Review and future directions of cross-cultural consumer services research

Jingyun Zhang a,⁎, Sharon E. Beatty b,1, Gianfranco Walsh c,2

a Department of Marketing, College of Business Administration, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH 43403, USA
b Culverhouse College of Commerce and Business Administration, University of Alabama, P. O. Box 870225, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0225, USA
c Institute for Management, University of Koblenz-Landau, Universitätsstrasse 1, 56070 Koblenz, Germany

Abstract

It is widely recognized that an increasing number of service firms are expanding into international markets. Many studies in the services marketing literature have focused on the identification and discussion of similarities and/or differences in consumer service experiences across nations and cultures. In this paper we review the relevant literature, address conceptual and methodological issues associated with extant cross-cultural consumer services research and suggest theories and approaches in regards to future research in the area. In addition, we introduce and discuss the concept of “cultural service personality” as a potential new theoretical perspective.

© 2007 Published by Elsevier Inc.

Keywords: Cross-cultural; Services research; Service expectations; Evaluations of service; Reactions to service

Contents

1. Introduction ........................................................................................................... 211
2. Article selection method ..................................................................................... 212
3. Consumer service experiences and culture ...................................................... 213
   3.1. The consumer service experience and our framework .................................... 213
   3.2. Culture and service expectations ................................................................... 213
   3.3. Culture and service evaluations ..................................................................... 218
   3.4. Culture and reactions to service ..................................................................... 218
   4.1. Going beyond Hofstede ................................................................................ 219
   4.2. Cultural service personality .......................................................................... 220
5. Methodological issues: critique and future directions. ..................................... 221
   5.1. Emic vs. etic oriented research ..................................................................... 221
   5.2. Operationalization and measurement of culture .......................................... 221
   5.3. Selection of country and context .................................................................. 222
6. Limitations and conclusions ............................................................................. 222
References ............................................................................................................... 222

1. Introduction

Services are increasingly important worldwide. In the U.S., the service sector accounted for more than 79% of the GDP in 2006 (US Central Intelligence Agency, 2007) and 80% of its workforce come from the service sector (Czinkota and Ronkainen, 2002).
the economic significance of the service industry grows, so does the interest in services research, as demonstrated by the fast-growing body of services marketing literature in the past decade, especially in the consumer services area. In fact, Vargo and Lusch (2004) recently suggested that the marketing discipline is going through a paradigmatic change, shifting its focus from exchanges of “goods” to service-centered exchanges.

An increasing number of service providers are marketing services internationally and it is the fastest-growing area of international trade (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2007). American firms have experienced dramatic growth in service exports over the past decade, generating a $65 billion balance of payments surplus in services in 2003, helping to offset the country’s $483 billion deficit in goods (US Department of Commerce, 2005). This growth creates opportunities as well as challenges for businesses, especially when firms attempt to globally standardize their service delivery (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2004). One reason for such challenges is that consumers’ perceptions of service are culturally bound (Zeithaml et al., 2002). de Ruyter et al. (1998, p. 189) argue that “[i]n order to market services effectively to international consumers, service providers must have a thorough knowledge of their target group(s)”. A solid understanding of the role of culture in the service delivery process is more crucial than ever for service firms operating globally.

Despite growing research in consumer service experiences, relatively little research has examined the role of culture in regards to these experiences, with little attempt aimed at synthesizing it. As Maheswaran and Shavitt (2000) point out in regard to global consumer psychology research, systematic research in consumer services is in its infancy. In this article, we attempt to review cross-cultural services research that focuses on the consumer. First, we introduce our conceptual framework and its components. Second, we review existing studies using our framework and suggest future research directions. Third, we discuss overall conceptual issues in the literature and introduce the concept of “cultural service personality”, developed from our review, as a potential new theoretical perspective. Finally, we address overall methodological issues and point to future research directions.

2. Article selection method

Our goal was to locate academic cross-cultural services research focusing on consumers and published in major journals. We used three criteria in choosing articles to include.

1. It should be empirical cross-cultural or cross-national comparative studies for two or more cultures/countries.
2. Studies need to involve consumer services, i.e., be related to the service experience.
3. Studies need to have investigated the topic from a consumer behavior perspective, rather than a more general focus on international services marketing, from a firm perspective (cf. Knight, 1999).

We focused our search in a set of leading and influential academic journals that we felt would cover the topics of interest here. We also conducted a search in major electronic databases including ABI Inform and EBSCO using keywords such as “cross-cultural”, “cross-national” and “services”. A total of 40 relevant articles were located, covering 11 years of research published from 1996 to 2006. Earlier Knight (1999) reviewed international services marketing studies from a firm’s perspective (1990–1998), focusing, for example, on issues like mode of entry. Our review covers cross-cultural services from a different perspective—from the perspective of the consumer and only overlaps with Knight by 3 years. A summary of the journals reviewed and the number of relevant articles found per journal are shown in Table 1. We note that our focus on journals leaves out a number of conference or book articles on this topic. However, we focused on journal articles due to their wide availability across countries.

![Figure 1](image.png)

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journals included in the review</th>
<th>Number of articles located</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Service Research (JSR)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Services Marketing (JSM)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Journal of Service Industry Management (IJSIM)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Business Research (JBR)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Marketing Review (IMR)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Retailing (JR)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Consumer Marketing (JCM)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Industries Journal</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Journal of Marketing (EJM)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Marketing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Marketing Theory &amp; Practice (JMTP)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Journal of Research in Marketing (IJRM)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Consumer Psychology (JCP)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Consumer Research (JCR)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of International Business Studies (JIBS)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of International Marketing (JIM)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Marketing Research (JMR)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science (JAMS)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Science (MS)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology &amp; Marketing (P&amp;M)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Consumer service experiences and culture

3.1. The consumer service experience and our framework

Fig. 1 provides the conceptual framework we use here to review and organize our presentation of the literature. This framework represents our view of the effects of culture on important dimensions of consumers’ service experiences— their expectations, their subsequent evaluations of the service experience, and finally their reactions to the service experience. Our view of consumers’ service experiences is consistent with three-stage models of service consumption used in the services marketing literature (cf. Lovelock and Wirtz, 2007) and with major service paradigms, such as the SERVQUAL framework (Parasuraman et al., 1993; Zeithaml et al., 1993).

Expectations are commonly defined as “[p]retrial beliefs about a product that serve as standards or reference points against which product [or service] performance is judged” (Zeithaml et al., 1993, p. 1) and are important in service experiences. In regard to service expectations (as well as evaluations of services), the most widely accepted framework is the SERVQUAL framework developed by Parasuraman and his colleagues (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Zeithaml et al., 1993). This framework conceptualizes the customer’s assessment of service quality as the gap between what they expect and their evaluation of the performance of a particular service provider. The SERVQUAL framework also incorporates an instrument to measure service quality, which is proposed to include five dimensions—tangibility, reliability, assurance, responsiveness, and empathy. The SERVQUAL instrument, originally developed in North America, has been tested in various service contexts and is highly regarded.

In the second stage, individuals evaluate the service performance, often against expectations (Patterson and Johnson, 1993). An individual will confirm or disconfirm aspects of the service performance based on expectations, which influences their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the service provider. Following a satisfying or dissatisfying service experience, in the third stage, individuals will have varying reactions to the service. When poor service is received, the customer may take various actions, such as complaining and/or switching. Further, they could have varying reactions to the service provider’s recovery efforts. On the other hand, a satisfying service encounter or service recovery may lead to the formation of an ongoing relationship between the parties.

Our framework (in Fig. 1) shows culture as potentially impacting on each stage of the service experience. National culture has been defined as patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting that are rooted in common values and societal conventions (Nakata and Sivakumar, 2001). Hofstede (1991, p. 5) defined culture as the “collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from those of another”. We identify some of the most popular categorizations of national culture or cultural dimensions in Table 2. Further, Table 2 indicates which paradigms are used by the studies reviewed here. The popularity of Hofstede’s (1984, 1991) framework is notable here.

Each article in our review was categorized by the primary service experience dimension addressed. Then, Table 3 was developed in which we chronologically present the articles and a summary of a) how culture was treated, b) which countries and the service contexts were studied, and c) a summary of the findings. Our goal in the sections to follow is to summarize the findings, highlighting what they tell us about the topic in regard to universals and differences.

3.2. Culture and service expectations

Many researchers have attempted to test the robustness of the SERVQUAL dimensions across cultures. Based on our review, it appears that while the majority of reviewed studies attempted to validate the SERVQUAL scale by assessing its psychometric properties and by examining the structure and relative importance of the resulting dimensions across cultures (Donthu and Yoo, 1998; Espinoza, 1999; Furrer et al., 2000; Sultan and Simpson, 2000; Witkowski and Wolfinbarger, 2002), others looked for or
Table 3
Summary of cross-cultural services literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Treatment of culture</th>
<th>Countries/service context</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lee and Ulgado (1997) JSM</td>
<td>Used Hofstede’s individualism/collectivism as post-hoc explanation.</td>
<td>U.S. vs. Korea/fast food</td>
<td>Differences between U.S. and South Korean patrons in terms on expectations and perceptions of fast-food restaurant services. For U.S. customers, low food prices and assurance were more important; for Korean customers, reliability and empathy were more important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donthu and Yoo (1998) JSR</td>
<td>Applied Hofstede’s dimensions directly in hypotheses, measured at individual level.</td>
<td>U.S., Canada, and India/banking</td>
<td>Individuals rated lower on power distance, higher on individualism and uncertainty avoidance, and those who are short-term oriented had higher overall service quality expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Espinoza (1999) IJSIM</td>
<td>Applied individualism/collectivism, monochronic time, and polychronic time in hypotheses, pre-hoc justification, not measured.</td>
<td>Quebec (Canada) vs. Peru/supermarket</td>
<td>Similar dimensional structure of SERVQUAL in two cultures. Importance of the dimensions: Reliability: equality important in Quebec and Peru Responsiveness: more important for Quebeccois Tangibles: More important for Peruvians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furrer et al. (2000) JSR</td>
<td>Applied Hofstede’s dimensions in hypotheses, measured.</td>
<td>U.S., Switzerland and, China, Singapore, South Korea/banking</td>
<td>Individualism—high service quality expectations. In cultures with greater power distance: weaker respondents were more likely to tolerate failure from more powerful service providers. In cultures with high degree of masculinity, respondents expected a female service provider to be more feminine than professional.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sultan and Simpson (2000) JSM</td>
<td>No specific cultural dimensions used.</td>
<td>U.S. vs. Europe/airline</td>
<td>No difference in the order of importance of SERVQUAL dimensions by nationality. Expectations, perceptions and overall assessment of service quality varied by nationality. U.S. respondents had higher expectations of service quality than Europeans; Europeans found the service quality of U.S. airlines to be lower than their own international carriers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witkowski and Wolfinbarger (2002) JBR</td>
<td>No specific cultural dimensions used. Focused on service environment and cultural norm differences.</td>
<td>U.S. vs. Germany/banks, medical care, retailing, postal facilities, restaurants</td>
<td>German respondents had lower service expectations, lower perceived service outcomes than did U.S. respondents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laroche et al. (2005) IMR</td>
<td>Applied individualism/collectivism in hypotheses, measured.</td>
<td>English speaking vs. French speaking Canadians/airline</td>
<td>Both individualists and collectivists relied more on external information sources in formulating service expectations. Internal (external) information sources were relatively more important in forming expectations for collectivists (individualists) than for individualists (collectivists), and “will” (“should”) expectations were more diagnostic for collectivists (individualists) than for individualists (collectivists).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malhotra et al. (2005) IMR</td>
<td>Used Hofstede’s power distance, and individualism/collectivism as pre-hoc justification, not measured. Focused on economic and social-cultural factors.</td>
<td>U.S., India, the Philippines/banking</td>
<td>Examined differences in perception of service quality dimensions between developed and developing economies. Developed countries: better established reliability, more emphasis on “breakthrough service”, emotional security, and credibility based on performance standards, communication geared to individuals, continuous improvement of service quality and higher levels of relationship marketing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johns et al. (2005) SIJ</td>
<td>No specific cultural dimensions used.</td>
<td>Northern Cyprus vs. U.S./travel agents</td>
<td>Promptness, empathy, efficiency and servicescape aesthetics were main determinants of customer satisfaction. Instead of the predicted SERVQUAL five-factor solution, factor analysis showed an underlying unidimensionality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluations of service</td>
<td>No specific cultural dimensions used.</td>
<td>U.S. vs. Mexico/banks, grocery stores, specialty stores, and department stores</td>
<td>Mexican respondents rated perceived service quality higher than U.S. respondents. Different importance of service quality factors: U.S. respondents focused more on personalized service. Mexican respondents emphasized availability more and confidence in the support staff.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Treatment of culture</th>
<th>Countries/service context</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluations of service</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winsted (1997) JR; (1999) JMTP; (2000) IJSIM</td>
<td>Occidental vs. oriental cultural heritage and Hall’s communication context, pre-hoc, not measured.</td>
<td>U.S. vs. Japan/restaurant, health care pre-hoc, not measured.</td>
<td>Friendliness, being personal, authenticity, and promptness were more common from the U.S. sample; caring for the customer was more consistent from the Japanese sample. Results were consistent in both restaurant and health care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mattila (1999a) JSR</td>
<td>Applied Hall’s and Hofstede’s power distance and individualism/collectivism in hypotheses, pre-hoc and post-hoc, not measured.</td>
<td>Western vs. Asian consumers/hotel</td>
<td>Individuals of different cultures focus on cues. Respondents from Western cultures were more likely than Asian counterparts to rely on tangible vs. intangible cues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stauss and Mang (1999) JSM</td>
<td>Used Hofstede’s, Hall’s, and Riddle’s to derive cultural distance, pre-hoc justification, not measured.</td>
<td>Japanese, U.S., Germany/airline</td>
<td>Contrary to predictions, customers recalled more critical incidents with respect to 1) intra-cultural encounters than inter-cultural encounters, 2) encounters between partners with small cultural distances vs. encounters between partners from distant cultures, and 3) the percentage of negative critical incidents was higher in intra-cultural encounters than in inter-cultural encounters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brady and Robertson (2001) JBR</td>
<td>No specific cultural dimensions used.</td>
<td>U.S. vs. Ecuador/fast food</td>
<td>Effect of service quality on behavioral intentions such as repurchase intentions, loyalty, and word of mouth is mediated by satisfaction, consistently across cultures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilbert et al. (2004) JSM</td>
<td>No specific cultural dimensions used.</td>
<td>Jamaica, Scotland, U.S., Wales/fast food</td>
<td>Revealed two empirically derived cross-cultural fast-food customer satisfaction dimensions: satisfaction with the personal service and satisfaction with the service setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keillor et al. (2004) JIM</td>
<td>Used Hofstede’s dimensions as pre-hoc justification, not measured.</td>
<td>Australia, China, Germany, India, Morocco, Netherlands, Sweden, U.S./fast food and grocery</td>
<td>Drew on theory from Nordic School of Service Marketing (NSSM), tested direct effects of technical (physical quality) and functional (service quality and servicescape) elements of the service encounter on intentions. Differences found between fast-food and grocery customers in the eight countries. Relative effects of the service elements on intentions also differ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laroche et al. (2004) JIM</td>
<td>Used Hall’s communication context and Hofstede’s dimensions as pre-hoc justification, not measured.</td>
<td>U.S., Canada, Japan/dentist’s office</td>
<td>Japanese respondents were more conservative in their evaluations of superior service (lower ratings) but were less critical (more forgiving) of inferior service (higher ratings) than North U.S. respondents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ueltschy et al. (2004) JBR</td>
<td>No specific cultural dimensions used.</td>
<td>U.S., English vs. French speaking Canadian/dentist’s office</td>
<td>Some measures of satisfaction and service quality are nonequivalent across cultures (due to response bias introduced by translation, interpretation and meaning of particular items). In situations with high expectations and performance, English Canadians perceived lower service quality than U.S. and French–Canadians subjects. In situations where expectations and performance were lower, E–Cs perceived higher quality than U.S. and F–C respondents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voss et al. (2004) JSR</td>
<td>Used Hofstede’s uncertainty avoidance dimension, pre-hoc and post-hoc, not measured.</td>
<td>U.K. and U.S./financial service, retail, restaurant, hotel</td>
<td>U.K. customers were more tolerant of poor service quality than U.S. customers. The use of systematic procedures for capturing customer feedback and complaints had a direct and positive influence on satisfaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brady et al. (2005) JR</td>
<td>Used Hofstede’s dimensions as country selection criteria only, not measured.</td>
<td>Australia, Hong Kong, Morocco, Netherlands, U.S./fast food and grocery (Physicians–U.S. study)</td>
<td>Identified four service evaluation models from the literature involving the relationships amongst sacrifice, service quality, service value, service satisfaction, and behavioral intentions. The “comprehensive” model fit best across countries and service settings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cunningham et al. (2005) SIJ</td>
<td>No specific cultural dimensions used.</td>
<td>U.S., Korea, Taiwan/multiple</td>
<td>Examined how US, Korean and Taiwanese consumers perceived and classified 13 services. Results showed consumers view services primarily based on whether they are personalized or standardized, and whether there is a physical component of the service. Convenience perceptions and evaluations of banking, public transit and university services differed across countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imrie (2005) IMR</td>
<td>Used Confucianism as post-hoc explanation, not measured.</td>
<td>Taiwan vs. U.S./multiple (unspecified)</td>
<td>Generosity, reflecting the Confucian relational ethic, had a filtering role on individuals’ evaluations of service experiences in the Taiwanese context, due to hierarchical nature of Taiwanese society, where service providers adhere to strict roles and appear content to do so.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued on next page)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Treatment of culture</th>
<th>Countries/service context</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluations of service</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veloutsou et al. (2005) EJM</td>
<td>No specific cultural dimensions used.</td>
<td>Greece, Jamaica, U.K., U.S./fast food</td>
<td>There were more similarities than differences in the measurement of satisfaction across cultural contexts suggesting that the development of measures to examine and compare consumer satisfaction across cultures and languages is feasible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reactions to service</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Wulf et al. (2001) JM</td>
<td>Used Hofstede’s dimensions as justification for country selection, not measured.</td>
<td>U.S. the Netherlands, Belgium/food and apparel retail</td>
<td>Different marketing relationship tactics such as direct mail, preferential treatment, interpersonal communication and tangible rewards have a differential impact on consumer perceptions of retailer’s relationship investment, which in turn affect relationship quality and behavioral loyalty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liu et al. (2001) JSR</td>
<td>Applied Hofstede’s dimensions in hypotheses, measured.</td>
<td>U.S., Switzerland, China, Singapore, South Korea/banking</td>
<td>With superior service, individuals from low individualism or high uncertainty avoidance cultures tended to plan to praise more than individuals from high individualism or low uncertainty avoidance cultures. With poor service, individuals from high individualism or low uncertainty avoidance cultures more often said they would switch, give negative word of mouth, or complain than individuals from low individualism or high uncertainty avoidance cultures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liu and McClure (2001) JCM</td>
<td>Used individualism/collectivism, in-group/out-group as pre-hoc justification, not measured.</td>
<td>U.S. vs. Korea/retail and restaurant</td>
<td>When dissatisfied, customers in collectivist culture were less likely to engage in voice behavior, but more likely to engage in private behavior (WOM or exit) than customers in an individualist culture. Those who voice dissatisfaction in individualistic cultures were less likely to exit while those who did not voice dissatisfaction in collectivistic cultures were less likely to exit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patterson and Smith (2001a) IJISM; (2001b) JSM</td>
<td>Used Hofstede’s uncertainty avoidance, individualism/collectivism, femininity/ masculinity as pre-hoc justification, not measured.</td>
<td>U.S. vs. Thailand/medical, hairdressers, auto mechanics, travel agents, and retail financial advisors</td>
<td>While the same set of benefits motivated both U.S. and Thai respondents’ propensity to maintain relationships with a range of service providers, special treatment benefits (reflecting social bonds) were more important for Thai respondents and confidence benefits were more important for U.S. respondents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hui and Au (2001) JBR</td>
<td>Used Hofstede’s long-term orientation as part of pre-hoc justification, not measured.</td>
<td>China vs. Canada/hotel</td>
<td>Compared the effects of three kinds of complaint-handling strategies (voice, compensation, and apology) on respondents’ justice perceptions and post-complaint behaviors. Voice had a stronger effect on Chinese than on Canadian respondents, while compensation had a stronger effect on Canadian respondents than on Chinese respondents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patterson and Smith (2003) JR</td>
<td>Used Hofstede’s individualism/collectivism as pre-hoc justification, not measured.</td>
<td>Australia vs. Thailand/travel agency, medical and hairdressers</td>
<td>Examined 6 switching barriers: search costs; loss of social bonds; setup costs; functional risk; attractiveness of alternatives; and loss of special treatment benefits. These costs explained substantial amounts of variance in propensity to stay and appeared universal across west–east cultures, while variations were found across industries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warden et al. (2003) IJSIM</td>
<td>Used Hofstede’s dimensions as pre-hoc justification, not measured.</td>
<td>Taiwan vs. outside Taiwan/airline</td>
<td>Extended Stauss and Mang (1999) model. Found reduction in inter-cultural failure seriousness can be attributed not to the error itself, but to increased acceptance of the recovery strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mattila and Patterson (2004a) JSR; (2004b) JR</td>
<td>Used Hofstede’s individualism/collectivism and uncertainty avoidance as pre-hoc justification, not measured.</td>
<td>U.S., Malaysia, Thailand/restaurant</td>
<td>Compensation (discount and apology) was more effective in restoring a sense of justice to U.S. respondents than to East Asian (Thai and Malaysian) respondents. Compared to Chinese consumers, Canadian consumers experienced less perceived control in dissatisfying service encounters, blamed themselves less, perceived the provider to have more control over a negative event, and believed the event to be less likely to recur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poon et al. (2004) EJM</td>
<td>Used Hofstede’s long-term vs. short-term orientation as pre-hoc justification, not measured.</td>
<td>Canada vs. China/unspe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
assessed additional aspects beyond the five SERVQUAL dimensions (Lee and Ulgado, 1997; Malhotra et al., 2005). Laroche et al.’s (2005) study was unique in that it examined how customers use information sources to form expectations, as well as the nature of these expectations across cultures.

There are both consistent and inconsistent findings that can be drawn from these studies. One consistent finding is that compared to U.S. consumers, consumers from other cultures/countries tend to have lower overall service quality expectations. Some researchers attribute this to differences in national service environments (Witkowski and Wolfinbarger, 2002) or socioeconomic factors (Malhotra et al., 2005). For example, Witkowski and Wolfinbarger (2002) argue that the lower service expectations found in their sample of German respondents (compared to U.S. respondents) were due to the general unfriendly service environment in Germany (which they call “service desert”) and the tendency of Germans to compartmentalize their public and private selves. Other researchers attribute it to cultural differences, most often using Hofstede’s dimensions. The positive link between individualism and higher levels of service expectations was often found (Donthu and Yoo, 1998; Furrer et al., 2000; Laroche et al., 2005). The argument is that individualists, due to their drive and self-responsibility ethic, will demand that others also be efficient and will, therefore, be more demanding than individuals from more collectivist cultures (Furrer et al., 2000).

When comparing the dimensional structure of SERVQUAL measures across different cultural settings, many studies found structures that were consistent with the original U.S. conceptualization (Donthu and Yoo, 1998; Espinoza, 1999; Furrer et al., 2000). However, when it comes to the relative importance of these dimensions, findings were less consistent. For example, Sultan and Simpson (2000) found no difference in the order of importance of SERVQUAL dimensions for U.S. vs. European airline passengers, with reliability being the most important and tangibles the least important. Witkowski and Wolfinbarger (2002) also found reliability to be the most important for both U.S. and German samples. However, Espinoza (1999) reported that while reliability was equally important in individualist and collectivist cultures (Quebec and Peru), responsiveness was the most important for the Quebecois due to their monochronic time orientation. Lee and Ulgado (1997) found that, in regard to fast-food service, low price and assurance were more important to individualistic U.S. consumers due to their focus on the notion of “time is money”, while reliability and empathy were more important to collectivist Korean consumers who consider eating in a restaurant as more of a social experience. Donthu and Yoo (1998), measuring cultural values at the individual level, found that individuals high on power distance had lower expectations about the responsiveness and reliability of service quality and were more willing to tolerate poor service due to their tolerance for inequities. On the other hand, individuals high on individualism expected more empathy and assurance from the service provider and tended to focus more on meeting their own needs and were thus, less tolerant of poor service.

While the SERVQUAL remains the dominant framework applied in this area of cross-cultural research, some researchers have begun to challenge the SERVQUAL dimensions by both conceptualizing a framework for measuring service quality internationally (e.g., Smith and Reynolds, 2001) and by empirically developing a culture-specific service quality measure suitable in non-Western cultures (Raajpoot, 2004). This resulted in the addition of several dimensions—personalization, formality, and sincerity. Raajpoot’s PAKSERV measure used not only Hofstede’s dimensions, but also the national cultural orientation (Dorfman and Howell, 1988) and Schwartz’s (1992) personal values.

Further, the appropriateness of some unique elements within cultures is harder to explain. For example, Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) report that in many Muslim cultures, smiling can be a sign of sexual interest and therefore women are socialized not to smile at males. Similarly, Rafaeli and Robert (1987) report in Israel, smiling at customers is viewed as a sign of inexperience, suggesting that an American-type service (that is, service with a smile) may be inappropriate in some cultures.

In regards to future research in this area, more within culture, empirically-oriented research (i.e., culturally bound) is needed to

### Table 3 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Treatment of culture</th>
<th>Countries/service context</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wong (2004) JBR</td>
<td>Used Hofstede’s dimensions as pre-hoc justification, not measured.</td>
<td>U.S., Australia, Singapore/restaurant</td>
<td>Compensation improved respondents’ assessments of the service encounter in all three countries but only affected repurchase intentions and word of mouth in U.S. sample, not in Singaporean or Australian samples. An apology improved satisfaction for Singaporean and Australian samples but not for U.S. respondents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patterson et al. (2006)</td>
<td>Used Hofstede’s individualism/collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance to develop hypotheses, measured at individual level.</td>
<td>Australia vs. Thailand/hotel</td>
<td>Customers with a higher collectivist value orientation perceived more interactional justice when there was an organization-initiated recovery. An apology from a service provider with more status had a greater effect on perceptions of distributive justice for customers with a higher power distance value orientation. Customers with a higher uncertainty avoidance orientation perceived higher levels of procedural justice when given cognitive control over the recovery process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Studied both expectations and evaluations.
* Studied both evaluations and reactions.
systematically develop more theory in the area. A few steps may be taken to achieve this. For example, researchers could start by using qualitative research methods to develop a list of expectations focusing on a specific culture. From there, a means-end (or similar) approach to tie these expectations to cultural values and orientations could be used. This then could be expanded to other cultural contexts using a more etic approach (not culture bound) to assess the impact of cultural orientations along with other related factors such as national service environment on service expectations.

3.3. Culture and service evaluations

As mentioned previously, the SERVQUAL framework is conceptualized based on the gap between consumers’ expectations and evaluations of the service performance. A number of studies reviewed in the previous section that used SERVQUAL measures (Lee and Ulgado, 1997; Sultan and Simpson, 2000; Witkowski and Wolfinbarger, 2002) also examined the evaluation of services. Findings from these studies indicate that consumers in different cultures evaluate and perceive service quality differently. For example, across service categories, Mexican respondents rated service quality higher than U.S. respondents (Herbig and Genestre, 1996) possibly due to their lower expectations, while German respondents reported poorer service performance than U.S. respondents (Witkowski and Wolfinbarger, 2002) due to the poor service environment in Germany.

A number of studies also found differences in customers’ evaluations of service under low and high service performance conditions. For example, Voss et al. (2004) found that due to the conservatism and the “stiff upper lip” model in the U.K., U.K. customers were more tolerant of poor service quality than U.S. customers. Laroche et al. (2004) found that Japanese respondents expressed lower ratings of quality perceptions under a superior service condition than North Americans. They argue that this is because Asian cultures are traditional service cultures and in such high-context/collectivist and long-term oriented cultures, trust and commitment are considered necessary for any good customer–provider relationship.

A number of studies also looked at the factors consumers use in evaluating services. Many researchers used emic approaches and went beyond the SERVQUAL framework (e.g., Imrie, 2005; Winsted, 1997, 1999, 2000). They consistently found that individuals in different cultures focus on different factors when evaluating services. Further, some of these factors are culture-specific and not included in the SERVQUAL dimensions. For example, Japanese respondents emphasized “caring for the customer” due to the unique oriental cultural heritage (Winsted, 1997), while Taiwanese respondents, who are heavily influenced by the Confucianism in Chinese culture, stressed the importance of “generosity” (Imrie, 2005). Individuals in different cultures also seem to rely on different cues when evaluating their service experience. Using Hall’s communication context framework, Mattila (1999a) found that respondents from Western cultures (low context) were more likely than their Asian counterparts (high context) to rely on tangible rather than intangible cues from the environment.

Individuals’ evaluations of services are often reflected in their satisfaction ratings of the service experiences. The dominant perspective is that satisfaction is a result of high service quality (Cronin and Taylor, 1992). While Veloutsou et al. (2005) found similarities in the measurement of satisfaction across four culturally diverse samples, Ueltschy et al. (2004) found that some measures of satisfaction and service quality were not equivalent across cultures due to response biases based on translation, interpretation and meaning of particular items across cultures. Brady and Robertson (2001) and Brady et al. (2005) attempted to test the service quality-satisfaction relationship in a multi-country context and found that the relationship does generally hold across cultures, with some differences across countries noted due to differing national and temporal settings.

In regards to future research in this area, the universality of causal relationships as examined by Brady and his colleagues appears to be a useful direction to pursue. If relationships and relationship causality do not hold up across cultures our task of understanding cross-cultural differences and similarities will be much harder. Further, an overall framework to aid in examining this area more carefully would be useful. Perhaps this could begin by fully listing potential behaviors and norms, then relating these to values and cultural dimensions, and suggesting differential effects on satisfaction/dissatisfaction based on theory. Finally, although there is some evidence that individuals evaluate physical surroundings in service settings differently across cultures (e.g., Mattila, 1999a), servicescape research (e.g., Bitner, 1992) has yet to be extended in a cross-cultural context. Thus, experimental research aimed at how individuals in different cultures evaluate different elements of the servicescape would be quite useful.

3.4. Culture and reactions to service

A number of studies reviewed here examine how people across cultures react differently to service failures and service recovery actions taken by the service providers. Findings in this topic are fairly consistent. For example, many studies found that when receiving poor service, consumers from individualistic cultures such as the U.S. are more likely to complain than individuals from collectivist cultures such as China, Singapore and Korea (Liu et al., 2001; Liu and McClure, 2001).

Further, researchers have found that recovery strategies may have different effects on consumers in different cultures. For example, Mattila and Patterson (2004a,b) found that compensation (e.g., discount and apology) was more effective in restoring a sense of justice to American respondents who focus more on equity given their highly independent self view, than to East Asian (Thai and Malaysian) respondents who focus more on the interdependent self and equal treatment than equity. Wong (2004) found that compensation improved their respondents’ assessments of the service encounter in the three countries investigated (U.S., Australia, Singapore), but it only affected repurchase intentions and word of mouth for the U.S. sample. On the other hand, an apology improved satisfaction for the Singaporean and Australian samples but not for the U.S. sample. She argued that Australians and Singaporeans are sensitive to the informational cues that are embedded in the
compensation offered but this information is only incorporated and interpreted within the service delivery contexts independently of the consumption experience. Hui and Au (2001) found that voice (i.e., allowing customers a chance to express dissatisfaction) had a stronger effect on collectivist Chinese respondents who value respect, status and face in their social behaviors, while compensation had a stronger effect on Canadian respondents due to the fact that receiving physical and financial compensation is uncommon in China and Chinese consumers may have much lower expectations because of its underdeveloped service industry. These findings suggest that Northern Americans may be more result-focused and pragmatic in their reactions to service experiences.

Individuals’ reactions to poor service may be a reflection of their attributions of the failure. Poon et al. (2004) found that when compared to Chinese consumers, Canadian consumers experienced a lower level of perceived control in dissatisfying service encounters, blamed themselves less, perceived the provider to have more control over the negative event, and believed the event to be less likely to reoccur due to the considerable difference in the stage of economic development and the likelihood of service failures between Canada and China.

As a reaction to service, consumers may choose to stay with the same service provider and develop a relationship. But why and how customers develop a relationship may differ across cultures. Patterson and Smith (2001a,b, 2003) found that while the same set of benefits motivated both U.S. and Thai respondents’ propensities to maintain relationships with a range of service providers, the importance of the benefits differed for the respondents by country. Special treatment benefits, reflecting social bonds, were more important for Thai respondents, who tend to rate high on uncertainty avoidance and collectivism, while confidence benefits were more important for U.S. respondents, who tend to rate low on uncertainty avoidance and high on individualism. Further, they found that switching costs provided a strong explanation for propensity to stay with a service provider in both cultures, suggesting their universality. However, none of the studies we reviewed examined the possible differences in customer–service provider relationship formation across cultures.

Obviously, there needs to be more cross-cultural research on service failure and recovery, customer complaining behaviors, service relationships and antecedents to and nature of service provider loyalty. There is a surprising lack of research on these important topics. Further, theories revolving around attribution, appraisal and equity may be useful in this work but have not been systematically applied. These topics should be fully enumerated and explored in future cross-cultural studies. Next we address various conceptual issues raised by our review.

4. Conceptual issues: critique and future directions

Cultural research can help validate existing theoretical paradigms, enrich our current theorizing, and may even lead to new theories (Bagozzi, 1994). Although the field of cross-cultural consumer services is relatively new, it has tremendous potential for developing insights into the services marketing literature. In this section, we discuss some overall conceptual issues and some future directions with a focus on “going beyond” Hofstede. Finally, we present a potentially new theoretical perspective in the area—the concept of “cultural service personality”.

4.1. Going beyond Hofstede

Although there are many useful categorizations of culture or cultural dimensions (see examples in Table 2), only a few, other than Hofstede, have been applied in cross-cultural services research. While Hofstede’s extensive framework has been applied and appears to be useful across a number of different areas (cf. Sivakuma and Nakata, 2001), scholars in recent years have raised concerns related to the over-reliance on this framework. Some question the constraints of the population (IBM employees) and time frame (1968–1973) of much of the data collected (Smith et al., 1996). Others argue that since Hofstede’s classification was originally related to work values rather than consumer behavior and other micro-phenomena, it might be less relevant in more culture-specific studies on more micro-phenomena in consumer behavior (Yau et al., 1999).

Thus, we believe it is important to go beyond Hofstede. We address this on several fronts. First, we argue that it is important to consider alternative cultural value dimensions in cross-cultural research. Many of the dimensions in Table 2 have been extensively used elsewhere. For example, the cultural work of Schwartz, Triandis (and Gelfand), and Hall have each been cited hundreds and some even thousands of times, according to Google Scholar. Thus, it is surprising we do not see more of these works in the consumer services area. Moreover, some of the inconclusive or conflicting findings we currently see in the literature may be partly due to the fact that Hofstede’s dimensions may not capture some of the rich differences across cultures and ignore some of the other important differences, such as the degree to which a culture is horizontal or vertical (Triandis and Gelfand, 1998). For example, in a recent issue of the Journal of Consumer Psychology, Shavitt et al. (2006) expand on Triandis and Gelfand’s work, highlighting its relevance to cross-cultural research in moving beyond individualism/collectivism. Other articles in this issue also highlight cultural concepts that go beyond individualism/collectivism in advancing cross-cultural research in consumer psychology (cf. Aaker, 2006; Oyserman, 2006).

Future research should attempt to adopt alternative cultural dimensions, when relevant, to expand our understanding of culture and its impact on service experiences. For example, when examining customer complaint and word-of-mouth behaviors, Schwartz’s (1992, 1994) value dimensions may be relevant and yet have not been applied to how individuals might react to service experiences in different cultures. Further, since almost every service delivery process involves communication between customers and employees, it could be fruitful to use frameworks that focus on communication differences between cultures. For instance, by drawing on the communication dimensions of direct vs. indirect, elaborative vs. succinct, personal vs. contextual, and instrumental vs. affective communication, identified by Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988), researchers could examine the extent and type of communication customers from different cultures expect and desire during service delivery.
Secondly, in “going beyond” or moving forward, we argue that it is important to go beyond cultural value orientations or belief systems such as Hofstede’s work. Recently, in an excellent article, Craig and Douglas (2006) pointed out that culture is no longer a phenomenon defined by or isolated to a particular locale since the world is becoming increasingly de-territorialized and penetrated by elements from other cultures, resulting in cultural contamination, cultural pluralism and hybridization. Indeed, researchers must carefully specify the role of culture and define the appropriate unit of analysis. They also suggest that in order to develop deeper understanding of culture and its various manifestations, it is time to move beyond national culture and incorporate three important components of culture. These include a) abstracts of intangible elements of culture such as values and belief systems (represented by Hofstede or Schwartz’s work), b) the communication links which bind and perpetuate a cultural system (which would be represented by Hall’s (1976) work) and c) material aspects of culture, such as artifacts, symbols and rites (represented by McCracken’s (1986) framework on the cultural meaning of consumer goods). This would also include economic aspects of the culture. We have categorized these cultural components in Table 2, noting that the first two are represented but not the material aspects. We believe that cross-cultural consumer services research could benefit greatly by more fully incorporating the components of culture as suggested by these scholars. Next, based on our understanding of culture, our review of the cross-cultural consumer services literature and the broadened perspective of cultural components, we present a new conceptualization that addresses the role of culture on consumer service experiences.

4.2. Cultural service personality

From our review of the literature on cross-cultural consumer services, we observed a number of consistent findings which underlie the impact of culture on the various stages of consumers’ service experiences. This led us to the conclusion that different cultures may exhibit various “cultural service personalities”, which we define as the overall characteristics, tendencies, or desires related to consumer service experiences within a specific culture. While different researchers in the past have focused on different elements of culture—some focused more on value and belief systems (e.g., Hofstede’s dimensions) while others on communication systems (Hall’s framework), the perspective we propose incorporates all three components of culture as recommended by Craig and Douglas (2006). We believe that by incorporating these different components of culture (value and belief systems, communication systems, and material culture), we can capture the richness of culture and its impact on consumer service experiences. It also expands upon our Fig. 1 in regards to the role of culture in consumer service experiences in a specific cultural context (e.g., Western vs. Eastern perspective).

We suggest that consistent cultural service personality patterns may be a product of the impact of various components of culture on consumer service experiences. This perspective not only provides a brief summary of what we currently know about the literature, it also has the potential to help us gain deeper understanding of the role of culture in consumer service experiences in future research. In Table 4, we outline this framework by presenting two consistent cultural service personalities which emerged from our review—the Western/
Individualistic vs. Eastern/Collectivist. Note that the components of culture we are using are the ones derived from our review. However, there is certainly a need to adopt alternative ones, such as some of the other ones found in Table 2.

Cultural service personality is reflected in the service experience dimensions (e.g., consumer service expectations, and their evaluations and reactions to the service received) and is influenced by the different components of culture. Take consumer satisfaction as one of the characteristics of cultural service personality for an example. A number of studies from our review consistently reported lower satisfaction ratings from Western respondents than their Eastern counterparts especially under low performance situations. This difference can be explained by a number of factors related to cultural components. First, Western consumers are “more difficult to satisfy” due to their higher expectations of service quality as a result of a) their higher individualism (value and belief systems) which leads to higher expectations and demands in terms of efficiency and individual attention, and b) to their generally higher economic development levels (material culture) where service industries or service environments are more established in general and consumers are more accustomed to higher levels of service performance. Second, Western consumers evaluate service differently than their Eastern counterparts. In terms of communication systems, Western consumers, characterized by low communication context, are more likely to focus on tangible/physical elements of the service. On the other hand, Eastern consumers, characterized by a high communication context, are more likely to focus on the intangible elements of service or give a more holistic evaluation of their service experience thus often times resulting in higher satisfaction ratings especially when the service performance level is lower. Thus, this theory offers a view of how culture and service experiences combine to form a view of a country or cultural area. Next we turn to the methodological issues raised in this review.

5. Methodological issues: critique and future directions

In this section, we discuss three methodological issues that evolved from our review and suggest some future research directions. Specifically we focus on a) the emic–etic debate, b) operationalization and measurement of culture, and c) the selection of country and context.

5.1. Emic vs. etic oriented research

How to study cross-cultural services is closely related to the debate over emic vs. etic research approaches. While the emic approach is based on the premise that theorizing is culture-specific and favors within-culture investigation, the etic approach advocates generalization and focuses on issues that are universal and common to all cultures (Berry, 1989). We believe that both approaches contribute to our understanding of service related issues in the global context. They are simply two points of view that can converge to enrich cultural research (Maheswaran and Shavitt, 2000). The critical question is which approach best addresses the issue at hand.

Moreover, Berry’s (1989) five-step systematic process is useful: 1) start with initial research on a question in one’s own culture (emic A), 2) next attempt to use the same concept or instrument to study a behavior in another culture (imposed etic), 3) then move to a discovery strategy in another culture (emic B), 4) then compare emic A and emic B, and 5) when there is no communality, comparison is not possible, but with some communality (derived etic) comparison is possible. Although the literature is moving in this direction, the imposed etic approach is still the dominant approach. However, when studying service expectations and evaluations, frameworks with an emic approach (e.g., studied first in the U.S.) such as SERVQUAL and servicescape research may be developed further by following this direction.

Additionally, it is important in cross-cultural research to “involve the locals”. Collaborative research across countries should utilize local researchers in all steps of the process (Craig and Douglas, 2002; Cavusgil and Das, 1997). Research teams should be drawn from the countries involved in the research to reduce chances of incorrect interpretations and to increase “emic” understanding.

5.2. Operationalization and measurement of culture

The major issue here is how culture or cultural dimensions are assessed. As seen in Table 3 and also from our review, we found trends which are similar to what Nakata and Pokay (2004) found in the global marketing literature. That is, the majority of the studies explicated culture implicitly. That is they loosely or briefly discuss what is meant by the culture construct in the context of the study, while others present a culture construct in more detail, but used it post-hoc to explain unpredicted results or pre-hoc to provide only context and background. In contrast it is important to draw cultural concepts and develop hypotheses based on strong theory and logic.

How culture is operationalized and whether cultural values are measured is another issue of concern. Most often it is treated as synonymous with country or nation, perhaps for expediency; however, it is clear that cultures are not homogenous—but that, in fact, “layers of culture exist” (Hofstede, 1991, p. 10), and such an operationalization often shortchanges the richness of the cultural concept. Observed effects may be due to many effects other than culture, leading to erroneous conclusions (Nakata and Pokay, 2004). Although the nation-as-surrogate assumption has been called into question (Nakata and Pokay, 2004), most researchers tend not to acknowledge the potential problem.

It is important for researchers to measure values and cultural orientations rather than assume differences based on where the data are collected. Very few studies reviewed here actually measured the culture construct. While few studies used cultural constructs in forming hypotheses, even fewer measured the dimensions at the individual level, with a few exceptions (Donthu and Yoo, 1998; Furrer et al., 2000; Laroche et al., 2005; Patterson et al., 2006). In regards to measurement issues, although there are many scales to choose from, there are also a number of issues to tackle. Taras (2006) identified and reviewed 113 instruments that have been used to measure culture.
quantitatively, while Triandis et al. (1995) empirically assessed seven scales that measure allocentrism and idiocentrism (i.e., the individual-level constructs of collectivism and individualism). Finally, Rowney and Taras (2006) identified a number of measurement issues to address, such as response styles, low reliabilities, wording comparability, as we move forward in this area.

5.3. Selection of country and context

A final issue of concern here relates to country selection in cross-cultural service research and the need for a theoretical foundation for the selection of countries (e.g., Cavusgil and Das, 1997; Sivakuma and Nakata, 2001). Often convenience and achieving a large variation on the dimensions of interest are the primary drivers of this issue (Livingstone, 2003). Our review reveals that other than convenience, the rationale for selecting countries was often not provided, and the inconsistent findings, especially in service expectation and evaluation areas, may be due to the strong variations in selection of country and within-country or culture sample. Thus, countries or cultures should be selected on the basis of generalizing and building on theory.

Further, some inconsistent findings may be due to variations of service contexts. Many of the studies reviewed in the service expectation area used a single industry, often in banking or retail contexts. The lack of contextual richness of these studies may reduce the generalizability of the findings. We believe there are many other service contexts that could be used in cross-cultural service research, ranging from services which involve low to high amounts of interaction opportunities and include customer–service provider employee contact (Bowen, 1990). These include services such as hairdressers, telecommunication services, and car repair shops. Further, since some studies found differences due to contexts (Cunningham et al., 2005; Keilor et al., 2004; Winsted, 1999), industry selection is important.

6. Limitations and conclusions

In this article we attempted to review the literature on cross-cultural services marketing research, to highlight and discuss conceptual and methodological issues, and to make recommendations for future research regarding the interplay of culture and service delivery. Although we tried to include as many quality studies as possible to provide a comprehensive overview of the literature, we did not draw from all possible sources, leaving out sources such as books and proceedings, where much additional cross-cultural research resides. We believe, however, that the research reviewed here provides a good overview of the topics.

Our framework in Fig. 1 outlines important areas in regard to culture’s impact on various aspects/stages of individuals’ service experiences, while our Table 4 expands this topic based on specific findings and understanding from our literature review. Although there have been studies looking at the role of culture in each area (i.e., expectation, evaluation, and reaction to service experiences), more is needed to enrich our current understanding of variations, as well as commonalities of consumers’ service experiences across cultures.

Successful services marketing in the global market depends on a solid understanding of the uniqueness of specific cultures in which the firm competes. Future research efforts should focus on discovering these insights through both emic and etic research modes. Further, we recommend using the five-step approach suggested by Berry, as well as Craig and Douglas’s (2006) perspective, utilizing all three components of culture including value/belief systems, communication systems, and material culture. The future of cross-cultural research in services is bright and we encourage others to delve into these topics further. We also hope our “cultural service personality” perspective will serve as a potential new theoretical idea to encourage future research in the area.

References


Note: Articles with an * are the ones included in the review (see also Table 2).


