The Impacts of Cultural and Emotional Intelligence on Hotel Guest Satisfaction: Asian and Non-Asian Perceptions of Staff Capabilities

文化智力与情绪智力对酒店客人满意度之影响：亚洲人与非亚洲人对员工能力之看法

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Abstract

This study examines the impacts of frontline hotel employees' emotional intelligence (EI) and cultural intelligence (CQ) on guests' satisfaction, and uniquely captures guests' perceptions of staff capabilities. The results of a survey conducted with Asian and non-Asian respondents suggest there is a strong positive relationship between employee EI and CQ. More significantly, non-Asian hotel guests perceived higher employee EI and CQ than Asian hotel guests. Finally, both employee EI and CQ had positive and significant impact on overall satisfaction, nevertheless, CQ had a much stronger prediction of overall satisfaction than EI. The paper examines the implications of these findings for human resource practices with particular reference to businesses targeting culturally diverse market segments. The conclusion also considers the potential for future studies to expand research based on consumer's conceptions and perceptions of frontline staffs' EI and CQ capabilities in alternative hospitality and service domains.

摘要

本研究检视了一线酒店员工的情绪智力（EI）与文化智力（CQ）对客人满意度之影响，并独特地捕捉了客人对员工能力的看法。对亚洲人与非亚洲人受访者进行的调查结果表明：员工的情绪智力与文化智力之间存在较强的正向关系。更为显著的是，非亚洲的酒店客人对员工情绪智力与文化智力看法比亚洲酒店客人要高。最后，员工的情绪智力与文化智力对总体满意度都有显著的正向影响，然而，文化智力对总体满意度的预测性比情绪智力强得多。本文研究了这些发现对人力资源实践的影响，特别是对那些针对多元文化市场细分的企业的意义。研究结论还考虑了未来研究的潜力，以消费者对一线员工在其他酒店款待与服务领域的情绪智力和文化智力之理解和认知为基础，扩大研究范围。

Keywords: Cultural intelligence, Emotional intelligence, Guest perception, Guest satisfaction, Service, Staff capabilities

关键词：文化智力、情绪智力、客人看法、客人满意度、服务、员工能力

Introduction

Service interactions in hotels between frontline staff and guests have affective dimensions that shape the encounters and their impacts (Prentice & King, 2011; Koc, 2019; Koc & Boz, 2020). Therefore, customising service encounters can be crucial to guest satisfaction, especially when employees demonstrate emotional intelligence in creating unique guest experiences. Emotional intelligence (EI), as developed by Salovey and Mayer (1990), can be defined as the ability to identify and understand emotions in oneself and others, to regulate one's emotions and to behave appropriately during social interactions. EI thus comprises a set of psychological capacities and social skills involving intrinsic emotional awareness, control and expression management (Koc, 2019; Mok, Tsarenko, & Gabbott, 2008). In the hospitality sector, EI helps service employees perform positive emotional labour and develop deeper host-guest relationships. As Prentice and King (2011) suggested, proper application and demonstration of emotional skills can calm emotional customers and help employees manage their emotions simultaneously to avoid experiencing emotional dissonance (see also Koc, 2019; Koc, Aydın, Ar, & Boz, 2017).

International tourist arrivals increased more than twofold to 1,403 million worldwide (World Tourism Organisation, 2019) and fivefold to 65.15 million in Hong Kong (Hong Kong Tourist Board [HKTB], 2019a) between 2000 and 2018. Hence, the different cultural backgrounds of tourists and hosts mean they are inevitably engaged in cross-cultural interactions (Rockstuhl, Seiler, Ang, Van Dyne, & Hubert, 2011; Ye, Zhang & Yuen, 2012; Yurur, Koc, Taskin & Boz, 2018). Frontline service employees are vital when dealing with customers from diverse cultures (Darvishmotevali, Altinay, & De Vita, 2018), and managing intercultural encounters requires cultural intelligence. Cultural intelligence (CQ) refers to an individual's ability to identify and understand other cultures and to adapt their behaviour effectively in different intercultural contexts

(Moon, 2010). Cultural intelligence has a close relationship with cultural sensitivity which emphasizes one's ability to manage cultural difference (Yurur et al., 2018). CQ can be applied to two types of situations: first, when individuals have to adjust to unfamiliar and culturally different places (Earley & Ang, 2003; Earley & Mosakowski, 2004); and second, when individuals have to communicate effectively with people from diverse cultural backgrounds (Thomas et al., 2015). Frontline employees in hotels generally apply CQ when communicating with guests from diverse cultural backgrounds. Previous research has examined the impacts of Western and Eastern cultures, using American and Chinese samples, in different hospitality contexts. For example, in a study of hotel selection, Chinese travellers ranked hotel employees' courtesy and attentiveness as major determinants, whereas employees' efficiency and promptness were ranked higher by Western respondents (Tsai, Yeung, & Yim, 2011). A study of service failure showed that Chinese customers expected to receive spontaneous, tactful and sincere employee actions, which contrasted Americans, who stressed the importance of financial responses (Swanson, Huang, & Wang, 2014). Such differences between Western and Eastern cultures identified in previous works highlight the need for hospitality practitioners to appreciate the implications of cultural differences, and the need to deliver customised services to their culturally diverse guests (Tsang & Ap, 2007), particularly for excellent performance outcomes (Darvishmotevali et al., 2018).

The intensification of cross-cultural interactions worldwide requires hotel employees to display high EI and CQ in domestic contexts and in different cultural settings (Kumar, Che Rose & Subramaniam, 2008; Moon, 2010). It is vital for hotels to recognize the forms and intensity of employee emotional labour required in cross-cultural service encounters, and to consider CQ in addition to EI to ensure the satisfaction of their guests, who may have vastly different needs and wants based on their own cultures. However, studies linking CQ in the hospitality industry are rare (Darvishmotevali et al., 2018). Past studies identified significant difference between Western and

Eastern cultures in which only few countries or even a single country was used to represent a wider cultural grouping. Furthermore, the majority of empirical studies adopted a self-report approach to measure EI and CQ, incurring the risk of inflated assessment that may affect the interpretation of the research findings.

Gaps in current knowledge mean it is necessary to examine: a) how hotel frontline service employees utilise their EI and CQ in cross cultural service interactions; b) the relationship between employees' EI and CQ in the highly competitive global hotel sector; and c) how hotel guests' assessment of employees' EI and CQ can influence their satisfaction. Given that research on EI and CQ in hotels is scant and that customers' perceptions of performance are regarded as having a much greater influence on their satisfaction than actual performance (Teare, 1998; Wong & Dioko, 2013), the present study attempted to explore Asian and non-Asian hotel guests' perceptions of frontline employees' EI and CQ and their impacts on overall guest satisfaction. The conceptual model is presented in Figure 1. The objectives of this study were to:

1. examine the relationship between hotel guests' perceptions of employees' EI and CQ;

2. identify Asian and non-Asian hotel guests' perceptions of employees' EI and CQ;

3. analyse the overall satisfaction of Asian and non-Asian hotel guests; and

4. assess the relationship between EI and CQ and their impacts on hotel guests' overall satisfaction.

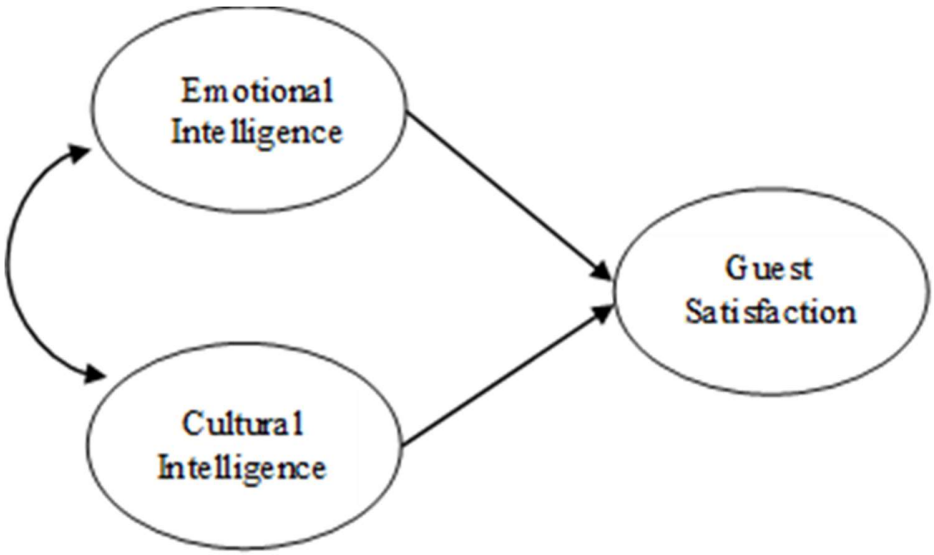

Figure 1. Conceptual model

Literature Review

The Definition and Domains of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence is the ability of individuals to recognize and understand the emotions of oneself (Cavelzani, Lee, Locatelli, Monti & Villamira, 2003) and others (Crowne, 2009; Gunkel, Schlagel, & Engle, 2014, Mok et al., 2008; Wong & Law, 2002). Individuals who have high emotional intelligence develop more effective interpersonal relationships through modifying their responses, cope with negative emotions and have better control over their own lives (Wong & Law, 2002).

Salovey and Mayer (1990) proposed that EI consists of three dimensions: appraisal and expression of emotion, comprising self-emotional appraisal (SEA) and others' emotional appraisal (OEA); regulation of emotion (ROE); and utilisation of emotion (UOE). Self-emotional appraisal (SEA) enables individuals to realize and express their own emotions, whereas Others' emotional appraisal (OEA) facilitates the recognition and understanding of other people's emotions (Wong

& Law, 2002; Yuan, Hsu, Shieh, & Li, 2012). Regulation of emotion (ROE) signifies how one adjusts one's own emotions. Individuals with EI are able to recover rapidly from psychological distress and demonstrate better utilisation of emotions (UOE) to meaningfully engage in activities to improve work performance (Wong & Law, 2002; Yuan et al., 2012). Goleman (1998) suggested that EI encompasses four domains: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management; whereas Cavelzani et al. (2003) proposed two domains: personal competencies and interpersonal competencies. Nevertheless, as observable phenomena, EI manifests itself in the way that people address and understand emotions in themselves and others, adjust their own emotions correspondingly and take initiatives to adjust their actions and interactions with people according to the perceived requirements of the situation.

Emotional Intelligence in the Hospitality Industry

Hospitality, even in its commercial forms, is fundamentally people-centric, comprising disparate dynamic encounters (Kim & Agrusa, 2011; Langhorn, 2004; Scott-Halsell, Shumate, & Blum, 2007; Scott-Halsell, Blum, & Huffman, 2008; Scott-Halsell, Blum, & Huffman, 2011). A service encounter involves 'unique dyadic interactions' (Mok et al., 2008, p. 22): intensive engagement between service provider and customer (Kernbach & Schutte, 2005) in which both parties inevitably experience emotions (Koc, 2019). It is difficult for providers to control these situations because 'emotion is a personal phenomenon' (Calvelzani et al., 2003, p. 4). Hence, Prentice and King (2011) suggested that service firms need to develop the ability to appraise and understand employees' emotions before they can manage them properly.

Frontline hotel employees are expected to act proactively in service encounters with a high level of emotional labour. This requires them to control their inner feelings and outward behaviours to express appropriate emotions based on the context and the organizations' display rules (Chu,

Baker & Murrmann, 2012; Chu & Murrmann, 2006). Frontline employees need to express desired emotions congruent with those of their customers', which often requires staff to hide or suppress their inner feelings and emotions (Lee & Ok, 2014). However, persistent inconsistencies between felt and expressed emotions can have negative psychological outcomes (e.g. tension, stress, fatigue, and inauthenticity) (Lee & Ok, 2012; Pugh, Groth, & Hennig-Thurau, 2011). As the positive and negative outcomes of EI predominantly depend on employees' emotional skills (Prentice & King, 2011), an emotionally intelligent employee can moderate his or her feelings and expressed emotions to customers, demonstrating flexibility and adaptable behaviour (Koc, 2019; Prentice & King, 2013). Hence, emotional labour is largely controlled by positive EI attributes (Lee & Ok, 2012) such as extending genuine care, courtesy, friendliness, sincerity and empathy while serving customers (Matthews, Zeidner & Roberts, 2012; Wong & Law, 2002). Such behaviours can achieve desirable outcomes including better service performance (Kim & Agrusa, 2011), joy and job satisfaction (Lee & Ok, 2012; Wolfe & Kim, 2013), creative performance (Darvishmotevali et al., 2018), and guest satisfaction.

Conceptualising Cultural Intelligence

Globalisation has provided more opportunities for people to interact with others from different parts of the world. Consequently, the ability to adapt to inter-cultural encounters and interact effectively with culturally diverse individuals have become valuable assets (Thomas et al., 2015). This situation is greatly conducive to the emergence of CQ. The concept of CQ, developed by Earley and Ang (2003), is commonly interpreted as representing an individual's capability to interact and respond in cross-cultural settings. Researchers from different fields approach CQ differently, but their fundamental interpretations of CQ are consistent and complementary. CQ is defined as an individual's ability to identify and comprehend diverse foreign cultures and

effectively adapt to environments where multiple cultural values and norms operate (Ang et al., 2007; Brislin & Worthley, 2006; Crowne, 2009; Earley & Mosakowski, 2004; MacNab & Worthley, 2012; Thomas et al., 2015) and to interact with culturally different individuals (Crowne, 2009; Moon, 2010; Thomas et al., 2015).

Cultural Intelligence is composed of four dimensions: metacognitive, cognitive, motivational and behavioural (Ang et al., 2007). Metacognitive CQ refers to an individual's capability to be consciously involved and to purposively identify, learn and monitor the cultural norms of others, to anticipate others' preferences and adjust one's ideas accordingly through cross-cultural experiences and interactions. Hence, metacognitive CQ involves deep-level information processing (Moon, 2010; Rockstuhl et al., 2011). Individuals with high metacognitive CQ can flexibly and sophisticatedly apply their cultural knowledge in diverse cultural interactions. Cognitive CQ is much more concrete: reflecting awareness of a variety of norms, practices, traditions and taboos in diverse cultures (MacNab & Worthley, 2012). Thomas et al. (2015) regarded it as important content-specific knowledge, which can help to process knowledge for solving problems in various intercultural encounters. Motivational CQ is the ability to put effort and energy into learning and adapting oneself in different cultural contexts to overcome difficulties and barriers (Chen, Liu & Portnoy, 2012; Rockstuhl et al., 2011). High motivational CQ drives individuals to recognize and understand the cultures of others, resulting in focused and persistent efforts to adjust behaviour so it fits into different cultural settings and can lead to better connections with others. Finally, behavioural CQ refers to showing respect to others by exhibiting suitable and adaptable behaviour within diverse cultural contexts (Chen et al., 2012).

Cultural Intelligence in the Workplace

The psychological and social aspects of CQ have been widely studied, yet CQ studies in the workplace remain limited. CQ, which is highly relevant to global hospitality business practice, is largely unexplored. Nevertheless, studies outside of commercial hospitality, such as Ang et al. (2007), confirmed that metacognitive CQ and behavioural CQ are significantly related to task performance. Chen et al. (2012) studied the relationship between motivational CQ (personal and organisational) and the sales performance of real estate agents in different cultural regions across the United States. The results of the above two studies suggest that higher employee motivational CQ drives better task performance, and this relationship was further strengthened by organisational motivational CQ and its diversity climate. A recent study in Asia by Presbitero (2017) generated consistent results on the motivational CQ–task performance relationship. Specifically, based on supervisors' evaluations, motivational CQ enhanced task performance among employees in a Philippine call centre who provided overseas services. This highlights the need for further empirical studies that reveal the positive impact of CQ on employee and organisation performance in Asian and non-Asian countries.

The Relationships between EI, CQ and Guest Satisfaction

It is generally agreed that EI and CQ possess both distinctive and overlapping characteristics (Crowne, 2009; Gunkel et al., 2014; Kumar et al., 2008; Moon, 2010; Rockstuhl et al., 2011). Given that emotional cues are different across cultures (Alon & Higgins, 2005), Crowne (2009) proposed that individuals should manage their emotional expression by using their cultural knowledge and skills in cross-cultural interactions. However, a key issue for the current study is how the two are potentially interdependent, particularly in hospitality service settings. For example, Moon (2010) previously argued that having EI alone did not result in effective leadership

in a cross-border context unless CQ was also demonstrated. CQ obviously plays an important role in global business (Kumar et al., 2008). This highlights the need to examine the association between EI and CQ. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed for studying the impacts of EI and CQ on service encounters and its outcomes in a culturally diverse hospitality context:

Hypothesis 1. Hotel employee EI is positively associated with CQ

It is generally recognized that non-Asian hotel guests tend to be more satisfied with hotel services than their Asian counterparts. Schuckert, Liu and Law (2015) found that English-speaking customers gave higher satisfaction ratings than non-English ones, which is congruent, to a certain extent, with Lau, Akbar and Yong's (2006) study of Asian and non-Asian hotel guests' overall satisfaction. The relatively higher satisfaction of non-Asian guests is reflected in the recent findings of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University's Tourist Satisfaction Index (TSI) and Tourism Service Quality Index (TSQI) (School of Hotel and Tourism Management [SHTM], 2016). Data on the TSI and TSQI in the hotels sector, collected between 2012 and 2016 in Hong Kong, show that the average scores of long-haul travellers from the Americas, Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, as well as Europe, Africa and the Middle East, are consistently higher than those of their short-haul counterparts from mainland China, Japan and Korea, South and Southeast Asia, Taiwan and Macau. Based on these studies, it is plausible to propose that non-Asian travellers are more generous when evaluating hotel employees' performance than their Asian counterparts. Thus, the following hypotheses are presented.

Hypothesis 2a. Non-Asian hotel guests perceive higher employee EI than Asian hotel guests.

Hypothesis 2b. Non-Asian hotel guests perceive higher employee CQ than Asian hotel guests.

Customer satisfaction is a 'global concept' (p. 249), which reflects customers' psychological states based on their service experience (Cardozo, 1965). Customer satisfaction is often used as an outcome variable linked to measures of perceived service performance (Song, Der Veen, Li, & Chen, 2012). Different evaluations of service performance result in varying levels of tourist satisfaction (Kozak, 2001); even so, perceived performance maintains a positive and strong relationship with satisfaction (Nam & Lee, 2011; Song et al., 2012). Kernbach and Schutte (2005, p. 441) reported that 'service-provider emotional intelligence had a significant main effect on customer satisfaction'. Hotels serving international segments are cross-cultural contexts requiring intensive customer contact in which service quality of frontline employees substantially affects travellers' overall satisfaction with the hotel performance (Qu, Ryan & Chu, 2000). Consequently, frontline employees' ability to demonstrate EI and CQ in accordance with guests' cultures becomes crucial to guests' evaluations of their accommodation experiences.

Hypothesis 3. Hotel employee EI and CQ is positively associated with hotel guest satisfaction.

Methods

Measurement Development

Previous studies of EI and CQ were based on people's self-assessment of capabilities. In contrast, this study developed a novel alternative approach: capturing consumers' assessment of frontline staffs' EI and CQ capabilities. This approach builds on a well-established tradition of studies examining customers' satisfaction based on their perceived experience in service encounters (Kohsaka, Matsutani, Matsuoka & Tomiyoshi, 2015; Rod, Ashill & Gibbs, 2016; Specht, Fichtel & Meyer, 2007). Customers' perceptions of staff performance (e.g. perceived employee effort, abilities, and service delivery) are significant determinants of customer satisfaction (Rod et al., 2016; Specht et al., 2007). Hence, frontline employees' verbal (style, tone) and non-verbal (facial

expressions, gestures and body language) behaviours in service encounters, reflecting their emotions and cultural capabilities, could be identified and evaluated by customers through their interactions. A survey was developed to explore hotel guests' perceptions of front office employees' EI and CQ, and their impacts on guest satisfaction. The front office is commonly acknowledged as 'the hub or nerve centre of the hotel' (Walker, 2013, p. 98) and is therefore an ideal context to examine how EI and CQ manifests in service behaviours. The instrument consisted of four sections. In section one, three filtering questions were designed to identify appropriate respondents who had recently stayed in a hotel and could answer the questions. Questions in sections 2 and 3 captured evaluations of hotel front office employees' EI and CQ according to the hotel guests' experiences during service interactions, such as check-in and check-out or other general communications with the Front office staff. Questions in section 4 captured guests' overall satisfaction based on their general evaluation of the hotel front office employees' EI and CQ. To make the respondents clear about the context of the survey and the questions posed to them, a question stem "Based on the service interactions which I encountered during my stay in the hotel …" was applied to the measurement of EI, CQ and guest satisfaction in the questionnaire. Finally, section 5 collected respondents' demographic information including age, gender and education level. The English questionnaire was professionally translated into Chinese, Japanese and Korean languages to facilitate the responses of hotel guests who could not fully understand English.

Measurement of EI and CQ

Hotel guests were asked to rate the front office employees' EI and CQ on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) based on recalled experiences of interacting with the Front Office employees. A 16-item EI scale developed by Wong and Law

(2002) was chosen to use in the survey. Kim and Argrusa (2011) described the scale as a 'psychologically sound measure in the management field' and noted its 'brevity and reputation'. The original measurement scale comprises *Self-Emotional Appraisal* (SEA), *Others' Emotional Appraisal* (OEA), *Use of Emotion* (UOE) and *Regulation of Emotion* (ROE). In this study, SEA subscale was not used since guests' perceptions were measured. Hence, three subscales: OEA, UOE and ROE were refined and modified for this study. Finally, a total of seven items including OEA (three items), UOE (two items) and ROE (two items) from Wong and Law (2002) were reworded to fit into the front office context in the survey.

The scale developed by the Cultural Intelligence Centre (Ang et al., 2007) was adopted to measure CQ in this study. One of the subscales, metacognitive CQ, pertaining to individuals' perception of his/her cognitive ability, was excluded. Owing to the self-report nature of the original scale, the items were modified and reworded for the current study. Three subscales with a total of nine items was chosen, encompassing cognitive CQ (three items), motivational CQ (two items), and behavioural CQ (four items).

Sample Selection and Data Collection

Data were collected by convenience sampling in popular Hong Kong sightseeing locations such as Victoria Peak and Avenue of Stars. To ensure appropriate respondents were identified, the potential respondents were informed of the study's purpose and asked to answer the three filtering questions before proceeding with the survey.

Respondents were asked to identify their country of origin, and subsequent cultural categorisation was determined with reference to the Hong Kong Tourism Board Monthly Report – Visitor Arrivals Statistics in December 2018 (HKTB Research, 2019b). Visitors from mainland China, Taiwan, Japan, Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia etc., who were geographically proximate

while historically influenced by Confucianism and Buddhism (Mattila, 1999; Yong & McAvoy, 2005), were classified as Asian visitors. Non-Asian visitors included visitors from United States, United Kingdom, Germany and the Pacific Rim, including Australia and New Zealand.

Respondents were also asked to specify the hotel properties they stayed at. The hotels were classified as either luxury or budget properties using confidential information provided by individual hotels such as average achieved room rate and staff-to-room ratio (HKTB2020), and hotel facilities (including food and beverage, health, IT and business). A total of 295 hotel guests from 66 hotels (33 luxury and 33 budget hotels) completed the questionnaires; 16 questionnaires were not usable due to illegible writing or missing answers. Hence, 279 valid responses were received and used for statistical analysis.

Data Analysis and Results

Respondent Profiles

Table 1 provides the demographic profile of Asian and non-Asian respondents. Male and female visitors were about 46% and 53% respectively, and they were highly educated as 66% had obtained a college/university level education. The majority of respondents were aged between 26 and 55 years, about 85% were in Hong Kong for vacation or leisure purpose and about 82% were independent travellers. Around 160 (57%) of the visitors selected luxury hotels and the rest 119 (43%) stayed in budget hotels. Almost half (46%) of the respondents stayed in hotels for 3 to 4 nights, followed by 1 to 2 nights (24%) and 5 to 6 nights (21%).

Table 1. Respondents' profile

	N=279	Percent		N=279	Percent
Gender			*Travel mode*		
Male	130	46	Package tour	50	18
Female	147	53	Independent traveller	229	82
Missing	2	1			
			Country/region of origin		
Age			Mainland China	47	17
Under 18	7	2	Taiwan	20	7
18-25	49	18	Japan	18	6
26-35	69	25	South Korea	30	11
36-45	54	19	Singapore	16	5
46-55	70	25	Malaysia	6	2
56-65	18	7	Thailand	2	1
66 or above	12	4	Indonesia	2	1
			India	14	5
Purpose of visit			Asia – Others	6	2
Vacation/leisure	237	85	Australia	14	5
Business/meeting	30	11	New Zealand	6	2
Visiting friends/relatives	12	4	UK	10	4
			France	10	4
Type of hotel			Germany	21	8
Luxury	160	57	Russia	6	2
Budget	119	43	Europe – Others	20	7
			USA	17	6
Length of stay in hotel			Canada	14	5
1 to 2 nights	66	24			
3-4 nights	127	46	*No. of visits*		
5-6 nights	59	21	First time	171	61
7 nights or above	17	6	2-4 times	75	28
Missing	10	3	5-7 times	15	5
			8-10 times	3	1
Educational level			More than 10 times	15	5
Less than high school	13	5			
Secondary/high school	82	29			
College/university	142	51			
Postgraduate	42	15			

Harman's Single-factor Test

In this study, Harman's widely used single-factor test was used to examine the presence of common method variance (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). In addition,

exploratory factor analysis was performed to evaluate the amount of variance in the observed variables that can be explained by a single factor. Podsakoff et al. (2003) contended a significant common method variance is present when a single factor appears or one general factor accounts for the majority of the covariance in the independent and dependent variables.

All of the variables in this study were loaded in exploratory factor analysis using unrotated principal component analysis. The results revealed three distinct factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0. All three factors together explained 68.9% and the first factor did not account for the majority of the variance. Hence, it was concluded that common method variance did not affect the results of this study.

Measurement Model and Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis was performed using AMOS 25 to test how well the individual variables represent the relevant construct measure (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2014). The measurement model comprised 9 constructs (including first-order factors) and 18 measurement items. Table 2 shows that the factor loadings of the manifest variables of the respective latent variables were well above the threshold of 0.5 and significant at $p<.001$ (Hair et al. 2014). As shown in Table 3, the average variance extracted (AVE) for all variables are higher than 0.5 and the composite reliabilities well exceed 0.7. These values support the convergent validity of the measurement scales (Hair et al. 2014) that the measurement items of each construct correlated to one another (Mitchell & Jolley, 2013).

Table 2. Confirmatory factor analysis: Items and loadings

Construct and scale item	Standardised loading	*t*-value	Mean (SD)
Emotional intelligence (EI) (α = .89)			
Others' emotional appraisal (OEA)			
OEA1:The hotel employee knew my emotions based on my behaviors.	.85	NA	5.11 (1.01)
OEA2: The hotel employee was sensitive to my feelings and emotions.	.89	18.42	5.11 (1.10)
OEA3: The hotel employee had good understanding of my emotions.	.88	17.96	5.16 (1.08)
Utilisation of emotion (UOE)			
UOE1: The hotel employee was self-motivated to serve me.	.81	NA	5.37 (1.15)
UOE2: The hotel employee had tried the best to serve me.	.86	13.96	5.52 (1.05)
Regulation of emotion (ROE)			
ROE1: The hotel employee was able to control temper and handle difficulties rationally.	.82	NA	5.32 (1.05)
ROE2: The hotel employee had good control of the emotions.	.82	13.04	5.29 (1.04)
Cultural intelligence (CQ) (α = .87)			
Cognitive CQ (COG)			
COG1: The hotel employee generally knew the language I use.	.65	10.74	5.27 (1.08)
COG2: The hotel employee generally knew the values and beliefs of my culture.	.80	14.39	4.90 (1.12)
COG3: The hotel employee generally knew the basic rules for expressing body language in my culture.	.83	NA	5.02 (1.13)
Motivational CQ (MOT)			
MOT1: The hotel employee enjoyed interacting with me.	.88	13.50	5.10 (1.15)
MOT2: The hotel employee talked to me confidently.	.76	NA	5.34 (1.11)
Behavioual CQ (BEH)			
BEH1: The hotel employee changed the verbal behavior (e.g. accent, tone) conforming to my culture.	.73	13.62	4.82 (1.20)
BEH3: The hotel employee changed the body language (e.g. posture, gesture) conforming to my culture.	.93	17.35	4.82 (1.18)
BEH4: The hotel employee altered facial expressions conforming to my culture.	.83	NA	4.90 (1.30)
Guest satisfaction (GS) (α = .94)			
GS1: I am satisfied with the employee's emotional and cultural performance in the service encounter.	.95	NA	5.46 (1.01)
GS2: I am overall satisfied with the cuctomer services of the hotel.	.94	26.39	5.52 (1.01)

Note: All factor loadings are significant at $p < .001$. Parameter is fixed at 1.0 for the maximum-likelihood estimation. Hence, *t*-value was not obtained for those fixed to 1 for identification purpose.

Discriminant validity was evaluated by comparing the AVE values with the squared correlation of the two constructs (Hair et al., 2014) and the pairwise correlation (Kline, 2005). BEH2 was eliminated because of evidence of cross loading. As shown in Table 3, the AVE for each pair of constructs was greater than the squared correlation estimate, a rigorous test suggested by Hair et al. (2014), and the pairwise correlations of the manifest variables were lower than 0.85 (Kline, 2005), lending support for discriminant validity. Some manifest variables of both EI and

CQ construct were relatively high. Nevertheless, Hair et al. (2014, p. 691) contended "high correlations of two construct models, as high as 0.9, can still provide significant difference in fit between two models". Finally, the measurement model overall fitted the data satisfactorily according to the goodness-of-fit indices (χ^2 = 259.31, df = 110, χ^2/df = 2.36, TLI = 0.95, CFI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.07) from the confirmatory factor analysis.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics, composite reliabilities, correlations, and squared correlations

	Mean (Std dev.)	AVE	OEA	UOE	ROE	COG	MOT	BEH	GS
EI: OEA	5.13 (.97)	0.76	**.91**[a]	.69[b]	.66	.70	.69	.50	.67
EI: UOE	5.45 (1.01)	0.69	.48[c]	**.82**	.70	.73	.72	.52	.71
EI: ROE	5.30 (.95)	0.68	.44	.49	**.81**	.70	.69	.50	.68
CQ: COG	5.06 (.94)	0.58	.48	.54	.49	**.81**	.76	.55	.75
CQ: MOT	5.22 (1.03)	0.68	.47	.52	.48	.58	**.81**	.54	.74
CQ: BEH	4.89 (1.03)	0.70	.25	.27	.25	.30	.29	**.87**	.54
GS	5.49 (.98)	0.89	.45	.50	.46	.57	.55	.29	**.94**

Goodness-of-fit statistics: χ^2 = 259.31, df = 110, $p < .001$, χ^2/df = 2.36, TLI = .95, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .07.

Note: All correlations among study variables are significant at $p < .01$.

[a] Composite reliabilities are shown along the diagonal line.

[b] Correlations are shown along the diagonal line.

[c] Squared correlations are shown along the diagonal line.

Correlation between Guests' Perceptions of Employee EI and CQ

The relationship between the hotel guests' perceptions of front office employees' EI and CQ was shown in table 4. It shows a high correlation coefficient (r) of 0.764 for employees' EI and CQ, with p<0.01. Hence, Hypothesis 1 was supported. Hotel employees' EI and CQ was positively associated.

Table 4. Correlation coefficient between guests' perceptions of employees' EI and CQ

	Overall emotional intelligence	Overall cultural intelligence
Overall emotional intelligence	1	.764**
Overall cultural intelligence	.764**	1

Note:$^{**}p < .01$ (2-tailed)

Asian and Non-Asian Hotel Guests' Perceptions of Employees' EI and CQ and their Overall Satisfaction

As shown in Table 5, Asian hotel guests perceived employees' EI (mean = 5.16) and CQ (mean = 4.96) to be lower than non-Asian guests (EI mean = 5.48; CQ mean = 5.20). Furthermore, Asian hotel guests' overall satisfaction (mean = 5.35) was lower than their non-Asian counterparts' (mean = 5.67). The findings supported Hypotheses 2a and 2b. Non-Asian hotel guests perceived higher employee EI and CQ than Asian hotel guests. In addition, Table 5 also shows that luxury hotel guests perceived significantly higher employees' EI (mean =5.46), CQ (mean = 5.21) and overall satisfaction (mean = 5.66) versus budget hotel guests' perception of EI (mean = 5.07), CQ (mean = 4.85) and overall satisfaction (mean = 5.26).

Table 5. Comparison of guests' perceptions of EI, CQ and overall satisfaction by types of guests and types of hotels

	Asian hotel guests	Non-Asian hotel	*t*-value	Budget hotels	Luxury hotels	*t*-value
Emotional intelligence	5.16	5.48	-3.21**	5.07	5.46	3.70***
Cultural intelligence	4.96	5.20	-2.36*	4.85	5.21	3.46***
Overall satisfaction	5.35	5.67	-2.74**	5.26	5.66	3.20**

Note:$^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$.

Associations of EI and CQ on Guests' Overall Satisfaction

A multiple regression was conducted to further examine the associations of EI and CQ on guests' satisfaction. The results in Table 6 show that overall EI and CQ helped to explain the EI- and CQ-guest satisfaction relationship, with a 95% confidence interval. The correlation coefficient *R* of 0.778 suggested a high positive relationship between both predictors (guests' perceptions of employees' EI and CQ) and guests' overall satisfaction. Hence, Hypothesis 3 was supported: hotel employee EI and CQ were positively associated with guest satisfaction.

Employees' EI and CQ accounted for 60.5% (R^2=0.605) of the variability in guest overall satisfaction, which pointed to the significant contribution of EI and CQ to guest satisfaction. As Field (2013, p. 340) stated, standard beta values (β) can provide greater insight into the importance of a predictor in the model. The data suggested that employees' overall CQ (β=0.463) had a higher predictive effect than employees' overall EI (β=0.365) on hotel guests' overall satisfaction.

Table 6. Regression results of hotel guests' overall satisfaction

Independent variables							
	B	SE	*β*	*t*	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
Constant	0.459	0.249		1.843	0.047		
Overall emotional	0.432	0.069	0.365	6.223	0.000***	0.416	2.403
Overall cultural intelligence	0.542	0.069	0.463	7.898	0.000***	0.416	2.403
Multiple R	0.778						
R Square	0.605						

Note: (1) *B*, coefficient; SE, standard error; *β*, standardised coefficient; *t*, t-value; Sig., significance.
(2) Dependent variable: guests' overall satisfaction. (3) Non-significant items are not included in the table.
(4) *** p < .001.

Discussion

The present study found a strong positive correlation between guests' perceptions of hotel front office employees' EI and CQ. Moreover, the data point to a strong link between EI, CQ and guest experiences in service interactions with front office employees, which reflects results of previous research outside hospitality service settings (Moon, 2010; Rockstuhl et al., 2011). The results also suggest that the ability to translate frontline staff's EI and CQ capacities into guest satisfaction may be influenced by the market segments that hotels target. Non-Asian hotel guests consistently gave higher ratings to hotel employees' EI and CQ, as well as their overall satisfaction, than their Asian counterparts. This may be explained by notions of cultural similarity and distance.

Cultural distance, the degree to which the difference in cultural values between one country and another country (Sousa & Bradley, 2006), is often used in studies of intensive cross-cultural contacts in contexts such as hospitality and tourism. Previous research has suggested that the higher the similarity of the hotel staff and guests' cultural background, the higher the expectation and the lower the satisfaction (Lau et al., 2006; Zhen & Zhu, 2010). Moreover, according to the PolyU Tourist Satisfaction Index (SHTM, 2016), satisfaction with hotels among tourists from short-haul markets including mainland China, Taiwan, Macau, Japan, Korea etc. was consistently lower than those of non-Asian tourists, which was consistent with other research comparing satisfaction between Asian and non-Asian customers (Manzur & Jogaratnam, 2008; Mattila, 2000; Mattila & Choi, 2006). Other studies also suggested that the closer the culture between the tourists and the destination where the service encounter takes place, the more critical they will be of service quality and satisfaction (Tsang & Ap, 2007; Weiermair, 2000).

The emphasis on status difference and social hierarchies in Asian cultures (Mattila, 1999; Mattila, 2000; Tsang & Ap, 2007) may, to a certain degree, drive Asian customers to clearly demarcate the role of service employees, and raise expectations to receive particular forms of

personalised service during encounters (Mattila, 1999; Schuckert et al., 2015). This may partially help to explain the lower ratings of employees' EI and CQ and overall satisfaction given by Asian guests. Owing to cultural similarity, Asian hotel guests could have higher expectations and better comprehension of the level of cultural sensitivity, authenticity and sincerity of front office employees. Conversely, greater cultural distance in tourist-host service interactions at destinations, may lead to tourists being less demanding and more tolerant (Weiermair, 2000; Weiermair & Fuchs, 2000), and more satisfied (Ahn & McKercher, 2013). Previous studies have also suggested that non-Asian tourists are more interested in the intangible attributes of a destination's culture (Yong & McAvoy, 2005) while looking for fun and enjoyment (Mattila, 1999). In other words, the dissimilarity of the culture might have made non-Asian hotel guests feel more interested in the novelty of different cultures, and hence their expectations towards the service employees in the service encounters may have been lower than those of Asian guests.

It is also important to recognize alternative potential explanations for guest perceptions and evaluations. Employees' performance in service encounters might play a part in the lower ratings of Asian hotel guests. Service encounters in hospitality settings are bilateral and the quality of interaction largely depends on how service employees communicate with guests and satisfy their needs (Wu & Liang, 2009). For example, lower ratings given by visitors from mainland China may be due to hotel service employees and managers having insufficient knowledge and a superficial understanding of mainland Chinese hotel guests. Customer-facing staff may merely follow long-established protocols when interacting with Chinese visitors, without considering cultural differences such as norms and practices. It is also important to note that the significantly different ratings of luxury and budget hotel guests, to some extent, correspond with those of non-Asian and Asian guests because non-Asian tourists are traditionally more willing to spend more

on hotel accommodation than their Asian counterparts according to the visitor spending report of the HKTB (2019b).

Given that Hong Kong is a long-established international city attracting millions of international visitors every year, countless cross-cultural interactions are enacted, in which service employees exercise their CQ. The finding of a highly positive association of frontline employees' CQ on the overall satisfaction of hotel guests may indicate that they generally possess capacities across multiple dimensions of CQ (Lam & Cheung, 2018), particularly for those working in luxury hotels. This is because luxury hotel guests regard quality interaction with service employees as one of the important determinants of their satisfaction (Padma & Ahn, 2020), and in these luxury hotels, culturally sensitive employees have better service performance (Sizoo, 2008). Specifically, frontline staff utilising their CQ to show understanding of the guests' culture and interacting with them using verbal behaviour (language, style and tone) and non-verbal behaviour (facial expressions, gestures and body language) conforming to the guests' culture during the service encounter should result in higher levels of guest satisfaction. In principle, this may involve frontline employees adjusting their interactional routines – behaving in a reserved manner in conservative cultures and enthusiastically in open ones. Recognizing guests' cultural backgrounds can enable culturally intelligent employees to consciously and purposefully use appropriate verbal and non-verbal behaviour congruent with guests' cultures in the service encounter. However, the willingness and ability of frontline staff to adapt their interactional practices must also be considered in relation to the organisational context, specifically the extent to which interactions are scripted and thus routinised, limiting improvisation, and whether staff are (or feel) empowered to adjust the scope and form of their service behaviours. Improvisation and the effective deployment of cultural intelligence may thus be more likely to emerge in operations targeting

higher-value segments, which have human resource (HR) development and reward practices to nurture these staff capabilities.

The multiple regression analysis highlighted the predominant role of frontline employees' CQ on guests' overall satisfaction, given that the prediction of guests' perceptions of employees' CQ was higher than their perceptions of employees' EI. These findings stress the complementary relationship between EI and CQ (Rockstuhl et al., 2011), and that CQ is more relevant to EI in cross-cultural service encounters (Alshaibani & Bakir, 2017). This reinforces the need for hotel HR practitioners to pay considerable attention to frontline employees' EI and CQ as desirable, distinct, but interrelated traits in the recruitment, development, appraisal or reward processes since both are associated with positive customer service behaviour. The need to identify and nurture these qualities is amplified in hospitality service settings characterised by greater levels of intercultural contact. The practical implications of these findings are discussed in the concluding section.

However, as a cautionary note, it is important to be critical in interpreting the data regarding differences in the response patterns of Asian and non-Asian tourists. Notions of cultural distance and similarity are implicitly based on several potentially problematic assumptions: firstly, more generally, that cultural traits are immutable; and secondly, in the context of this study, that 'Asian' tourists represent a homogenous group. Attempts to create taxonomies of cultural traits (e.g. Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010) have been criticised for adopting essentialist conceptions of cultures (Bradley, 2018). Nevertheless, research, including in hospitality and tourism, continues to utilise and test notions of 'cultural essentialism' in studying attitudes and behaviours (cf. Chao, Takeuchi, & Farh, 2017; Fong, He, Chao, Leandro, & King, 2019; Kim & McKercher, 2011; Manosuthi, Lee, & Han, 2020; Pikkemaat & Weiermair, 2001). We urge readers to avoid reductive interpretations of the data. Nevertheless, those subscribing to arguably essentialist conceptions of

culture may see treat the results as an empirical conundrum requiring: a) more sophisticated measures of cultural traits; and b) a larger sample of respondents from across different national and ethnic groups, from within the Asian region, to account for potential differences between members of diverse cultures.

Conclusion

Despite scholars' agreement on the importance of EI and CQ in highly interactive cross-cultural settings, the interaction of these factors and their impacts on guest experiences and satisfaction have not received sufficient attention in research on hotel service settings. This study adopted a novel, customer-focused approach to addressing gaps in current knowledge. In capturing guests' perceptions of frontline employees' EI and CQ, it found a strong relationship between the two concepts. Importantly, the study attempted to contextualise the findings by accounting for some of the consumers' fundamental characteristics. Specifically, Asian hotel guests tended to rate their overall satisfaction and employees' EI and CQ lower than their non-Asian counterparts. The discussion proposed that these findings may be explained by notions of cultural similarity, which assume that cultural closeness between guests and frontline staff frames expectations of the service encounters that are not met and drive dissatisfaction. Linked to this, the discussion also considered whether lower levels of satisfaction could be explained by insufficient attention being paid by hospitality operators to culturally-determined expectations of their major source markets, or to sufficiently tailor the service in response to these consumers' needs. Beyond these aspects of culture, the study demonstrated positive associations of employees' EI and CQ on guests' overall satisfaction. Therefore, it is possible to argue that frontline service employees working in a dynamic and culturally diverse work setting need to capitalise on their EI, whilst exercising their CQ – the most predictive factor impacting on guest satisfaction – by considering guests' cultural

background and adapting their service routines accordingly. However, as noted in the discussion, it is important to remain cautious regarding reductive or essentialist conceptions of culture.

Implications for Practice

The implications of the study's findings primarily relate to HR management and development practices but they also extend to wider marketing ones. Arguably, EI in frontline staff can be developed or at least nurtured through continuous training and education initiatives (Koc, 2019; Koc & Boz, 2020; Lee, Kim & Jeon, 2013; Scott-Halsell et al., 2007; Tsai & Lee, 2014). Similarly, given the potential impact of CQ on satisfaction identified in this study, it is imperative for hotel practitioners to cultivate and develop frontline employees' CQ. Previous work has suggested providing targeted development activities such as workshops to enhance employees' emotional effort (Lee & Ok, 2012), adaptability (Prentice & King, 2013) and understanding of empathy and building customer relationships (Rozell, Pettijohn & Parker, 2004). By nurturing and strengthening the EI and CQ of frontline employees, their competence in dealing with cross-cultural service encounters can be enhanced, thereby reducing their work stress and burnout and bringing positive effects on employees' well-being. However, the development of emotional intelligence is likely to require a wider ranging and more subtle set of actions.

Specifically, evidence of EI and CQ capabilities can be evaluated through behaviour-based questioning at the recruitment stage (Bangerter, Corvalan, & Cavin, 2014). Focusing on developing effective interview techniques is a more feasible recommendation than psychometric testing, for example, which is costly and impractical for a small and medium enterprises and independent businesses, which often dominate in the hospitality sector. Focusing on applicants' narratives of past experience of EI and CQ-related service encounters can provide insights into their capabilities, as evidenced in their experiences. However, it can also be used by operators to

gather cultural insights about cross-cultural service incidents that can then be used either in formal development initiatives, such as those noted above, or informal ones.

Informal development of EI and CQ competencies are fundamentally tied to the nature of intra-organisational learning and knowledge sharing, and the culture of leadership. Specifically, past studies have explored the potential role of peer learning and organisational socialisation among tourism and hospitality service employees (Lugosi & Bray, 2008; Lundberg & Mossberg, 2008). This relies on nurturing a culture of learning, which normalises and rewards knowledge sharing in everyday workplace encounters. This is linked, in part, to the culture of leadership, and how it supports social learning and behavioural modelling, in this case of the effective performance by supervisory staff of EI and CQ capabilities, and their positive workplace consequences, for example on guest experiences and feedback.

However, it is also necessary to acknowledge the function of recognition and reward systems in underpinning such workplace cultures. Frontline employees can better understand and mobilise EI and CQ when there is an appropriate reward system (Rozell et al., 2004; Lee & Ok, 2012), which might include compliments, recognition and monetary incentives. Rozell et al. (2004) for example suggested using EI as a criterion in employees' performance appraisals. Not all of these may be feasible given the rate of employee turnover and the generally poor record of HR investment in some parts of the international hospitality sector. Nevertheless, the recognition by organisational leaders of EI and CQ as an element of workplace practice still helps frontline staff become aware of their existence and appreciate, in some capacity, their uses in service encounters.

Beyond these HR considerations, it is also useful to consider the wider implication of this study. Specifically, the study identified differences in the responses of Asian and non-Asian, and

luxury and budget hotel guests. This is important to highlight because it helps to contextualise hotels' evaluations of their staff's capabilities. In sum, frontline staff may exhibit high levels of EI and CQ, despite being evaluated lower by consumers from specific segments. Investing resources into extensive staff training or reward systems may, therefore, not be warranted; and staff receiving lower evaluations of their service skills from certain consumer segments should not automatically be sanctioned. These may result in a series of narrowly focused operational interventions, for example, the adoption of tailored service interaction or recovery protocols for guests from particular cultures, in this case from Asia. However, it may inform wider marketing practices, such as shifting the targeting to alternative segments who are more responsive to the operation or brands' service offerings. However, operations may try to better calibrate the expectations of consumers segments, particularly those who are drawn to budget ends of the market, where there may be fewer resources or opportunities to mobilise EI or CQ.

Limitations and Implications for Theory and Future Research

This study is the first attempt to investigate and provide direct evidence of the positive associations of front office employees' EI and CQ on guest satisfaction based on guest perceptions. This has wider theoretical implications concerning conceptions and perceptions of EI and CQ, particularly within empirical strategies. Previous studies have focused on self-evaluated conceptions of EI and CQ. However, this study suggests the need to examine in greater detail how Asian and non-Asian consumers conceive, operationalise and evaluate EI and CQ in their hospitality-specific service experiences, particularly in cross-cultural interactions, in order to understand the relationship better. Moreover, this study highlights important conceptual and empirical challenges regarding the validity of potentially 'essentialist' conceptions of culture, and their applications in capturing the perceptions and attitudes of specific cultural (sub)groups. Future research can try to utilise

psychometric measurements of cultural traits and quota samples to account for variations between members of different national and ethnic groups regarding service-encounter-related attitudes and behaviours.

Future qualitative studies can attempt to identify how EI and CQ related capabilities are performed and interpreted by consumers. These may be explored through content analysis of first-hand narratives of service interactions, generated either via focused exploratory interviews or, 'naturally', through online mediated commentary. Quantitative studies can also extend these lines of enquiry by examining the impact of guests' evaluations of staffs' EI and CQ capabilities on subsequent actions, intentions and perceptions, including complaint or complement behaviour, positive word-of-mouth, return intention, level of spend, brand value and destination image.

The empirical approaches adopted in this study can avoid risks of inflated (self-)assessment and enhance the generalisability of the study. However, it has some limitations which require careful consideration. First, this study adopted a cross-sectional design so the findings may not establish causal relationships among the variables. Second, the present study only examined the EI and CQ of front office employees from the guests' perspectives, and the relevant number of items in the measurement was reduced to two, hence, the findings may not represent the EI and CQ of all frontline hotel employees, or reflect a complete profile of their EI and CQ. Therefore, future studies can replicate this study in alternative service domains to examine the importance of employees' EI and CQ on guest satisfaction relating to other service or experiential aspects. To provide a complete picture of frontline employees' EI and CQ, future studies could include control variables, such as type of hotel, to explore their EI and CQ focusing on budget hotels or luxury hotels individually, or any particular type of hotel.

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