Exploring Chinese Cultural Influences and Hospitality Marketing Relationships.

by

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Marketing has always been recognised as an economic activity involving the exchange of goods and services. Only in recent years have socio-cultural determinants of marketing influences been identified as based on cultural differences (RM) which goes far beyond the Western concept of interaction. The essence of this interaction is kuan-hsi (personal relationships) which goes far beyond the Western concept of networking as kuan-hsi is entrenched into every aspect of Chinese society, influencing social, political and commercial relations. The nature of RM theory based on a cultural difference-oriented perspective is examined, and the present practice of RM and its specific nature within a Chinese cultural context of hotel management in Taiwan evaluated.

The Taiwanese hotel industry and rise in competition

The devotion of the Taiwanese government to actively planning and promoting tourism began in 1956 and since then the number of hotels has increased continuously. Beginning in the 1960s, the Taiwanese hotel industry, especially the international tourist hotel category, has been invested in, built and developed until the saturation of the market especially in the capital, Taipei city. Throughout the 40 years of development, the numbers of international tourist hotels in Taipei alone has increased from three hotels in 1965 to 27 hotels in 1995 and the number of rooms has also risen from 736 to 10,257 (TNTO, 1996). The competition among the international tourist hotels in Taipei is anticipated to be even more aggressive in the future due to new developments, market structure changes and major business hotel competition as a result of the failure to choose alternative segments (nearly all the existing and planned international tourist class hotels in Taipei are positioned in the business segment). In addition, during the past few years, neither the sales nor the occupancy rate of the international hotels in Taipei have increased in line with national increases in tourism arrivals.

New approaches to marketing

Alternative marketing theories have emerged since the 1960s and specifically in recent service marketing literature new theories have emanated with diverse approaches to redefine the marketing concept. As such, relationship marketing (RM) has received increasing attention, (Kotler and Armstrong, 1996; Palmer, 1996; Grönroos, 1994a; Gilbert, 1996; Gummesson, 1994; Bennett, 1996). The traditional “marketing mix” and its 4Ps, which has dominated the marketing paradigm for decades is challenged by the RM writers as a production-oriented definition of marketing instead of a market-oriented, or customer-oriented approach (Grönroos, 1994b). This approach is an attempt to replace earlier notions of transaction marketing. In transaction marketing the focus is very short term and since there is not much more than the core product or, in some cases, the image of the firm, or its brand, which would keep the customer attached to the seller, customers are difficult to retain. This leads to the price becoming the determining factor as competition rises (Grönroos, 1994a). On the other hand, relationship marketing embraces a function which has a longer term focus where its main philosophy is to build long-term relationships with customers. By maintaining a customer base and applying relationship marketing functions, the firm would create more value for its customers than the core product could provide alone. Within such circumstances, customers would tend to be less sensitive to a competitor’s price attraction, which would generate more profit for the company. Grönroos (1994a) suggests that the emergence of RM represents a paradigm shift in marketing, away from a restricting focus on the clinical functions of the management of the marketing mix toward an emphasis on the development and management of diverse forms of customer relationships.

The long-term financial benefits RM could convey has been the impetus to the development of the theory and the growing awareness it is receiving. Basically, the ground of the economic benefits that RM delivers is based on the following notions:

- Acquiring customers is much more expensive than keeping them.
- The longer the relationship is maintained between the company and customer the

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more profitable the relationship is to the firm (Buttle, 1996).

The above also requires an understanding of the way quality and service depart from traditional orientations and play a part in retention strategies. RM therefore, encompasses a series of organisational and managerial strategies based on researching customers’ personal needs to provide a more personal service or developing external partnerships to ensure third party support of company objectives. As part of this approach to retention, improving service and quality are as important as offering loyalty incentive schemes.

Cultural approaches in marketing practice

In order to understand the contextual background of generating relationships with customers, the cultural variable should not be omitted. The approach to explain marketing and general business in an intercultural environment has been supported by writers such as Usunier (1993), Hall (1990), Hofstede (1984) and Adler (1991) emphasising that cultural differences have an important impact on the results of all aspects in business such as marketing, management, leadership, decision making, etc.

As the derivation of RM theory was from a Western viewpoint it could be argued that the prescriptions for RM in Western norms of behaviour may fail when transplanted to a market which is sustained by a different set of cultural variables. Western-based database marketing and incentive schemes may fail in cultures where buyer-seller relationships have to be understood in the broader context (Palmer, 1996). Meanwhile, “relationship” as interpreted and valued differently by each culture would also influence the process, quality and sustainability of relationship building.

In this study, the Chinese culture, which is heavily “relationally oriented”, will be examined to analyse the practice of RM in a Chinese context. Therefore, some general background of culture, specifically the Chinese culture in a business context, will be presented. The Chinese-culture territory includes countries such as Taiwan, China, Hong Kong, Macau and Singapore. Although these countries may have distinct historical backgrounds, as they all belong to Chinese-dominated societies, similar cultural systems could apply to these so-called “Chinese Commonwealth” countries (Luo, 1997). Researchers in the study of Chinese cultural values find that although change is occurring, Chinese values have formed a clear and consistent system for generations (Yau, 1988; King, 1996).

Importance of recognising cultural differences

Since culture is a difficult to define construct, “culture” could be generalised as: A shared pattern of being, thinking, and behaving; something learned from childhood through socialisation; something deeply rooted in tradition that permeates all aspects of any given society (Xing, 1995).

Within the context of RM, the exchange process between the parties is targeted at a long-term relationship where personal interaction is required. This causes both difficulties and opens up possibilities as it increases the role of human differences, similarities, antipathies, etc. In the terminology of Hofstede (1984), different cultures imply different mental programming, which governs activities, motivation and values. This logic is also advocated by Adler (1991). To study RM related to Chinese culture the focal inclination we are pursuing is to study diverse relationship orientations.

No one who has had experience of Chinese society can fail to note that Chinese people are extremely sensitive to mien-tsu (face) and jen-chin (human obligation) in their interpersonal relationships. Similarly, a social phenomenon called kuan-hsi (personal relationship) cannot go unnoticed. These social-cultural concepts are key to the understanding of Chinese social culture as they are part of the essential “stock knowledge” of Chinese adults in their management of everyday life, including their business behaviour (King, 1991). Therefore, these socio-cultural concepts will be examined as an introduction to the characteristics of “relationship” as the Chinese way of dealing with business relationships.

Kuan-hsi (personal relationship)/networking

Western marketing literature has increasingly seen the management of networks as an important aspect of strategic behaviour and the networking paradigm as a “means of understanding the totality of relationships amongst firms engaged in production, distribution, and the use of goods and services”. In RM, networking is also considered as an important method of relationship building especially in buyer and
seller relationships. Most of the networking literature is relatively recent and has been largely concerned with the Western business context. However, this is somewhat ironic because history suggests that networks, translated as kuan-hsi, have been the dominant form of transactional governance in Chinese society since long before the concept was taken up by Western theorists (Davies et. al., 1995). In business relations, kuan-hsi can be considered as drawing on connections or networks in order to secure personal or business favours. Kuan-hsi has been pervasive in the Chinese business world for the last few centuries and today it binds millions of Chinese firms into a social and business web. As Buttery and Leung. (1998) have indicated, the behaviour may involve the constant process of giving without obtaining a favour in return, as it is based upon building life-long relationships and trust between each party.

Knowing and practising Kuan-hsi is part of the learned behaviour of being Chinese. As a socio-cultural concept, it is deeply embedded in Confucian socio theory and has its own logic which forms and constitutes the socio structure of Chinese society. Although Confucian socio theory has a tendency to mould the Chinese into group-oriented and socially dependent beings, it must be emphatically argued that Confucianism does attach reasonable autonomy to the individual. According to a study done by Ichiro Numazaki (1987, in Kao, 1991), “personal trust” is one of the key mechanisms on which kuan-hsi and partnerships are based. In recruiting people “personal trust” is the major criterion. In other words, this person must be either personally known by the boss or be introduced by a person whom the boss trusts. Analogously, when a firm or enterprise group seeks a partnership there will be no co-operation without intimate kuan-hsi. The co-operative inter-business relationship is primarily based on the personal trust between the two major bosses, if trust exists, the deal is very easy to accomplish (Kao, 1991).

Face (mien-tsu)/(lien)
In understanding Chinese interpersonal behaviour, the most significant factor is “face”. Although this is a human universal behaviour, the Chinese have developed a sensitivity to it and used it as a reference point in behaviour in a much more sophisticated and developed way than in other cultural groups (Redding, 1982). This is a key component in the dynamics of kuan-hsi, as one must have a certain amount of prestige to cultivate and develop a viable network of kuan-hsi connections (Luo, 1997). Face can be further classified into the two dimensions of lien and mien-tsu. Lien is associated with personal behaviour and character whereas mien-tsu is something valuable that can be achieved. The amount of mien-tsu a person has is a function of social status. The Chinese interact with each other to protect, give, add, exchange or even borrow mien-tsu; it enters much more into everyday transactions as a form of social currency (Chen, 1995).

Similar to face, jen-chin (personal obligations) is also a form of social capital that can create leverage during interpersonal exchanges. In the cultivation and development of kuan-hsi, jen-chin plays an important role. Since jen-chin involves social exchange obligations, there is a need for people to keep equity in mind. When people fail to follow the rule of equity in exchange of jen-chin, they lose their face and this is not socially or morally appropriate. Thus, when people construct their kuan-hsi network, they are also weaving a web of jen-chin obligations. While they enjoy the benefits of connections of network, they also take on a reciprocal obligation which must be “repaid” in the future (Luo, 1997). For further explanation, the work of Pang et al. (1998) provides a fuller explanation of the history and culture of Chinese society.

Research methodology
Since the research is interested in the conceptual particularities formed by cultural factors that Chinese hotel practitioners have developed toward the practice of RM and its relation to the Chinese culture, the whole study is therefore framed within the hotel sector of a Chinese-dominated country – Taiwan. Taiwan is a Chinese-dominated society which allows for an interesting sample to test the reality and applicability of RM in the hospitality service sector.

The research set out to study the perceptions of hotel marketing managers with a Chinese background, as well as some expatriate (Western background) managers from “Five Plum Blossoms” category hotels (upper-market) in Taipei. Qualitative data were collected on the “relational” factors in the practice of RM and more specifically, the Chinese culture variables that influence the implementation of RM.

Purposive sampling was chosen due to the need to arrange interviews during the high season of 1997 and the small number of hotels in the sample. Managers were approached for
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Interview in 12 hotels. All had to fulfil the criteria of being sales or marketing managers or general managers with a marketing background. The response rate of the sample approached was 58.3 per cent. From the seven hotels participating, ten experienced managers provided hour-long, in-depth interviews, including seven of Chinese cultural background and three expatriate managers from Ireland, Belgium and Australia. A semi-structured interview was adopted for this research as the study required standard predetermined questions for each respondent. However, the semi-structured interview allows the interviewer to add supplementary questions to probe, or get a deeper insight into, the content and meaning of the answers given. Based on the literature, the research attempted to gain insight into the knowledge and application of RM in the hotel sector and how Chinese culture may affect RM practice in terms of its relational approach and mechanisms. Specifically the questions were developed to provide feedback on each individual’s understanding of the applications and mechanisms of RM based on internal, lateral, supplier and customer relationships; the cultural orientations of Chinese/Western managers and their relational approach to business and also the perceptions of managers to Chinese methods of carrying out their business. Each interview lasted over one hour.

The size of the sample means that the results represent only an exploratory study but these should provide a basis for further research in the area.

Findings
All the managers were able to identify that customer retention and relationship building are allied to the concept of RM. When asked about background knowledge to RM, it seems that the managers have an understanding of what direct marketing, or one-to-one marketing generally encompasses but this is limited to practising, at the tactical level, the use of a customer database to promote food and beverage activities.

In the relationship with buyers, the hotels in Taiwan take a similar approach to that advocated by RM academics. Depending on the segment, repeat visits or the value of the customers, the hotels decide on whom to build a relationship and in what way to build it. As the most profitable customer segment for all the hotels interviewed is the business traveller, the hotels have devoted much effort to retaining this segment of customers, either through building a strong relationship with the intermediaries (such as secretaries of large corporations), or directly with the customers (through loyalty programmes, promotional activities and special gestures). The majority of hotels have a database list which is managed as part of the “Frequent Guest Programmes” to ensure incentives are appropriately calculated. The systems also collect personal details such as preferred room and restaurant, prices paid, length of stay, etc. The schemes are card-based and some of the listed benefits are shown in Table I.

One important prerequisite that constitutes a RM programme is a corporate culture which specifies a relationship framework. This is where service and quality are used in conjunction with loyalty schemes to build satisfaction and relationship loyalty so as to achieve relationship longevity and increased profitability. Six of the seven hotels reported their culture to be relation-oriented. By this they explained the emphasis is on a people-oriented approach which is to build relationships. According to the managers, they believe that customer retention is something natural, which is almost built in to the Chinese culture and need not to be emphasised. This explains the reason why managers have stressed the retention strategy as part of their “relational approach” to customers, but no formalised programme has been implemented. As part of improving the commitment of staff to customers, the Royal Hotel, Shangri La Hotel and Ambassador Hotel have attempted to ensure both work and private life spheres of employees are looked after.

Loyalty programmes have been a widely practised marketing tool in the Taiwanese hotels. Most of the chain hotels have claimed the success of their loyalty programmes mainly on the basis of the reasonably high returning rate of loyalty scheme members. As all the chain hotels interviewed have a loyalty scheme that is initiated by its head office, it has become a norm in the industry rather than a scheme which provides competitive advantage. One of the hotel managers said that the “necessity” of having such a programme is simply because every one else has done the same. Therefore, the high returning rate is only the result of the discount factor. Hence, the loyalty programme in the Taiwanese hotels, although widely practised, needs refinement to serve as an effective long-term relationship building tool.

The Taiwanese hotels do not have formalised internal marketing programmes. This mirrors the hotels’ reluctance in
empowering their employees and also a belief that customer retention is something natural and almost built into the Chinese culture. Therefore, the "smiling" and "act by the book" service meets the hotel's standardised operation procedure (SOP) but may not enhance the employee's ability to satisfy the customers fully. This may be because the responsibility of implementing an internal marketing programme belongs to the human resource department and marketing have little input.

For the Taiwanese hotels, building relationships with the customers is thought of as a natural practice, which the managers perceive as the starting point of business and as a norm rather than a new marketing strategy. However, the evidence of this study indicates there is little integration of service, quality and loyalty schemes into an integrated approach to the creation of RM.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table I</th>
<th>Some benefits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Ambassador Hotel (independent hotel)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Grand Formosa Regent (management contract)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 per cent discount for members</td>
<td>Club awards: Free stays based on points collected or bonus packs with redemption to vouchers to purchase dinner, drink, sauna etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complimentary fruit basket, continental breakfast in the VIP lounge</td>
<td>Complimentary fruit basket, chocolates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free access to happy hour in the VIP lounge twice each week</td>
<td>Priority waiting list for reservations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free access to swimming pool, health and business centre</td>
<td>General manager's weekly cocktail party invitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free late check-out facility to 3 o'clock</td>
<td>Complimentary paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free access to happy hour in the VIP lounge twice each week</td>
<td>Free late check-out facility to 3 o'clock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free access to swimming pool, health and business centre</td>
<td>Direct telephone numbers given for reservations, inquiries, club requests, etc.</td>
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**Relationship marketing in relation to Chinese culture**

The finding that there is evidence of a lateral relationship between the hotel and its competitors, government organisation and airlines indicates that the Taiwanese hotels have made efforts to maintain a beneficial relationship with different government bodies by use of relationship pricing and hospitality. As far as competitors are concerned, the relationship is harmonious but not close. As reported, it is hard to predict when you will need the assistance of your competitors on a small island with limited space and resources, therefore good relationships are important. The closest lateral relationships exist with the airlines. There have been some service partnership deals between the airlines and the hotels, for example a barter programme between Eva airways and the Ambassador hotel that shows the close connections between the industries. Therefore, the hotels are attempting to maintain long-term relationships with all stakeholder groups.

Using Trompenaars' (1997) dimensions (Universalism versus Particularism; Individualism versus Collectivism; Neutral versus Emotional; Specific versus Diffuse and Achievement versus Ascription), of how human beings relate to other people, the following offers an exploratory examination of the business value orientation of the Chinese and the Western managers interviewed.

**Universalism versus Particularism (rules versus relationships)**

The overall findings showed that most of the managers prefer to follow a universalist approach to contracting, which is to conform to rules rather than to adopt a particularist stance. However, 42 per cent of the Chinese managers and, interestingly, one expatriate manager have identified special conditions in contracting with Chinese business partners. They pointed out that in dealing with Chinese business partners, a request for a legal contract is sometimes deemed to be evidence of bad faith and inappropriate as it carries no sense of commitment. It is the relationship from which all the obligations derive, not the piece of paper. The consensus of the expatriate managers was that they preferred a professional and "down to earth" business attitude while interacting with customers. This shows the universalist value of the Western managers which contrasts with the Chinese particularist approach of personal meandering before getting down to business.

The sample size is small but the findings support Ambler's (1995) observation that Chinese and Western managers approach new relationships from opposite ends. For Westerners, everything starts with a contract that they alter to fit different circumstances, whereas the Chinese depend on the long-term, valuable relationship and let the details be worked out, as long as the
relationship remains stable and beneficial for both parties.

When asked about the manager’s contact with their customers during the sales/marketing activity, all three expatriate managers preferred a professional “down to earth” business attitude. Moreover, the four managers who would approach customers first with personal meandering include both the independent and chain hotel managers. They emphasised that this approach is only applicable when contracting with the local Chinese customers, including their corporate clients, travel agencies, tour operators, suppliers, etc.

**Collectivism versus Individualism (group versus individual)**

Personal characteristics and achievements are how individualists define themselves, whereas in a collectivist society, people are group oriented and define themselves as members of communities with concern for the general welfare of the group (Adler, 1991). In a group-oriented society, the harmony, unity and loyalty to the group is emphasised. Nevertheless, individualists praise the achievements of a single individual.

In both questions to identify the collectivist or individualist tendency of the managers, the result showed that most Chinese and Western managers are collectivists representing the group orientation of these managers. This result has highlighted the literature suggesting that in a collectivist organisation such as most Chinese hotels belong to, the management needs to motivate the whole group of employees, not specific individuals as it may result in disharmony among the personnel.

In sum, there was no obvious difference among the Chinese and Western values as the majority of the managers are collectivists.

Of the total sample of managers, 80 per cent prefer to give positive regard to the employees as a group to motivate their employees, which indicates a collectivist value. On the other hand, 20 per cent of managers use both a collectivist and individualist approach. Replies to questions on whether managers would avoid showing favouritism and extol the whole group, or seek high performers in motivating employees, showed that 80 per cent of the managers would treat the whole group equally even “star” personnel.

On the other hand, the general manager of the Ambassador hotel stated: “There will be no improvements, if employees see no difference after devoting their efforts”.

**Neutral versus Emotional (range of feelings expressed)**

In the approach to establishing relationships with people, reason and emotion both play an important role. It is seen in some cultures that business is a human affair and expressing a whole gamut of emotions is considered appropriate. However, in a society where reason is deemed to be more adequate, interaction with business partners is neutral and objective. In this case the degree of visible “emotion” is what differs among cultures and the question of whether emotion should be exhibited in business relations is raised.

According to the research carried out by Trompenaars (1997), cultures such as the American tend to exhibit emotions, yet separate them from rational decision making. Conversely, Italians would exhibit emotions and not separate them from objective decisions. In contrast, another culture such as the Dutch have a tendency of not showing their emotions and separate rational issues. The results of this study demonstrated that both Chinese and Western managers are neutral in their contacts during their business encounters. In particular, the expatriate managers have shown a higher degree of neutral value by reporting they favour avoidance of physical contact and strong gestures during business interaction. This indicates the managers understand certain aspects of the culture and have overcome the problems found by Huyton and Sutton (1996) or Mwaura et al. (1998), where Western managers are seen as emotional, volatile and demanding, but with a high degree of skill and the ability to listen; and need to restrain themselves and indicate co-operation and humbleness rather than be too open and direct.

**Diffuse versus Specific**

When involved in a business relationship, a specific relationship is prescribed by a contract and a diffuse relationship by real personal contact. These two differences indicate how far a person would like to get involved in a business relationship. In some cultures, people are only willing to engage with others in specific areas of life and single levels of personality. On the other hand, diffuse cultures would devote multiple areas of life and at several levels of personality at the same time to a relationship.

The question regarding the manager’s preference for a separate business agenda and private issues or the reverse has not revealed an obvious difference between the Chinese and Western managers. However, the question of giving precise or general
instructions to employees has demonstrated that the Western managers are more specific as precise and detailed instructions are given to their employees.

Achievement versus Ascription
Achievement implies that a person is judged by his/her achievements on record, but ascription denotes the status procured by an individual’s birth, kinship, sex, etc. In constituting a relationship with business partners from ascriptive cultures such as the Japanese, respect is paid with specific attention to the senior members of the company and care is taken over who negotiates.

During the interview process, the emphasis by managers on the way they see Chinese business partners, customers or employees confirmed that the business relationship in a Chinese society commences with building a “relationship”. Therefore, the findings have confirmed that while Western influenced RM is not fully adopted, the Chinese place a great emphasis on the nature and quality of “relationship” in the business context.

In the attempt to distinguish the value orientations of Chinese and Western managers, the difference that existed was not obvious. In some respects, the Western managers are more rational and non-relational and the Chinese managers have shown a more emotional and relational tendency. However, the difference is vague. This result is not surprising if the rapid industrialisation of Taiwan is taken into account and the vast business information emerging from the Western countries. Moreover, the Chinese managers may have shown a more Westernised value system partly because they are working in hotels serving international markets. This may be a slow process as Kao et al. (1995) have argued. Confucianism is essentially a system of substantive ethics which mitigates against individual economic acts on the basis of rational calculation.

Differences in marketing strategies to Chinese and Western customers
The following are some reports from the managers of the differences in Chinese and Western customers and their different marketing strategies:
• During a business meeting, Chinese culture emphasises the degree of familiarity others have with you rather than focusing on the product during the initial contact as it is believed if the relationship is stable and trustworthy, the product quality can be further discussed and arranged. This can be contrasted to the Western approach where once the purchase has been successful, the relationship will follow.
• Chinese customers are said to be more price sensitive than Western customers by the managers. The price concerns the Chinese buyers more than the quality of the product, whereas the Western consumers contemplate quality of products more and then evaluate it against the cost before purchasing. Therefore, to market to Chinese clients, the prices, the brand name and the prestigious status are the first concern. However, product features such as room size, security, proximity to shops, location, etc. will be the priority when marketing to Western customers.
• In the process of relationship building with customers the Chinese managers have had to adapt to different customers’ expectations. They show a certain business flexibility in their approaches that may be different to that found in studies such as Mwaura et al. (1998).
• Chinese managers would more often use a third party who has appropriate connections or social status to reconcile business problems or acquire business advantages during business negotiations within the Chinese community.
• The basic approach of most Chinese managers in their marketing strategy is to establish kuan-hsi (relationship/networking) followed by business dealing, while the Western manager’s technique would try to establish a closer relationship after business dealing in order to get more business in the future.

Conclusion
From the above findings, the emphasis of Chinese managers on Chinese personal relationships, including the use of kuan-hsi, mien-tsu, jen-chin, etc. when interacting with their business encounters is prevalent. This is also confirmed by the three Western managers interviewed about their experience and observation in dealing with Chinese colleagues, business partners and customers. This finding correlates with the literature that kuan-hsi, jen-chin and face (mien-tsu) are the dominating characteristics in Chinese business relationships. It is the general consensus that once a good kuan-hsi has been established, a number of benefits will accrue.
This finding allows for an understanding of how Chinese and Western business relationships can be developed by the use of cultural understanding as it offers practical guidelines to all parties. As such, Figure 1 is offered as a means of illustrating the influence of such relationships on the business world.

However, there are some negative aspects of kuan-hsi building from the managers’ perspectives that are not mentioned in the literature. It is possible to argue from the findings of this study that if the kuan-hsi established is not of good “quality”, based on sincerity, trust, etc., the intimate relationship may be manipulated as a means to request more service or value (as in the case of customers) than is appropriate. This may decrease the benefits of such relationship building for the hotels in the long run.

The managers also identified the importance of jen-chin and mien-tsu in building relationships with the various parties. Although doing favours is of less importance, in the building of kuan-hsi, it can be a very effective tool to initiate or enhance a relationship if required. If one can build mien-tsu for their encounters, it would be highly valued and appreciated. At the same time, the hotel managers would be able to tap into the customer’s kuan-hsi and social resources if they consistently provide opportunities for their customers to “gain face”, e.g. the customers may repay them by introducing them to other potential accounts.

Finally, this exploratory study has indicated the importance of understanding the cultural background of the customers marketed to. Hence, any study of the practice of RM needs to be informed of the cultural and personal relationships of those involved in the overall business relationships in order to comprehend fully the dynamics which may impact on RM delivery.

References and further reading


