proposes an

intercultural perspective to the phenomenon. The prevailing paradigm in the field of intercultural communication research is the interpretative paradigm (Ting-Toomey, 1984: 170). As the interpretative paradigm belongs to the phenomenological paradigm, the two research paradigms considered within the present study can be considered as opposite to each other.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) state that research paradigms vary with respect to three fundamental questions. These fundamental questions are: the ontological question, the epistemological question and the methodological question. (Guba & Lincoln, 1994: 108.) Next these three fundamental questions are further opened in relation to the positivist and interpretative intercultural paradigms in the following sub section.

4.1.1 Ontological question

- “What is the form and nature of reality and, therefore, what is there that can be known about it?” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994: 108)

Ontological assumptions refer to the standpoint the research paradigm takes on the nature of reality (Hirsjärvi et al., 2005: 121). In the positivist paradigm, reality is seen as objective and something that is apart from the researcher (Creswell 1998 quoted in Collis & Hussey, 2009: 49). The interpretative intercultural paradigm assumes that reality is socially constructed (Creswell, 2007: 21).

Following the positivist paradigm, tourist service satisfaction could be seen as an objective reflection of reality. Subsequently, tourist service satisfaction could be examined by focusing on service quality characteristics. Approached from the positivist paradigm, it can be reasoned that tourist service satisfaction is something that is closely related if not identical to the perceived service quality. The rationale is that if the objective quality of the service is good, the tourist objectively perceives the service quality as good and as a result is likely to be satisfied with service. In other words, it is assumed that the perceived service quality reflects the actual quality of service, thus the tourist satisfaction would be an objective and logical result of good service quality. Consequently,

if tourist satisfaction is understood from a positivistic perspective it can be reasoned that service satisfaction studies should focus on service quality.

A phenomenological, interpretative paradigm assumes that subjective and intersubjective experiences of the individuals create and sustain the social reality (Ting-Toomey, 1984: 170). Therefore reality can be seen as a projection of human imagination (Morgan & Smircich 1980 quoted in Collis & Hussey, 2009: 61). This approach thus views the nature of reality as subjective. If the subject of this study is understood from this perspective, tourist service satisfaction can be seen as subjective experience rather than an objective assessment of service quality. Under the interpretative paradigm, in contrast, tourist service satisfaction can be seen as something that is socially-negotiated between the service provider and the tourist.

Ontological differences between the dominating approach to tourist satisfaction and alternative approaches, such as the present intercultural interpretative approach, can be further illustrated by examining the definitions of satisfaction. Thus, examination of the satisfaction definitions under a positivist paradigm is on place. On the basis of an extensive marketing literature review Giese and Cote (2000) identified three most often found components of customer satisfaction definitions. These components were:

- 1) Consumer satisfaction is a response
- 2) The response pertains to a particular focus
- 3) The response occurs at a particular time

(Giese & Cote, 2000)

The above three components of customer satisfaction can be identified from Lovelock and Wright's (2002) definition of customer satisfaction. The authors define customer satisfaction as "a short-term emotional reaction to a specific service performance" (Lovelock & Wright, 2002: 265-266). Defining customer satisfaction as a "response" that has a "focus" and that "occurs at particular time" demonstrates the positivistic approach to the phenomenon. These three components of customer satisfaction seem to fall short especially when

examining complex phenomenon of tourist satisfaction. Assuming that tourist satisfaction with service would merely be a short-lived response to the actions of the service provider seems somehow shallow. This approach to customer satisfaction definition does not seem to take into consideration that service is fundamentally reciprocal process. Additionally, this process may evoke emotions beyond “short-term reactions” in the participants (see Pearce, 2005: 163).

Pearce (2005: 163) seems to approach tourist satisfaction from a phenomenological perspective as he sees tourist satisfaction as “socially-negotiated account of sometimes deeply felt attitudes that lie at the heart of the topic”. Pearce emphasises the importance of interpreting and adding meaning to the empirical studies on tourist satisfaction. A study conducted by Small (2003) further illustrates this point of view. Results of Small’s study indicates that satisfaction of individual woman travellers may be a complex phenomenon involving deep emotions. The women in the study were satisfied with travel as it made them feel connected to the world, for instance. Pearce (2005: 163) points out that traditional way of thinking about tourist satisfaction falls short when deep emotions, such as these are involved. Following Pearce’s (2005) approach to tourist satisfaction, it can be found that the predominating ways to approach and define tourist satisfaction are falling short with this respect.

4.1.2 Epistemological question

- “What is the nature of the relationship between the knower and the would-be knower and what can be known? (Guba & Lincoln, 1994: 108)

While ontological questions concern the nature of reality, the epistemological questions concern how the “reality may be known” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002: 7). According to Fumerton (2006: 1), “Epistemological questions involve the concept of knowledge, evidence, reasons for believing, justification, probability, what one ought to believe, and any other concepts that can only be understood through one or more of the above”. Hirsjärvi et al. (2005: 121) contend that the researcher needs to consider epistemological issues, such as

what is the nature of relationship between the researcher and the subject under a study.

The positivist paradigm assumes that the researcher and the subject under a study are independent entities and therefore the researcher can study the subject without influencing it (Guba & Lincoln, 1994: 110). In contrast, in the interpretative intercultural research paradigm, the researcher inevitably influences the subject under a study. Additionally, the subject under a study may have an influence on the researcher. The prior can occur since in interpretative research, the researcher can be seen as a key instrument because all the stages of the research are influenced by subjective interpretations and observations of the researcher. Subsequently, these interpretations cannot be differentiated from the background and understanding of the researcher. (Creswell, 2007: 39.)

4.1.3 Methodological question

- “How can the inquirer (would-be knower) go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known?” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994: 108)

In positivist research, methods usually involve testing and verifying the hypotheses developed (Guba & Lincoln, 1994: 110). Positivistic approach often makes use of quantitative methods (Punch, 1998: 29). According to Salo-Lee (2009), the intercultural approach makes use of multiple methods in order to better understand how cultural differences affect the interaction between members of different cultures. Thus, there is no “typical” intercultural communication methodology. Preferably, a rather flexible methodological approach is used. This study uses qualitative interpretative methodology. When qualitative interpretative methodology is utilised the research data is often obtained through the interaction between the researcher and the participants of the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1994: 111). The latter are usually individuals who have experienced the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 1998: 31).

4.2 Previous intercultural studies in tourism field

Tourism studies have traditionally been lacking intercultural communication approach (Jack & Phipps, 2005: 6). Therefore, not many of studies in the field of tourism marketing can be found to have made use of intercultural communication approach. Some studies that exist in this area have concentrated on discourses that are used in tourism marketing. Papen (2005: 93-98) focused on the concept of power in the tourism marketing discourses. He states that local communities often have limited power over the creation of the tourism discourses, such as marketing materials. The underlying reason for this limitedness is that these materials are often produced in isolation and in an artificial manner by international tour operators. Pritchard and Morgan (2005: 53-54) examined the same topic from a slightly different perspective. They contend that tourism marketing discourses can be seen to have developed through complicated historical and socio-cultural systems.

Besides the tourism marketing field, there have been some attempts to combine tourism studies and intercultural communication studies. Intercultural studies on communication between the hosts and the tourists have enlightened notions of identity, community, otherness and difference (Jaworski & Pritchard, 2005: 2-3). O'Reilly (2005: 167), has suggested, for instance, that long-term, long-haul independent travel provides the traveller a change to reinvent one's identity. Also Hottola (2004) examined the effects of long-term travel. He focused on adaptation and the concept of culture shock in a tourism context. He extended the theorem of culture shock to tourism and developed a "Dynamic model of culture confusion". In essence, this model depicts the adaptation processes that long-haul pack packer tourists may go through when they travel for a prolonged period of time.

Pearce (1982) is one of the few researchers who have examined intercultural encounters in tourism context from a socio psychological point of view. According to above author, the social interaction between the tourist and the host is the key to understand components of tourism behaviour, such as tourist satisfaction. By analysing both positive and negative travel accounts from the tourist, he came to a conclusion that tourist satisfaction seems to stem from the

intimate contact with the host. (Pearce, 1982: 126-127.) He found out that perceptions of the social interaction with service personnel and tour guides was central in both positive and negative travel experiences. He states that contact between the tourists and host may elicit deep positive as well as negative emotions in tourists. (Pearce, 1982: 139.)

Pearce (1982) also examined the difficulties in the tourist-host social interaction. More specifically, he was interested in tourist's reactions to the contact and the errors tourists make in social interaction with culturally dissimilar hosts. Pearce proposed that cultural assimilators and other training programmes could be used to improve the intercultural social skills of the tourist. (Pearce, 1982: 22.) Also Krippendorf (1987) focused on the problems in the tourist-host contact. According to him, both tourist and the host prefer to keep a safe distance from each other in a social encounter because of the various problems involved with the tourist-host relationship (Krippendorf, 1987: 59-61). He also suggested that disappointments relating to travelling could be diminished by educating people for travel (Krippendorf, 1987: 145).

Jaworski and Pritchard (2005: 2) find the lack of dialogue between researchers from the field of intercultural communication and the researchers from the field of tourism surprising. Jack and Phipps (2005) take a similar perspective on the issue as Jaworski and Pritchard (2005). Jack and Phipps state that tourism not only provides a special opportunity for intercultural communication, but that it can also be seen as a form of intercultural communication in itself. Furthermore, they believe that intercultural communication can be defined as dialogical and material exchanges between members of different cultural groupings. Exchange is not only the key practise of tourists but also an applicable metaphor for understanding the nature of tourism. In tourism context, the exchanges can be narrative, material, intercultural or economic. Thus, the exchanges do not only refer to exchanges of money for goods and services but also to shared stories, information, advice, tips and helping. Hence, if intercultural communication in tourism context is seen as dialogical and material exchanges between the tourists and the hosts, then tourism can be defined as an intercultural activity (Jack & Phipps, 2005: 5-6.)

Ward (2008) sees the benefits of coupling tourism and intercultural communication researches. The author believes that interdisciplinary studies could benefit both research fields. According to her, tourism offers a popular platform for first hand intercultural contacts. She believes that intercultural studies could benefit from testing and developing their theories in the “rich and varied natural lab” which tourism settings provide. The views provided by Ward (2008), Jack and Phipps (2005), and Jaworski and Pritchard (2005) are all somewhat different from those provided by Hofstede (2001). He states that “modern tourism represents the most superficial form of intercultural encounter” (Hofstede, 2001: 452). According to Hofstede, this is because mass tourists do not make an effort to find out about the local culture. Subsequently, the tourism service providers will learn about the cultures of the tourist in a distorted and stereotypical fashion. However, he does not exclude the possibility of considering tourism in the context of intercultural communication research. He states that tourism raises cultural awareness by bringing cultures together. He concludes by stating that “possibilities of tourism probably outweigh the disadvantages”. (Hofstede, 2001: 452- 453.)

This study follows Ward’s (2008), Jack and Phipps’s (2005), and Jaworski and Pritchard’s (2005) line of thinking. Consequently, this means that the intercultural service encounter between a tourist and the service provider provides a fruitful context for intercultural communication research. Besides the arguments presented by Ward (2008), Jack and Phipps (2005) and Jaworski and Pritchard (2005) - I would hereby like to present my own argument with respect to this claim. For this purpose it is necessary to introduce a concept called “service scripting”.

Service scripting refers to the service management process through which service personnel are trained to respond in certain ways in service interface. Scripted service behaviours often include particular manners of greeting and routines for probing, empathy and positivity (Lee-Ross, 2001: 89). Service scripting in tourism is not perhaps as common as it is in some other industries such the fast food industry. The reason for this is that tourism services often necessitate personal and flexible participation from both tourist and the service

provider. For instance, extreme tourist activities, such as white water rafting, require service interaction that goes far beyond scripted service (see e.g. Arnould & Price, 1993). In tourism, it is also possible that a personal relationship develop between the service provider and the tourist. Such a relationship may be developed on a package holidays, for instance. This is because in such a holiday, the tour guide may be in a frequent and close contact with the same group of tourists for a relatively long period of time. As these examples illustrate, in some cases the service interaction in an intercultural tourism setting can be far from scripted, thus being superficial service interaction. In contrast, tourists and the service providers may engage in a highly personal and multilevel social interaction. This is the reason why I believe that intercultural service encounters in tourism offer a rich and interesting setting for intercultural communication research.

4.3 Tourist service satisfaction as a culturally driven phenomenon

As the literature review in chapter two illustrated, culture has only recently been incorporated to the service quality and customer satisfaction studies. So far, culture has received a relatively limited amount of attention in perceived service quality and satisfaction studies (e.g. Imrie et al., 2002). Hence, the effects of culture have also only recently been acknowledged in the field of tourist service satisfaction studies. Reisinger and Turner (2003: xxii) state that models and theories still dominant in the field of tourism marketing research do not take the impact of culture sufficiently into consideration. According to them, culture is a central element influencing the intercultural interaction between the tourists and the hosts. Thus, culture affects tourists' and hosts' perceptions of these interactions. (Reisinger & Turner, 2003: 192.) Moreover, other tourism researchers, such as Mattila (1999) and Crofts and Erdmann (2000) have also shown that culture influences the antecedents of tourist service satisfaction. Studying perceptions of the tourists without taking the cultural aspect into consideration is therefore likely to produce different kinds of results than the studies that take the effects of culture into consideration.

Reisinger and Turner (2002a, 2002b) are among those few researchers that have examined the role of culture in the intercultural service interaction

between the tourist and the host. More specifically, their study focused on the perceived outcomes of such interaction. As their study remains as one of the few attempts to incorporate culture and communication in service satisfaction studies, their research is considered in more detail on the following.

Reisinger and Turner (2003) conducted an extensive literature review on cross-cultural, intercultural, marketing and tourism literature and arrived to a conclusion that tourist service satisfaction is a culturally driven phenomenon. The findings of the literature review indicated that the service interaction and the resulting satisfaction with that interaction are influenced by three key cultural concepts: (1) cultural values of the participants (2) cultural rules that the participants associate with the social interaction and (3) perceptions or attitudes that the participants have on each other. (Reisinger & Turner, 2003: 282 -283.)

Reisinger and Turner (2003) argue that differences in cultural values between the service provider and the tourist have the greatest impact on service interactions and tourist satisfaction with that interaction. Also the cultural rules of social interaction guide the behaviours of the participants in the social interaction and therefore cultural differences with respect to these rules between the participants are likely to influence tourist satisfaction. In addition, the positive or negative perceptions or attitudes the participants have on each other are likely influence the social interaction and the resulting satisfaction. Reisinger and Turner depict the relationships between these concepts by model that they labelled as the “cultural model of conceptual relationships. This model shows how the three key cultural concepts; cultural values, cultural rules social interaction and perceptions are likely to influence the two other concepts depicted in the model: the social interaction between the tourist and the host and the resulting tourist satisfaction with that interaction. (Reisinger & Turner, 2003: 282-284.) The cultural model of conceptual relationships is illustrated in Figure 4.

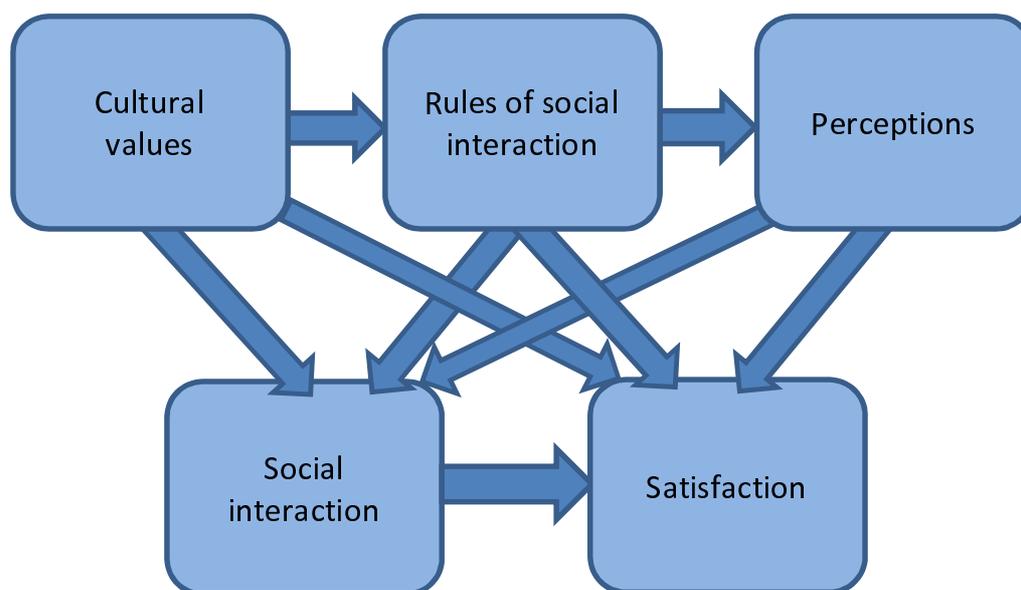


Figure 4. Cultural model of conceptual relationships (Reisinger & Turner, 2003: 283)

Based on the relationships between the theoretical concepts depicted in the cultural model of conceptual relationships, Reisinger and Turner (2002a; 2003) formed a hypothesis which they tested quantitatively on over 600 Asian tourists (Indonesian, Japanese, South Korean, Mandarin and Thai) visiting Australia and on over 200 Australian service providers. Reisinger and Turner hypothesized that cultural differences between the Australian service providers and the tourists from different Asian countries determine the tourist-host interaction and satisfaction with this interaction. More specifically, they hypothesised that differences in cultural values and the cultural rules of social behaviour between the service provider and the tourist actually exist. In addition, they denoted that the way the service providers and the tourists perceive each other also differ with respect to the cultural groups investigated in the study. Subsequently, the authors believed that these differences can be grouped in cultural dimensions which depict the culture specific characteristics of given cultural group with respect to the service evaluations. (Reisinger & Turner, 2002a, 2003: 282-288.)

To conduct the study, Reisinger and Turner (2002a) formulated a structured questionnaire that consisted of questions related to all five components depicted in the cultural model of conceptual relationships. The respondents

were asked to state their opinions on the basis of 6-point scale, ranging from least important to most important. Cultural values of the participants were examined on the basis of Rokeach Value Survey (1973). Reisinger and Turner argue that this instrument is well equipped to provide specific information on cultural values. In their study, the rules of social interaction were measured with Argyle's (1974) list of 34 rules of social behaviour. Additionally, specific rules of social behaviours in Asian cultures were identified from the literature and added to the instrument. In their study, perceptions were measured using the SERVQUAL instrument, albeit moderately modified. Social interaction was measured using a list of different types of social interactions. These included common activities, such as sharing a meal and playing sports together. Last, tourist satisfaction was examined by listing components of social interaction and asking the respondents to rate their satisfaction with each of the component. The components of social interaction included satisfaction with the conversation and satisfaction with the language used. (Reisinger & Turner, 2002a.)

The findings of the study conducted by Reisinger and Turner (2002b, 2003) confirmed the hypothesis that cultural values, rules of social interaction and perceptions all influenced the social interaction between the tourist and the host. Consequently, these factors influenced tourist satisfaction with the interaction. The study also indicated that tourists from different cultural groups (Indonesian, Japanese, South Korean, Mandarin and Thai) differ in their service perceptions. (Reisinger & Turner, 2003: 284.) Furthermore, the results imply that the Japanese tourists differ most from the Australian service providers. The findings on Japanese tourists pointed towards three unique service dimensions: service helpfulness, values of competence and rules of greetings. According to Reisinger and Turner, the service helpfulness dimension refers to the punctuality, trustworthiness and respectfulness of the service provider. Not surprisingly, the Japanese tourists' perceptions of competent service provider were found to be unique. The study revealed that logical, self-controlled, disciplined, formal and emotionally restrained behaviour of the service provider was associated with service competency in the minds of the Japanese tourists. Based on the study, Japanese tourist seemed

to place a particular emphasis on the ways Australian service providers greeted and addressed them in their speech. (Reisinger & Turner, 2003: 297-298.)

The study conducted by Reisinger and Turner (2002a, 2002b) pointed towards the important role of culture in service interaction and tourist satisfaction with that interaction. It can be stated that their study is more cross-cultural than intercultural in nature. The reason for this is that their study focused on comparing tourist service satisfaction among the different cultural groups. However, Reisinger and Turner (2003) imply that there is need for intercultural understanding in tourist satisfaction studies. They state that cultural differences in nonverbal behaviour, religious beliefs, time orientation, attitudes to privacy, manners, body language, forms of address, and gestures can cause misunderstanding and conflict between the tourist and the host. According to them, the cultural differences with respect to the above listed elements are often the reason for tourist dissatisfaction. They argue that studying and understanding how cultural factors affect the tourist-host contact is an imperative feat for the actors in the tourism field. (Reisinger & Turner, 2003: 31.) Reisinger and Turner (2002: 312) summarise this point by stating that “Cultural awareness, communication, and interpersonal skills will be necessary to avoid and/or reduce tensions and develop understanding among international tourists and hosts with different cultural values”. They further point out that education in cross-cultural awareness is therefore important to the actors in the tourism field (Reisinger & Turner, 2002).

Reisinger and Turner (2002a, 2002b, 2003) offer a valuable perspective on the complex issue of tourist satisfaction. However, as they approached the phenomenon from cross-cultural point of view and used structured questionnaires with a scale as a data collection method, the results of their study may have some shortcomings. Being a cross-cultural research, the focus of the study was to compare service dimensions among the different cultural groupings rather than to understand them. The data used in the research consisted of tourists ratings on various issues addressed in the questionnaire. As already mentioned before, Pearce (2005: 163) also believes that structured

questionnaires are not perhaps equipped to yield data that contributes to the understanding of phenomenon as complex as tourist satisfaction.

Quantitative questionnaires, which often are employed in cross-cultural research, force tourists to express their views by using numbers. Subsequently, the data obtained can be seen to lack contextual information, which literally places the statements of the tourists in some sort of context. This information is important to the researcher who attempts to understand tourist satisfaction. The reason for the above being that all the additional information with respect to satisfaction appraisals provided by the tourists may contribute to the researchers understanding of the phenomenon and perhaps lessen the need for the researcher's subjective interpretation. As Reisinger and Turner's (2002a, 2002b) study lacked the contextual information, there might be a risk that the findings of their study are some way slightly distorted. As Pearce (2005: 163) also points out, written or spoken service accounts provided by the tourists are potentially rich in contextual information and therefore perhaps better suited than the quantitative questionnaires for a study that aspires to understand the satisfaction appraisals of the tourists.

Another limitation of the study conducted by Reisinger and Turner (2002a, 2002b) concerns the way social interaction was operationalised. In the questionnaire, social interaction between the tourists and the host was operationalised as a list of common activities, such as sharing a meal or playing sports together. It can be questioned, to which extent the list of different types of social interaction provided in the questionnaire was able to depict the reality of the social interaction between the tourist and the host. For instance, inquiring tourists' perceptions of playing sports together with the service provider might not be meaningful if such an activity has not taken place. Furthermore, measuring tourist perceptions by using a list of possible types of social interaction might lead the tourists to think that the list of social interaction types provided in the research is inclusive. Thus, the questionnaire does not encourage the tourists to think about other possible types of social interaction that might have taken place and might have been important with respect to their satisfaction appraisals.

The findings of the study conducted by Reisinger and Turner can also be questioned, since they examined tourists and hosts perceptions using the SERVQUAL instrument. The various problems associated with the SERVQUAL instrument were highlighted in chapter two. It should be noted however; that Reisinger and Turner might have avoided some of the problems involved with the SERVQUAL instrument due to the modifications they made to the instrument for it to better fit the context of their study.

4.4 Problems with cross-cultural studies

As mentioned earlier in this study, many previous tourist service satisfaction studies that have considered the impacts of culture have been cross-cultural rather than intercultural in nature. This means that these studies have focused on cross-cultural comparisons. For instance, Imrie et al. (2002) compared the service satisfaction antecedents across different cultures. Moreover, Reisinger and Turner (2002a, 200b) focused to compare how satisfaction appraisals differ among different cultural groupings. Thus, cross-cultural studies have examined how the perceptions of tourists from different cultures differ from each other. These cross-cultural studies on tourist service satisfaction have often made use of quantitative methods, since quantitative research methodology allows comparisons of service perceptions and evaluations across cultures.

Although cross-cultural studies provide important information on how culture might influence the service perceptions and evaluations and thus, tourist satisfaction, they might have some short falls. Cross-cultural studies do not necessarily contribute to the understanding of what goes on in the minds of the tourists when they engage in service that takes place in a culturally unfamiliar setting; conforms to a different kind of cultural norms and is offered by a culturally different service provider. Consequently, cross-cultural studies may offer limited reasoning on why tourists are or are not satisfied with a given service. Based on the findings on the cross-cultural studies, suggestions have been made on what kind of service is appreciated in different countries. By the same token, these issues should be taken into consideration by the service providers in order to satisfy the international tourists. These suggestions and recommendations for actions, however, remain shallow and superficial if the

effect of culture on service perceptions and evaluations is not understood in full.

The present study is in many ways different from the previous cross-cultural tourist service satisfaction studies. This study also examines the impacts of culture on service perceptions, but rather than taking a cross-cultural approach, the present study takes an intercultural approach. On the basis of the current literature one can note that intercultural approach to tourist service satisfaction studies is needed to complement the cross-cultural studies in the research area. Intercultural studies on tourist service satisfaction might also overcome some of the problems associated with the cross-cultural tourist service satisfaction studies. Intercultural approach to tourist service satisfaction has not been used much and therefore calls for further examination on the following section.

4.5 Intercultural approach to tourist service satisfaction studies

Reisinger and Turner (2003) argue that it is paramount for tourism service providers to understand how culturally dissimilar tourists perceive and evaluate the service. They point out that, while tourism services might be considered satisfying in domestic tourism context, the same services may not satisfy international tourists. (Reisinger & Turner, 2003: 31.) It can be argued that while cross-cultural studies are needed to obtain large-scale knowledge on cultural differences on tourist service satisfaction, intercultural understanding of tourist service satisfaction is needed at this point of tourist satisfaction studies. As already pointed out in chapter three (p. 47), cross-cultural and intercultural approaches can be used to complement each other (Kim, 1984: 27). Hofstede (2001: 5) also points towards this by stating that “measures based on content analysis also have to be interpreted”. This means arguably that an interpretative intercultural approach to tourist service satisfaction, is truly needed to “bring to life” to all the knowledge obtained through the cross-cultural inquiries.

There is a need to go beyond comparing the perceptions of culturally dissimilar tourists. I believe that intercultural approach to tourist service satisfaction could provide important insights on international tourist’s satisfaction and

therefore contribute to the understanding of these satisfaction appraisals. An intercultural approach can be used to examine international tourists' perceptions of intercultural service encounters rather than comparing these perceptions across cultures. Furthermore, an intercultural approach can be also used to examine how cultural differences in communication and service behaviours of the participants are manifested in intercultural service encounters. Hence, intercultural communication approach may contribute to the understanding of how these factors affect participant's satisfaction with the particular intercultural service encounter.

As the discussion in chapter two indicated, there exists confusion in the service quality criteria of international tourists (p. 31). Moreover, there is also a reason to believe that the dominating approach to study tourist satisfaction might be fundamentally flawed (p. 28). An interpretative intercultural approach might overcome some of these problems. If the factors that affect the service satisfaction of an international tourist are not known, the satisfaction of an international tourist cannot be studied with existing service quality and satisfaction methodology. The reason for the above is that the current methodologies tend to force the respondents to express their views of the received service within a certain stringent framework. As the existing frameworks have been found insufficient, there is a need to allow new issues and themes to emerge. An interpretative intercultural approach may contribute to the understanding of the factors influencing the service satisfaction of an international tourist.

Reisinger and Turner (2003 quoted in Pearce, 2005: 166) argue that tourist satisfaction can be better understood by examining possible problems in the interaction between culturally dissimilar service providers and tourists. Intercultural communication research can be used to explore how cultural differences between the participants in intercultural encounters influence the outcomes of that interaction (Salo-Lee, 2009). Service encounter is like any other social encounter to which prevailing cultural norms apply (Usunier, 2000: 294). Thus, service interaction between an international tourist and the service provider can be seen similar to those intercultural social interactions

that are frequently under study in the field of intercultural communication. Intercultural communication research offers an extensive amount of knowledge on how culture affects to the outcomes of intercultural interpersonal communication. However, this field of research has not been sufficiently used in understanding the complex phenomenon of tourist satisfaction. Due to this, one can believe that intercultural communication literature on interpersonal interaction would provide important insights on this issue and should therefore be applied in intercultural service satisfaction studies.

The fundamental difference between the intercultural communication approach and the dominating tourism marketing approach can be found from the perspectives on how the service interaction outcomes are being examined. Namely, the dominating approach to tourist satisfaction focuses on the perceived outcomes of only the other participant of the service interaction. Subsequently, this approach has ignored the fact that satisfaction with an interpersonal interaction is fundamentally a mutual process. When outcomes of an intercultural interaction are examined in the field of intercultural communication, these outcomes are often considered from the perspective of both participants. An intercultural approach to service interaction outcomes could describe the optimal outcomes as “effective” or “appropriate” communication (see e.g. Lustig & Koester, 2003: 65). Furthermore, intercultural communication approach considers the “effectiveness” and “appropriateness” of the interpersonal interaction from the perspective of both of the interactants, the outcomes of such interaction cannot be perceived as effective or appropriate if only one of the participants of the interaction feels this way.

It might seem perhaps naive to suggest that both participants of the service interaction should be equally satisfied with the service interaction. Since, in the service interaction, the service providers are expected to make most of the effort and provide a satisfying service experience to the tourists. However, I believe that mutual aspect of service satisfaction is something worth considering. The concept of mutual service satisfaction between the service provider and the customer is not totally strange to the marketing field either.

Klaus (1985 quoted in Kellogg, Youngdahl & Bowen, 1997) emphasised the psychological need satisfaction of both the customer and the service provider in the service encounter. This view suggests that service managers should aim to manage the service encounters in a way that it satisfies both participants of the service encounter.

The present study sees tourist's satisfaction with service as something that stems from the social interaction between the service provider and the tourist. Therefore, the communicative behaviours of both participants are in key position in the creation of satisfaction. More specifically, tourist satisfaction with service is seen as something that the service provider and the tourist negotiate together in interpersonal interaction. Hence, tourist service satisfaction is largely dependent on the perceived success of this negotiation. Following this line of thinking, tourist service satisfaction means, to a large extent, tourist satisfaction with the communication that takes place in the service interaction.

Chen (2002) takes a similar standpoint on the issue by contending that individuals' perceptions of intercultural communication are closely related to the satisfaction these individuals' feel with that interaction. More specifically, the results of his study revealed that participants' perceptions of the procedural aspects of intercultural communication, such as communication synchrony, difficulty and "common ground" had a major impact on individual's sense of satisfaction with that interaction. Following this line of thinking and extending Chen's (2002) notions a bit further, it could be reasoned that tourists' perceptions of intercultural communication with service provider will shed light on tourist satisfaction with the whole service. Therefore, I believe that tourist perceptions of the communicative factors of the preceding service interaction provide knowledge on tourist satisfaction with that interaction.

To conclude, interpretative intercultural approach is found to be well equipped to contribute to the understanding of a complex phenomenon of Japanese tourist service satisfaction. While providing important insights on the phenomenon, an interpretative intercultural approach may pinpoint and address

some of the problems associated with the dominating tourist service satisfaction methodology.

4.6 Benefits of mixed methodology

The marketing literature has recently started to acknowledge advantages of multiple, complementary research methods (Williams & Buswell, 2003: 58). Grönroos (2007: 88) is one of the marketing researchers who argue for the use of qualitative research instruments in perceived service quality and customer satisfaction studies. The reason why the author sees qualitative methodology beneficial might have to do with the way he conceptualises service quality. Grönroos (2007) distinguishes two dimensions of service quality: the technical service quality and the functional service quality. According to Grönroos, the technical service quality refers to “what the customer is left with” when the service interaction is over. Thus, the technical service quality refers to the quality of a hotel room or a restaurant meal, for instance. The functional service quality refers to the quality of the interpersonal element of service: the way customer is being served. According to Grönroos, customers evaluate the functional service quality subjectively, whereas the technical service quality can be assessed more objectively by the customers. Grönroos emphasises the need to understand the ways customers perceive and evaluate the functional service quality. (Grönroos, 2007: 73-74.)

While the dominant, quantitative methodology might be better equipped to assess customers' perceptions of technical service quality, it may fall short when it is used to assess the functional service quality. Grönroos (2007) suggests that qualitative methodology, such as critical incident method, could be well suited to investigate customers' perceptions of service quality. In this method, the respondents are asked to describe particular service incidents, where the outcome of the service has somehow differed from the expected. According to Grönroos, the critical incidents provide the researcher with rich data that pinpoint the strengths and problem areas of service. (Grönroos, 2007: 88.) The critical incident method is frequently used in intercultural research and particularly in intercultural training (see e.g. Chen & Starosta, 1998: 272-273). The fact that critical incident method seems to be well suited to study service quality and satisfaction might imply that also other methods frequently

utilised in the field of intercultural communication research could perhaps be applied in the field of services studies as well.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has argued for the use of interpretative intercultural communication approach in tourist service satisfaction studies. The discussion on the research paradigms pinpointed the fundamental differences between the dominant, positivistic approach and the interpretative intercultural approach to the phenomenon. Following the phenomenological approach, tourist service satisfaction can be seen as socially-negotiated account between the service provider and the tourist. Consequently, the communication behaviours of the participants can be seen central to this phenomenon.

An overview on interdisciplinary studies in the field of tourism and intercultural communication was provided to illustrate the compatibility of the two study fields. It was then reasoned that service satisfaction is a cultural phenomenon which is affected by cultural values and cultural rules of social interaction of both the tourists as well as the service providers. By the same token, the benefits of intercultural approach as opposite to cross-cultural approach were also discussed. It was reasoned that interpretative intercultural approach could contribute to the understanding of the tourist satisfaction of an international tourist.

The present study has so far consisted of literature reviews from the fields of marketing, tourism and intercultural communication. This literature review has provided a broad perspective on the phenomenon under study in the present research. Moreover, the literature review has also contributed to the understanding of to the subject of this study. The tourism marketing literature review, presented in chapter two, contributed to the understanding of the ways tourists formulate their perceptions and evaluations of service. Furthermore, this part of the literature review also provided information on the possible antecedents of tourist service satisfaction. Following the marketing perspective, the intercultural communication literature review, depicted in chapter three, offered insights on how culture might affect tourists' perceptions and evaluations of intercultural service encounters. The present chapter has

considered how tourist perceptions of preceding intercultural service interaction could be studied from an interpretative intercultural communication perspective. The rationale of intercultural communication approach contribution to tourist service satisfaction studies is depicted in Figure 5.

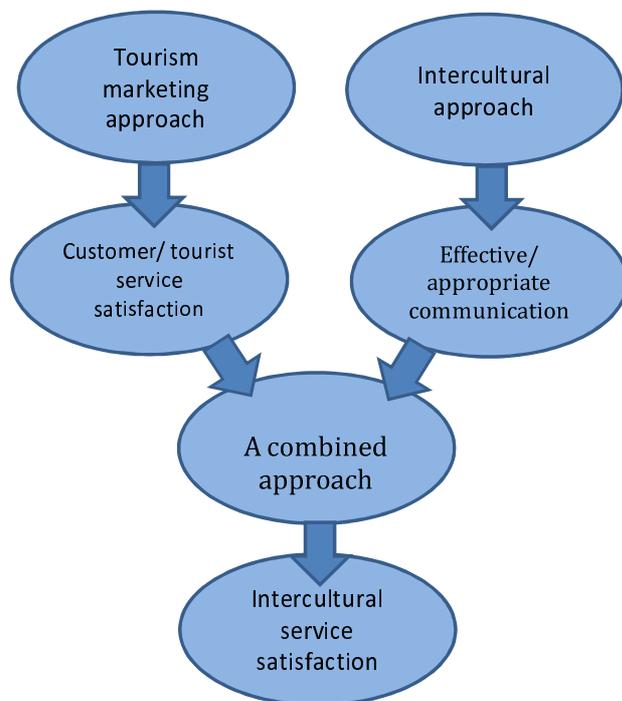


Figure 5. Concept map for combined approach

To conclude, one can argue that interpretative intercultural approach can be used to study Japanese tourist service satisfaction in Finnish service settings. In general, little is known about the ways Japanese tourists perceive and evaluate Western service. Moreover, it happens that the traditional approaches to tourist service satisfaction have been found to be inefficient, thus this study proposes a considerably different kind of perspective to deal with the complex phenomenon in question. It is believed that interpretative intercultural approach is well equipped to provide the understanding that the tourism marketing field currently lacks. Namely, the tourist service satisfaction seems to be a phenomenon that is strongly influenced by both cultural and communicative factors. By the same token, many of the current problems related to the dominating methodology seem to stem from the failure to acknowledge the role of these factors in tourist service satisfaction framework.

5 METHODOLOGY

The structure of this chapter does not necessarily follow that of a typical research methodology chapter in a master's thesis. This is because the different stages of the research design are presented here in a similar order in which they happened in real life.

5.1 Qualitative interviews as a data collection method

Qualitative, face-to-face interviews were chosen as the data collection method for the present study. This method was chosen because this study aims to understand the complex phenomenon of Japanese tourist service satisfaction through the perceptions of the Japanese tourists. Lindlof and Taylor (2002: 173) state, that qualitative interview is “particularly well suited to understand the social actor's experience and perspective”. Kvale (1996: 1) finds qualitative interviews well equipped to produce rich and varied data. He states:

“In an interview conversation, the researcher listens to what people themselves say about their lived world, hears them express their views and opinions in their own words, learns about their work situation and family life, their dreams and hopes. The qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects' points of view, to unfold the meaning of people's experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations”. (Kvale, 1996: 1.)

Qualitative, face-to-face interviews as a data collection method can be time-consuming and expensive (Kumar, 2011: 150). In this research as well, data collection required considerable efforts. This was largely due the fact that interviews took place in Finnish Lapland, 800 kilometres away from my place of residence. The interviews had to be conducted within a four day time frame, as the Japanese tourists that participated in the study were not present in the hotel at the same time. A lot of effort was also involved in transcribing and translating of the data. While collecting the data for this research therefore was

neither simple nor inexpensive, it is believed that the efforts made for the data collection were worth the trouble. This is because qualitative face-to-face interviews can produce valuable data, not easily obtained through other data collection methods.

5.2 Avoiding biases

In this research, the data was gathered in the rather early stage of the research. According to Punch (1998), working on a topic before looking into literature may prevent the findings of the study being biased. This is because literature shapes the researcher's ways of thinking and thus affects researcher's perspective on the phenomenon. Consulting the literature too early may also prevent new ways of approaching a phenomenon from emerging. (Punch, 1998: 43-44.) I chose to postpone the use of more specific literature as I did not want it to affect the results of this study too much.

There was also another reason for delaying the use of more specific literature. The subject of this study has not been previously studied much from similar perspective and therefore not a lot of more specific literature exists in the area. Therefore, conducting the study in the early stage of the research was both beneficial and necessary. While I did not want the literature to influence the research at this point too much, a more general literature review was conducted to guide the research. In addition, some previous studies on Japanese tourists were reviewed. These studies got me interested in the topic and gave me ideas on what questions remained unanswered in this area of research. Due to my study background in tourism and business studies, I had also some pre knowledge on the tourist satisfaction research methodology as well as some of the problems associated with them. The tourism marketing literature review further deepened my understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of the most commonly used tourist satisfaction research methods. The literature review also increased the knowledge on some of the alternative approaches that had been proposed in the field. The methodological choices applied in the study were thus based on my pre-knowledge on the subject as well as the literature review conducted.

Pearce (2005) finds tourist satisfaction studies often suffering from a positivity bias. By positivity bias he refers to the phenomenon that tourists give unrealistically positive evaluations on services. According to him, these overly positive evaluations can be explained by tourists' desire to protect their self-esteem. Tourist self-esteem can be seen to be connected to the tourist satisfaction because the choices tourists make with respect to the holiday often reflect their values and identity. The positivity bias might occur also because people enter tourism situation out of free will and often pay a lot of money for it. Therefore tourists might be reluctant to admit that they have made a bad choice selecting the tourism situation which then leads to overly positive statements. Pearce continues to state that positivity bias is a problem especially when studying satisfaction of Asian tourists. (Pearce, 2005: 165-167.)

In order to avoid positivity bias in tourist satisfaction studies, the research should be conducted by researchers who are not associated directly with the service business (Pearce, 2005: 165). This study has good possibilities to avoid the positivity bias, because the study was conducted for academic purposes. This was made clear for interviewees in the beginning of the interviews in order to encourage the interviewees to speak freely about their views on service. It is believed that this decreases the effects of positivity bias in the present study. Furthermore, the positivity bias can perhaps be avoided when the research is carried out in the native language of the interviewees (Pearce, 2005: 166). The interviews in this research were conducted in the native language of the interviewees: Japanese. As I do not speak Japanese myself, a fellow intercultural communication student, who is also native Japanese, conducted the interviews. I believe that this substantially decreased the effects of the positivity bias in this study. I also believe that conducting the interviews in Japanese really contributed to the quality of the data. Pearce (2005: 166) states that when positivity bias is avoided, Asian tourists can be rather critical in their satisfaction appraisals.

Conducting the interviews in the native language of the respondents had some other benefits also. For instance, no Japanese tourist had to be excluded from the study because of their language skills. This means that all the Japanese tourists in the hotel at the time of the interviews could be included in the study

and no selection had to be done in this respect. It is also believed that an interview conducted in the native language of the interviewees is likely to produce rich and varied data as no language barrier between the interviewer and the interviewees exist. This is because the interviewees are more likely to provide more detailed and accurate service descriptions as they do not have to make an effort to speak a foreign language. Additionally, conducting the interviews in native language of the participants reduces the risk for multiple interpretations and misinterpretations of the interview questions (Lyons & Bike, 2010: 418). While misinterpretations and multiple interpretations can always occur in communication, their influence on this research was perhaps less as the interviews were conducted in Japanese.

As already pointed out earlier in this study (p. 19), the tourists tend to formulate their service evaluations holistically. Subsequently, there is a “risk” that service experiences of tourists easily “merge” into one holistic opinion in the minds of tourists (Weiermair, 2000). Because of this tendency, I find it important to examine tourists’ perceptions of service as soon after the actual service experiences as possible. The majority of the Japanese tourists interviewed for the present research were approximately halfway through their holiday in Finland at the time of the interview. This timing can be seen as ideal for conducting the interviews. I believe that tourists might be better able to distinguish between different elements that have influenced their satisfaction appraisals when the service experiences are still fresh in their minds. Therefore inquiring tourists’ perceptions of service while they are still on holiday might be beneficial. If tourist service descriptions were obtained when the tourists had already returned home, there is a risk that data might not be as good. It might be that once the tourists are back in their normal lives, the service experiences are partly forgotten and more superficial descriptions of these, would be provided by the tourists. The risk for positivity bias might also be great if the tourists do not retain lively recollections of the less satisfying service experiences and tend towards formulating overly positive statements of the holiday to protect their self-esteem and ego.

Williams and Buswell (2003: 171) suggest that tourists might be reluctant to participate in interviews while on holiday because tourists often have restricted

time in their hands. Even though tourists interviewed for this research can be seen to have had limited time resources, all the tourists were seemingly happy to participate in the study. It is my belief that the willingness of the Japanese tourists' to take part in this research was largely due to the fact that the interviews were conducted in Japanese.

5.3 Scene and procedure

Lindlof and Taylor (2002) state that decisions about when and where to conduct the interviews are crucial in a research project. They further state that interviews should be conducted at times when the outside pressure on the participants is low and they are relaxed. Thus the interview scene, according to them, should be free from interruptions. (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002: 185.) For the purpose of data collection, I contacted a privately owned hotel, with a considerable amount of Japanese visitors yearly, in Finnish Lapland. It was believed that the best results could be obtained by conducting the interviews in this setting, as opposite to conducting the interviews at the airport, for instance.

The interviews were conducted at the end of March 2010. The timing of the interviews was chosen according to the number of Japanese tourists staying at the hotel at that particular time. I was not able to contact the tourists before the actual encounter at the hotel. However, the hotel manager briefed me about the arrival and departure days, and the size of the group of the Japanese.

The interviews lasted a total of four days as not all the interviewees were present at the hotel at the same time. During these four days, the interviewer and I stayed in the same hotel as the Japanese tourists. The initial contacts with the interviewees happened usually with the help of the hotel staff. The hotel employees informed us when the Japanese tourists could be around the hotel lobby area. These times included the times when the Japanese were waiting to take part in prearranged dinners or activities, for instance. We then waited in the hotel lobby to make the initial contact with the Japanese tourists. If, the Japanese tourists made sudden changes to their plans, the hotel staff often called to inform us. The hotel staff therefore facilitated the data collection process a lot.

The communication in the initial encounters was mostly done in Japanese. All the Japanese tourists we encountered wanted to take part in the interviews. The interviews were conducted at the best time suitable for the interviewees in a separate dining room near the hotel lobby area. The dining room provided an ideal setting for the interviewing as it was empty from other customers as well as employees at the time of the interviews. There were also no other distractions in the interviews. Therefore it is believed that the interviewer and the interviewees were able to fully concentrate on the situation at hand.

Before the interviews started, the purpose of the research was explained to the participants. After this the participants were asked to sign an informed consent (see Appendix 1). As I do not speak Japanese myself, and therefore could not participate in the interviews, I chose not to be present in the interview situation once everything was set up. It is believed that the participants felt more comfortable to engage in conversation in Japanese, when the researcher who does not understand or speak Japanese is not present in the interviewing situation. However, I was aware of what was seemingly going on in the interview situations as I monitored the interviews through a window from the hotel lobby. Based on these observations and also reflections on the interviews provided by the interviewer, the Japanese tourists seemed to enjoy the interview situations and expressed their views on Finnish service freely.

5.4 Research questions and semi-structured interviews

The three research questions of this study are:

- RQ1 How do Japanese tourists perceive Finnish service providers communication behaviour in service encounters?

- RQ2 What kind of notions, if any, do Japanese tourists make of their own communication behaviour in service encounters?

- RQ3 How do Japanese tourists perceive the nature of the intercultural service encounters?

To answer the research questions, a semi-structured interview design was used. A semi-structured interview with fixed questions was chosen as a method of data collection for the present study. Semi-structured interviews give some freedom to the interviewer while at the same time following a certain structure (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998: 87). The semi-structured interview method enables the reflection of the multifaceted reality through the true perceptions of the interviewees (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 1982: 36).

The following seven interview questions were used in this research:

1. How did you prepare for the trip?
2. Has everything gone as expected during your stay?
3. How would you describe the service?
4. Do you feel you can talk about the service openly with the service provider?
5. Could you describe your interaction with Finnish service providers?
6. How would you describe your relationship with the service providers?
7. How would you describe the atmosphere on the holiday?

Kvale (1996: 158) points out that deliberately leading questions can be well suited for certain research pursuits. However, as Kumar (2011) states, the general guideline is that qualitative interview questions should not be leading. A leading question is a “one which, by its contents, structure or wording, leads the respondent to answer in a certain direction”. (Kumar, 2011: 155.) In this research, the questions were designed so that they would lead the participants as little as possible. For instance, the question number three: “How would you describe the service?” was included as opposite to a question: “Do you think the service has been good?” This is because the latter question could be considered as a leading interview question. Also, while I was interested if the participants had experienced difficulties with respect to Finnish service, I did not want to lead the participants to consider all the possible difficulties involved with service by including a question such as “have you experienced difficulties with the service in Finland?” to the interviews. Therefore, in order to avoid leading the interviewees, all the interview questions were designed so that they were as natural as possible.

The interview questions were open-ended. According to Kumar (2011), open-ended interview questions are well suited for obtaining in-depth information as the respondents have the opportunity to express themselves freely. Open-ended questions also reduce researcher bias as the data obtained through open-ended questions is thus less influenced by the researcher. (Kumar, 2011: 153.) Open-ended questions were best suited to meet the aims of this research. As not much previous information exists on how communication aspects of service interaction between the Japanese tourist and the Finnish service provider, it can be argued that open-ended questions should be to study this phenomenon as opposite to closed questions. As the interview questions were open in nature and the interviewees were encouraged to discuss freely about their views on service, the data obtained is believed to be rich and multifaceted.

Hirsjärvi et al. (2005) state that the interview can take place between a researcher and an individual, between researcher and a couple or it can be conducted as a group interview. The nature of the phenomenon under an investigation, as well as the participants of the interviews determines what type of the interview can be chosen. The researcher has to decide, what type of interview is best equipped to meet the aims of the study. (Hirsjärvi et. al, 2005: 199.) In the present research, the interviews took place between the interviewer and a Japanese couple. Conducting the interviews in this manner was a natural choice because all the Japanese tourists that took part in this research were travelling with their spouses. Grönfors (1982: 109) suggests that the participants may be more relaxed when the interviews are conducted in a way that more than one individual is interviewed at once. It is believed that interviewing the Japanese tourist together with their spouses produced richer data than if the participants would have been interviewed individually. Five interviews were conducted for the purposes of the present research, thus all together ten persons participated in the interviews. Each interview lasted approximately forty minutes. The interviews were recorded with a digital audio recorder.

5.5 Transcribing

Transcribing usually involves editing the material to some extent. This means that the recorded speech is not transcribed literally and for instance broken parts of the sentences can be left out. (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002: 206.) Also in this research the recorded interview data was edited at the transcribing stage of the research. Mechanics of speech, such as length of pauses, were not transcribed as the interest in this research was on the informational content of the interview (Kumar, 2011: 211).

In this research translation of the data and transcription of the data were conducted simultaneously (Kumar, 2011: 215). As this type of transcribing is subject to various potential errors, it is important that the transcriber is familiar with the research approach (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 1982: 130). In this research, a fellow intercultural communication student, different individual than the one who conducted the interviews, transcribed the interview data. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (1982: 130) state that when the data is transcribed by another person than the researcher themselves, the trustworthiness of the research can be improved by providing the transcriber with good instructions.

In this study, the transcriber was given instructions and guidelines with respect to transcribing. The transcriber was first asked to listen to the interviews once through without making any comments. The transcriber was then asked to provide a transcription of all the meaningful data in the recorded material. This meant that, subsidiary remarks such as participants' comments regarding cell phones ringing in the middle of the interview were transcribed as requested. Like already mentioned above, only the content of the discussion was asked to be described and not the phonetics, such as laughter. The researcher was present in the initial stages of the transcribing process and elaborated the guidelines regarding the transcribing to the transcriber when needed. It is believed that using an outsider to transcribe and translate the data reduces the investigator bias in the present study.

5.6 General inductive approach to data analysis

The transcribed interview data was analysed using inductive approach. Inductive analysis method can be used when the researcher does not want to test existing theories on the phenomenon (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011: 43). The objective of inductive approach is to let themes emerge from the data without the constraints of existing methodologies (Thomas, 2003). In inductive research, theories and concepts are brought into the analysis towards the end of the analysis to support the findings of the researcher (Alasuutari, 1993: 26).

McGivern (2006: 426) states that conducting a purely inductive study is difficult in practise as the researcher is likely to have some knowledge, attitudes and ideas of the phenomenon under investigation, which influences the analysis process. He contends that inductive analysis process always involves deductive reasoning. Thomas (2003) also thinks that the findings of inductive analysis are always affected by deductive reasoning. However, he states that the deductive processes take place when the objectives of the research are set.

Thomas (2003) proposes a “general inductive approach” as a “convenient” and “efficient” method to analyze qualitative data”. In this method, the text is first read through multiple times which allow various meanings that the text entails to emerge. Researcher then identifies text segments containing meaningful units and creates categories accordingly. The analysis is guided by research objects because the general categories are derived from them. According to Thomas, a general inductive approach can be used when: 1) the text needs to be summarized, 2) links between research objectives and the findings that emerge from the data needs to be established or when 3) a new theory needs to be developed on the basis of the text. Thomas points out, that general inductive approach is commonly used method in qualitative data analysis, however most researchers use it without giving this label to the analysis method. (Thomas, 2003.)

I chose to use general inductive approach, as the study aims at understanding the relationship between Japanese tourist perceptions and evaluations and communication behaviours at play in service interaction. According to Thomas

(2003), the process of general inductive data analysis involves five procedures: (1) Preparation of data, (2) close reading of the text, (3) creation of categories, (4) overlapping coding and uncoded text, and (5) continuing revision and refinement of category system. I will next describe what each of these procedures meant in the context of this study.

1) Preparation of the data

Preparation of the data includes formatting the data into a common format (Thomas, 2003). At this stage, the transcribed interview data was brought into a one word document and formatted in the Times New Roman, font size twelve and margins 2, 5. After the preparation, the transcribed interview data constituted of twenty one pages. The data was not narrowed down at this point of the analysis.

2) Close reading of the text

In order to identify themes from the text, the researcher should read the text multiple times in detail. This stage is important as the researcher needs to gain understanding of what the text entails. (Thomas, 2003.) In the present study, close readings of the data took place during a time period of eight months. The initial close readings of the text happened shortly after the transcription process was finished in August 2010. The text was read few times during the autumn 2010 as well. The more intensive reading took place in the spring 2011. I believe that the long time span between the initial readings of the text and the more intensive readings contributed to the quality of the analysis. The long time span allowed the researcher to internalize the contents of the data. Subsequently, the interpretations of the data did not have to be rushed.

3) Creation of categories

In general inductive approach, categories are created on an upper level and on a lower level. The upper level categories are derived from the research aims and the lower level categories are derived from the close readings of the text. (Thomas, 2003.) In this study, the upper level categories were threefold as they were derived from the research questions. The three upper level categories were: (1) Japanese tourist perceptions of Finnish service providers'

communication behaviour, (2) Japanese tourists' notions on their own communication behaviour and, (3) Japanese tourists' perceptions of the intercultural service encounter as it affects the affects their service perceptions.

The meaningful units of text in this study consisted of sentences or parts of sentences. Following Thomas' (2003) suggestion, I used copy and paste procedure for marking the meaningful units into text categories. The text categories were collected into an Excel file. For instance, the following response of one respondent: "*Even if something goes wrong, we would think 'oh well, this must be the way it is here in Europe', and would not say anything about it*", was considered to contain three meaningful units and therefore assigned to three different categories. The first meaningful unit "*Even if something goes wrong, we would think 'oh well'*" fitted to the category "managing difficulties". The second segment of meaning "*this must be the way it is here in Europe*" fitted to the category "respecting the culture". The third segment of meaning "*would not say anything about it*" was marked to the category "complaining behaviour".

A total of 46 categories were created from the interview data by going through the text systematically in this manner. As in the present study, the interview questions were open-ended and the interviewees were encouraged to talk about their views on service openly, it often resulted that responses to interview question A, actually provided an answer to interview question B. Answer to the interview question A might have been provided at the end of the interview or not at all. In addition, due to the open-ended interview questions, the data contained Japanese views on various different aspects of service and some of these aspects were not asked in the interview questions at all.

As the objective of the present study was to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, I wanted to consider all the responses concerning service. Thus, the meaningful units that were assigned e.g. to a category named "respecting the culture" might have been derived from the responses of any of the seven interview questions. Given this, most of the times keeping track on what meaningful unit resulted from what interview questions did not make sense. Rather than the interview questions,

the textual context in which the meaningful unit resided, was considered important. This is because the textual context often provided important information considering the objectives of this study. Therefore, considering the above described example, the whole sentence: *“Even if something goes wrong, we would think 'oh well, this must be the way it is here in Europe', and would not say anything about it”* was assigned to the each of the three categories to provide context for that particular meaningful unit. On those meaningful units that did not reside in this type of “meaningful textual context”, interview questions were used to provide context for the meaningful unit.

4) Overlapping coding and uncoded text

In general inductive approach, one meaningful unit of text can be marked into multiple categories and a large amount of text can be left uncoded (Thomas, 2003). As the interview questions were open-ended, the interviewees talked sometimes about issues that are not relevant to this study. Those parts of the text that did not contain meaningful information for the objectives of this study were not considered in the coding process. Meaningful units of text were often assigned into more than one category.

5) Continuing revision and refinement of a category system

The researcher needs to go through the categories he or she has created and look for subtopics, contradictory points and new insights, out of which, new categories should be created when necessary (Thomas, 2003). In this research, the refinement of the category system led into 49 categories.

After the category system is finalized, the researcher needs to look for categories that could be combined on the basis of common denominator. The process aims at having three to eight categories that entail the researcher view on the key features that emerged from the data considering the research objectives. (Thomas, 2003.) Six key themes emerged from the data as a result of the inductive coding process. The coding process is depicted in Figure 6.

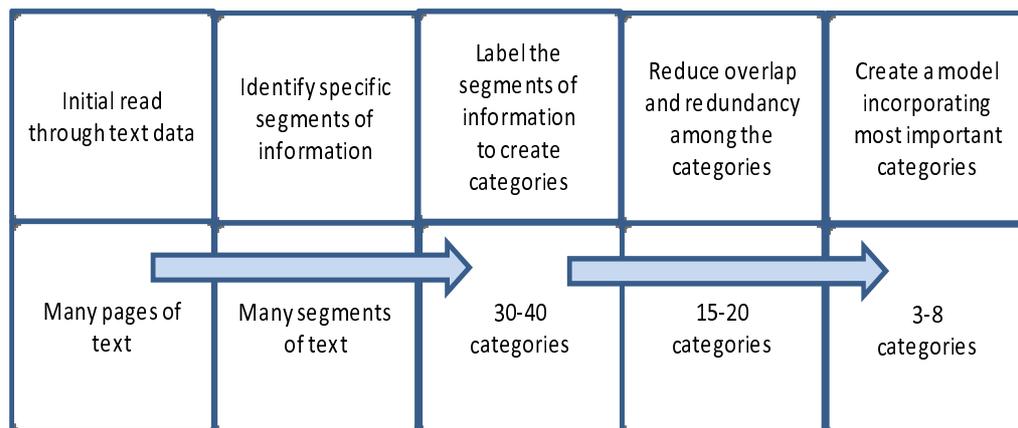


Figure 6. Coding process in inductive analysis (Creswell 2002 quoted in Thomas, 2003: 6)

5.7 Trustworthiness

According to Hirsjärvi et al. (2005), the trustworthiness of a qualitative research can be improved by describing the research process in detail. This means that the researcher should aim to accurately and objectively depict all the stages of the research, starting from designing and implementing the research instrument until the analysis and representations of the findings. In qualitative interview research the interview circumstances including all the possible distractions should be reported to the reader. (Hirsjärvi et al., 2005: 217.) A close description of the interview design, setting and procedure was therefore provided in this section. In addition, a detailed description of the data treatment was provided.

According to Hirsjärvi and Hurme (1982), the trustworthiness of a qualitative semi-structured interview research can be assessed in terms of conceptual validity and content validity. According to them, conceptual validity refers to the stage where research problem is identified and the main conceptual frameworks are chosen. As this study is inductive, the main concern with respect to validity does not concern conceptual validity. According to them, content validity refers to the questions and themes that are chosen for the interviews. Content validity of a qualitative interview is not good if the questions do not yield meaningful answers with respect to the research objectives. Content validity can be improved by designing the interview instrument so that a suitable amount of questions are included and a sufficient

amount of additional questions are developed with respect to all the interview themes. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 1982: 129.) In this research, a considerable number of additional questions were developed for each seven main interview questions. The additional questions were developed to provide the interviewer alternative ways to present the theme related to the each interview question to the interviewees in case the interviewees have problems answering the main interview question. In this research, the interviewer did not have to rely on these additional questions much as the interviewees did not have problems answering the main interview questions.

In a qualitative research, the researcher functions as a key instrument. This is because the researchers are often the ones who design the data collection instrument, gather the data, transcribe the data and analyse the data. (Creswell, 2007: 38.) In this research, besides the researcher, two different individuals were closely involved in the data collection process. These individuals conducted the interviews as well as transcription and translation of the interview data. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (1982) see this posing a threat to the trustworthiness of the research. They believe that it is not likely that the interviewer and the transcriber have internalized the research problem as well as the researcher has. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 1982: 130.) In this research, the interviewer and the transcriber were from the same field of study as the researcher is. The interviewer and the transcriber were also familiar with the topic of the research. It is believed that they therefore had internalized the research problem to a sufficient extent to be able to conduct their tasks adequately. Moreover, it is believed that the interviewer and the transcriber involved in this research contributed to the trustworthiness of the research, rather than posed a threat to it. This is because their involvement reduced the

5.8 Ethics

Ethical considerations in this study concerned the interview consent, research instrument, data access and textual representation of the subjects (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002: 90-96). The interviewed Japanese tourists gave an informed consent to participate before the interviews. The consent was written in English but explained in Japanese when necessary to ensure that the tourist were aware of its contents. The research instrument used in this study can be considered

ethical, as the interview questions and the way in which the interviews were conducted did not cause negative outcomes, such as emotional stress in the subjects (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002: 95). The interview data was kept confidential at all times and all the identifying information of the subjects has been excluded from the textual presentation of the data (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002: 96-97).

6 SIX KEY THEMES AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the interpretation and analysis of the six key themes that emerged from the data as a result of the general inductive data analysis.

6.1 Data presentation

According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), in the presentation stage of a qualitative research, the researcher has to advance their arguments by selecting and showcasing just a small piece of the overall data. This stage of the research is not simple as the researcher has to struggle with the following three questions: (1) what evidence to include in the presentation, (2) how to present this evidence, and (3) how to establish the relationship between the data and theory. (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002: 296-301.) Following Lindlof and Taylor's line of thinking, in this research the six key themes emerged from the data will be used as evidence. The six key themes that emerged from the data were labelled as follows: (1) "proxemics", (2) "style of speaking", (3) "indirectness/other-directness", (4) "knowledge", (5) "consideration", and (6) "reassurance". These six themes seem to have a key role in the creation of Japanese tourist service satisfaction or dissatisfaction in Finnish service setting. The Japanese seemed to be overall relatively satisfied with Finnish service. The following four key themes: (1) "proxemics", (2) "style of speaking", (5) "consideration", and (6) "reassurance" seemed to contribute to Japanese tourist service satisfaction. The remaining two key themes: (3) "indirectness/otherdirectness", and (4) "knowledge" seem to contribute to the Japanese tourist service dissatisfaction.

The most common way to showcase the findings of a qualitative research is to present the themes emerged from the analysis (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002: 298). I will present the six key themes identified in the general inductive analysis according to the three upper-level categories that guided the analysis process. These three upper-level categories were: (1) tourist perceptions of service providers' communication behaviour, (2) tourists notions on their own communication behaviour, and (3) tourists perceptions of the intercultural

service encounter. The six key themes with respect to the upper-level categories that guided the analysis process are depicted in Figure 7.

	CONTRIBUTES TO SATISFACTION	CONTRIBUTES TO DISSATISFACTION
Tourists' perceptions of service providers' communication behaviour	"PROXEMICS" "STYLE OF SPEAKING"	
Tourists' notions on their own communication behaviour	"CONSIDERATION"	"INDIRECT-/OTHERDIRECTNESS" "KNOWLEDGE"
Tourists' perceptions of the intercultural service encounter	"REASSURANCE"	

Figure 7. Six key themes and upper-level categories

Lindlof and Taylor (2002: 296) state that in a qualitative research, there is often a lot of evidence that fights for their right to be presented. This was also the case in the present study. Thomas (2003) stresses that it is important that the researcher is able to make the “hard” decisions when considering which emerged themes are the most important ones. The six key themes introduced above were considered as the most important themes with respect to the aims of the present study. Developing these six categories was a long process that involved various steps and required a considerable amount of effort. The hard decisions Thomas (2003) is referring to had to be made at the end of the analyzing process. In this study, four themes in particular were competing for their right to be considered as one of the “key themes”. These four themes were labelled as “facial expressions”, “language skills”, “being a guest” and “accommodation”.

Facial expressions of the service provider and language skills of the tourists were found to have an effect on Japanese tourist service satisfaction. However, the findings with respect to these themes were more scattered than the findings with respect to the six themes that are considered as key themes in this study. The two other competing themes: “being a guest” and “accommodation” were also found to have an effect on Japanese tourist service satisfaction. However,

these themes could be combined for the most parts with the key theme (3) “indirectness /other-directness”, and the key theme (5) “consideration”.

In the following subchapters, the six emerged themes will be analysed in depth. To illustrate the meaning of the key themes, quotes from the interviews are presented in the beginning of each sub chapter. Abbreviation “JC” at the end of each quote refers to a “Japanese couple”. To further clarify the reader, the number after the abbreviation “JC” is used to indicate the actual chronological order of the interviews.

6.2 First key theme: “proxemics”

The first key theme “proxemics” emerged under the first upper-level category that guided the analysis process and thus deals with Japanese tourists’ perceptions of Finnish service providers’ communication behaviours. Proxemics refers to the interaction distance between the Finnish service provider and the Japanese tourist in the service encounter. Four out of five Japanese couples brought up the issue of proxemics in the interviews. Additionally, they all had perceived the proximity in the service interaction with Finnish service providers in similar ways. They relate:

“The distance the Finnish people have seems similar to Japanese. If we go to, for example to Italy, the people there sometimes seem to act too close, or too friendly, to Japanese tourists” (JC4), “On the communication aspects, [the service providers] have the good distance, not too close, not too far”(JC2), “The proximity that [the service providers] have is very comfortable to us. Not too close, not too far” (JC5).

Interpretation

Japanese tourist perceptions of the proximity between themselves and the Finnish service provider in the service interaction seem to contribute to the Japanese tourist service satisfaction. Japanese tourists’ responses indicated that the proximity in the service settings in Finland resembled the proximity that Japanese tourists were used to in service settings in Japan. It seems that for this reason the Japanese perceived the proximity between themselves and Finnish service providers as comfortable. Subsequently, this contributed to the positive

perceptions of the service interaction and Japanese tourist satisfaction with that interaction. One response illustrates this point particularly well: *“If we go to, for example to Italy, the people there sometimes seem to act too close, or too friendly, to Japanese tourists (JC4)*. It seems that this particular Japanese couple had had negative experiences related to proximity in intercultural service encounters in other countries. This comment implies that proximity in intercultural service encounters may cause problems and deteriorate the service satisfaction. The responses of the other interviewed Japanese couples also seem to indicate that Japanese tourists’ perceptions of proximity between themselves, and the culturally dissimilar service providers might be an important factor with respect to service satisfaction.

Hall (1990a: 1) defines proxemics as “the interrelated observations and theories of man’s use of space as a specialized elaboration of culture”. He believes that space sometimes communicates with such a force that the messages conveyed through the use of space may even override the spoken word (Hall, 1990b: 175). Hall (1990a) suggests that the concept of space may vary subsequently between the Westerners and the Japanese. He states that Westerners refer to space as distance between objects, and thus perceive space as “empty”. Japanese, in contrast, give meaning to the spaces (Hall, 1990a: 153). Yoshikawa (1982) elaborates this issue further by stating that in Japan the space between an individual and other people is an essential part of being a human. According to him, the Japanese consider that only in relationship to other persons, an individual can become a human being. The views presented by Hall (1990a, 1990b) and Yoshikawa (1982) imply that sense of space is extremely important to Japanese. Additionally, their notions suggest that the experiences of space might differ between the Finns (Westerners) and the Japanese.

The findings of this study suggest that rather than experiencing space in distinct ways, the Japanese tourists and Finnish service providers were speaking the same language of space (see Hall, 1990a, 1990b). To understand the possible reasons for this, there is a need to consider the role and meaning of proxemics in intercultural interpersonal communication in more detail.

Proximity is a frequently used term in communication research. According to Argyle (1974), proximity refers to the physical interaction distance the participants in a social encounter choose to have from each other. He states, that participants in a social interaction choose the degree of physical proximity between the “lower limit” and the “upper limit”. The lower limit refers to a situation where the participants are in a bodily contact with each other. The upper level of the proximity in social situation is determined by physical factors such as visibility and audibility. This is because these factors set the conditions for social interaction situation. (Argyle, 1974: 94.) Given this, the degree of proximity in a social interaction can vary to a great extent. Hall (1990a) argues that there are four distance zones with different levels of proximity involved. He labels these distance zones as intimate distance, personal distance, social distance and public distance. He continues to argue that the meanings of these distance zones are culturally driven and that many problems in intercultural encounters result from the differing views the participants have with respect to the personal distance. (Hall, 1990a: 116-128.)

According to Hall (1990a: 119), personal distance can be thought of as “a small protective sphere or bubble that an organism maintains between itself and others”. Ting-Toomey (1999: 128) follows Hall’s (1990a) line of thinking and states that “personal space is our unconscious protective territory that we carry around with us and deem sacred, nonviolable and nonnegotiable”. According to her, the person who violates that space is often considered rude. What is considered as violation of personal space varies from culture to culture. She further suggests that differences with respect to personal space violation could be explained by the idea of high- and low- contact cultures identified by Hall (1990a). (Ting-Toomey, 1999: 128-129.)

Hall (1990a) distinguishes between low-contact and high-contact cultures. He claims that “different cultures live in different sensory worlds”. According to him, people therefore differ with respect to preferred amount of closeness, touching and other sensory cues in interpersonal communication. (Hall, 1990a: 181.) Ting-Toomey (1999) states that in low-contact cultures there is often more space between the interactants than in high-contact cultures. Finland, as a northern European country, can be classified as a moderate or low-contact

culture and Japan is categorised as a low-contact culture (see Ting-Toomey, 1999: 129.) This might imply that Finnish service providers and the Japanese tourists have similar preferences with respect to the preferred amount of personal space in service interaction. The findings of this study suggest that cultural similarity with this respect might contribute to the Japanese tourist service satisfaction. In other words, it seems that Japanese tourists' and Finnish service providers' cultural similarity with this respect could be an antecedent of Japanese tourist service satisfaction in Finnish service settings. Subsequently, cultural tendencies with respect to high-contact or low-contact communication should perhaps be further considered in studies focusing on Japanese tourists satisfaction with an intercultural service encounters.

Salo-Lee et al. (1998: 55) point out that in intercultural interaction, politeness and consideration can be expressed not only through verbal communication, but through nonverbal behaviour as well. It seems that the nonverbal behaviour of the Finnish service provider and particularly their use of space in the service interaction were interpreted positively by the Japanese tourists. To conclude, Japanese tourists' perceptions of proximity between the service provider and themselves seem to be strongly related to their service satisfaction appraisals. The findings of this study suggest that Japanese tourists and Finnish service providers were able to attach similar meanings to the use of space in the service interaction. In other words, Finnish service providers and the Japanese tourists seem to be able to communicate with each other successfully using the language of space.

6.3 Second key theme: “style of speaking”

The second key theme “style of speaking” emerged under the first upper-level category that guided the analysis process. Consequently, the discussion in this sub chapter continues the discussion on Japanese tourists' perceptions of Finnish service providers' communication behaviours. The findings of this study imply that the language barrier between the Japanese tourists and the Finnish service providers sometimes caused exchange of messages in the service interaction between the participants to be rather simple. The responses also show that sometimes the Japanese had not understood much about the Finnish service provider speech. Even in such occasions, however, the “style of

speaking” of the service provider still seems to have contributed to the tourist service satisfaction. They relate:

“In Finland [the service providers] say 'thank you' from their hearts”(JC3), “[the service provider] talked to us in Finnish, which we had no clue, but we had fun”(JC1), “we had no idea what they (the service providers) said... so we used gestures saying like ‘one’ or ‘two’”(JC1), “We wanted [the service provider] to say something in Finnish although we do not understand him”(JC1). “..we feel [the service providers’] kindness also, because if we ask them for something, they are always helpful, try to explainIt is more than we expected” (JC1)

The findings of this study also indicate that Japanese tourists especially appreciated the talkativeness of the Finnish service providers in service interactions. This “verbal expressiveness” seemed to have contributed to the service satisfaction. They relate:

“[The service providers] talk to us all the time, which we really appreciate” (JC3), “It is easy to understand, so we appreciate it very much” (JC1), “[the service providers] are very talkative and speak to us quite often. Even when we are just passing by in the corridor, they say 'hello'” (JC3), “best thing of all is that Finnish people in the service speak English slowly to us, clearly” (JC1)

Interpretation

Japanese tourists seem to make perceptions, interpretations and evaluations on Finnish service providers’ verbal communication more on the basis of how they expressed themselves than what they expressed. This means that while the contents of a message might not have been meaningful to the Japanese, the way of expressing the message made it meaningful. The following notion by one respondent illustrates this point particularly well: *“we feel the hospitality much better here than in Japan. In Japan, the customer service is done because it is expected from the customer, so the simple saying like 'thank you' sometimes sounds really systematic there, but in Finland [the service providers] say 'thank you' from their hearts”(JC3).*

Yoshikawa (1982) points towards this issue by stating that Japanese tend to trust majorly the emotional side of human beings. Subsequently, Japanese might incline to pay more attention how messages are transmitted rather to what the messages contain. Donahue (1998: 154) points out that Japanese tend to emphasise the social style of communication as opposite to an informational style. According to him, the social function of communication is manifested in paralinguistic features of the language such as tone of voice and the nonverbal aspects of speech such as the facial expressions (Donahue, 1998: 119). These notions imply that the Japanese tourists might be therefore more sensitive to these paralinguistic features of language and partly formulate their evaluations of the Finnish service providers' communication on the basis of these features. The findings of this study seem to support this notion as many service descriptions provided by the Japanese tourists entailed comments on the style of speaking of the Finnish service provider. In general, these comments regarding this issue were positive rather than negative. However, Finnish service providers could perhaps further enhance Japanese tourist service satisfaction by paying more attention to the emotional and social function of communication.

While Yoshikawa (1982) suggest that Japanese might trust the emotional side of human being to the extent that they have "mistrust towards verbal language", the content part of the Finnish service provider's messages seem to have an important role in the Japanese tourist service evaluations as well. Japanese tourists' responses illustrate that explanations and suggestions provided by the Finnish service personnel was very much appreciated by the tourists. Subsequently, this seems to have contributed to their service satisfaction. Therefore, also the informational function in addition to the social function of Finnish service providers' communication seems to be important to the Japanese tourist service satisfaction. Additionally, the findings of this study indicate that Japanese tourists perceived Finnish service providers talkative and chatty. Subsequently, this perceived talkativeness seems to have resulted in more positive service evaluations by the Japanese. This issue is interesting approached from the intercultural communications perspective.

In intercultural encounters Finns are not often perceived as talkative. Salo-Lee et al., (1998: 54-55) point out that Finns are in a risk of being perceived as impolite by foreigners because of the characteristics of their verbal communication style. They state that the Finns are rather curt and their communication style can be considered as plain compared to other Western cultures. Also Sallinen-Kuparinen, McCroskey and Richmond (1991) note that Finns are often considered as reserved and quiet by the foreigners. Lehtonen (1994) agrees with above noted authors. He points out that this cultural characteristic communication style of the Finns may engender irritation and bewilderment in foreigners. According to him, the long silences that often belong to the Finnish communication style may bother the individuals who come from cultures that are not used to long silences in social interaction. (Lehtonen, 1994: 61.)

The myth of silent Finns is perhaps disappearing as communication styles have changed in Finland (Salo-Lee, 2007b). There is still however, a reason to believe that Finns are not particularly talkative when compared to some other nations (Lewis, 2005: 69). In the light of the above discussion it could be assumed that the Japanese tourists might perceive Finnish service providers as non-talkative and curt. However, the findings of this study indicate otherwise. Furthermore, contradictory to the literature, the findings of this study indicate that perceived verbal expressiveness of the Finnish service providers seemed to have contributed to the service satisfaction of the Japanese.

Several authors such as Lewis (1996: 22) suggest that Japanese do not particularly value expressive verbal communication behaviour in interpersonal communication. Yoshikawa (1982) points out that Japanese might consider a person who speaks extensively as immature and novice. He believes that this idea is deeply rooted in Japanese mentality. As already mentioned earlier in this study (p. 71), Japanese tourists seem to value self-controlled, disciplined, formal and emotionally restrained behaviour of the service provider (Reisinger & Turner, 2003: 298). These notions imply that the verbal expressiveness of the Finnish service provider would not contribute to the Japanese tourist service satisfaction. As already noted above, the findings of this study indicate otherwise.

As the findings of this study thus seem to be contradictory to the literature on various aspects, it is important to consider what kind of role the context might play in the issue. Finns and the Japanese might have similar preferences with respect to the communication in service interaction, which is, in essence, communication between strangers. Salo-Lee et al. (1998: 45-46) state that neither Finns nor Japanese normally feel the need to reduce uncertainties involved in initial encounters with strangers by engaging in small talk. As the Japanese tourists and Finnish service providers might have similar preferences with respect to amount of this “meaningless conversation” in the service encounters, both participants might feel more comfortable with silences than the lack of small talk may cause. Therefore, even though Japanese perceived Finns as talkative, in reality no much talking necessarily took place in the service interaction, at least from the perspective of such cultures where small talk is regarded as a valuable form of communication.

Maynard (1997: 20) points out that preferred communication styles in Japan are greatly dependent on the context. Therefore, Japanese tourists might have substantially different kinds of expectations with respect to the service interaction compared to the other types of social interaction situations. Subsequently, the communication behaviours expected and appreciated in service providers by the Japanese might also be distinct. Yoshikawa (1982) states that Japanese associate non-talkativeness with wisdom and power. While these characteristics might be desirable in a conversation partner in some other social situation, they might not be optimal characteristics of a service provider in the minds of the Japanese. Furrer et al. (2000) suggest that, as members of large power distance culture, Japanese expect the service providers to appear weaker than them. Consequently, Japanese tourists might expect the communication behaviours of Finnish service providers to reflect the power distance between the service provider and the customer. As noted above, being verbally expressive could be interpreted as being novice and immature by the Japanese. On these bases, one could contemplate if the verbal expressiveness of the Finnish service providers could have been interpreted, and positively evaluated, as high power distance behaviour by the Japanese tourists.

The discussion above indicated that the Finns and the Japanese might have similar expectations with respect to some aspects of interpersonal interaction between strangers. For instance, both the Japanese and the Finns seem to have similar views on small talk in such interactions. Moreover, the findings of this study indicate that the communication styles of the Finns contribute to the Japanese tourist service satisfaction. By this token, it might be worth considering that if a service interaction where the participants associate similar communication styles to those of the service provider's, service satisfaction is likely to be created. Following this line of thinking, those service interactions, where the participants have substantially differing views with respect to the communication behaviours in service interactions would be less likely to lead to service satisfaction.

To conclude the discussion on the first two key themes, the "proxemics" and the "style of speaking", both the nonverbal communication styles and the verbal communication styles of the Finnish service providers seem to play an important role in the service evaluations made by the Japanese tourists. The findings of this study indicate that the communication styles of the Finnish service providers seem to have positive influences on Japanese tourist service satisfaction.

6.4 Third key theme: "indirectness /other-directness"

Introduction

The third key theme "indirectness/ other-directness" emerged under the second upper-level category that guided the analysis process and therefore deals with Japanese tourists' notions on their own communication behaviours. To be able to explain how this key theme, to my understanding, influences Japanese tourist service satisfaction, there is need to consider an approach from consumer behaviour studies. This approach deals with the customer participation in services, which was already briefly discussed earlier in this study (p. 22). This approach sees customers as co-producers of service and contributors to their own service satisfaction. A rather detailed description of this approach is presented next as this discussion also contributes to the

understanding of the two key themes that will be considered after this sub chapter

The customer role in the creation of service is a topic that has not yet received much attention in the consumer behaviour studies. Bitner, Faranda, Hubbert and Zeithaml (1997) state that “in many services customers themselves have vital roles to play in creating service outcomes and ultimately enhancing or detracting from their own satisfaction and the value received”. They argue that while customers are not likely to care if their participation in service benefits the service provider in terms of increased productivity, for instance, customers will likely care more if their needs are met in the service interaction. According to them, customers can contribute to their service satisfaction by performing their role effectively. Performing the customer role may be highly dependent on the characteristics of the customer, such as their motivation and skills. (Bitner et al., 1997.) For instance, in the field of health tourism, tourists satisfaction is highly dependent on the tourists own participation. This is because the goal of health tourism is to improve fitness or lose weight (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007: 33). Thus, the health tourism services necessitate a considerable amount of effort and motivation by the tourists themselves.

According to Bitner et al. (1997), customers can contribute to the service satisfaction through three roles. These roles are: (1) the customer as productive resource, (2) the customer as contributor to quality, satisfaction and value; and (3) the customer as competitor to the service organisation. The second customer role proposed by them “customer as contributor to quality, satisfaction and value” is important in the context of the present study. According to these authors, customers can contribute to the quality, satisfaction and value of the service by four means. These means are: (1) providing information, (2) expressing their hopes, (3) making effort and, (4) providing physical possessions. Customers often need to provide information to the service provider in order for the service to be successful. For instance, restaurant customers have to provide information concerning their food allergies to the waiter. Customers need to be able to express their hopes and

wishes regarding the service as it is the case when they are getting a new haircut, for instance. Customers also may have to make some kinds of efforts for the service. As already noted above, customers who engage in fitness services, for instance, have to make efforts in order to contribute to the satisfying outcomes of the service. Finally, customers sometimes have to provide physical possessions to the service provider. For instance, the service provided by Inland Revenue cannot be performed without customers providing necessary paper work such as receipts for the employees of the organisation. (Bitner et al., 1997.)

Services differ with respect to the level of customer participation required. Williams and Buswell (2003) suggest that in the field of tourism, customer participation might be particularly important. They state that tourists can participate for instance by specifying some aspects of service, performing certain tasks or they can function as a quality control, as they constantly observe if the service quality is achieved or not. According to them, tourism services often also require creative participation from the tourists. This is the case for instance when tourists take part in interactive experiences offered in heritage centers. (Williams & Buswell, 2003: 106.)

In intercultural tourism service context, the customer participation becomes a highly interesting issue. This is because culturally different tourist may vary in their capabilities and willingness to participate in the service. Participating in service may also elicit different kind of reactions and feeling in different customers. Mattila (1999) suggests that Japanese customers, for instance, would not particularly enjoy self-service. She notes that self-service, without adequate abilities and motivation by the customer, may result in negative outcomes of service and even experiences of losing face. Self-service is perhaps not perceived so negatively by the customers who are more used to such services. Understanding how customer participation is experienced in different cultures is therefore important as it might have major implications on customer satisfaction.

The views provided by Bitner et al. (1997) and Williams and Buswell (2003) suggest that tourists themselves may have an important role in the creation of service satisfaction. Moreover, it can be reasoned that tourists' communication behaviours may have an important role in tourist service participation and resulting service satisfaction. While customers may be able to take part in the service by providing physical possessions or making efforts of some sort, without effective communication these "inputs" do not make much sense. Therefore, there seems to be reason to believe that communication behaviours of the tourist play an important role in creation of service satisfaction. The discussion in the following three sub chapter includes considerations of tourists as co-producers of service and tourists as co-creators of service satisfaction. The third key theme, which is labelled as "indirectness/ other-directness", will be discussed next.

The findings of this study indicate that Japanese tourists were rather indirect in their communication behaviours in the service interaction. The tendency towards this type of communication seemed to impede Japanese tourists' service participation and co-creation of service satisfaction. The Japanese tourists did not seem to express their hopes and expectations with respect to the service to the Finnish service providers. They relate:

"What we wish to have happened was that [the service provider] had told us which to go to... it would have been much easier for us"(JC1), "When we wanted something to drink, not just water but something like orange juice, but [the service providers] asked us for 'water', so we just answered 'Yes'"(JC3), "we hope [the service providers] provide more information"(JC5), "[The service provider] should have acted with good hospitality"(JC2), "[the service providers] could have tried to call the bar before we went"(JC1), "If we had trouble in understanding what the local people say when asking questions, we feel sorry for making them trouble"(JC3)

Even if something went wrong in the service interaction from the point of view of the Japanese tourists, they seemed to have avoided expressing this to the service provider. It is also possible that Japanese tourists expressed their

dissatisfaction with service but did so in such indirect ways that the Finnish service provider had not seemed to have noticed. They relate:

“We do not want to argue here. We see people arguing in Europe about service and stuff, but Japanese people in general do not do that”(JC4), “we don’t think it is appropriate to say something”(JC2), “We have never complained to the local people”(JC2), “basically we do not complain”(JC1), “We do not see the point of complaining. It is not worth complaining in Europe” (JC4), “one incident we had almost said something to complain” ... “We felt a little anxious, but did not say anything. If it had been in India, we definitely would have complained” (JC1), “...if things were as bad as they would do us harm, we would complain” (JC2)

Interpretation

The findings of this study imply that not only the communication styles of the Finnish service providers, but also the communication styles of the Japanese tourists seem to influence the success of the service interaction and resulting satisfaction with that interaction. For instance, one couple states *“What we wish to have happened was that [the service provider] had told us which to go to...” (JC1)*. This notion indicates, that instead of asking directly where they should go, Japanese tourist chose to remain silent and accept the information provided by the Finnish service provider. Japanese tourists were not particularly satisfied with this service encounter. It seems that the lack of more comprehensive information made the Japanese perceive the Finnish service provider as ignorant. Additionally, the scarcity of information provided by the service provider meant that Japanese tourist had to make more effort themselves. The evaluation of this particular service encounter by the Japanese tourists in question could have perhaps been more positive, if the Japanese tourist had asked the information they wanted directly from the service provider.

Several service descriptions provided by the Japanese tourists reflect similar situations as the one described above. Besides avoiding expressing their hopes and wishes directly to the service provider, Japanese tourists seem to be rather

reluctant to ask for additional information from the service provider. Additionally, in such occasions where something had gone wrong with the service and the Japanese tourists would have had the right to complain, they refrained from doing so. While several reasons for this type of behaviour can be suggested, I feel it is important to consider this issue in the light of high-context and low-context communication, which is one of the cultural variables identified by Hall (1989).

As already briefly discussed earlier in this study (p. 49), Japan can be considered as high-context culture and Finland has been found to have characteristics of both high-context culture, and low context culture (see (Hall, 1989: 45; Salo-Lee et al., 1998: 60). According to Hall (1989: 91), communication in high-context cultures is highly dependent on the context. Subsequently, communication in these cultures is often depicted as indirect. In contrast, communication in low-context cultures is not that much dependent on the context and therefore the message itself contains the majority of the information. Subsequently, communication in low-context cultures can be seen as direct.

Hall (1990a: 133) believes, that with respect to communication, “people raised in high context systems expect more of others than do the participants in low-context systems”. This notion implies that the Japanese tourist might expect more from the Finnish service provider in the service interaction than the service provider is aware of. Japanese tourists might tend to expect that service providers would be able to understand their wishes and hopes related to service from their indirect ways of expressing them. Donahue (1998: 195) points out that this type of customer behaviour is typical to the Japanese. He contends that Japanese communication style is typically very indirect and Japanese expect the hearer to complement the gaps (Donahue, 1998: 218). For this reason, Japanese themselves sometimes refer to their culture as the “guessing culture”, “sashi no bunka” (Donahue, 1998: 195). Even though Finnish culture has characteristics of both high and low context cultures, in Finnish communication, the words are expected to reflect what the speaker means (Salo-Lee et al., 1998: 60). This might be one of the reasons why Finnish

service providers might not be able to complement the gaps Japanese tourists leave in their speech. Furthermore, as the Finnish service providers might not be able to guess the meanings behind the Japanese tourists' indirect communication, the quality of the service interaction may deteriorate. Consequently, also Japanese tourist service satisfaction might decrease.

According to Donahue (1998), indirect communication is one way of expressing respect and politeness in Japanese culture. When Japanese use indirect communication, they expect the hearer to read between the lines. Japanese prefer to use indirect communication to avoid underestimating the listener by providing too much information. (Donahue, 1998: 185.) Also Hall (1989: 92) points towards this issue by stating that there is phenomenon called "talking down" or in other words "low-contexting", which means providing the listener with more information than they need. Based on these notions it could be reasoned that indirect communication behaviour could be an expression of politeness towards Finnish service providers by the Japanese tourists. Japanese tourists might also think that the indirect way of communicating is the best way to get their messages across to the service providers. Namely, it has been suggested that members of high-context cultures tend to believe that indirect communication is the most effective way of communicating and that direct communication is not effective. Similarly, the members of low-context cultures tend to believe that direct communication is more effective than indirect communication. (Gudykunst & Lee, 2003: 18.) This poses a threat to the success of an intercultural service interaction between tourists coming from high-context cultures and the service providers coming from low-context cultures. This is because in order to the service interaction to be successful, the participants are expected to alter their communication behaviours and also their mental believes about the implications of such an adjustment on the communication.

Hall (1990a: 101) states that high-context communication efficient and fast as long as the hearer is capable of performing their role. According to him, in high context communication, much of the work is passed to the listener, who has to program the message. Without this the communication is incomplete. Donahue

(1998: 33.) agrees with Hall (1990a: 101) and points out that in Japan, communication is perceived as successful when the listener understands what the speaker attempts to say. This places emphasis on the skills of the listener, rather than the skills of the speaker. The findings of this study suggest that the skills of the Finnish service providers were not perhaps sufficient in this regard. This is because the service providers did not always seem to be able to complete the communication process when interacting with the Japanese tourists.

Reisinger and Turner (2002b, 2003) acknowledge the tendency of the Japanese tourists for indirect communication. According to them, Japanese tourists' tendency for indirect communication is likely to influence the service interaction and the resulting satisfaction with that interaction. They state, that Western service providers need to understand Japanese tourists' tendency towards indirect communication. They note that in Japanese communication, words and expressions rarely convey the true meaning. According to them, the Western service providers should be alert to signals the words and expressions entail. Additionally they should learn how to recognise what is left unsaid in order to provide service that the Japanese perceive as satisfactory. (Reisinger & Turner, 2002b, 2003: 304.)

Besides, being indirect, the communication behaviour of the Japanese tourists seems to be other-directed. This is because the Japanese tourists seem to be rather concerned about the effects of their communication behaviour on Finnish service provider. Sometimes the other-directed communication behaviour was manifested in rather subtle ways. For instance, Japanese tourists seem to be rather self-conscious about the trouble they might possibly cause to the service provider. This point is well illustrated in the following comment by one respondent: *"If we had trouble in understanding what the local people say when asking questions, we feel sorry for making them trouble"* (JC3). In my view, this notion in a service context is rather atypical as it is often assumed that tourists, as paying customers, have every right to "make trouble" for the service providers.

Japanese tourists' tendency towards other-directed communication was particularly evident when something went wrong with the service. In an event of a service failure, the respondents seemed to think that they had "no right" to complain as they considered themselves as being "guests" in Finland. Furthermore, the Japanese were extremely careful in their service evaluations and seemed to be prepared to complain only if there was a severe problem with the service.

Donahue (1998: 184-185) contends that Japanese communication can be considered as other-directed as the Japanese wish to avoid confrontation. Ting-Toomey (1999: 209) states, that the other-directed communication behaviour often promotes the need for verbal circumspecification in a case of a conflict. These notions suggest that Japanese tourists, when dissatisfied with the service, would be careful to complain. The findings of this study seem to support this notion. This is because none of the interviewees had complained to the service provider, even though they had experienced dissatisfactory service situations.

Refraining from complaining might indicate also Japanese tendency towards other-oriented facework strategies in conflict situations (Ting-Toomey, 1999: 216). Facework refers to those communication behaviours that people use in interpersonal interaction to protect themselves and other from vulnerable emotions, such as shame (Ting-Toomey, 1999: 38). This implies that by refraining from complaining, the Japanese tourists might wish to save the Finnish service provider from the shame the complaint might cause.

Complaining can be seen as one form of customer participation (Bitner et. al, 1997). According to Kellogg et al. (1997: 211), in an event of a service failure, customers can take part in the service by intervening. They state that "customers engage in intervention behaviours when they feel their own participation is necessary because they believe a service provider's ongoing activities are unlikely to produce a satisfactory outcome". The intervention behaviour may contribute to the service quality and satisfaction. This is because if the customer is not satisfied with the service, by intervening, they give the service provider a chance to correct and fix the service performance. (Kellogg et al., 1997.) The findings of this study suggest that Japanese tourists

might be rather unlikely to engage in intervention behaviours in Finnish service settings.

As Ahmed and Khron (1992) point out Japanese customers even when dissatisfied with the service, do not like to complain. According to them, this is because they wish to avoid revealing negative feelings and creating conflicts. Several other studies show that Japanese tourists rarely complain (e.g. Reisinger & Turner, 2002b). This is interesting, because several studies also suggest that Japanese tourists might be particularly critical in their service evaluations (Crotts & Erdmann, 2000; Reimann et al., 2008). Crotts and Erdmann (2000) for instance suggest that customers from high masculinity cultures, such as the Japan, would be more critical in their service evaluations. Reimann et al. (2008) suggest that Japanese cultural tendency to avoid uncertainties would result in considerably lower tolerance with respect to service failures. These notions imply that while Japanese refrain from complaining they tend to find various reasons for complaining. The findings of this study do not, however, support the notion that the Japanese would be particularly critical in their service evaluations in a Finnish tourism service context. Therefore the results of the present study are more in line of those provided by Weiermair (2000). He suggests that a large cultural distance between the tourist and the service provider might result in greater levels of service quality tolerance.

To conclude, the findings of this study show that the Japanese tourists seem to be rather indirect in their communication behaviours. This may impede tourists' participation in service and therefore result in lower service satisfaction. The findings of this study were in line with the previous findings related to the complaining behaviour of the Japanese tourists. However, the findings of this study differ with respect to the notions that Japanese tourists would be particularly critical in their service evaluations.

6.5 Fourth key theme: “knowledge”

The fourth key theme “knowledge” emerged under the second upper-level category that guided the analysis process. Subsequently, the discussion in this

sub chapter continues the discussion on Japanese tourists' notions on their own communication behaviours. Japanese tourists did not always seem to have enough knowledge to be able to participate in the service in full. Consequently, this issue had an impact on tourist service satisfaction. Additionally, due the lack of knowledge, Japanese tourists seemed to question their abilities to evaluate Finnish service. They relate:

“We are not sure what behaviour is appropriate and what is not here” (JC2), “we do not think it is appropriate to say something...It could be a part of the culture” (JC2), “It was very surprising to us. Oh it is normal to do that”(JC5), “Here you need to...But we did not know it...”(JC1), “The system we experienced ... was a big culture shock..We later understood the reason why they do so”(JC2), “if something happens...we assume that it is because of our lack of knowledge”(JC3), “If something goes wrong, we would think...this must be the way it is here...”(JC4). “Japan, what we think or what we do is more or less following the common sense. But when in outside Japan, we need to accept the differences they would have there”(JC2), “If we had trouble in understanding what the local people say when asking questions, we feel sorry for making [the service providers] trouble”(JC3).

Interpretation

The findings of this study indicate that Japanese tourist's knowledge on Finnish service culture might have an effect on the quality of the service interaction and the resulting satisfaction with that interaction. Bitner et al. (1997) acknowledge that it is important that the customer has enough knowledge to be able to perform their role as customers effectively. The findings of this study show that when the tourists lacked the knowledge concerning the adequate behaviours in the service setting, they were less likely to be satisfied with the service. A service description provided by one Japanese couple illustrates this point particularly well. In this incident, the respondents lacked the knowledge on the free-seating system that the low fares airlines in Europe frequently use. As the respondents did not know the system, they were deeply confused when entering the plane. The respondents describe their feelings with such a strong word as “culture shock”. The lack of knowledge

can be seen as one of the reason why this incident left the respondents dissatisfied with this service experience.

Bitner et al. (1997) state that in situations such as the one described above, customer knowledge may contribute to service satisfaction in a different way also. They believe that if something goes wrong with the service when the customer participation is high, customers tend to be less dissatisfied with the service as they partially blame themselves for the service failure. According to them, this is because customers believe that they could have done something themselves to avoid the service failure. The findings of this study were in line with this theory as those Japanese who seemed to acknowledge the ways their lack of knowledge might influence the quality of the service, did not seem to be particularly critical in their service evaluations. The following response illustrates this point well: *if something happens...we assume that it is because of our lack of knowledge (JC3)*. Therefore, customer knowledge seems to have an important role in tourist service satisfaction or dissatisfaction in an event of a service failure.

The findings of this study imply that the Japanese tourists do not need the knowledge only in the service participation but also in the service evaluation process. Namely, the Japanese tourists seemed to be unable to evaluate the Finnish service because they did not know what constitutes appropriate service behaviours in Finland. To elaborate this notion, I will consider intercultural communication competency literature. Lustig and Koester (2003: 68) state that knowledge, in the context of intercultural communication competency refers to “the cognitive information you need to have about the people, the context, and the norms of appropriateness that operate in a specific culture”. They state that this information is important for the interactants to be able to choose behaviours that are both appropriate and effective in a given context. They contend that for the success of intercultural communication it is important that the participants have both culture general and culture specific information. Cultural general knowledge refers to the general and abstract awareness of intercultural communication processes. Culture specific knowledge refers to the knowledge that helps to understand the particular cultures involved in the

interaction as well as the particular context in which the interaction occurs. (Lustig & Koester, 2003: 68-69.)

I believe that Japanese tourists need particularly cultural specific knowledge to be able to evaluate the behaviours and communications of the Finnish service provider. It can be reasoned, that the tourist need to feel capable of evaluating the service interaction in order to feel satisfaction with that interaction. To illustrate this, I will consider the response provided by one of the interviewed couples. They relate: *“we are not sure what behaviour is appropriate and what is not here...So we assume that the way the shopkeeper acted was one of the ways could happen”* (JC2). The respondents did not seem to know enough about the nature of Finnish service and therefore were not able to make their service evaluations in full. This point is illustrated further when one considers a situation where a service failure occurs. If the tourists do not have enough culture specific knowledge on the service, they may not be able to tell a difference between a service failure and a cultural feature of service. The findings of this study clearly point towards this issue. The following notion by one of the interviewed couples illustrates this point: *“think it is appropriate to say something...It could be a part of the culture”* (JC2). In my view, tourists need, at least to some extent, culture specific knowledge on the service culture of the visited country to be able to make adequate service evaluations.

To conclude, the findings of this study imply that tourists' lack of culture specific knowledge decreased the likelihood for tourist service satisfaction. Williams and Buswell (2003: 107) state that when tourists are required to take part in the service delivery, they should be also competent enough to do so. Canziani (1997) suggests that competent customers require knowledge, skills and motivation to be able to perform their roles as customers in the service encounters. Her views on customer participation resemble views found in intercultural competency literature. Namely: knowledge, skills and motivation are often seen as the building blocks of intercultural competency (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009: 7). As the service interaction in tourism often takes place between culturally dissimilar participants, there might be a need to extend the views on customers' skills, knowledge and motivation provided by Canziani's

(1997) a bit further and consider what skills, knowledge and motivations are required from customers in a intercultural service encounters.

6.6 Fifth key theme: “consideration”

The fifth key theme “consideration” emerged under the second upper-level category that guided the analysis process. Consequently, this sub chapter continues the ongoing discussion on Japanese tourists’ notions on their own communication behaviours. The findings of this study imply that the Japanese tourists show “consideration” in their service evaluations. More specifically, they seem to make an effort to find multiple ways of interpreting the communication behaviours of the service providers, particularly in an event of a service failure. Moreover, the tourists also seem to suppress the negative feelings that these situations might engender in them. They relate:

“[The service provider] might have been generous towards us by giving us the freedom of choice, or she might not have had any interest in what we do”(JC1), “(it) was one of the ways could happen”(JC2), “the attitude or how [the service provider] was all depend on his character”(JC2), “Maybe it was the misunderstanding of the language”(JC1)”, “If the same thing happens in Japan, we might get angry”(JC5), “we had almost said something to complain”, (JC1), “We felt a little anxious, but did not say anything”(JC1)

In addition, the Japanese tourists also seem to place their service evaluations into a wider context. They relate:

“If we set Japanese way of service as the best one, Finnish one is a little far from it”(JC1), “coming from the culture where the customer is the God, we feel the difference in the concept of hospitality”(JC2), “In different countries we would take the same things differently”(JC1), “This is more about the general differences between Japanese company and the other”(JC2), “We know that this is not Japan, and things must be different here”(JC3),” “We tend to see things according to the fact whether we are in Japan or not”(JC2), “We understand that this is how it goes here in Finland”(JC1), “But this is something we kind of expect to happen during the travel abroad... so it is OK”(JC5)”, “Since we are abroad, we expect less service”(JC5)

Interpretation

The Japanese tourists seemed to consider their service experiences from various perspectives before formulating their service evaluations. To illustrate, I will consider an incident where the Japanese couple had asked advice for transportation from a hotel employee. They relate: *“Then [the service provider] said, ‘Go whichever you want to... She might have been generous towards us by giving us the freedom of choice, or she might not have had any interest in what we do’ (JCI).* This response shows that instead of concluding that the communication behaviour of the service provider in this situation was inappropriate, the respondents considered alternative ways of interpreting the behaviour of the service provider. If the respondents “choose” to make the service evaluation on the basis of the first interpretation possibility; *“She might have been generous towards us by giving us the freedom of choice” (JCI)* the evaluation of that service interaction is likely to be more positive than if the respondents choose to make the evaluation on the basis of the second interpretation possibility of the same situation: *“she might not have had any interest in what we do” (JCI).*

Several similar incidents, where Japanese tourists presented multiple ways of interpreting the same service situation emerged from the data. Thus, the findings of this study imply that Japanese tourists made efforts to understand the communication behaviours of the Finnish service providers, especially in an event of a service failure. Even though the respondents were not always capable of explaining the communication behaviours of the service providers, aspiring to understand these behaviours seemed to contribute to the service satisfaction. As the example considered above illustrated, having multiple alternative interpretations concerning a puzzling service experience might result in being less dissatisfied with the service.

The findings of this study show that when negative reactions and emotions were involved with the service experiences, Japanese tourists seemed to be able to deal with them mindfully. The following service description provided by the first interviewed couple illustrates this: *“When we called taxi to the hotel this morning, the meter for the taxi was already running. We felt a little anxious,*

but did not say anything. If it had been in India, we definitely would have complained" (JC1). Even though the tourists reported feeling rather anxious when stepping into a taxi where a taxi meter is already running, they did not express these emotions to the service provider. Instead, tourist managed these negative feelings which allowed them to consider the situation from different perspectives. This seemed to contribute to the creation of more positive service evaluations. This is because through this process the tourists seemed to be able to explain the situation for their selves.

Gannon (1994: 258-259) states that Japanese are socialized from birth to acquire self-control. According to him, this self-control helps individuals to live in a group oriented society. Gannon (1994: 270) further points out, that when Japanese face a conflict situation; they tend to suppress their feelings for the sake of harmony of the group. In the light of the findings of this study, this learned self-control seems to have an important role in the service interaction and tourist satisfaction or dissatisfaction with that interaction.

The fact that respondents frequently placed their service experiences into a wider context also seemed to contribute to the tourist service satisfaction. This point is well illustrated in the following comment by one of the respondents: *"Since we are abroad, we expect less service"*. The tourists thus seemed to acknowledge the existence of cultural differences in service. Furthermore, they seemed to have adjusted their service expectations accordingly. In other words, the Japanese tourists did not expect similar performances from the Finnish service providers as they would from the Japanese service providers back home. Consequently, they seemed to be satisfied with lower levels of service in Finland than in Japan. In addition, Japanese tourists' ability to consider the negative service experiences in a wider context seemed to result in being less dissatisfied with the service. This notion is well illustrated by the views provided by a couple who had experienced rude service on a bus journey. They relate: *"But this is something we kind of expect to happen during the travel abroad... so it is OK"* (JC5). It seems that this Japanese couple was not particularly dissatisfied with the service as they considered that similar kinds of service experiences belong to travelling.

To conclude, the findings of this study imply that “consideration” plays an important role in creation of Japanese tourist service satisfaction. It was shown that in an event of a service failure, Japanese tourist seemed to be less dissatisfied with the service when they were mindful in their service evaluations. Aspiring to understand the service experience as well as managing the negative feelings involved seemed to result in less negative service evaluations in these situations. Placing the service experience into a wider context was also found to affect the service evaluation process in similar ways.

6.7 Sixth key theme: “reassurance”

The sixth key theme “reassurance” emerged under the third upper-level category that guided the analysis process. Therefore, the discussion in this sub chapter deals with the Japanese tourists’ perceptions of the nature of the service encounters. The findings of this study imply that the Japanese tourists seem to be rather sensitive to the ambiguities involved with the service interaction. Subsequently, they seem to have a rather low threshold for negative feelings such as anxiety, apprehension and distress in the service encounters. These negative feelings seem to contribute to the Japanese tourist service dissatisfaction. However, the effects of these negative feelings were diminished by the trust Japanese tourists seemed to have on Finnish service providers. The label “reassurance” refers to this issue. The meaning of the sixth key theme is best illustrated in the three following service descriptions:

Description 1)

“The system we experienced on the flight from Helsinki to Ivalo was a big culture shock to us. The free-seating system where the passengers take the seats wherever vacant on the plane was surprising. We later understood the reason why [the service providers] do so, which was for ‘cost down’. Anyway, we first felt puzzled.” (JC2) [The other respondent did not speak English well and was worried about having to sit next to non-Japanese passengers]

Description 2)

“Compared to the travel to other countries, we feel that it is secure. We do not worry about our passports being stolen or anything. Today while we were in husky tour, we left our belongings in the van, but when we came back to the van, they were not there, so asked the driver. He said that he put them by the reception desk of the hotel. It was very surprising to us. Oh it is normal to do

that. It is a very safe country. This kind of safeness makes us think this trip and this place nice.” (JC5)

Description 3)

“There was one incident we had almost said something to complain. When we called taxi to the hotel this morning, the meter for the taxi was already running. We felt a little anxious, but did not say anything. If it had been in India, we definitely would have complained. But since this is Finland, we figured that this is the rule they follow here.” (JC1)

Interpretation

Intercultural service encounters may cause stress and anxiety in tourists. Weiermair (2000) contends that the reason for this can be found from the nature of tourism and the way it affects the interpersonal interaction between the tourists and the service providers. He states, that the unpredictable nature of the service setting and the inconsistent characteristics of the service personnel may contribute to the increasing anxiety levels experienced by the tourist. He continues to state that the conflicts stemming from the discrepancy between the perceived reality and the expectations that inherently belong to the tourist-host relationship may also contribute to the stress and anxiety of the tourist. Also Gray (1987 quoted in Ryan, 1995: 45) contends that holidays potentially involve various stressful circumstances for tourists and acknowledges that social interactions are one of the main sources of stress while travelling.

The findings of this study imply that the intercultural service encounters might indeed be potential sources of stress for the Japanese tourists. To illustrate this, I will consider the first service description provided in the beginning of this sub chapter. In this description, the respondents describe the outcomes of the service with such a strong word as “culture shock”. The respondents state that the free seating system they had experienced on the flight from Helsinki to Ivalo was surprising, puzzling and shocking to them. Tourism services differ with respect to the risks and stress involved (Ryan, 1995: 45-46). Adventure tourism services, such as white water rafting involve relatively high risks (see Arnould & Price, 1993). The free seating system on a flight cannot perhaps be considered involving a high risk for tourists. As this type of service encounter

however, seems to be able to create a considerable amount of stress in the Japanese tourists, there might be a reason to believe that these particular Japanese tourists have a rather low threshold for anxiety in intercultural service encounter.

Stauss and Mang (1999) state, that customers might experience “culture shocks” in intercultural service encounters. This is because in such a situation, the customers have to make considerable efforts to adjust their own behaviour to fit the context that might be strange to them. Kowner (2002) points out that many Japanese find intercultural encounters unpleasant and even frightening. Furthermore, several tourism researchers such as Reisinger and Turner (2002b) note, that intercultural service encounters are especially stressful for the Japanese tourists.

Reisinger and Turner (2002b) point out, that taking part in intercultural service situations may cause stress for the Japanese tourists. This is because, in this type of interaction, Japanese tourists tend to worry about the performance of the service personnel and their own safety, for instance. They state that these issues may cause substantial social and psychological reactions in Japanese tourists. Pizam and Sussmann (1995) also note that intercultural service encounters may evoke feelings of uneasiness in Japanese tourists. They state, that Japanese tourists may wish to reduce risks and uncertainties involved with travelling by minimising the exposure for the foreign culture on their holidays.

As already discussed earlier in this study (p. 30), Reimann et al. (2008) suggest that customers from high uncertainty avoidance cultures such as Japan, might be less tolerant for uncertainties involved with service. Therefore, these customers, especially in an event of a service failure, might judge service more critically. Hofstede (1980: 184) suggests that members of high uncertainty cultures have a need for consensus, experience higher anxiety levels, and necessitate rules. Yoshikawa (1982) presents contradictory statements in this regard. He contends that the Japanese would be especially well capable of living with ambiguity and uncertainty. The findings of this study imply, that while perhaps sensitive to the uncertainties, anxieties and risks involved with

the intercultural service settings, the Japanese tourists seem to be relatively well capable of managing these negative issues.

The findings of this study imply that the effects of stress and anxiety on the service satisfaction were diminished by the trust Japanese tourists had on the Finnish service providers as well as the perceived security of the service encounters. To illustrate, I will consider the second and the third service description provided in the beginning of this chapter. In these descriptions, Japanese tourist initial negative perceptions of the service encounter seemed to have been moderated by the security and safety associated with the service situation. The respondents in both descriptions initially found the service surprising, inappropriate and even unsatisfactory. However, the trust associated with the Finnish service setting and Finnish service providers made the respondents reconsider their initial service perceptions. As the respondents reconsidered their service experiences in the light of general security and safety associated with the Finnish service, the initial negative reactions such as surprise seemed to have been alleviated. Hence, this “reconsideration process” seemed to leave the tourists less dissatisfied with the service at the end.

To conclude, the findings of this study imply that the Japanese tourists easily associate many types of concerns and risks to the intercultural service encounters. Japanese tourists’ anxiety and stress in service situations might stem from the unfamiliar service systems as well as from the deviating behaviours of the service providers. The findings of this study are in line with the previous studies which suggest that the lower thresholds for anxiety and uncertainty are likely to result in lower service satisfaction, especially when a service failure occurs. In this study, however, Japanese tourists’ sensitivity to the ambiguities involved with the service interaction did not seem to excessively deteriorate Japanese tourist service satisfaction. This was perhaps because the Japanese tourists perceived the service settings and service providers in Finland generally safe and secure.

7 GENERAL DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that six communicative factors, thus six key themes, play a role in the creation of Japanese tourist service satisfaction or dissatisfaction in a Finnish service setting. These six key themes are: (1) “proxemics”, (2) “style of speaking”, (3) “indirectness/otherdirectness”, (4) “knowledge”, (5) “consideration”, and (6) “reassurance”. In the previous chapter, these themes were discussed in the light of marketing, tourism and intercultural communication literature. The discussion in this chapter further deepens the intercultural understanding of these six themes.

All the six key themes frequently appear in intercultural competency literature. Studies conducted by Yu et al. (2001) and Sharma et al. (2009) show that intercultural competency of the service provider as well as the intercultural competency of the customer may play an important role in the creation of customer service satisfaction. Therefore there is a need to consider the six key themes in the light of intercultural competency theories. I will begin with a short introduction to intercultural competency studies.

7.1 Intercultural competency studies

Intercultural competency is one of the main areas of study in the field of intercultural communication (Gudykunst, 2003b: 168). According to Salo-Lee (2010), research on intercultural competency can be roughly divided into two categories: studies that concentrate on efficiency and studies that focus on human development. According to her, however, the distinction between the two categories is not clear. This is because in order to be interculturally effective one always has to go through personal growth. While going through the personal growth, one often becomes unnoticeably more efficient in intercultural communication. In the field of international business and management, intercultural competency has been assessed more in terms of effectiveness, whereas competence models developed by psychologists have been perhaps more concerned on human development. (Salo-Lee, 2010.)

Intercultural competency is often defined in terms of the effectiveness and appropriateness of the communication. Deardorff (2006: 247-248) sees

intercultural competency as “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations, based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes”. Lustig and Koester (2003: 63) take a similar standpoint on the issue by stating that “competent communication is interaction that is perceived as effective in fulfilling certain rewarding objectives in a way that is also appropriate to the context in which the interaction occurs”. While a universally accepted definition on intercultural competency does not exist, many conceptualisations of intercultural competency include components labelled “knowledge”, “skills”, and “motivation”. These three elements are often seen as the building blocks of intercultural competency (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009: 7).

The concept of intercultural competency has been rather recently introduced to the services studies. Some researchers such as Sharma et al. (2009) and Yu et al. (2001) have considered the relationships between the intercultural competencies of the participants of intercultural service encounter and service satisfaction. According to these authors, intercultural competency has not yet received enough attention in the service satisfaction studies. Therefore there seems to be a need for further examination on the issue.

The findings of this study give reason to believe that the intercultural competencies of the Finnish service providers as well as the intercultural competencies of the Japanese tourists have an impact on tourist service satisfaction. In the light of the findings of this study, different kinds of intercultural competency are required from the participants. I will next discuss the role of intercultural competency in tourist service satisfaction. I will begin the discussion by considering how intercultural competency of the Finnish service providers might contribute to the service satisfaction of the Japanese tourists.

7.1.1 Intercultural competency of the service provider

Yu et al. (2001) contend that there is a relationship between service providers’ intercultural competency and tourist satisfaction. They examined how intercultural communication competency of a tour guide might affect tourist satisfaction. According to them, intercultural competency of the service

provider contributes to the customer satisfaction. They believe that all the building blocks of intercultural competency, namely “knowledge”, “skills”, and “motivation” of the tour guide, contribute to the tourist satisfaction. More specifically, understanding and awareness of cultural differences (knowledge), language and interpersonal skills (skills) and empathy and sensitivity other’s needs (motivation) are needed from the tour guides when providing satisfying services for the culturally dissimilar tourists. (Yu et al., 2001.)

The findings of this study imply that Finnish service providers’ intercultural competency with respect to skills and knowledge in particular contributes to Japanese tourist service satisfaction. More specifically, the first two key themes: (1) “proxemics” and (2) “style of speaking” indicate that Finnish service provider’s communication styles are important to the Japanese tourist service satisfaction. In order to be interculturally competent in communication styles, the service providers need both knowledge and skills. There seems to be a need to consider how service providers’ intercultural competency in communication styles might affect the Japanese tourist service satisfaction.

Different cultures have different kinds of communication styles (Bennett, 1998: 50). The style of communication refers to the typical way of conveying and interpreting meanings in interpersonal communication (Donahue, 1998: 119). People are often not aware of their communication styles, which may cause problems in intercultural communication (Salo-Lee et al., 1998: 30). In order for the communication to be effective in intercultural interaction, participants need to be aware that communication styles differ from culture to culture (Donahue, 1998: 124). Communication styles encompass both verbal and nonverbal aspects of communication (Ramsey, 1999: 114). I will first discuss how verbal communication styles of the service provider might affect the tourist service satisfaction.

Reisinger and Turner (2002b; 2003: 311) suggest that communication styles of the service provider play an important role in Japanese tourist service satisfaction. As already briefly mentioned earlier (p. 71), the results of their study pointed out that the way a Western service provider greets a Japanese tourist might play a role in service satisfaction of Japanese tourists. According

to them, this is because service providers' greeting styles may affect Japanese tourists' willingness to engage in service interaction. Subsequently, the greeting styles may have an effect on the tourist service satisfaction. If not done appropriately, the way the service providers greet Japanese tourists may not only discourage them from engaging in the service situation but also deteriorate their service satisfaction. The findings of this study imply that Japanese tourists placed importance on the ways Finnish service providers greeted them. A service description provided by one interviewed couple illustrates this point. They relate: "*the shopkeeper seemed rude. When we went into the shop, there were no greetings*" (JC2). The way of greeting in this incident might have contributed more to the Japanese tourist service dissatisfaction than the Finnish service provider assumed.

Donahue (1998: 130) states that respectfulness is one of the key characteristics of Japanese communication. According to him, proper addressing is one of the most important ways of expressing respectfulness in speech. Reisinger and Turner (2003: 298) contend that the ways the Western service providers address Japanese tourists might influence Japanese tourist service satisfaction. I believe that Finnish service providers might be at risk trivializing this issue since addressing does not play as important of a role in Finnish communication as it does in Japanese communication. I believe that it is important to give attention to the proper ways of greeting and addressing in service settings involving Japanese as the issue potentially has a major effect on their service satisfaction. Additionally, it does not require major efforts from the Finnish service providers to change their communication behaviour with this respect.

In addition to proper greeting and addressing, Reisinger and Turner (2003: 304) believe that Western service providers can express politeness and contribute to the Japanese tourist service satisfaction by using a discreet communication style in the service interaction. They recommend that Western service providers, in order to conform to the Asian rules of politeness, should avoid being straightforward and only say what is needed to be said in the service interaction. According to them, direct and verbally expressive communication styles should be avoided when interacting with Asian tourists as it might be interpreted as being disrespectful and impolite by the Asians.

This study yielded contradictory results with respect to this claim. As discussed in the context of the second key, the “style of speaking”, the findings of this study imply that talkativeness and verbal expressiveness of the Finnish service provider contribute to Japanese tourists’ positive service evaluations.

The findings of this study imply that besides the verbal communication styles, the nonverbal communication styles of the Finnish service providers may affect Japanese tourist service satisfaction. Ting-Toomey (1999) states that that nonverbal communication in intercultural interaction often causes miscommunication. According to her, there are three reasons for this. These reasons include: (1) same nonverbal signals have different meanings in different cultures (2) various nonverbal signals are at play in each interaction and (3) nonverbal communication patterns vary according to personality, gender and situation, for instance. (Ting-Toomey, 1999: 115.) Barna (1997) argues that besides the language barrier, there is a nonverbal language barrier which often causes problems when members of different cultures interact with each other. She states that this is because people use their senses to perceive only those things from their surrounding that are somehow meaningful for them. Subsequently, people tend to notice only certain things in the nonverbal communication behaviour of other people. Additionally, people may have difficulties interpreting nonverbal behaviours of others. (Barna, 1997: 373-374.)

Lustig and Koester (2003) state that nonverbal behaviour is governed by rules and norms which are culture-specific. These authors believe that the reason why nonverbal behaviours often cause problems in intercultural communication is that people learn these behaviours early in their childhood and therefore are often not aware of them. In other words, people are not aware of the effects of culture in their nonverbal behaviour. (Lustig & Koester, 2003: 199.) As nonverbal behaviours are therefore majorly intrinsic, it might be difficult to become aware of and learn how to manage the communicational problems caused by the nonverbal communication.

Ting-Toomey (1999) states that it is possible to learn mindful nonverbal behaviour. In order to understand mindful nonverbal behaviour it is necessary

to consider the functions of nonverbal behaviour. According to her, nonverbal behaviour has four functions: reflecting identities, expressing emotions, managing conversations, and formation of impressions and attractions. She continues to state that by mindfully managing these four functions, the interactants are able to manage nonverbal communication patterns with respect to tone, face, gestures, eye contact, touch, space, and time. (Ting-Toomey, 1999: 116.)

Ting-Toomey (1999: 115) notes that nonverbal behaviour is a “powerful form of human expression” and it can besides causing miscommunication also facilitate communication. I believe that service providers can use mindful nonverbal behaviour to contribute to the tourist service satisfaction. Besides becoming aware of their own nonverbal communication behaviour and learning how to manage it mindfully, it is important that the service providers learn about the nonverbal behaviour of the culturally dissimilar tourists. Ting-Toomey (1999) states that in order to facilitate intercultural communication by the means of nonverbal behaviour, the interactants should learn how to “identify the appropriate nonverbal display rules in different cultures”. She continues to state that is important that the interactants also “understand the cultural values and attributions that are attached to different nonverbal norms and rules”. (Ting-Toomey, 1999: 140.)

Reisinger and Turner (2003) contend that the Western service providers need to learn about Asian tourists’ cultural characteristics of nonverbal communication such as body language, gestures and eye gazing. They believe that these factors play an important role in service interaction and tourist satisfaction with that interaction. Subsequently, the Western service providers should learn about them if they wish to provide satisfying services to the Asian tourists. (Reisinger and Turner, 2003: 304.) Barna (1997) points out nonverbal symbols such as body movements, postures, and gestures are easily observable. Subsequently, learning about them might be less difficult (Barna, 1997: 374).

Even though Reisinger and Turner (2003: 304) provide an extensive discussion on the effects of service providers’ nonverbal behaviour in tourist service satisfaction, they do not consider how proxemics in the service interaction

might influence tourist service satisfaction. The findings of this study imply, as discussed in the context of the first key theme “proxemics”, that Japanese tourists’ perceptions of proxemics in service interaction might be closely related to their satisfaction with the service interaction. The relationship between tourist service satisfaction and tourists’ perceptions of proximity in the service interaction has not yet received a lot of attention in the services studies and subsequently might call for further attention.

Kowner (2002) states that the problems related to the nonverbal behaviour are the most critical ones in the interaction between Japanese and a non-Japanese. He believes that Japanese, when interacting with non-Japanese, often feel that their status is being violated. This is because communication in other cultures differs to a large extent from the Japanese culture with respect to the status recognition. He suggests that the non-Japanese interactants could improve the outcomes of intercultural interaction with the Japanese by learning the principals of Japanese status-related behaviour. Studies have shown that Japanese prefer a greater conversation distance when interacting with their professors or fathers, for instance (see Ting-Toomey, 1999: 130). As Japanese are expected to show respect to their professors and fathers, it could be reasoned that the greater interaction distance is one way of showing the respect in Japanese communication. In other words, the interaction distance seems to be an important status-related behaviour in Japanese communication. This perhaps partly explains why the issue of proxemics seems to be rather important to the Japanese tourists interviewed for the present study. Finnish service providers could perhaps further contribute to the Japanese tourist service satisfaction by learning more about Japanese preferences with respect to the interaction distances. Barna (1997: 374) points out however, that proxemics is an implicit cultural code and therefore difficult to learn.

To conclude, it is important that the Finnish service providers are aware of how their communication styles, both verbal and nonverbal, might affect Japanese tourist service satisfaction. The Finnish service providers should pay special attention to the proper ways of greeting and addressing the Japanese tourists. The relationship between the verbal expressiveness of the service provider and Japanese tourist service satisfaction might require further examination as the

findings of the present study seem to be contradictory with the results of the previous studies with this respect.

It was reasoned that the interaction distance between the Finnish service provider and the Japanese tourist might be interpreted as status-related behaviour by the Japanese. By maintaining the proper distance in the service interaction, Finnish service providers can show respect and politeness to the Japanese tourists. Finnish service providers need to be aware of how the various messages from nonverbal behaviours might convey in service interaction. Finnish service providers should attempt to manage their nonverbal behaviour mindfully and also learn about the nonverbal behaviour of the Japanese. This is important as if the norms of nonverbal communication are violated, tourists may make negative judgements on service providers' motives and intentions (Lustig & Koester, 2003: 199). As the nonverbal behaviours of the service provider can either impede the service satisfaction or enhance it, it is crucial that the service providers give attention to this issue. The role of nonverbal behaviours in service interaction is further emphasised when the service providers and the tourists do not share a common language. Also in those types of tourism services where high risks are involved and the verbal communication is temporarily unfeasible due the circumstances, effective nonverbal communication is of utmost importance. For instance, it is very important that nonverbal communication between the tourist and the service provider is efficient in adventure tourism services such as white water rafting.

7.1.2 Intercultural competency of the tourist

Sharma et al. (2009) suggest that there is a relationship between the intercultural competency of the customer and customer satisfaction. They conducted an exploratory qualitative study where they interviewed fifty culturally dissimilar customers in various service settings. The findings of their study point towards intercultural competency being a key determinant in the customer service evaluation process. They strongly support more qualitative research to be done on the relationship between the intercultural competency of the customer on the customer satisfaction.

The findings of this study imply that the intercultural competency of the tourist may have an effect on service interaction and tourist satisfaction with that interaction. The findings show that intercultural competency of the Japanese tourists might affect the service outcomes in two ways. Firstly, intercultural competency of the tourists might facilitate the intercultural service interaction and therefore contribute to the tourist service satisfaction. Secondly, intercultural competency of the Japanese tourists may contribute to the tourist service satisfaction at the evaluation stage of the service process. I will first examine how Japanese tourists' intercultural competency might facilitate the service interaction and subsequently, the service satisfaction.

The findings of this study imply that tourists' intercultural competency with respect to knowledge might play an important role in the creation of Japanese tourists service satisfaction. As the discussion in the context of the third key theme, the "knowledge", indicated, it seems that Japanese tourists could contribute to their own service satisfaction by increasing their culture specific knowledge. Reisinger and Turner (2003: 51) seem to acknowledge this as they state that the "effectiveness of communication between tourists and the hosts depend upon the cultural knowledge they have of each other". The findings of this study also imply that the communication styles of the Japanese tourists might play a role in the success of the service interaction and therefore influence the resulting service satisfaction. As discussed in the context of the fourth key theme, the tendency towards indirect/other-directed communication was found to have a negative effect on the quality of the service interaction. Subsequently, there is a reason to believe that indirect/other-directed communication might contribute to the Japanese tourist service dissatisfaction. Japanese tourists could therefore influence their own service satisfaction by learning more efficient ways of expressing their service related hopes and desires as well as concerns in Western service contexts.

According to Kowner (2002), the stress that intercultural encounters may evoke in Japanese may lead to the Japanese misinterpreting the nonverbal communication behaviour of the culturally dissimilar other. His views on the outcomes of intercultural interaction between Japanese and non-Japanese are rather skeptical. He states that "Japanese intercultural communication

difficulties seem to lie in the deep-rooted nonverbal and verbal behaviour of both parties, to the extent that one wonders if there is any remedy to the problem”. He argues that while foreign languages can be learned by self-study, the nonverbal communication skills can only be learned by long contact with another culture. According to him, Japanese could improve the outcomes of intercultural communication however, by raising their awareness on cultural differences in behaviour and by engaging in intercultural communication encounters.

It seems that Japanese tourists’ intercultural competency can substantially affect the quality of intercultural service interaction and subsequently, contribute to the resulting service satisfaction. The findings of this study also imply that the Japanese could contribute to their own service satisfaction still in the evaluation stage of the service interaction. The discussion in the context of the fifth key theme “consideration” and the sixth key theme “reassurance” point towards this issue. The discussion on both of these themes indicated that Japanese tourists that participated in this study were mindful in their service evaluations. Practicing mindfulness in the service evaluation process seemed to contribute to the service satisfaction of the Japanese tourists.

The findings of this study imply that Japanese tourists were mindful in their service evaluations, as they rarely “jumped to conclusions”. Preferably, they took time to consider and interpret their service experiences and the communication behaviours of the Finnish service providers from various points of views. Intercultural communication literature states that interculturally competent individuals are able to make a distinction between description, interpretation and evaluation. This is because many problems in intercultural communication happen due to misperception, misinterpretation and misevaluation (Adler and Gundersen, 2008: 72). As already discussed earlier, (p.59) being mindful with respect to these different stages of perception process may prevent those problems from occurring. Consequently, intercultural communication is likely to be more successful if the interactants are able to make a distinction between their perceptions, interpretations, and evaluations.

Several intercultural competency theories contain the concept of mindfulness; however, the concept is understood in various ways. Gudykunst (1998: 227) believes that in order to communicate effectively, individuals need to be mindful in their communications with others of different cultures, especially if they are strangers to them. According to him, “being mindful is the single most important skill in communicating effectively with strangers”. This is because when people are mindful they can make conscious choices with respect to their behaviours which contribute to the effective outcomes of the interaction. (Gudykunst, 1998: 227-228.) Ting-Toomey (1999: 46) follows the same line of thinking and states that satisfactory outcomes of intercultural interaction are dependent on people’s willingness to practice mindfulness. Hence, mindfulness of the interactants in intercultural service encounter can be seen thus as one of the key elements influencing the outcomes of that interaction. Gudykunst (1998) further notes that the misunderstandings happen in intercultural communication majorly because of the way people interpret the behaviour of others, not because of the actual behaviour. Therefore, people need to be aware of their unconscious ways of interpreting the behaviour of others. In other words this means that effective communication requires that people are mindful. (Gudykunst, 1998: 30.)

As discussed in the context of the sixth key theme, the “reassurance”, the findings of this study show that Japanese tourists are rather sensitive to the risks and concerns related to the intercultural service settings. In the Finnish service setting the ambiguities associated with intercultural service encounters seemed to have diminished because of the security and safety associated with the Finnish service providers and service settings. Nevertheless, feelings of anxiety and uncertainty seemed to be involved in the service interaction and there is reason to believe that these feelings easily influence Japanese tourist service satisfaction. Even though some service researchers, such as Reimann et al. (2008), have acknowledged the effects of uncertainty and anxiety on service satisfaction, there has yet not been much effort to overcome these problems. I believe that intercultural competency literature could assist the Western tourism actors to subdue some of these issues.

Gudykunst (1998) states, that interaction between culturally dissimilar strangers often engender higher levels of uncertainty and anxiety than intracultural interactions. This is because the behaviour of the culturally dissimilar other is likely to be inconsistent with the expectations. For this reason intercultural encounters between strangers have been indicated to result in perceptions of lower quality of communication. (Gudykunst, 1998: 34-36.) Lustig and Koester (2003: 284) contend that satisfaction resulting from the intercultural encounter is dependent on how anxiety and uncertainty are being managed.

Gudykunst (1998) believes that by mindfully managing the uncertainties and anxieties involved with intercultural communication between strangers, it is possible to improve the outcomes of such interaction. Managing of anxiety and uncertainty does not mean, however, attempting to get rid of them. They should be managed so that they do neither exceed the maximum threshold nor go below the minimum threshold. More specifically, the levels of uncertainty should not exceed a maximum threshold, because then the individual lacks the sufficient amount of information to predict and explain the stranger's behaviours. Levels of uncertainty should not go under the minimum threshold either because then the individual is overly confident which will often lead to misinterpretations. Similarly, in order for the communication to be effective, anxiety should not be too high or too low. If the anxiety is too high the information processing is too simplistic and the participant does not have enough confidence to predict the behaviour of the other. If the anxiety is too low, there is no motivation to interact and participants' overconfidence impedes the predictions of the behaviours. (Gudykunst, 1998: 35-36.)

According to Berger (1979 quoted in Gudykunst & Nishida, 1984), there are three strategies to reduce uncertainty: passive, active, and interactive. Passive strategies include observing and making social comparisons, active strategies include asking questions about the target from other people whereas interactive strategies include asking questions from the target itself and self disclosure. Gudykunst and Nishida (1984) point out that the use of uncertainty reduction strategies seem to be culturally dependent. They suggest that the Japanese are

more likely to use passive or active strategies rather than interactive strategies to reduce uncertainty. A study conducted by Nishimura, Waryszak and King (2006) showed that travel guidebooks were trusted as the best source of information among the over 1200 Japanese tourists examined in the study. Searching information from the travel guidebooks could perhaps be seen as an active uncertainty avoidance strategy. Furthermore, Japanese tourists often travel in groups, which can perhaps be seen as a different kind of active uncertainty avoidance strategy (see Ryan, 1995: 45).

There is reason to believe that managing anxieties and uncertainties in tourism service settings might be especially complicated. One reason for this is that there are potentially various types of risks and stress involved in intercultural service encounters in tourism, as already discussed earlier (p.125). However, there is also another reason for uncertainty and anxiety management being an especially complex issue in tourist service satisfaction context. This is because the level of arousal has been shown to have a special role in tourist satisfaction (Williams & Buswell, 2003: 61). This means that, at least some tourists actually look for situations, including service situations that cause greater level of arousal while on holiday than they normally would, as greater arousal levels can in some occasions create excitement and feeling of adventure which can lead to greater satisfaction.

The results of this study and several previous studies imply that Japanese tourists perhaps do not tend to seek great level of arousal on their holidays. In contrast, Japanese tourists seem to avoid or minimize the anxieties and uncertainties involved with travelling. While the Japanese seemed to perceive Finnish service providers trustworthy and the service encounters as safe, I believe, that Finnish tourism service providers could further enhance Japanese tourist service satisfaction with relatively small efforts. For this purpose the tourism service providers should increase their understanding of the sources of uncertainty and anxiety in intercultural service settings. Subsequently, actions should be designed to address these sources of anxiety and uncertainty.

7.2 Relationship between perceived service quality and service satisfaction

I believe that investigating tourist service satisfaction through tourist perceptions of service quality might be problematic. One reason for this might be that the perceptions in intercultural service encounter are subject to misperception, misinterpretation and misevaluation (Adler & Gundersen, 2008: 72). This issue may cause problems when tourists perceive, interpret and evaluate the service quality. Consequently, the perceptions of service quality might not be a particularly reliable way of approaching the service satisfaction. Furthermore, customers from different cultures might have totally different kinds of perceptions, interpretations and evaluations of even similar kinds of tourism service experiences. One reason for this might be that the customers judge the service according to their own cultural standards. In other words, customers criteria for service quality seems to be culturally distinct, as already discussed earlier in this research (p. 31). As culturally dissimilar customers' evaluations of similar kinds of service might vary substantially, it might not be perhaps wise to rely solely on tourists' perceptions on service quality when examining tourist satisfaction with intercultural service encounters.

The findings of this study imply that it might be dangerous to assume that good perceived service quality would automatically lead to service satisfaction in international tourism context. It seems that perceptions of service quality and tourist service satisfaction can be, at times, rather far from each other. It seems that Japanese tourist might report being relatively satisfied with service even though their notions show that they had perceived the service quality as moderate or even low. The reasons for this included that the tourists placed their service experience into a wider context or considered as themselves having influenced the service outcomes in some ways.

The results of a study conducted by Reimann et al. (2008) further indicate that perceptions of service quality might be poor indicators of service satisfaction in an intercultural service context. Their study found out that cultural tendencies for high uncertainty avoidance might alter the relationship between the perceived service quality and service satisfaction. There have not been a lot of studies focusing on how culture might affect the relationship between perceived service quality and service satisfaction. It could be reasoned, that

besides uncertainty avoidance, other cultural value orientations, such as power distance and masculinity and femininity could moderate the relationship between perceived service quality and customer satisfaction. I believe that more research should be done to study how cultural value orientations might affect the relationship between perceived quality and customer satisfaction.

To conclude, studying tourist service satisfaction through perceived service quality might be problematic and therefore done with caution. I believe that tourist service satisfaction in intercultural context should perhaps not be examined solely by the existing perceived service quality frameworks. Furthermore, I believe, that intercultural competency of the service provider as well as the intercultural competency of the tourists could be used as indicators of tourist service satisfaction in an intercultural service context. Subsequently, intercultural competency should be included into the service satisfaction framework of an international tourist, in my opinion.

7.3 New framework of Japanese tourist service satisfaction in Finland

Alasuutari (1996) states, the results of a qualitative research are discussed in a larger framework and “this requires that the researcher is theoretically informed, but the process itself cannot be called theory building”. According to him, theorizing comes to play after all this or “on the side”. In this research, the results have been discussed in a theoretical framework of tourism, marketing and intercultural communication literature. On the side of this process in the present study, a framework of Japanese tourist service satisfaction in Finnish service setting has developed. This framework consists of the six key themes identified in the present study and therefore depicts the communicative factors that seem to play a role in Japanese tourist service satisfaction in a Finnish service context.

It is important to note, that the framework presented here is developed on the basis of this highly explorative study, which considered the service perceptions of ten Japanese tourists only. The data was analysed inductively and this type of research is always affected by the researcher to some extent. Furthermore, the interpretation process of the emergent themes is always subjective. Therefore, the framework should be considered as a contextually bound in-

depth insight on service satisfaction of those Japanese tourists investigated in this study.

Given this, I will now explain the framework of Japanese tourist service satisfaction that this study proposes. This framework is thus based on the six key themes that emerged from the data in the present study. The discussion on these six themes pointed towards the role of intercultural competency in tourist service satisfaction. I believe that the intercultural competency of the tourist as well as the intercultural competency of the service provider serves as service interaction “resources”. Chelladurai (2006: 38) states, that “customer as a resource” refers to the “extent that clients bring with them their personal, physical and psychological attributes and to the extent they provide the necessary information”. Thus, seeing customer as “service resources” is closely related to the marketing perspective that sees customers as creator of their own service satisfaction, which was discussed earlier in this study (p.108).

I believe that the intercultural competency of the Japanese tourists may function as “service resource”. More specifically, cultural specific knowledge of the Japanese tourist (see discussion on the fourth key theme) and the tourist awareness of their tendency to indirect/other-directed communication (see discussion on the third key theme) serve as customer resources to service interaction. Also the service providers’ intercultural competency is seen as service resources in this framework. Based on the findings of this study, mindful nonverbal and verbal communication of the service provider may serve as an important service resource. More specifically, the nonverbal communication (see discussion on the first key theme) and verbal communication (see discussion on the second key theme) of the Finnish service provider serve as service providers resources to service interaction in this framework.

Both the intercultural competency of the tourist as well as the intercultural competency of the service provider thus serves as resources to the service interaction. In this framework, the Japanese tourists form perceptions of the service quality on the basis of the service interaction. Perceived service quality does not however, mean the same as service satisfaction in this framework. In

my view, the cultural tendencies of the tourists have the “power” to moderate the relationship between the perceived service quality and tourist satisfaction. This view is similar to that of Reimann et al.’s (2008) which has been discussed throughout this research (see pages 30, 117,126, 141). Furthermore, I believe that intercultural competency of the tourist may have an impact at this stage of the service evaluation process. More specifically, the extent that tourists can be mindful (see discussion on the fifth and the sixth key theme) at this point of service evaluation process may contribute to the tourist service satisfaction. It is important to note that, to my understanding, the intercultural competence thus can only contribute to the service satisfaction and not abate the perceptions of service quality. Being mindful at this stage of the service evaluations process do not necessarily alter the perceptions of service quality either, but the function of being mindful may be just to maintain the perceptions service quality level. A new framework of the communicative aspects of Japanese tourist service satisfaction is depicted in Figure 8.

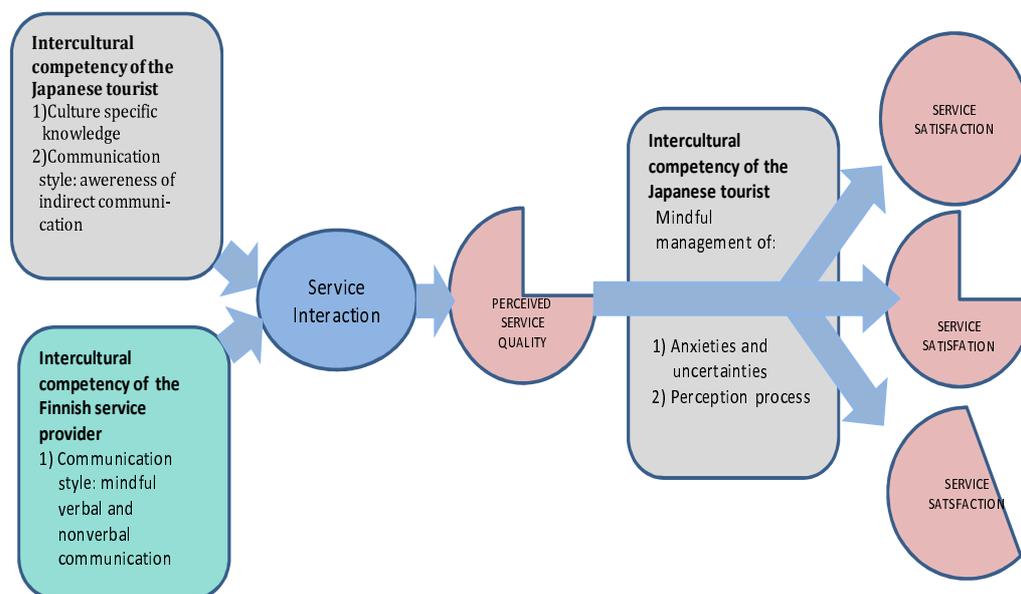


Figure 8. New framework of Japanese tourist service satisfaction in Finnish service setting

7.4 Implications on the tourism industry

This chapter has considered the findings of this study in the light of intercultural competency literature. The focus has been to examine what kind of role intercultural competency might play in tourist service satisfaction. In

the beginning of this chapter it was discussed how the service providers could contribute to the tourist service satisfaction by improving their intercultural competency. For this purpose intercultural competency training methods have been introduced to the tourism field. For instance, Bochner and Coulon (1997) argue for the use of intercultural communication competence training methods service personnel training in tourism hospitality industry. Also Reisinger and Turner (2003: 323) state that “all tourism and hospitality industry employees should participate in compulsory cross-cultural training. In the light of the findings of this study, it is necessary also to consider the possibilities and benefits of intercultural training for tourists.

Applying intercultural competence training methods to tourists is not a novel idea. Pearce (1982: 78-79) has introduced the idea of using “cultural assimilators” to educate tourist for travel and to improve tourist-host contact difficulties. I follow Pearce’s (1982) line of thinking and thus believe that tourism industry could benefit from intercultural competence training methods substantially. It is worthwhile to consider what kind of benefits providing intercultural competence training, not only for the service providers but for tourists, could bring to the industry. Already based on the findings of this exploratory study it seems safe to state that the intercultural competency of the tourists is likely to contribute to the service satisfaction. While the actors in the tourism field might have limited possibilities to influence the intercultural competency of the tourist, I believe that tourists themselves could be motivated to improve their intercultural competency with this respect if they are encouraged to do so. This is because tourists are likely to be willing to contribute to their own satisfaction with service. One major reason for this is that satisfaction in tourism can be seen to be connected to tourist self-esteem and ego (see p. 76). As travelling has become such a mundane activity in today’s world, it could be assumed that more and more individuals would be willing to contribute to their own service satisfaction by improving their intercultural competency. Intercultural competency training for tourists could also perhaps be used to reduce the negative impacts of travelling, such as environmental impacts.

Tourism agencies, in particular, might benefit from offering intercultural competency training for their customers. The reasons for this can be found from the ways tourists tend to make their holiday evaluations. As already discussed earlier in this study (p. 19), tourists tend to evaluate the tourism experience holistically. Additionally, it has been indicated that tourist service satisfaction is a major contributor to the overall tourist satisfaction (p. 19). Consequently, tourist satisfaction with the tourism agency on the whole is dependent on tourist satisfaction with the service at the holiday destination. Furthermore, as intercultural competency of the tourist might contribute to the tourist service satisfaction, it follows, that this competency has also impact on tourist satisfaction with the tourism agency. Consequently, tourism agencies should consider organising competency training for their customers. On a package holiday, the training could be included in the program and take place during a bus journey, for instance.

Actors in the tourism field could also consider offering lectures on intercultural sensitivity to the independent travellers prior to the trip. While not all tourists are likely to be interested in this type of lectures, some tourists might be motivated to improve their intercultural skills in order to enhance the positive outcomes of the holiday. I believe that intercultural competency training might interest tourists who: (1) perceive cultural differences between their countries of origin and the destination as considerable, (2) associate many types of risks into travelling, and/or (2) do not speak common language with the service providers. The findings of this study imply that the Japanese tourists might benefit from intercultural training. A view presented by Yamashita (2003) seems to support this notion. The author believes that Japanese tourists, especially on package tours, may be tied to a strict schedule, feel compelled to take pictures and buy souvenirs. Therefore, tourism for them becomes a kind of job. (Yamashita, 2003: 92.) This type of attitude towards travelling was illustrated in some of the responses provided by the participants of this study as well. For instance, one interviewed couple relate: *“We try to have much more fun...we want to do as much as possible... Even if we are tired, we push ourselves”* (JC5). Those tourists, who share similar standpoints on traveling, might find intercultural training appealing.

8 CONCLUSION

This study has discussed the complex phenomenon of Japanese tourist service satisfaction in a Finnish service context from various perspectives. The study began with a tourism marketing literature review, where some of the problems with the dominating approach to tourist service satisfaction were identified and discussed. An intercultural communication approach was then introduced. The intercultural communication literature review showed some of the ways culture might be manifested in the communication behaviours of participants involved in intercultural service encounters. The close relationship between culture and perception was highlighted. Particularly, the problems caused by misperception, misinterpretation and misevaluation in intercultural encounters were discussed. The intercultural communication approach to the phenomenon under study was then presented. This discussion also introduced some of the closely related previous studies in the field.

The empirical part of the study provided an insight to the Japanese tourists' perceptions of the communication behaviours at play in the intercultural service encounters between themselves and the Finnish service providers. The findings of this study shed some light on the ways Japanese tourists perceive, interpret and evaluate the communication behaviours of the Finnish service providers. The findings of this study also increased the understanding of how Japanese tourists own communication behaviours might influence their service satisfaction. Additionally, Japanese tourist perceptions of the nature of the service encounters were explored.

In this study, the findings were discussed following the review of literature from different fields of study. This discussion pointed towards the important role of participants' intercultural competency in the creation of tourist service satisfaction. It was shown that Finnish service providers' intercultural competency in communication styles might contribute to the Japanese tourist service satisfaction. It was also reasoned that Japanese tourists' intercultural competency could contribute to their service satisfaction. More specifically, Japanese tourist competency in communication styles as well as their cultural

specific knowledge was found to have an impact on their service satisfaction. Additionally, the extent the Japanese tourists were able to practice mindfulness in their service evaluations was found to have an impact on their service satisfaction. Based on the findings of this study and the subsequent discussion, a framework of Japanese tourist service satisfaction in Finnish service settings was proposed. Finally, the possibilities of intercultural competency training in the tourism field were briefly considered.

8.1 Meeting the aims

I will now consider how the aims of this study were met. I will start the discussion from the first aim of this study.

(1) The first aim of this study was to highlight some of the problems involved with the dominating approach to the study of tourist satisfaction. The SERVQUAL instrument was found to be one of the most frequently applied methodologies in tourist service satisfaction studies. Several problems involved with the SERVQUAL instrument were identified and discussed. These included: (1) problems with comparing expectations to perceptions, (2) problems with the relationship between perceived service quality and satisfaction, (3) problems involved with the service quality dimensions, (4) problems involved with quantitative methodology, and (5) problems involved with not focusing on the human interaction dimension.

The empirical part of the research also contributed to the meeting of the first aim. More specifically, the findings derived from the qualitative, intercultural study, which further contributed to the understanding of the problems involved with the SERVQUAL methodology. The findings of this study imply that the qualitative interviews as a data collection method seemed to overcome some of the problems associated with the quantitative the SERVQUAL methodology. Qualitative interviews proved to be able to produce rich and varied data which offered firsthand insights to the ways Japanese tourists perceive, interpret and evaluate Finnish service. It seems that the relationship between the perceived service quality and the service satisfaction is more complicated in this context than the SERVQUAL methodology proposes. The qualitative interview data also allowed new themes to emerge in the inductive data analysis. The emerged

themes might signal that service quality dimensions outside the SERVQUAL methodology perhaps exist. The findings of this study imply that the Japanese tourist service satisfaction is a complex, multilevel, intercultural as well as communicational phenomenon. It can be questioned how well suited the SERVQUAL methodology is to study a complex phenomenon such as this.

(2) The second aim of this study was to show how an intercultural communication approach could contribute to improving tourism service satisfaction studies by offering a new perspective to the phenomenon. Interpreting the findings of this study in the light of intercultural communication theories increased the understanding of the new themes that emerged in the inductive data analysis. This was particularly important, as some of the emerged themes were not identified in the tourism marketing literature. The first key theme, the proxemics, for instance, has not received much attention in tourism services studies. Intercultural communication literature was thus used to understand how the issue of proxemics might influence tourist service satisfaction in this context. This study also gave rise to many important questions in the area of tourist service satisfaction. For instance, the findings of this study imply that there might be a relationship between tourist service satisfaction and participants' cultural similarity in intercultural service interaction. This relationship calls for further attention. Future research addressing these questions might also benefit from an intercultural interpretative approach.

The use of intercultural communication literature also contributed to the understanding of the study's results by placing them into a wider context. More specifically, interpreting the six emerged themes in the light of the intercultural communication literature showed that all the six themes were linked to intercultural competency. Following the discussion on the intercultural competency and the findings of this study, a framework of Japanese tourist service satisfaction in a Finnish service context was proposed. While this framework is based on the findings of this exploratory, small-scale research, it offers a contextually bound, in-depth insight on Japanese tourist service satisfaction in Finnish service settings. To conclude, an interpretive

intercultural approach seems to be well equipped to provide meaningful knowledge to the actors in the tourism field.

(3) The third aim of this study was to increase the understanding of Japanese tourist service satisfaction with Finnish service by investigating tourists' perceptions of communication behaviours in service interactions between the Japanese tourists themselves and Finnish service providers. The following three research questions were developed to meet the aims of the study: (1) How do Japanese tourists perceive Finnish service providers communication behaviour in service encounters? (2) What kind of notions, if any, do Japanese tourists make of their own communication behaviour in service encounters? and, (3) How do Japanese tourists perceive the nature of the intercultural service encounters?

As the three research questions listed above guided the inductive data analysis process, the six key themes that emerged from this process, can be considered as answers to the three research questions. The six key emerged themes were labelled as follows: (1) "proxemics", (2) "style of speaking", (3) "indirectness/other-directness", (4) "knowledge", (5) "consideration", and (6) "reassurance". These six themes represent the main communicative factors proved to have an impact on Japanese tourist service satisfaction in a Finnish service setting in this study.

The first and second key themes can be considered as answers to the first research question, which focused on Japanese tourists' perceptions of Finnish service providers' communication behaviour. Japanese tourists' perceptions of the service interaction distances between themselves and the service providers were found to contribute to the tourist service satisfaction. Additionally, the service providers' style of speaking seemed to contribute to the positive service evaluations made by the tourists. The third, fourth and fifth key themes can be considered as answers to the second research question, which focused on tourists' notions on their own communication behaviours in the service encounters. These notions indicated that tourists' tendencies towards indirect/other-directed communication as well as their lack of culture specific knowledge seemed to have a negative influence on tourist service satisfaction.

Finally, the sixth key theme provides an answer to the third research question which focused on tourists' perceptions of the service encounters. Japanese tourists' perceptions of the service encounters implied that the tourists were rather sensitive to the ambiguities involved with these encounters. However, Japanese tourists generally perceived the Finnish service situations secure and safe which seemed to contribute to their service satisfaction.

In this study, the key six themes were interpreted following the review of intercultural communication, marketing and tourism literature, which contributed to the understanding of Japanese tourist service satisfaction. On these bases, a framework of communicative factors influencing Japanese tourist service satisfaction in a Finnish service context was proposed. The findings of this study imply that Japanese tourists formulate their service evaluations through a complicated process. Furthermore, they seem to consider their service experiences from various perspectives and as a part of a bigger context. The findings of this study and the subsequent discussion showed that Japanese tourist evaluations of Finnish service were overall rather positive. To conclude, it can be argued that this study has increased the understanding of Japanese tourist service satisfaction in Finnish service settings.

8.2 Limitations of the study

This study is subject to many limitations. One of these limitations concerns the use of supporting literature. An interpretative intercultural communication approach has not been applied much to the study of tourist service satisfaction. As not many studies exist in this area, there is not much I have been able to refer to. Being an exploratory study, the findings of this study are highly tentative and cannot be generalised. The explorative nature of the research was however, made clear already in the introduction. While this study has provided new insights on the phenomenon of Japanese tourist service satisfaction in a Finnish service context, more research is needed to be able to discuss the possibilities of generalisation of the findings.

The restricted resources in the data collection phase of the research can be considered as limitation of the study. While a lot of effort was made to obtain a rich and unbiased data for this research (see p. 63), my lack of skills in

Japanese had implications on the data obtained. As I was not able to conduct the interviews and the transcription of the data myself, this part of the research was determined by the external resources available. External resources, such as availability of time and money, also limited the possibilities for additional data collection. For instance, additional, supporting data could have been collected from the participants of this study in the form of written service accounts once they had returned home. The use of complementary data such as this might have contributed to the quality of the research results.

The discussion in this study has used existing literature on Japanese as well as on Finnish communication behaviour. Cultures, and along them communication styles of the members of those cultures, are constantly under a change. Salo-Lee (2007b) points out, that the generational differences in communication styles among the Finnish population are so big that one could even talk about different cultures. Gannon (1994: 274) believes that generational differences also among the Japanese are considerable. As the participants in this study were relatively young in age, this study might have benefitted from the use of more contemporary literature on Japanese communication behaviours.

The data obtained through semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions presented some challenges for the research. This data collection method produced a rich and varied data; however, the obtained data also contained a considerable amount of information that was not relevant for the purposes of this study. The usability of the data could have been perhaps improved by altering some of the interview questions. Particularly the following interview questions could have perhaps been modified: (1) How did you prepare for the trip? (2) Has everything gone as expected during your stay?, and (7) How would you describe the atmosphere on the holiday? All of these three interview questions produced meaningful data for the purposes of this research but perhaps less so than the other four interview questions. This might be because these questions were less specific compared to the other interview question. Altering the wording of these interview questions might already have contributed to the quality of the data obtained through them.

This study can be considered to be subject to a researcher bias which limits the study. Being an inductive qualitative study, the findings of this study are largely dependent on the researcher. This is because in this type of research, the researcher functions as a key research instrument. Subsequently, the findings of the study are based on the researcher's subjective views and interpretations. (Creswell, 2007: 39.) As already discussed earlier, (p. 95) this issue concerns all the stages of the research process. Additionally, as this study focuses on cultural differences, it is also subject to a cultural bias. This means that my interpretations and understanding of Japanese tourists' perceptions is subject to my Finnish cultural background. The limitations caused by the researcher's cultural background are inevitable in this type of study. As Hall (1990a: 188) points out: "no matter how hard man tries it is impossible for him to divest himself of his own culture, for it has penetrated to the roots of his nervous system and determines how he perceives the world".

8.3 Suggestions for future research

The findings of this study are derived of this small scale, exploratory research. Therefore, other studies are needed to examine the relevancy of the six key themes identified in this research. The future research should also be aimed at identifying other themes and issues that might have an impact on Japanese tourist service satisfaction in Finnish service settings. Future studies could benefit from multimethod approaches. Combining qualitative approaches with quantitative approaches could lead to a better understanding of the phenomenon and contribute to the generalisability of the study results. Observation as a data collection method could be considered. A data obtained through observations on the communication behaviours at play in the intercultural service encounters could perhaps lead to a different kind of understanding on the phenomenon in question. A more versatile impression on the phenomenon could be obtained through interviewing also the Finnish service providers in the study.

Future studies on Japanese tourist service satisfaction should particularly consider the use of the critical incident method. As already mentioned earlier in this study (p. 81), Grönroos (2007) believes that the critical incidents provide the researcher with rich data that pinpoint the strengths and problem areas of

service. (Grönroos, 2007: 88.) Japanese tourist service satisfaction could perhaps be further understood by conducting a case study. A research that focuses on specific service encounters between the Japanese tourist and the Finnish service providers and investigates the perceptions of both participants, could contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon.

A general aim of this study was to raise questions. Many questions emerged when the findings of this study were discussed following the review of tourism, marketing and intercultural communication literature. Particularly the intercultural competency literature seemed to be fruitful in this regard. It has already been acknowledged in the field of service marketing that intercultural competency of the service provider is likely to contribute to the tourist service satisfaction (Yu et al., 2001). However, as Sharma et al. (2009) point out, further investigation is needed to explore the relationship between intercultural competency of the customer and customer satisfaction. I believe that this relationship requires further examination especially in the field of tourism. This is because the findings of this study imply that the Japanese tourists' intercultural competency might play an important role in the creation of service satisfaction. Future studies could focus for instance on the following issues:

- What aspects of intercultural competency are particularly important in the creation of tourist service satisfaction?
- What kinds of tourists could particularly contribute to their own service satisfaction through intercultural competency training?
- How, where and by whom should intercultural competency training be arranged for the tourists?

The findings of this study imply that the communication styles of the Finnish service providers and the Japanese tourist might be, to a certain extent, similar. This similarity seemed to have an impact on Japanese tourist service satisfaction. For instance, the discussion in the context of the first key theme indicated that both the Finns and the Japanese might have similar preferences concerning the amount of contact in interpersonal interactions. Lewis (2005: 67) points towards this issue by stating that Finland and Japan are close to each other on communicational aspects. According to him, while aspiring to

conform to Western values, Finns tend to use communication styles similar to Asians. The findings of this study imply that Japanese tourists were generally rather satisfied with Finnish service. It might be worth investigating to what extent this satisfaction could have resulted from the participants' cultural similarity in communication styles.

Future research could thus explore the possibility of a relationship between the service provider's and the tourists' cultural similarity in communication styles and the resulting tourist service satisfaction. Based on the findings of this study it could be hypothesized that a service interaction where the participants associate similar communication styles to those of the service provider's, service satisfaction is likely to be created. Subsequently, those service interactions, where the participants have substantially differing views with respect to the service provider's communication behaviours would perhaps be less likely to lead to service satisfaction. Future studies on Japanese tourists' perceptions of service in different cultural contexts should be conducted in order to shed more light on this issue.

Finally, the findings of this study gave a reason to further consider the study conducted by Reimann et al. (2008). The results of their study show that customer's tendency towards high uncertainty avoidance might moderate the relationship between customer perceptions of service quality and customer service satisfaction. The findings of this study support this claim. Future research is needed to explore how other cultural value orientations, such as power distance, masculinity and femininity, individualism and collectivism or the long versus short term orientation might alter the relationship between the perceived service quality and service satisfaction in intercultural tourism service settings.

8.4 Final words

This study has provided fresh insights into the study of tourist service satisfaction. The focus of this study has been on the cultural and communicational aspects of the phenomenon. This study has approached the issue through the Japanese tourists' perceptions of Finnish service encounters. Exploring the perceptions and self-reflections of the Japanese tourists has

increased the awareness of the Japanese tourists' service evaluation process and made a multilevel discussion on the phenomenon possible.

Cultural variety is, without a doubt, one of the charms of travelling. As Reisinger and Turner (2003: 31) state, "many international tourists travel overseas to experience culture of a host destination". Cultural differences between the service providers and the tourists are best seen as an enrichment of intercultural service encounters. However, this does not mean that neither actors in the tourism field nor the tourists themselves are well off ignoring the effects of culture on the service interaction and satisfaction. Cultural awareness and sensitivity is paramount for the actors in an international tourism field. Cultural understanding can be used to prevent possible negative outcomes of the service encounters, such as culture shock. Cultural awareness and sensitivity can also be used to enhance tourist service satisfaction. The findings of this study imply that service providers can considerably contribute to the tourist service satisfaction already by paying attention to seemingly minor issues in their communication behaviour. Cultural knowledge and understanding should not be seen as something that solely benefits the actors in the tourism field. Also the cultural awareness of the tourists themselves may have an important impact on the outcomes of the intercultural service encounters.

To conclude, future studies are needed to increase the intercultural understanding of the service satisfaction of an international tourist. Both culture and communication seem to play a major role in this complex phenomenon. As tourism is becoming more and more a multicultural industry, it is imperative that culture and communication soon find their place in the tourist service satisfaction framework.

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APPENDIX

University of Jyväskylä
Faculty of Humanities
Department of Communication
Master's Degree Programme in Intercultural Communication

Elli Räsänen
xxx
xxx

CULTURAL DETERMINANTS OF A CROSS-CULTURAL TOURIST-HOST CONTACT

I am a student in the University of Jyväskylä and I am conducting interviews for my Master's thesis. The topic of my study is the cultural influences on the contact between the Japanese tourists and Finnish hosts.

During the interview you will be asked questions related to the social contact between you and the host. The interview is planned to take from half an hour to forty five minutes. You are encouraged to talk freely on the issues related to the study and present your ideas. If there should be a question you do not feel comfortable answering to, we will then move to the next question. You are free to withdraw from the interview at any time without an explanation.

All the information you are willing to give is confidential. The data will be kept in a safe place and will not be given to third parties. The possible citations to the data will be done anonymously and your name will not appear anywhere in the study.

PARTICIPANTS AGREEMENT:

I am aware that my participation in this interview is voluntary. I understand the intent and purpose of this research. If, for any reason, at any time, I wish to stop the interview, I may do so without having to give an explanation. The data gathered in this study are confidential with respect to my personal identity.

If I have any questions about this study or about my rights as a research participant, I am free to contact the student researcher (contact information given above).

I have been offered a copy of this consent form that I may keep for my own reference.

I have read the above form and, with the understanding that I can withdraw at any time and for whatever reason, I consent to participate in today's interview.

Name of the interviewee _____
Signature of the interviewee _____
Date _____