RETAIL'S SOCIAL SIDE: HOW CONVENTIONAL AND UNCONVENTIONAL EMPLOYEE APPEARANCE INFLUENCE CUSTOMERS FROM DIFFERENT CULTURES?

Halimah Ali Alkhairi

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Department of Marketing

AUT Business School, Auckland University of Technology

Abstract

With people dining out more than ever, selecting a restaurant from a high number of possibilities is now influenced by an increasing number of factors. The appearance of the employees in a restaurant is one of these influential factors, and is considered key in the retail environment. For example, the wearing of uniforms or a certain standard of dress. As there is little academic research in this area, this thesis investigates the influence of employee appearance (in this case, conventional vs. unconventional) on customers' psychological comfort, behavioural intentions and anticipated enjoyment at a high-end restaurant.

This thesis also aims to explore the potential moderating effect of culture in this scenario, with ethnicity serving as a proxy. As New Zealand is a multicultural society, this research will focus on three ethnicities, New Zealand European, Chinese and Middle Eastern. This research includes a factorial one 2 (employee appearance: conventional vs. unconventional) X 3 (cultures/ethnicities) between-subjects experimental design. The results showed that customers perceived conventional employee appearance as being comfortable across the cultural groups, while an unconventional appearance was perceived differently. Specifically, New Zealand Europeans and Chinese perceived it to be comfortable which is opposite to Middle Eastern who perceived it to be less comfortable. This thesis contributes to the literature by expanding the knowledge of the influence of unconventional versus conventional appearance of employees from the perspective of customer culture. It also contributes to the signalling theory and the stimulus-organism-response paradigm (S-O-R) by adding a cultural element and providing valuable insights via a conceptual framework of the influence employee appearance has on customer comfort, behavioural intentions and anticipated enjoyment in the retail sector, specifically here, in a high-end restaurant

environment. In other words, how the conventional or unconventional appearance of employees may attract or deter customers of varied cultures.

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Attestation of authorship

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning"

Halimah Alkhairi

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For the readers of my thesis, particularly for researchers, there is no success that is achieved without obstacles, it is actually the challenges that make it possible to recognize and acknowledge the successes. One must be positive and say: I can do it and I will do it. Lastly, it is important to remember that the experience the researcher gains in the process will help him or her develop in the future.

Ethics Approval

Ethics approval was granted on the 21st November 2018 by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) until the 19th November 2021 (see Appendix A). The ethics application number is 18/377.

1 Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Employee appearance is a pivotal element of a retail environment, and refers here to an employee's external presentation, their dress, tattoos and hairstyle (Swami & Barrett, 2011; Yan, Yurchisin & Watchravesringkan, 2011). In a high end-restaurant, employees typically wear "generic male" uniform (Lapointe, 1992). It is probably unusual to find employee wearing different clothes or casual clothes at upscale restaurants. Tattoos and unusual hairstyle or hair colour can be described as unconventional appearance although they have become witnessed in some cultures (Karl, Peluchette & Hall, 2016). These unconventional appearances even though at times controversial such as the story when a tattooed woman was dismissed a while ago from Air New Zealand (Ankirskiy, 2014), it has also become more common in the work environment, particularly among young people (Dean, 2010). Yet, only one study has investigated this area. This study investigated the beliefs of employees, as they relate to the way an employee's unconventional appearance may influence customer perception (see Karl et al., 2016).

Drawing upon signalling theory and the stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) paradigm, the present thesis extends Karl et al.'s (2016) study by investigating the influence of conventional and unconventional employee appearance on customers' psychological comfort. In turn, on their behavioural intentions and the anticipated enjoyment. Employees who are front-of-house, such as a waitresses are at times committed to a particular style and appearance, set by managers, and other times are not (Lapointe, 1992; Timming, Nickson, Re & Perrett, 2017). It is therefore important to understand the impact of these business decisions on the patrons of a restaurant, as managers want customers to stay in their environments longer and spend more money. Hence, this thesis focuses on two aspects of

employee appearance (i.e. unconventional: hairstyle and colour and tattoos vs, conventional: non-hairstyle and colour and tattoos).

The retail environment holds many elements that the customer notices and uses to make judgements about or evaluate the store. This evaluation of the retail experience attempts to discover whether it is the store overall or certain aspects of the store that have an impact on customers (Söderlund, 2011). In addition to this, the evaluation of a retail experience differs from one culture to another (Lee, Hwang & Bennett, 2015). The main difference between cultures could be studied in terms of the cultural dimensions of individualism and collectivism. In this thesis, Chinese and Middle Eastern cultures represent the collectivist dimension and the New Zealand Europeans culture represents the individualist dimension (Hofstede & Bond, 1988; Jose & Schurer, 2010; Ralston et al., 2012; Watkins & Liu, 1996). Importantly, looking at the cultures from the lens at both of these dimensions is fruitful as there are differences among the collectivist and individualist cultures themselves (Tassell, Flett & Gavala, 2010). Also, the behaviour along with the perception of the customers may also differ from one culture to another, as previously mentioned.

1.2 Research problem

Perhaps as a result of today's busy lifestyle, dining out has increased and people now have more choices in dining experience (Edwards, 2013). While frequency of dining out may vary (e.g. daily, weekly, and monthly), dining out is now a significant activity in the New Zealand lifestyle. According to Statistics New Zealand (2017c), 25 percent of New Zealanders spend relatively more on restaurants and takeaway than grocery products. The majority of New Zealanders who repeat the experience of dining out are young people or people with small children (Sriwongrat, 2008).

As mentioned, New Zealand is a multi-cultural country, in fact, it is considered to be one of the most multi-cultural countries in the world with over 220 different ethnic groups residing in the country and this diversity is predicted to increase in the following years (Statistics New Zealand, 2017b; Sriwongrat, 2008). According to Statistics New Zealand (2017a), in 2013, there were more than three million New Zealand European, 0.20 million Chinese and 0.05 million Middle Eastern/Latin American/African people living in New Zealand. As mentioned, these numbers are projected to increase (Statistics New Zealand, 2017). A good understanding of the cultural aspects that are pertinent to their business will equip restaurateurs with information about how to attract customers and develop repeat business to improve their profitability.

Although tattooing was unaccepted a long time ago in New Zealand, it has become more prevalent, along with the crazy hairstyles, among young and females New Zealanders as a part of following the fashion (Bell, 2014; Lawrence, 2009). It might be accepted in establishments such as fine dining.

People select a restaurant based on the foods and then the atmosphere (Hyun & Kang, 2014); many researchers support that the appearance of the employees represents a pivotal element of the restaurant (e.g. Barber, Goodman & Goh, 2011; Liu & Jang, 2009). The reason behind this is that people often associate certain factors with the different types of restaurants (Hanks, Line & Kim, 2017). For example, people associate upscale restaurants with higher prices, high food quality and employees wearing uniforms (Sriwongrat, 2008). In contrast, non-franchise takeaway restaurants can be associated with lower prices and employees can be found wearing casual clothes such as jeans (Clemes, Gan & Sriwongrat, 2013; Tsaur, Luoh & Syue, 2015). This research explores customers' perceptions from three cultural backgrounds within New Zealand (i.e. New Zealand European, Chinese and Middle Eastern). These three cultures were selected to align with the research teams' ethnic groups

(the two supervisors and the researcher); meaning a more in-depth understanding of each culture could be brought to the research design. In this way, this research seeks to understand the differences and similarities between these three cultures in terms of customer dining experience.

1.3 Research rationale

Dining out is much more than simply food consumption and many factors are involved in the experience, one being the customer's interaction with others (Akova, Cifci, Atsız & Gezeroglu, 2016; Edwards, 2013). The employees' characteristics in particular can be pivotal and managers use these to compete in various business environments including food service (Nickson, Warhouse & Dutton, 2005; Sharma, 2001; Tsaur et al., 2015). For example, Nickson et al. (2005) found that a majority of sample considered the appearance of the employees as central to leading a business towards success, while about 40 percent saw it as important. Sharma (2001) classified employee characteristics as one of the components that contribute to persuading the customers and thus generate positive consequences. The appearance of employees is usually the most obvious and visible factor that customers notice as they enter an establishment (Ruggs, 2013).

In signalling theory, customers usually construct their perceptions based on the physical evidence of the restaurant, and these perceptions differ from one restaurant to another (Quacha, Jebarajakirthyb & Thaichonb, 2017). For example, people are likely to consider the nuances of the physical environment of an upscale restaurant as this type of restaurant has to consider the aesthetic qualities from the viewpoint of their customers (Ryu & Jang, 2008). For example, the appearance of staff members can signal a particular image or price to the customer such as positive perceptions (Quacha et al. (2017). In contrast, in fast food restaurants for example, these factors may be omitted (Ryu & Jang, 2008).

Employee appearance including ethnicity, attire, tattoos, and hairstyle are considered within employee characteristics (Karl et al., 2016). Appearance is the key focus of this thesis; in particular, body art (e.g. tattoos) is an element of the employee's appearance that could have a significant influence on the customers' dining experience. Some customers may view employees who have visible tattoos, as less than satisfactory, and even if the service provided is of high quality and they would not recommend the establishment to others (Dean, 2011; Karl et al., 2016). However, the perspective of the customer toward the many different types of employee appearance might vary from one culture to another, in terms of acceptance or rejection (Karl et al., 2016).

Based on a review of the literature, there is a paucity in terms of investigating the influence of employee appearance (e.g. conventional versus unconventional) on the comfort, behavioural intention and anticipated enjoyment of the customers. Notably, only one study (i.e., Karl et al., 2016) has investigated how unconventional employee appearance may influence customer perceptions of service quality. The authors examined the differences between Mexico and Turkey from the perspective of the employee within these two countries rather than from the perspective of the customer. Therefore, this thesis extends these findings by examining the cultural differences and similarities within New Zealand in which culture is posited as a moderator. The focus will be on the high-end restaurant context and in particular from the customer's perspective.

Employee diversity presents both positive and negative consequences. For instance, Quacha et al. (2017) found that customers prefer to be served by employees who have a similar or the same appearance, ethnicity, or cultural background as themselves. This can produce several advantages such as ease in terms of communication, reduced dissatisfaction and higher sales (Kim & Kim, 2012; Quacha et al., 2017).

On the other hand, negative consequences might be a result of a difference in ethnicity between customer and employee, for example, difficulty in communicating as well as potential racism (Leonard, Levine, & Joshi, 2004; Rosenbaum & Montoya, 2007). In addition, interacting with a stranger who does not belong to the same ethnic group can be uncomfortable for some (Cook, Calcagno, Arrow & Malle, 2012). Indeed, the differences in ethnicity in terms of the degree of privilege (high or low) are one a cause of discomfort (Cook et al., 2012). For example, in terms of the interaction among people because they consider it as a kind of bias (Cook et al., 2012).

Past researchers have agreed that it is crucial to have an understanding of the influences of the social environment (i.e. the role the employee plays) (Sharma, 2001). Understanding the influence of the appearance of the employees, and the effect it has on the customer's comfort, is also paramount to the retail sector as it affects their anticipated enjoyment and behavioural intentions.

1.4   Research questions

The following questions will be investigated:

RQ1: What is the influence of an employee's appearance (conventional vs. unconventional) on customers' level of psychological comfort?

RQ2: What is the influence of customers' level of psychological comfort on their anticipated enjoyment and their behavioural intentions?

RQ3: To what extent is the strength of the relationship between conventional vs. unconventional employee appearance and customer comfort moderated by culture?

1.5   Significance of the study

This study seeks to design and test a baseline model: retail environment factors such as service employee appearance are modelled as antecedents to consumers' level of psychological comfort which, in turn, affects behavioural outcomes (i.e. behavioural intentions and anticipated enjoyment). Specifically, the physical appearance of an employee (independent variables) will be mediated by customer comfort. This relationship is then hypothesized to be moderated by cultural differences. In this case, ethnicity is considered a proxy for culture. An experiment was conducted to obtain answers to the research questions through the use of images of an employee with a conventional or an unconventional appearance (the visual stimuli). Through conducting this experiment, the relationship between employee appearance (independent variable) and customer behavioural outcomes (dependent variable) was explored.

A common framework that has been used by previous researchers (Ng, 2003), will be used also to present this thesis, namely, the S-O-R paradigm. This thesis contributes to this paradigm by adding a cultural element. It examines the psychological needs of customers in the context of employee appearance (S) influencing customers comfort (O) which in turn influences the customers' behavioural intentions and anticipated enjoyment (R). This thesis will be discussed and presented through use of the signalling theory (see Spence, 1973, 2002) and from the perspective of individualism-collectivism which was presented by Hofstede to understand the differences and similarities among the used cultures researched in this thesis (see Hofstede, 1984).

This thesis aims to contribute to the retail field, in particular, the hospitality industry, by providing valuable information for restaurateurs, helping them to see what may attract or dissuade customers from different cultures. Also, understanding how the appearance of employees affects customers can help restaurateurs improve what they offer, and thereby increase revenues and enhance their reputation. This thesis will also help restaurateurs in

terms of marketing design, planning and implementation. For example, a company or restaurant management may implement policies that include rules regarding employee hairstyles and visible tattoos.

1.6 Thesis's overview

A pre-testing phase was conducted to assist with answering the questions of this thesis. Chapter 2 presents a review of previous studies related to the influence of employee appearance on the customer comfort. In turn, the influence on their behavioural intention and their anticipated enjoyment of the customer. The third chapter describes the method used in this thesis which is an experimental design in which employee appearance is independent variable, behavioural intentions and anticipated enjoyment are dependent variable, culture is the moderator and psychological comfort is the mediator. It is followed by a chapter presenting the results and discussion. Chapter five sets out the conclusions drawn from the study.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter provides a brief description of the rationale behind this thesis and begins to outline the notion of the impact employee appearance might have on the behaviour of customers in high-end restaurant contexts. The research problem is given and is linked to the real world context which this knowledge may be applied to. The following chapter provides background knowledge about this topic through the review of relevant past studies.

2   Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1   Introduction

The influence of employee appearance on customer behaviour will be reviewed in-depth first, looking at how tattoos and hairstyle and have an impact on customer psychological comfort. The review will then focus on the effect of the comfort of customers on their behavioural intentions and anticipated enjoyment. This chapter will also outline gaps in past research along with proposing hypotheses.

2.2   The servicescape

Researchers define the restaurant environment as the physical area managed by restauranteurs (Hyun & Kang, 2014). Restaurants have been classified into five types: business dining, moderate scale, midscale, quick-service and upscale restaurants and each category has different characteristics (Bujisic, Hutchinson & Parsa, 2014). The servicescape of a retail establishment, that is, all the physical characteristics of an environment in which a service process takes place, is a key element of the restaurant experience that customers use to evaluate the restaurant in terms of such things as service quality (Ha & Jang, 2012; Ryu, Lee, & Kim, 2012). Customers use the servicescape as a signal to assign characterizations to the place of service (Bitner, 1992). The S-O-R paradigm which has been used by researchers (Ng, 2003; Kotler, 1973, 1974) (see Figure 1), to refer to the stimuli (S) and in this case, the environment involves many variables, one of which is employee appearance, that can be used to influence the customer. The O stands for organism (O) which represents the customer and their emotional responses such as their perceived level of comfort. The final R is the behavioural response (R) of the customer which refers to the reaction or behaviours, based on the previous factors, such as behavioural intentions and anticipated enjoyment.

Employee appearance is placed under the "tangible" dimension of the SERVQUAL model, a framework used to measure customer perceptions related to quality in the service industry (see Chow et al., 2007). It has also been used within another measurement framework researchers use to investigate customer behaviour in the restaurant environment, DINESCAPE (e.g., Ryu & Han, 2011). Past research considered employee's appearance as a social factor which has an influence on the customers (Ha & Jang, 2012). Signalling theory suggests that customers use the appearance as a signal to construct their perceptions particularly if they do not have enough information about the employee (Quacha et al., 2017).

As customers usually seek to find an environment that helps them to feel comfortable, they tend to select restaurants that enhance this psychological need (Kivela et al., 2000; Sriwongrat, 2008). The comfortable environment generates positive outcomes such as reducing risk and obtaining trust (Ainsworth & Foster, 2017). Also, it leads to increase customer comfort and thus leads to a positive evaluation of quality (Lloyd & Luk, 2011).

The lens of signalling theory along with the S-O-R framework (see Figure 2.1) will be used to find answers to the questions this thesis has set forth. How does employee appearance (unconventional vs. conventional) influence the comfort level of customers and is this relationship moderated by culture? The framework will also investigate how the comfort of customers may affect their behaviours (behavioural intention and anticipated enjoyment).

2.3 Employee's appearance

Employee appearance is often used to refer to external attire such as apparel, and the style of their clothing (Brocato, Voorhees & Baker, 2012; Yan et al., 2011). However, there are a number of ways to describe an individual's appearance, for example, the appearance of a person can involve their facial expressions and body type (i.e., slim vs. large) (Huneke, Benoit, Shams & Gustafsson, 2015). Additionally, certain phenomena relate to appearance

can elicit reactions from customers that range between appropriateness and inappropriateness such as, body art (e.g., a tattoo), piercings, as well as unnatural hair colour (e.g., pink & green) and clothing style (e.g., punk style). This thesis focuses on two elements of employee appearance, tattoos and hairstyle/colour.

Managers/employers hire particular employees to achieve their goals, and this includes the influence the employee might have on the customers (Karl et al., 2016). For example, Tsaur and his colleagues (2015) found that restaurateurs tend to make sure employees for each area of the restaurant adopt a specific style, such as in those who work in the first-line of service area. Restaurateurs also tend to employ young employees those who smile upon greeting customers and those who exhibit other positive characteristics. This is based on the idea that employees influence customers through various means, such as appearance and their facial expression, for example, smiling (Kim & Kim, 2012). As a result, the appearance of employees has become an important factor that is thought to influence customers.

Signalling theory suggests that certain qualities which are not consciously noticeable can be conveyed by other, noticeable qualities such as ethnicity which assists in reducing difficulties in interpersonal interactions (Quacha et al., 2017). Signalling theory was developed by Spence (1973, 2002) and has been used increasingly in management literature (Chang, Travaglione & O'Neill, 2015). For example, an employee's physical appearance can be used as a cue for customers to evaluate the restaurant (Karl, Hall, & Peluchette, 2013; Tsaur et al., 2015). An implicit cue such as this that customers use to evaluate the service quality and so forth before purchasing may result in positive or negative perceptions (Dean, 2010; Ruggs, 2013). In regards to the conceptual model below (Figure 2.1), conventional appearance of the employee may signal to customers the presence of comfort and vice versa based on the customer's cultural background.

Stimulus	Organism	Response
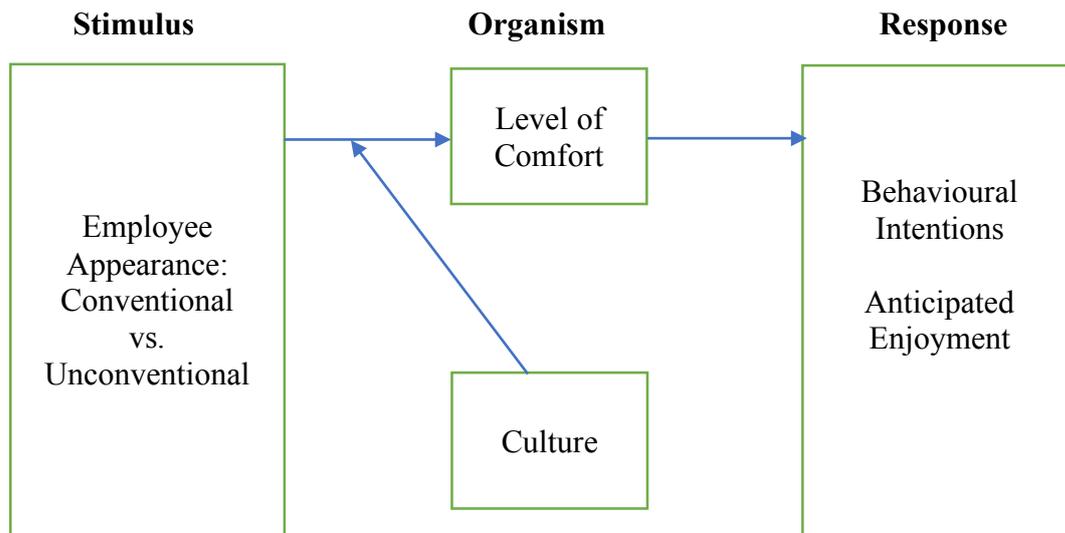
Figure 2.1 A conceptual framework of the influence of employee's appearance

In the following section, the influence of employee appearance (i.e., hairstyle/colour, and tattooing) on the customer's comfort will be reviewed in depth.

2.4 The influence of employee's tattoo and hairstyle and colour on customers comfort

Past researchers have investigated tattoos in a large number of studies (e.g. Swami & Barrett, 2011). They have investigated it from the perspective of various angles, in terms of acceptability and unacceptability, and appropriateness and inappropriateness (Ruggs, 2013; Timming et al., 2017). For example, some studies have discussed the tattooed employees in white and blue-collar occupations. The occupation itself may be a reason for customers to reject employees who have visible tattoos, by a customer such as in dentistry, as, from the patient's point of view, it could bring hygiene problems. Occupations related to finance, such as accountancy, may not be suitable for employees with visible tattoos, as the confidence others have in them may be decreased. In contrast, this perspective could be completely different if that employee were in an auto-mechanical occupation or bartending (Dean, 2010; Efthymiou, 2018; Ruggs, 2013).

Historically, tattooing is an ancient cultural practice that has existed in many cultures including the Middle East, New Zealand and China (Levy, Sewell & Goldstein, 1979). For example, tattooing was practiced in the European history and it was brought in New Zealand by people from South America who sailed to New Zealand (Levy et al., 1979; Marczak, 2007). An example of the ancient era of Middle Eastern such as Egypt, tattoos was practiced by female singers as well as it was found on mummies (Lande, Bahroo & Soumoff, 2013; Levy et al., 1979). While in the early of China, tattooing was used as a punishment additionally, it was used by Yue people who decorated themselves by tattoos as protection from sea monsters (Marczak, 2007; Reed, 2000).

In terms of the hair, researchers have investigated the various aspects of hair such as hair colour, style and length and its effects on the individual perceptions of customers (Swami, Furnham & Joshi, 2008). Hair styling in the past was regulated by employers and if the employee refused to comply with the regulations, s/he was usually suspended or dismissed from the workplace. Young New Zealander female tend to follow the fashion and consequently the hairdressing becomes as a feminine occupation (Brookes & Smith, 2009). This is due to the large percentage of females who work as a hairdresser (Brookes & Smith, 2009). Non-traditional hairstyles and unnatural hair colour have also become more widespread in China with the influence of Western culture (Odinye & Odinye, 2012).

However, from the perspective of the customer, their point of view of employee appearance may vary from one culture to another. This difference in perspectives could even be within collectivist and individualist cultures as there are differences between individualist cultures as well as between collectivist ones (Tassell, Flett & Gavala, 2010). For instance, in terms of whether the customer accepts or rejects the employee at a particular business based on the appearance of that employee (Karl et al., 2016). Moreover, perspectives of different generations also differ. As more and more young adults have body art and unnatural hair

colour themselves, there is a greater likelihood of acceptance of this kind of appearance in the workplace by younger people (Karl et al., 2016; Odinye & Odinye, 2012; Ruggs, 2013). With regard to the appropriateness of tattoos, these might be more accepted by people who have tattoos themselves than by those who do not have them (Dean, 2010). However, there is little research to support this claim.

Body modification (tattooing) and non-traditional hairstyle/hair colour have become popular worldwide, especially among the younger generation and among women more than men (Kluger, Seité & Taieb, 2019; Odinye & Odinye, 2012). For example, tattooing such as moko tattoo has spread throughout and been socially accepted in New Zealand as it is part of Māori culture and approximately 19 percent of New Zealanders have been tattooed (Bell, 2014; Lawrence, 2009). Also, there is many shops specialist in tattooing in New Zealand (Butler, 2006). In China, since the beginning of the 21st century, people have been inclined to accept cultural practices from the West particularly young Chinese people as these cultural trends are fashionable (Odinye & Odinye, 2012). For example, tattooing has spread and over 20 percent of Chinese associate their tattoos with love and affection (Kluger et al., 2019; Sanders & Vail, 2008).

On the contrary, there are some cultures, such as those in the Middle East that still hold negative perceptions about this kind of body art. The Middle East consists of different countries such as Egypt, Lebanon, the Gulf region (e.g. Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and, the United Arab Emirates) and some scholars consider Turkey as part of the Middle East as well (Almuhrzi, Alriyami & Scott, 2017). In Turkey, for example, employees are forbidden from showing a visible tattoo (Atik & Yildirim, 2014). As mentioned earlier, tattooing was found to be practiced in the ancient era in Egypt particularly in the mummies (e.g. a female mummy with 4000 year old) (Lande et al., 2013). A study by Al-Mutairi, Manchanda and Almutairi, (2010) which was conducted in the Gulf region studied over 460 patients who wanted to have

their tattoos removed and a majority of this number were female. The researchers found the main reason for tattoo removal was religious and so perhaps the practice of tattooing may be decreasing in this part of the Middle East. People who placed tattoo in the first time the motivation probably was as a kind of fashion, however, it seems they regret and thus want to remove it. Alternatively, many people in the Middle East use henna on the hands and feet as a kind of cosmetic, particularly for special occasions, such as the Night of Henna which is a night before the wedding, or using it to dye their hair, as it is healthier than chemical dyeing products (Guerrier, Abdulwahab, Basri & Revill, 1988; Humphrey-Newell, 1981; Ustuner, Ger & Holt, 2000). Some researchers describe henna as a tattoo as it is similar in appearance as a traditional tattoo. Henna is made from Lawsonia shrub and it is only temporary and thus it is both socially and religiously acceptable in the Middle East (Packard, 2012; Sumit, Vivek, Sujata & Ashish, 2012).

What the tattoo signals for customers differ from one culture to another, some customers view tattoos as a signal of fashion (Wohlrab, Kappeler & Stahl, 2007), while others may view tattoos as a signal of deviance, illegal behaviour and they may even be thought of as a stigma from the perspective of those in the older generations who see tattoos as unacceptable (Atik & Yildirim, 2014; Ruggs, 2013; Timming, 2015; Wohlrab et al., 2007). For example, some customers might feel uncomfortable when interacting with employees who have visible tattoos so, in this instance, they might feel less than satisfied (Dean, 2011; Ruggs, 2013). Consequently, even if the service that the tattooed employee provides is of high quality, the result is that the customer might not recommend the establishment to others (Dean, 2011; Karl et al., 2016).

This rejection of tattoos is not only by those in the older generation, managers in places such as Turkey also view this culture as demonstrating unacceptable behaviour, particularly if the position or role of the employee is one that requires a face-to-face interaction with

customers (Atik & Yildirim, 2014; Ruggs, 2013). This shows that employees' hair (e.g. colour, length, style) and tattoos are aspects of personal appearance which the customer may use as signals to construct their evaluations, inferences and impressions of the employee (Kyle & Mahler, 1996; Johnson, Schofield & Yurchisin, 2002; Johnson, Yoo, Kim & Lennon, 2008; Reilly, 1995). Moreover, in terms of acceptance by employers, it depends on the type of job, for example, work in a restaurant may be considered as having the least opportunity for tattooed individuals to be accepted (Brallier, Maguire, Smith & Palm, 2011; Efthymiou, 2018). From the perspective of signalling theory, this would be due to the use of visible factors in a customer's evaluation of a retail establishment particularly where there is a lack of other information (Quacha et al., 2017). In cultures that do not accept unconventional appearance such as tattoos, customers may perceive tattoos as a signal of negative behaviour, even illegal behaviour (Karl et al., 2016). Consequently, some employers seek to build a positive image by requiring their employees to be neat in terms of their appearance (e.g. hairstyle) or cover their visible tattoos (McGuckin, 1975; Williams, Thomas & Christensen, 2014).

In a restaurant setting, various factors exist that may influence the comfort level of the customers, comfort being a psychological state that includes feelings of calm, ease, relaxation and security (Ainsworth & Foster, 2017). However, if comfort is reduced or does not exist, the level of these psychological states will lessen or even become feelings of distress, unease, tension and insecurity (Spake, Beatty, Brockman & Crutchfield, 2003). Customers associate certain characteristics with certain restaurant types. For example, they connect a high-end restaurant with full service in terms of the menu or the table and also with high quality (Sriwongrat, 2008). Well-dressed employees in a high-end restaurant can signal to the customers a high-quality meal and a high price point (Sriwongrat, 2008; Tsaur et al., 2015). In other words, formality (e.g. formal dress) can signal to the customers the high

productivity, a high service provided as well as introducing a positive social influence (Karl et al., 2013). In contrast, employees in casual clothes in fast-food restaurants can signal to customers a low price point (Clemes et al., 2013; Tsaur, Luoh & Syue, 2015). The elements within the environment, including employee appearance need to align with the restaurant's strategy. An unconventional appearance could be perceived as incongruent with signalling a high-end store image, where conventional appearance could be the expected norm. Customers may have developed associations between high-end restaurants and conventional employee appearances. Therefore, it is interesting to understand whether tattoos could be acceptable in high-end restaurants.

Based on a review of the literature, there is a paucity of information related to investigating the influence of employee appearance (conventional versus unconventional) on the customer comfort. In turn, on their behavioural intention and their anticipated enjoyment. As mentioned earlier, Karl et al. (2016) manipulated similar constructs, conventional versus unconventional, to determine whether the unconventional appearance was considered appropriate in a white-collar context. Karl and her colleagues have examined the way the unconventional appearance of employees may influence customer perception by sending a survey to employees in two countries (Mexico and Turkey). Those employees who participated were asked about their beliefs about how eight attributes related to the unconventional appearance of employees, such as how tattoos and hair colour may influence customer perceptions. The findings showed that unconventional appearance can affect customer perceptions negatively.

In light of these findings, this thesis seeks to understand whether this notion applies to a high-end restaurant setting. Some researchers have found that customers often associate several factors (e.g., the high or low price) with different types of restaurants, upscale or fine-dining restaurant or casual or fast-food establishments. In addition to these factors,

employees in a certain context (i.e., the high-end restaurant) are seen to appear in a certain style such as a specific uniform (e.g., Clemes et al., 2013; Sriwongrat, 2008; Tsaur et al., 2015). Only one study has investigated the employees' beliefs about employees in relation to the way an unconventional employee appearance may influence customer perception of the service quality (see Karl et al., 2016).

Based on previous literature on the influence employee appearance (tattoo and hair colour) has on customer comfort; comfort may be increased or decreased by conventional versus unconventional employee appearance for the Middle Eastern in a comparison with New Zealand European and Chinese people. The relationship between employee appearance (conventional vs. unconventional) appearance and customer comfort is expected to be moderated by culture.

2.5   The influence of customer comfort on their behavioural intentions

Behaviours can be generally defined as people's automatic responses to stimuli experienced in a place or premise (Grossbart, Hampton, Rammohan & Lapidus, 1990). Behavioural intentions can be defined as an individual's desire to follow a specific behaviour, either positive, such as the intention to revisit a place or to recommend it to others, or negative, such as intending to avoid revisiting that place and criticising or dissuading others from visiting that place (Clemes, Mohi, Li, & Hu, 2018; Jani & Han, 2011). In other words, behavioural intentions are what the customer intends to do in the future (Hyun & Kang, 2014; Kim & Moon, 2009; Lloyd & Luk, 2011). However, customer behaviour varies depending on culture (Jahandideh, Golmohammadi, Meng, O'Gorman & Taheri, 2014). In the present thesis, behavioural intentions indicate, with respect to the customers of a restaurant, whether their intentions will be positive (e.g., a willingness to repeat this experience) or negative.

Comparing the restaurant setting to other settings, Lee et al. (2015) reported that in a restaurant environment, behavioural intentions have been investigated as they relate to several attributes. For example, how can the behavioural intentions of customers be influenced by customer satisfaction and service quality in a moderately upscale restaurant (see Clemes et al., 2018). Behavioural intentions of customers have been found to be influenced by factors in the restaurant such as the presence of comfort (positive behavioural intentions) or its reverse (negative behavioural intentions) (Lee et al., 2015). Kivela et al.'s (2000) findings show that females tend to revisit restaurants in which they felt comfortable and secure on their first visit.

Psychologically, customers need to feel comfortable in their environment, as this is a universal goal that an individual endeavours to achieve in his/her life from the moment he/she is born until he/she dies (Ng, 2003; Spake et al., 2003). Psychological comfort consists of several factors such as security, peace of mind, being free of worry and calm (Spake et al., 2003). For example, customers can feel peace of mind when they are able to see the kitchen employees in the restaurant (Alonso & O'Neill, 2010). Psychologically, people are affected by the people who are in front of them or communicate with them (Kang & Hyun, 2012). For example, in a luxurious restaurant, if the employee expresses a relaxing and worry-free manner, that will be induced in the customers (Jones & Jones, 1990). Thus, it seems that customer comfort is influenced by the employees surrounding them in a restaurant (Kang & Hyun, 2012), and therefore, employees have the ability to generate feelings of comfort, relaxation and calm in customers (Meyer, Barnes & Friend, 2017). As much as the customer feels comfortable with the employee, benefit will be generated for the business (Lloyd & Luk, 2011). This underlines the importance of making the customer feel comfortable with the employee, as it is a part of the customer's evaluation of the service as a positive signal (e.g., Lloyd & Luk, 2011).

Researchers have found that comfort, for example peace of mind, positively affects the behaviour intentions, intention to recommend and intention to repeat the experience (see Klaus & Maklan, 2013). Customers who intend to repeat an experience in a restaurant probably do so due to the presence of comfort in the environment during the first experience (DiPietro & Campbell, 2014). In contrast, customers who felt worried or anxious during a first experience will attempt to forget that failed experience by switching to a different one and are unwilling to revisit the first (Mattila & Ro, 2008). Based on this, it proposed that psychological needs (e.g. comfort) able to determine customers behavioural intentions whether it is positive or negative.

Purchase intention is another type of behavioural intention and it refers to an internal feeling the customer has while a particular situation such as shopping. Based on the idea that servicescape plays a fundamental role in a customer's buying intention, researchers have realized the importance of investigating the environmental cues in a store that affect customer buying intention (Bava, Jeager and Dawson, 2009). In some cases, customers who are shopping and enter a store/facility without having an intention to purchase, may have this intention shifted by the characteristics of the employees (e.g., their appearance) from not existing to existing and from purchasing or not purchasing (Kim, Ju & Johnson, 2009). From the point of view of the customer, environmental cues are probably considered an influential factor that adds to (whether it is positive or negative) their buying decision. A store where the customer feels comfortable is usually associated with a positive customer behavioural outcome such as the intention to purchase (Bava et al., 2009).

To sum up, the surrounding environment of a store offers plenty of cues which are considered as opportunities to influence the customers in order to try to meet their needs and expectations (Bitner, 1992). From this notion, each store seeks to provide customers with their psychological needs, such as comfort (Ng, 2003) Researchers have found various minor

aspects such as employee behaviours and gestures are important and can be viewed in the same way as the more obvious factors, for example, presenting and delivering excellent service (Lloyd & Luk, 2011). While this section discusses the influence of the customers comfort on their behavioural intentions, the following section will discuss the influence of this comfort on their anticipated enjoyment.

2.6 The influence of customer comfort on their anticipated enjoyment

The other aspect that is shown in Figure 2.1. is the customer's anticipated enjoyment. Enjoyment includes various elements such as interest, liking, pleasure, happiness, refreshment and gratification (Kendzierski & DeCarlo, 1991). A lack of enjoyment is defined as the opposite of these elements such as feeling bored, displeasure, a lack of refreshment and depression (Kendzierski & DeCarlo, 1991). What constitutes enjoyment varies from person to person, for example, some customers might enjoy talking while dining out and eating (Cranford et al., 2006). Some researchers view that a restaurant is not a place for social interaction as behaviour within it is pre-determined (Warde & Martens, 2000). Subsequently, it is fundamental for restaurateurs to understand what customers anticipate in relation to the restaurant in terms of a comfortable and enjoyable environment (Mhlanga, Moolman & Hattingh, 2013; Spake et al., 2003).

As some researchers consider comfort as one of the bases that assists in understanding customer behaviour they see shopping enjoyment as the hedonic side of shopping (Mhlanga et al., 2013; Spake et al., 2003). As this is considered as an essential driver for the customer in a store, many marketers/managers have attempted to achieve and motivate hedonic shopping in their strategies/goals (Evanschitzky et al., 2014; Johnson, Kim, Mun & Lee, 2014). As enjoyment is associated with the hedonic shopping experience, customers usually seek a store that provides an enjoyable environment, a store where they expect to enjoy good

customer service on the part of the employees, and in turn, they will probably spend more money there (Evanschitzky et al., 2014; Kim & Moon, 2009; Turley & Chebat, 2002). According to Spies, Hesse and Loesch (1997), if an individual finds a situation where s/he is able to achieve his/her goals, a sense of enjoyment will be aroused as they are willing to visit a store where they want to purchase an item and they also enjoy the experience at the facility.

Customer anticipation is mostly affected by or built on previous experiences whether it be positive or the reverse (Karl et al., 2016), meaning, shoppers' enjoyment can be impacted by their previous experience at a shop or establishment. For example, if the customer's perceptions are positive, the likelihood of enjoying the shopping experience is high and thus the time spent time in the shop will probably increase (Johnson et al., 2014). Prior research has discussed the various elements that elicit customers' enjoyment, such as sounds and scents, and how the element of enjoyment assists to generate positive consequences such as customer loyalty (Johnson et al., 2014).

However, what has not yet been the subject of investigation is research that investigates the influence of customer comfort as moderated by culture and its relationship to behavioural intention and anticipated enjoyment. As a consequence of this review of the influence of employee appearance on the customer and customer comfort. In turn on their behavioural intentions and their anticipated enjoyment, the following hypotheses have been proposed:

H1: Patrons of a high-end restaurant will feel more (less) comfortable in the presence of a staff member who has a conventional (unconventional) appearance, which will lead to more positive (negative) behavioural intentions and anticipated enjoyment.

H2: This relationship will be significant when moderated by culture. More specifically, a conventional (vs. unconventional) appearance will create greater comfort for Middle Eastern (vs. New Zealand or Chinese) customers leading to more positive behavioural intentions and anticipated enjoyment.

2.7   Conclusion

This chapter presents a review of the elements of this thesis, most particularly the influence of employee appearance (conventional vs. unconventional) on customer comfort which in turn influences the customers' behavioural intentions and anticipated enjoyment. Based on the literature review, it seems quite possible that an unconventional employee appearance is socially unacceptable for Middle Eastern customers when compared to New Zealand European and Chinese customers. The methodology used in this study to prove or refute these hypotheses will be presented in the next chapter.

3 Chapter 3 Methodology

This chapter presents the methodology used to investigate the proposed hypotheses which seeks to design and test a baseline model taking into account an environmental factor of a restaurant, namely the appearance of the service employees. The mediator was the psychological comfort of the consumers. In addition to this it seeks to understand how environmental factors at a restaurant affect the customers comfort level, and thus affect their behavioural intentions and their anticipated enjoyment. The appearance (i.e., conventional vs. unconventional) of the employee (independent variables) was tested. This relationship was then hypothesised to be moderated by cultural differences with ethnicity considered a proxy for culture in this case.

To facilitate understanding of the thesis's methodology, this chapter is divided into four parts. First there is a discussion of the research design, why it was chosen, and this includes an overview and the design of the experiment, the online survey, the scenario provided to the participants and why high-end restaurant was chosen. This is followed by a description of the experimental procedure and includes: (a) recruitment of participants, (b) measures, (c) research method and (d) the pre-test with its details (i.e. participant characteristics and the findings). Finally, the data analysis method including manipulation check, analysis techniques and data cleaning as well as the ethical considerations and, finally, the conclusion are detailed.

3.1 Research design and justification

Each method of the study is used based on the set questions. A quantitative method was chosen due to it is appropriate for answering the questions of this thesis particularly it is related to the social side (Nardi, 2018). It is also not costly in comparison with other methods as well as it allows to reach a large number of people in where they are (Jensen & Laurie, 2016; Nardi, 2018). As an experimental design was used, the quantitive method is

appropriate for computer-based along with online questionnaires additionally, for keeping the respondents anonymous. In addition, doing an experiment assists to understand the cause and effect facts (Nardi, 2018).

3.1.1   Overview and experimental design

An experiment was conducted to obtain the answers to the research questions (Section1.4). According to David (2007), conducting an experiment means there is more than one variable to manipulate and thus, conventional versus unconventional appearance was manipulated (the independent variable) to measure customers' anticipated enjoyment and behavioural intentions (dependent variable). The mediator was the comfort of the customer, and the moderator was the customers' culture.

The experimental design included a scenario with images showcasing the appearance of the employee (conventional vs. unconventional) (see Appendix C). These images were presented in the survey to determine the response of the participants. The images shown to the participants featured the same person, to avoid extraneous factors such as relative attractiveness or any other effect of comparison which would interfere with the intended purpose of this thesis. This pictorial method can assist the participants in imagining the required situation/environmental context and can give the researchers a more accurate assessment of the participants' feelings and opinions than would a written description (He, Chen & Alden, 2012).

The research questions were served with an experiment that involved both conventional and unconventional appearance of an employee along with a survey that targets potential customers. This design enabled the easy manipulation of the employee's appearance in order to examine the response of customers who are from three different cultures (Granello & Wheaton, 2004). This design presented valuable data as the results are generated from the

point of view of the customers. In order to investigate the research questions and test the proposed hypotheses, a factorial one 2 (employee appearance: conventional vs. unconventional) X 3 (cultures/ethnicities) between-subjects experimental design was undertaken. To this end, two conditions were used in this experimental design as follows:

Condition 1: The image of the high-end restaurant along with an image of an employee were used. This employee had an unconventional (tattoo, hairstyle) appearance. (See Appendix D).

Condition 2: The image of the high-end restaurant along with an image of an employee was used. This person had a conventional (no tattoo and hairstyle) appearance. (See Appendix D).

3.1.2   Online survey

The survey was designed via Qualtrics software (see Appendix F for the main study survey). Conducting an online survey is an appropriate way to gather the data needed to answer these research questions. The use of an online survey has become increasingly more common among researchers (Toepoel, 2016) as they have several advantages, for example, they are less time consuming (e.g. require only a short time to respond) and they are not as costly to conduct (Ilieva, Baron & Healey, 2002; Toepoel, 2016). Moreover, with online surveys researchers are able to use visual tools to ensure greater realism, with the formatting (e.g. colour) being easier (Granello & Wheaton, 2004) and thus this style of survey serves the investigation of this research particularly as it relates to employee appearance. Additionally, in terms of the status of the survey, online surveys afford the possibility of reaching a large number of people (Toepoel, 2016). The online experimental survey easily allows the researcher to control the way the participants answer the question, for example, flipping to the next page or returning to a previous one as well as editing their answers (Granello & Wheaton, 2004).

3.1.3   Scenario

A text-based scenario method assisted the study by manipulating the variables in the experiment which can be complex to study and manipulate in a real-life context (Söderlund, 2011). The survey involved a scenario (see Appendix C) describing a situation where the participant entered a high-end restaurant and found a waitress at the entrance. The waitress professionally greeted the customer, taking his/her name and then escorting them to the coat check. At the table, the waitress served water, filling the customer's glass and then offering the customer a drink while they look at the menu. The participant orders a drink, looks at the menu and orders a dish. It was important to have participants imagine coming into the restaurant and being seated to answer the survey questions with their real feelings, expression and attitudes.

3.1.4   High-end restaurant

A high-end restaurant was selected because customers usually stay longer and pay more attention to the environment at a full-service restaurant (Harrington, Ottenbacher, & Kendall, 2011; Kim & Chung, 2011). Based on signalling theory, customers use visible cues, such as employee appearance, to construct their perceptions related to invisible cues such as the quality of the service. They also associate specific characteristics to each type of restaurant environment in terms of quality, price, employee appearance and so forth. For example, they associate the higher prices with upscale and fine-dining restaurants (Clemes et al., 2013; Tsaur et al., 2015). Therefore, employee appearance needs to align with the strategy of each type of restaurant. Thus, for a high-end image, an unconventional appearance may be considered incongruent with the image high-end restaurants attempt to portray, a conventional appearance could be the expected norm at such an establishment. Customers may have developed associations between high-end restaurants and conventional employee

appearance. It was of interest to discover how customers might react if exposed to an incongruent cue, and whether this reaction is the same for all customers.

3.1.5   Pre-test of the stimuli

3.1.5.1   Design and participants characteristics

The pre-test consisted of three questions and the purpose of conducting a pre-test was to establish that the server's image was perceived as unconventional or conventional to ensure the independent variable was perceived correctly and would cue the intended outcome. See Appendix E for the pre-test. The pre-test also contained two conditions (conventional vs. unconventional waitress appearance) and it aimed to recruit at least 50 participants from each of the three ethnicities (i.e. New Zealand European, Chinese and Middle Eastern) for each condition. Distribution was conducted via social media. The participants were assigned randomly to one of the two conditions. Once the required number of participants was met, data cleaning was applied to participants who did not qualify to participate in the research. Consequently, the number of participants went from 203, which included 'other' ethnicities to 101 participants from the three ethnicities (n= 101). The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (SPSS) was used to analyse the data (i.e., a general linear model; an ANOVA). Data from the pre-test were used as part of the final thesis to ensure that the experimental stimuli were perceived correctly. In addition, the pre-test assisted to making a refinement to the experimental stimuli prior to sending out the final survey.

The participants (customers) (n=101) for the pre-test were from three ethnicities (New Zealand European, Chinese and Middle Eastern) residing in New Zealand. Specifically, (n=50) viewing the conventional and (n=51) viewing the unconventional condition. As ethnicity was used as a proxy for culture in the main study, it was important to collect data with a very similar sample population. The age of the participants was 18 and over and there

was no specific gender requirement or other specific demographic such as specific educational level and occupation. See Appendix B for the participant information sheet.

3.1.5.2   Pre-test findings

The following data shows the results of the pre-test survey (see Appendix E) of the respondents from three different cultures. This survey included three questions on seven-point scales. The first question was related to the person in the image's appearance. The question was presented as follows: On a scale of 1-7, rate how you feel about the person's appearance? This question included three different factors; a) very unconventional - very conventional, b) very unfriendly - very friendly, and c) very unapproachable - very approachable. The factors b and c were included to ensure that the participants perceived the images of the employee appearance as being (conventional or unconventional) as intended. Additionally, to ensure that it was not due to friendliness or approachability that people were feeling uncomfortable, the person still needed to come across as friendly and approachable. The aim of the second question was to evaluate the restaurant's image and understand whether people perceived the restaurant as high-end. It was presented as follows: I feel this restaurant is; a) expensive - inexpensive, b) high end - low end, and c) upmarket - downmarket.

An ANOVA analysis was conducted to understand whether there was a difference between the two conditions; conventional or unconventional appearance. The result was significant between the two conditions of appearance, $F(1, 99) = 10.13$, $p < .05$). Thus, conducting this pre-test was successful and showed that the independent variable was perceived correctly and cued the intended outcome, namely, the participants viewed the images of the employee's appearance as conventional (M=5.0, SD=1.72) and unconventional (M=3.8, SD=2.09). The results were similar across the three cultures. The unconventional

appearance of the employee was perceived as being more unconventional by New Zealand European (M=4.3, SD=1.87), Chinese (M=3.4, SD=2.06) and Middle Eastern (M=3.8, SD=2.32) and the conventional appearance was perceived as more conventional (New Zealand European, M=5.8, SD=1.50; Chinese, M=4.7, SD=1.82; and Middle Eastern, M=4.5, SD=1.60).

The pre-test assisted in the goal of this thesis which is to investigate the difference between these three cultures in their perceptions of these two conditions. These images could be used to represent the conventional and unconventional appearance of the employee as could the image of the high-end restaurant to which respondents from all three cultures in both condition groups perceived as being high-end (F (2,95) = 5.22, p < .05). By culture it was found the perceptions were as follows: New Zealand European (M=1.9, SD= 1.02), Chinese (M=2.1, SD= 1.18) and Middle Eastern (M=2.1, SD= 1.34). Notably, the scale items of the restaurant question were ordered in a reverse from positive to negative (i.e. high-end to low-end) (see Appendix E).

3.2   Procedure

3.2.1   Recruitment of participants

A convenient sample for the main study (Appendix F) was recruited from the personal network of the researcher via social media. As mentioned earlier, the participants represent three ethnicities (New Zealand European, Chinese and Middle Eastern) within New Zealand. The reasons for selecting these three cultures was first to align with the research teams' ethnic groups (the researcher and the research supervisors, and because it was relatively easy to access people from these three ethnicities. Second, as the research team belonged to these ethnicities, a more in-depth understanding of each culture could be brought to the research

design. Finally, it is interesting in itself to understand the differences and similarities between these three cultures in terms of customer experience in a high-end restaurant.

To ensure that all of the participants were from these three ethnic groups, the inclusion criteria in the participant information sheet included that the participants should be from these ethnicities (New Zealand European, Chinese and Middle Eastern). A screening question was also included to determine the eligibility of the participants to complete the survey (Pennell & Hibben, 2016). People who selected "Other" were excluded from the study. The total number of recruited participants for the main study was 206, broken down to 102 and 104 participants per condition.

3.2.2 Measures

The survey consisted of multiple-items that were measured with a seven-point scale (1 is strongly disagree and 7 is strongly agree). Customer comfort was measured through eight items that were developed and validated by Spake et al. (2003). The scale for anticipated enjoyment was measured using 18 items developed by Kendzierski and DeCarlo (1991). The study by Brocato et al. (2012), presented five-items that were used to measure the similarity and four-items to measure physical appearance. Behavioural intentions were measured by 10 items that were adapted from the study by Hightower, Brady and Baker (2002) to fit the context of this thesis.

3.2.3 Data collection method

To avoid internal validity threats related to testing (David, 2007), participants were assigned randomly to the main study and were not among those who did the pre-test. Once recruited, participants were asked to visit an online link where one of the experimental

conditions was randomly presented. Participants were presented with the information sheet (see Appendix B) which clarified the purpose of this research and other additional information related to this thesis and the researcher. All of this information was presented in the introductory page of the survey. Filling out the questionnaire was taken as consent to participating in the research, otherwise, the participant could withdraw at any time s/he wanted to, and any decisions to participate or not were welcomed. The participants were given the scenario and once they had read the scenario and viewed the visual stimuli, they were then asked to complete a survey. A pre-test was completed to ensure the experimental manipulations were successfully meeting the intended purpose of this thesis, namely, whether or not participants perceived the images of the waitress's appearance were conventional or unconventional.

3.3 Method of data analysis and justification
3.3.1 Manipulation checks

In any experimental design, participants should not be aware of manipulated items, such as images as researchers aim to measure participants' real world perceptions and behaviour without their attention focussing on the intended purpose of the experiment (Gneezy, 2017). In this thesis, the employee appearance was the manipulation. Thus, to ensure that the influence related to conventional versus unconventional appearance was authentic, at the end of the survey the participants were asked about their expectations related to the purpose of the survey study and the test question/s.

3.3.2 Analysis technique

To assist with the analysis of the experimental data, SPSS was also used. The appropriate analysis technique to be used in this process was mediation moderation analysis (model #7)

by Preacher and Hayes (2008) (Figure 3.1) and descriptive statistics were also taken into consideration.

Model 7

Conceptual Diagram
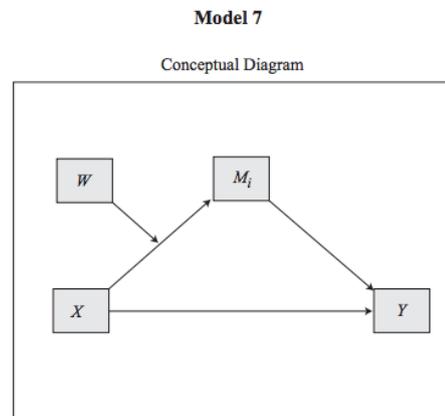
Figure 3.1 Mediation moderation analysis (model #7)

3.3.2.1   Data cleaning

Some of enjoyment measurement items were presented in a reverse way in the study by Kendzierski and DeCarlo, (1991). Hence, before starting the analysis of this thesis, variable items were ordered both negative and positive sides in the same way as the other items.

Conducting research without having missing data is rare, particularly during the data collection stage. This can occur for various reasons and one of them is skipping questions or options (e.g., if the question involves multi-scale options) (Field, 2009). Another reason for this is that people who do not qualify in the study, in this case, those who selected "Other" in the screening question referring to people who were from cultures other than the three-targeted cultures for this thesis. This occurred in both the pre-test and the main study surveys. To address this, a data cleaning process was conducted and consequently, the number of participants decreased from 344 to 229 in the main study. The number of participants in the main study among the three ethnic groups was still unequal and thus, random number generator was applied. As a result, the number of participants was further reduced from 229 to 206 participants (n= 206).

3.4   Ethical considerations

As mentioned earlier of this thesis, ethical approval from AUTEC was obtained. The participants in this research remained anonymous as no questions were asked in regard to their personal details such as their names, address or email. Only demographic questions which could be used for a comparison, such as age, occupation and education level were required (see Table 4.1). The participants' consent was elicited through the participant information sheet which explicitly states that "filling out the questionnaire will be taken as consent to participate in the research". See Appendix B for the participant information sheet. Therefore, completion of the survey was an indicator of the participant's consent.

3.5   Conclusion

The methodology used in this study as well as its design and rationalisation have been outlined above. The pre-test and its findings in regard to the independent variable (employee appearance: conventional vs. unconventional) was perceived as intended and participants perceived the image of the high-end restaurant also as intended. What follows in the next chapter are the results and discussion of them from the main study.

4 Chapter 4 Findings and discussion

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of the pre-test phase was to ensure that the independent variable (i.e. conventional vs. unconventional employee appearance) was perceived as intended and that the restaurant's image was perceived as being high-end. Participants in both condition groups perceived the conditions as intended, namely, the conventional appearance as being conventional and the unconventional appearance as being unconventional. The image of the restaurant was also perceived as high-end. This chapter will now provide the results and discussion of the main study. This will begin with the manipulation check results and conclude with the main study findings and the discussion, including an overview of the sample characteristics and hypothesis testing.

4.2 Preliminary data preparation

4.2.1 Awareness and manipulation check

Firstly participants' awareness of the purpose of the study was measured and it was found that none of the participants accurately articulated the intended purpose of the study. More specifically, most of the respondents indicated that the purpose of the survey was to look at overall appearance while some gave different answers such as investigating the impact of satisfaction and food service, price, customer experience, and restaurant décor. Secondly participants' awareness of the test questions was also investigated and none of them guessed at the correct test questions. The majority reported that they did not know, while some expected the price, the attractiveness of the restaurant and the waitress and loyalty to be the object of the study.

4.3 Findings and discussion

4.3.1 Sample characteristics

After ensuring in the pre-test that the variable was perceived as intended, the main study data was collected in the period from April to May 2019. A total of 206 participated in this study (n=206). To be specific, 70 New Zealand Europeans (n=70), 67 Chinese (n=67) and 69 people of Middle Eastern origin (n=69) participated. 104 people participated in the conventional condition group survey and 102 in the unconventional condition group survey. As the demographic questions were not compulsory, not all of the questions were answered by all participants (see Table 4.1 for the demographic characteristics).

The largest age group of the sample is between the age of 30 and 40 years old with around thirty five percent. It was an even split between male and female participants, with approximately 50% and 48% respectively. The three most common occupation types were student (37.9%), professional (25.2%) and company employee (18.9%). There may be some confusion as to the difference between company employee and professional. To clarify, a company employee is a person who works for a company or organisation (Nderitu, 2017), while a professional could be the employer or a person with specific professional skills, white-collar occupations such as doctor, lawyer etc. (Lutkins, 2016). The sample is highly educated with the majority of participants being university graduates or postgraduates.

Table 4.1 Participants' demographic characteristics

Age	
18 – 29	33%
30 – 40	36.9%
41-51	14.6%
52-62	10.7%
63+	3.9%
Total	**99.1%**
Missing system	0.9%
Gender	
Male	50.5%
Female	48.1%
Total	**98. 6%**
Missing system	1.4%
Occupation	
Student	37.9%
Company employee	18.9%
Self-employed	9.2%
Professional	25.2%
Civil servant	1%
Housewife/Househusband	3.4%
Retired	2.4%
Journalist	.5%
Teacher	.5%
Total	**99%**
Missing system	1%
Education level	
High school graduate or below	9.2%
Professional	4.4%
University graduate	41.3%
Postgraduate level	42.2%
Total	**97.1%**
Missing system	2.9%
Yearly income overall	
Less than $15,000	20.9%
($15,000 – $29,999)	6.3%
($30,000- $49,999)	13.6%
($50,000- $64,999)	15%
($65,000-$80,000)	10.7%
Over $80,000	26.7%
Total	**93.2%**
Missing system	6.8%

4.3.2 Preliminary analysis

The SPSS macro module was used to conduct the mediation moderation analysis of Preacher and Hayes (2008) (model #7, with 10,000 bootstrapped samples). There are four notations; Y refers to the dependent variable, X refers to the independent variable, M indicates the mediator variable (comfort) and W refers to the moderator variable (ethnicity) (Hayes, 2017). The dependent variables represent behavioural intentions and anticipated enjoyment.

4.3.2.1 Behavioural intentions

First, a comparison made between New Zealand European versus Middle Eastern participants from the three cultures. There is a significant interaction between comfort (M) and employee appearance (X) in that 95% bootstrap confidence interval (CI) excluded zero (95% CI: -1.0845, -.1936). The results also show that customer behavioural intentions can be significantly influenced by their comfort (95% CI: 2069, .4733).

The second comparison is between Chinese and Middle Eastern participants. There is a significant interaction between comfort and employee appearance in that 95% bootstrap confidence interval (CI) excluded zero (95% CI: -2.0599, -.0018). The results also show that customer behavioural intentions can be significantly influenced by their comfort (95% CI: .1306, .3874).

Finally, a comparison was made between New Zealand Europeans and Chinese. The results show that there is no significant interaction between comfort and employee appearance in that 95% bootstrap confidence interval (CI) excluded zero (95% CI: -1.0616, .5670). Also, the direct effect is non-significant with a 95% bootstrap confidence interval (CI) (95% CI: -.3336, .3108). Whereas the results show that customer behavioural intentions can be significantly influenced by their comfort (95% CI: .2368, .5044).

4.3.2.2   Anticipated enjoyment

A comparison between New Zealand Europeans and Middle Eastern participants will be presented first. The results show that there is a significant interaction between comfort (M) and employee appearance (X) in that 95% bootstrap confidence interval (CI) excluded zero (95% CI: -1.0845, -.1936). The results also show that customer anticpated enjoyment can be significantly influenced by their comfort (95% CI: .2463, .4585).

The second comparison is between the Chinese and Middle Eastern participants where there is a significant interaction between comfort and employee appearance in that 95% bootstrap confidence interval (CI) excluded zero (95% CI: -2.0599, -.0018). Also, the results show that there is a significant influence on the customer's anticipated enjoyment by their comfort (95% CI: .1790, .3776).

Finally is the comparison between the New Zealand European and Chinese participants. There is no significant interaction between comfort and employee appearance in that 95% bootstrap confidence interval (CI) excluded zero (95% CI: -1.0616, .5670). Also, the direct effect is non-significant with a 95% bootstrap confidence interval (CI) (95% CI: -.4530, .0893). Whereas the results show that customer anticipated enjoyment can be significantly influenced by their comfort (95% CI: .2650, .4902).

In the following section, hypothesis testing will be presented.

4.3.3   Hypothesis testing

The hypotheses proposed as follows:

H1: Patrons of a high-end restaurant will feel more (less) comfortable in the presence of a staff member who has a conventional (unconventional) appearance, which will lead to more positive (negative) behavioural intentions and anticipated enjoyment.

H2: This relationship will be significant when moderated by culture. More specifically, a conventional (vs. unconventional) appearance will create greater comfort for Middle Eastern (vs. New Zealand or Chinese) customers leading to more positive behavioural intentions and anticipated enjoyment.

The SPSS macro module was used to conduct the mediation moderation analysis of Preacher and Hayes (2008) (model #7, with 10,000 bootstrapped samples). As mentioned earlier, the dependent variables represent behavioural intentions and anticipated enjoyment.

4.3.3.1   Behavioural intentions

First, a comparison made between New Zealand European versus Middle Eastern participants from the three cultures. The results of the behavioural intentions variable (DV) will be presented.

There is a significant interaction between comfort (M) and employee appearance (X). Also, there is a significant and negative result of indirect effect for Middle Eastern participants it excludes zero (95% bootstrap confidence interval (CI): -.5795, -.0708) while for New Zealand Europeans it is non-significant (95% bootstrap confidence interval (CI): -.0354, .2907). Specifically, employee's appearance significantly influences the comfort of Middle Eastern people which in turn influences their behavioural intentions while it is not for New Zealand European. The results also show that the indirect effect of the mediated moderated index is significant and negative (SE=.1570, 95% CI= -.7525 to -.1392). Thus, partial mediation is supported and the results confirm that Middle Eastern people in comparison to New Zealanders people are more comfortable in the presence of a waitress that has a conventional appearance as opposed to one that has an unconventional appearance.

The second between-culture comparison is between Chinese and Middle Eastern participants. Similarly, behavioural intentions (DV) were tested first. There is a significant

interaction between comfort and employee appearance. The result of indirect effect is significant and negative for the Middle Eastern participants having a 95% bootstrap confidence interval (CI) excluding zero (95% CI: -.4701, -.0405) whereas for Chinese it is non-significant (95% CI: -.1591, .2100), while, the indirect effect of the mediated moderated index is significant (SE=.1409, 95% CI= -.5540 to -.0029). More specific, employee's appearance has a significant influence on the comfort of Middle Eastern people which in turn influences their behavioural intentions while it is not for Chinese. Hence, partial mediation is supported. Middle Eastern in comparison to Chinese people are less comfortable in the presence of a waitress with an unconventional appearance, and this comfort increased in the presence of the employee with a conventional appearance.

Finally, a comparison was made between New Zealand Europeans and Chinese. The results of the behavioural intentions show that there is no significant interaction between comfort and employee appearance. The indirect effect is non-significant for New Zealand European, with a 95% bootstrap confidence interval (CI) (95% CI: -.0410, -.3325) nor is it significant for Chinese people (95% CI: -.2364, .2896). The indirect effect of the mediated moderated index is also non-significant (SE=.1608, 95% CI= -.4376 to .2052). Thus, mediation is rejected. New Zealand Europeans and Chinese people are as comfortable in the presence of a waitress that has an unconventional appearance as one that has a conventional appearance. The second dependent variable of these three cultures will be presented in the following section.

4.3.3.2   *Anticipated enjoyment*

In this section, the second dependent variable (anticipated enjoyment) will be presented, first by a comparison between New Zealand Europeans and Middle Eastern participants. The results show that there is a negative and significant result of indirect effect for the Middle

Eastern (95% bootstrap confidence interval (CI): -.5548, -.0717) but a non-significant one for New Zealand Europeans (95% bootstrap confidence interval (CI): -.0378, .3073). Specifically, employee's appearance significantly influences the comfort of Middle Eastern people which in turn influences their anticipated enjoyment while it is not for New Zealand European. Whereas the indirect effect of the mediated moderated index is negative and significant (SE=.1506, 95% CI= -.7419 to -.1520). Hence, partial mediation is supported and the results show again that Middle Eastern people are more comfortable in the presence of a waitress with a conventional appearance. This comfort decreases in the presence of employee with an unconventional appearance.

The second comparison is between the Chinese and Middle Eastern participants where there is a significant interaction between comfort and employee appearance. While the indirect effect result for Middle Eastern participants is significant and negative (95% bootstrap confidence interval (CI): -.4537, -.0538), it is not for the Chinese participants (95% CI: -.1617, .2284). More specific, employee's appearance has a significant influence on the comfort of Middle Eastern people which in turn influences their anticipated enjoyment while it is not for Chinese people. The indirect effect of the mediated moderated index is (SE=.1438, 95% CI= -.5665 to .0020). The results also confirm that the comfort of the Middle Eastern participants increases in the presence of a waitress with a conventional appearance; it decreases in the presence of the waitress with an unconventional appearance. Hence, partial mediation is supported.

Finally there is the comparison between the New Zealand European and Chinese participants. There is not a significant interaction between comfort and employee appearance. The indirect effect is non-significant for New Zealand Europeans (95% bootstrap confidence interval (CI): -.0399, .3230) nor is it significant for the Chinese (95% CI: -.2123, .3040). The indirect effect of the mediated moderated index is (SE=.1585, 95% CI= -.4114 to.2190).

Thus, the mediation is rejected. Both cultures (i.e. New Zealand European and Chinese) are comfortable in the presence of a waitress that has an unconventional or a conventional appearance. In conclusion, the results of the Module 7# analysis show that the hypotheses H1 and H2 are supported.

4.3.4 Discussion of findings

This thesis sought to investigate the influence of employee (conventional vs. unconventional) appearance on the comfort of customers. In turn, would the level of comfort influence their behavioural intentions and anticipated enjoyment? Based on signalling theory, it was hypothesised that an unconventional appearance (S) can signal negative perceptions to Middle Eastern people and make them less comfortable in comparison to New Zealand Europeans and Chinese people. This feeling of reduced comfort (O) was predicted to lead to negative behavioural consequences (R), such as the intent to avoid revisiting the restaurant and precipitate negative word-of-mouth, as well as negative anticipated enjoyment. Conversely, the presence of comfortable feelings would lead to positive behavioural intentions such as repeating the experience, triggering positive word-of-mouth and positive anticipated enjoyment. The relationship between employee appearance (conventional vs. unconventional) and customer comfort was moderated by culture.

The results of this thesis indicate that the stimulus (i.e. appearance of employees) does play a role in making some customers feel comfortable. The findings show a waitress's conventional appearance (S) at a high-end restaurant can signal positive perceptions to customers. Tsaur et al. (2015) discovered similar results in their literature review and concluded that employees who dress conventionally and professionally make customers construct a high value for the restaurant and engender positive emotions. However, an unconventional appearance (S) can signal negative perceptions in the context of a high-end

restaurant to customers. This result is consistent with Karl et al. (2016) who found that customers construct negative perceptions in connection to unconventional employee appearance. However, Karl and her colleagues investigated the influence of unconventional appearance on employees who work in white-collar occupations such as healthcare, whereas this thesis is investigating this influence in the context of a high-end restaurant. Hence, the results of this thesis enrich the findings of the study conducted by Karl et al. (2016), by showing that unconventional employee appearance (S) could be signalling to customer negative perceptions, not only in the white-collar occupations but in the hospitality industry as well.

This thesis found that Middle Eastern people show an increase in their level of comfort in the presence of a waitress with a conventional appearance (S). This organism (i.e comfort) tends to decrease in the presence of a waitress with an unconventional appearance (S). This is similar to Karl et al.'s (2016) findings, where Turkish people perceived the unconventional appearance of the employees negatively. This thesis differs from Karl and her colleagues' study by investigating Middle Eastern people overall, the previous study investigated only one country in the Middle East, Turkey.

In contrast, New Zealand Europeans and Chinese people showed levels of comfort (O) with both stimulus (i.e. a conventional & unconventional) appearance. Past researchers reported that some customers feel less comfortable when served by tattooed employees and thereby they might feel less than satisfied (Ruggs, 2013). Dean (2011) reported that people may avoid recommending a provider that has tattoos to their friends as they might feel uncomfortable. This present thesis differs from these past studies by finding that the influence of the stimulus (i.e. a conventional appearance as opposed to an unconventional appearance) is only present when culture was a moderator. The context of this thesis (high-

end restaurant) also differs from past studies. This thesis has added to this field of study by confirming that culture can be an important factor.

The focus of the study conducted by Dean (2011) was the influence of tattooed and non-tattooed employees on customer satisfaction, not their comfort. The simple result related to comfort that was found was an additional result to the other results of the study. The results of this thesis expand the knowledge by looking at how customer comfort (O) is influenced by employees' hair colour and style combined with visible tattoos (S). It should also be noted that the sample of Dean's (2011) study, were university students between the ages of 18-24, while the sample in this study was a much wider 18 years and above. This thesis also expands knowledge in this field as it shows the influence to be from the perspectives of different age groups as well as different occupational groups such as students, the self-employed and professionals (see Table 4.1).

Importantly, the results of this thesis show that when Middle Eastern people felt comfortable in the presence of the waitress's conventional appearance, it leads to positive behavioural intentions and anticipated enjoyment. Namely, conventional appearance (S) can signal to customers such as Middle Eastern positive perceptions and a positive organism (comfort) which in turn leads to a positive behavioural response. In contrast, customers' uncomfortable feelings lead to negative behavioural intentions and lower anticipated enjoyment. Thus, unconventional appearance (S) can signal to Middle Eastern people negative perceptions and negative organism (comfort) which in turn leads to a negative behavioural response. In contrast, New Zealand Europeans and Chinese people displayed the same level of comfort in the presence of both stimulus (i.e. the conventional and unconventional) appearance of the waitress and this lead to positive behavioural intentions and anticipated enjoyment (R). This is perhaps due to the fact that unconventional appearance cues, such as tattoos, have spread widely and been accepted socially in both the New Zealand

and Chinese cultures (Bell, 2014; Kluger et al., 2019; Lawrence, 2009; Odinye & Odinye, 2012; Sanders & Vail, 2008). These cues are not accepted socially or religiously in Middle Eastern cultures (Atik & Yildirim, 2014; Karl et al., 2016).

Previous studies showed that the presence of customer comfort, such as peace of mind, lead to positive word-of-mouth (Klaus & Maklan, 2013) and revisiting the restaurant (DiPietro & Campbell, 2014). The study by Mattila and Ro (2008) reported that worried customers avoid repeating the initial experience which caused them to feel uncomfortable and attempt to forget this failed experience by switching to a different setting. This thesis has added to this previous research by showing the importance of culture in terms of the influence of comfort in determining whether positive or negative behavioural intentions and anticipated enjoyment occur.

Importantly, although the influence of an unconventional employee appearance (S) led to a decrease in the level of customer comfort (O), it did not lead to a decrease for some customers. This thesis found that this influence differs depending on culture. Specifically, customers who are from a cultural background that may not be as accepting of an unconventional appearance (S) may use this as a signal for negative perceptions, particularly at a high-end restaurant. As shown by Karl et al. (2016), a culture that does not accept an unconventional appearance might use it as a signal for anti-social behaviour. Although tattooing was practiced in ancient Egypt, it is not accepted socially in the Islamic religion. In Turkey, employees with visible tattoos are barred from work (Atik & Yildirim, 2014). A study conducted by Al-Mutairi et al. (2010) showed a large number of patients in the Gulf region who want to have their tattoos removed.

However, customers who are from cultural backgrounds which accept unconventional appearance perceive tattoos as a signal of fashion and thus feel comfortable. For example, among New Zealand Europeans and Chinese, approximately 19 percent of New Zealanders

have had been tattooed and over 20 percent of Chinese associate their tattoos with love and affection (Bell, 2014; Kluger et al., 2019; Lawrence, 2009; Sanders & Vail, 2008). Wohlrab et al. (2007) sited a similar explanation, finding that tattoos are viewed as being more fashionable than stigmatic. The findings of this thesis have added to this by confirming the role that culture may play in understanding how customers from different backgrounds perceive conventional and unconventional employee appearance.

The purpose of this thesis was investigated based on the stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) paradigm and from the lens of signalling theory (see Spence, 1973, 2002). The results added to the paradigm a cultural element in a mode consistent with the psychological need of customers. More specific, expand the knowledge of the stimulus (employees appearance; conventional vs. unconventional) can signal to customers (positive vs. negative) perceptions that influence the organism (psychological comfort) of the customer moderated by culture. In turn, how this signal can influence the response (behavioural intentions and anticipated enjoyment) in the high-end restaurant. Also, the findings of this thesis added to the signalling theory by presenting the importance of the culture as the moderator and how conventional and unconventional appearance (S) can signal to the customers from different cultural background positive or negative perceptions. For example, conventional vs. unconventional appearance can signal to the customers positive vs. negative perceptions. Particularly, customers who have a cultural background (e.g. Middle Eastern) that does not accept tattooing and crazy hairstyle specifically in an environment in such high-end restaurants. This also affects the response of the customers which causes positive vs. negative response, namely, behavioural intentions and anticipated enjoyment. In contrast, this stimulus (conventional & unconventional) can signal positive perceptions for customers who have a cultural background (e.g. New Zealand European & Chinese) that accept tattooing and crazy hairstyle even in an environment in such high-end restaurants.

To sum up, the findings of this thesis showed that a conventional employee appearance creates comfort for people from the three different cultures studied (New Zealand European, Chinese and Middle Eastern). In contrast, an unconventional employee appearance creates a difference in perspective, with New Zealand Europeans and Chinese people feeling as comfortable with it as with the conventional appearance, in contrast to the Middle Eastern participants. An unconventional appearance such as visible tattoos is not socially accepted in the Middle Eastern culture although it was once practiced in ancient Egypt. An unconventional appearance is accepted in New Zealand and Chinese society, particularly among the young and female populations as they consider it fashionable (Bell, 2014; Kluger et al., 2019; Lawrence, 2009; Sanders & Vail, 2008). This thesis shows the importance of culture and how it influences perceptions around conventional and unconventional employee appearance.

The proposed hypotheses of this thesis have been supported by the study findings. Interestingly, even though Chinese and Middle Eastern cultures represent a collectivist dimension, their perspectives varied. This result is consistent with Tassell et al. (2010) when they reported that there are differences in the perspectives among collectivist and individualist cultures themselves. This might be due to reasons such as religion and traditions. Young Chinese tend to view traditions as old fashioned and try to follow fashion from other cultures, such as that of the West and this may also be significant (Odinye & Odinye, 2012).

4.4   Conclusion

This chapter shows how this thesis differs from past studies by confirming the importance of the culture in understanding the influence of conventional and unconventional employee

appearance. From the findings and discussion of the main study, the next chapter will bring together the conclusions drawn from this thesis.

5 Chapter 5 Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the results of the main study. It showed that Middle Eastern people are more comfortable in the presence of a waitress with a conventional appearance as opposed to a waitress with an unconventional appearance. In contrast, New Zealand Europeans and Chinese people expressed comfort with both appearance styles of the waitress (conventional and unconventional). The chapter also discussed these results in terms of differences with past studies in this area. In this final chapter, the thesis will be summarised, and the theoretical implications, managerial implications, limitations and areas for future research will be provided.

5.2 Summary of the study

The motivation for this thesis was an absence of understanding the influence of employee appearance on customer comfort, and, in turn, exploring how their comfort might influence their behavioural intentions and anticipated enjoyment. Past studies have looked at different aspects of the retail environment (i.e., colour and music) and the effect they have on customer behaviour such as an increase or decrease in sales, attention to the atmosphere and purchasing outcomes (e.g., Areni & Kim, 1993; Bellizzi, & Hite, 1992; Kotler, 1973 - 1974). However, there is a gap in the literature related to the influence of retail employee characteristics, in particular, the appearance of employees. This thesis confirms that a conventional employee appearance has a positive impact on customers' comfort and this leads to positive behavioural intentions and anticipated enjoyment. Conversely, the perspectives of customers towards an unconventional employee appearance can be positive or negative depending on the customer's cultural background. Based on the findings of this study, it is assumed that an

unconventional appearance is more socially acceptable in New Zealand European and Chinese cultures than in Middle Eastern culture.

5.3   Theoretical implication

Theoretically, this thesis supports the idea that employee appearance plays an important role in the environment of a high-end restaurant. Specifically, an employee's appearance, being conventional or unconventional, influences the customer's psychological comfort. It also supports the idea that this level of customer comfort can be reflected positively or negatively in customers' behavioural intentions and anticipated enjoyment. A previous study by Karl et al. (2016) investigated the influence of unconventional employee appearance from the point of view of employees themselves but this was in a white-collar context. This thesis differs from Karl et al.'s (2016) study by investigating the influence of the conventional and unconventional employee appearance from the perspective of customer comfort and this has a direct bearing on behavioural intentions and anticipated enjoyment which will in turn have an impact on business performance.

Karl and her colleagues (2016) examined the influence of unconventional employee appearance on customer and colleague perception by sending a survey to employees. Consequently, the results were based on the perspective of employees. The findings of this thesis are based on data collected from (potential) customers and are from their perspective. Karl et al. (2016) investigated the influence of unconventional employee appearance on customer perceptions and, in turn, on service quality, whereas this study looked at the influence of conventional and unconventional employee appearance on the psychological comfort of the customer. In turn, the influence of customer comfort was linked to customers' behavioural intentions and anticipated enjoyment.

The context of this thesis' scenario was a high-end restaurant while Karl and her colleagues investigated employees in white-collar occupations such as banking and health care. This thesis used an experimental design survey which included images of the conventional and unconventional appearance of the waitress, and images of the restaurant image and provided a detailed written scenario. This design may have elicited more realistic responses.

The findings of this thesis showed that Middle Eastern people perceive unconventional appearance negatively. This is consistent with the findings of Karl et al. (2016) which showed that Turkish and Mexican people perceived unconventional employee appearance negatively. However, the current thesis differs from Karl et al. as its sample was from the wider Middle East the previous study investigated only Turkish people. Karl et al. (2016) investigated only two cultures (i.e. Turkey and Mexico) both of which represent collectivist cultures, whereas this current study drew its sample from New Zealand European culture representing the individualist dimension and Chinese as well as Middle Eastern cultures representing the collectivist dimension. This gives greater breadth and depth to the findings.

There is a number of studies that have investigated the influence employee appearance in reference to tattoos, in terms of acceptance, appropriateness and the reverse (e.g. Ruggs, 2013). However, none of these studies have investigated the influence of employee appearance on customer comfort as moderated by culture. Notably, this thesis investigates this influence based on the S-O-R paradigm in a mode consistent with the psychological needs of customers from the three cultures mentioned above. This study looked in particular at how an unconventional or conventional employee appearance (S) plays a fundamental role in customer comfort (O) moderated by culture. In turn, how does this affect the behavioural intentions and anticipated enjoyment (R) of the customers. This thesis also discussed and presented its findings from the lens of signalling theory (see Spence, 1973, 2002). The

findings of this thesis show that customers with a cultural background that does not accept an unconventional appearance signaled it with negative perceptions that lead to a decrease in their level of comfort. Conversely, a conventional appearance could be signaled with positive perceptions and an increase in the comfort of the customer.

5.4 Managerial implications

The expectation regarding the influence of employee appearance (conventional vs. unconventional) has been supported when seen from the lens of culture. Results of this thesis show that customer comfort level related to conventional employee appearance is similarly positive among the three cultures (New Zealand European, Chinese and Middle Eastern). When the employee's appearance is unconventional, this level graduates from being comfortable to being less comfortable from the perspectives of the respondents from these three cultures. Restauranteurs and restaurant managers of other types of restaurants may wish to have policies allowing employees to wear whatever they desire (i.e. the freedom to express themselves). As we move into an era of diversity, more organisations are going to embrace more open appearance/clothing policies for their employees.

However, based on the results from the three cultures studied in this research, a conventional appearance brought forth a similar level of comfort, but the level of comfort differed towards the unconventional appearance and restaurateurs and managers may wish to avoid unconventional employee appearance in high-end restaurants particularly. They could do this fist to distinguish their restaurant environment from other types of restaurant which do not stop employees exhibiting their tattoos. In multi-cultural societies, such as New Zealand, which include people from cultural backgrounds such as the Middle East, which do not feel as comfortable with tattoos, restaurant managers may wish to take this into account. It is

generally regarded as important that restaurateurs make their customers feel as comfortable as they would at home.

5.5   Limitations and future research

As with any research, this thesis had some limitations. These are set out below along with areas for future research.

- As the selected environment was a high-end restaurant, the findings of this thesis may not serve researchers who are investigating other types of restaurants (e.g., casual and fast food restaurants). This is because customer expectations may differ in these other styles of restaurant. In some of these types customers do not usually pay attention to the restaurant's physical environment to quite the same degree. Hence, in future research, the focus of this study could be extended to other types of restaurant to make a wider comparison.

- In this thesis the image of unconventional employee appearance included arm tattoos and a purplish hair colour for a waitress at a high-end restaurant. A different location for the tattoo, for example, the neck or another hair colour, for example, green, could be investigated in the future research at both high-end restaurant environments and other restaurant type environments. The results may differ from those of this study as customers who accepted arm tattoos may not accept neck tattoos or green hair colour. Thus future researchers could investigate the response of people to tattoos on other parts of the body or piercings, especially when accompanied by tattoos.

- As culture is such a rich area for research, future research could focused on only one or two culture/s instead of the three cultures considered for this thesis (i.e., New

Zealand European, Chinese and Middle Eastern). Alternatively, researchers could choose many different cultures and the same high-end restaurant environment included in this thesis.

- This research investigated one individualist culture (i.e., New Zealand European) and two collectivist cultures (i.e. Chinese and Middle Eastern), so future research could investigate more individualist and collectivist cultures or could look at an equal number of cultures of each type.

- This thesis contributed to research on store atmosphere or servicescape in regard to staff appearance by adding a cultural element. It employed the S-O-R paradigm and the signalling theory. Future research could adopt a different theory, such as role theory.

- In this thesis, the scale for anticipated enjoyment was measured using 18 items developed by Kendzierski and DeCarlo (1991). Future research can enhance the measurement of anticipated enjoyment by using scales that have been adapted/adopted by scholars in the marketing context.

- In terms of data collection, this survey's sample was only from New Zealand. Selecting a different country could be an option for research in the future in addition to selecting a different approach, such as a focus group or interview. Investigating different populations is important to discover differences and make a comparison with people who have similar cultural backgrounds but are from different countries. The results may differ from the participants in New Zealand and those from another country who share a similar cultural background, for example, Chinese.

Employee appearance plays an important role in a business environment. Within multi-cultural societies there are various cultures, meaning there can be customers with varying cultural backgrounds. Each culture is distinct from another in its traditions and norms and people may follow or ignore these norms. As was proved by this study, an unconventional employee appearance can signal to some customers, such as those from the Middle Eastern cultures, negative perceptions and therefore less comfortable feelings while others may be accepting of it. A decrease in the level of comfort leads to negative behavioural intentions and reduced anticipated enjoyment. In short, understanding customers from different cultural-backgrounds can decrease negative results and thereby promote positive ones such as positive behavioural intentions and anticipated enjoyment.

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Appendix A: Ethics Approval

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

Auckland University of Technology
D-88, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, NZ
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

21 November 2018

Crystal Yap
Faculty of Business Economics and Law

Dear Crystal

Ethics Application:18/377 **Retail's social side: How does it impact shoppers from different cultures**

I wish to advise you that the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) has **approved** your ethics application at its meeting of 19 November 2018.

This approval is for three years, expiring 19 November 2021.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using form EA2, which is available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics.
2. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using form EA3, which is available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics.
3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form: http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics.
4. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
5. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval for access for your research from another institution or organisation then you are responsible for obtaining it. If the research is undertaken outside New Zealand, you need to meet all locality legal and ethical obligations and requirements. You are reminded that it is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard.

For any enquiries please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz

Yours sincerely,

Kate O'Connor
Executive Manager
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: halimahalkhairi@gmail.com; megan.phillips@aut.ac.nz

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

24 August 2018

Project Title

How the level of shopper's comfort influences their perceptions in the restaurant

An Invitation

Dear Sir/Madam,

You are invited to participate in a research project which is interested in investigating the comfort level and perception toward the employee's appearance at a restaurant. This research will be conducted by Halimah Alkhairi, a student from the Department of Marketing, AUT Business School within the Faculty of Business, Economics & Law at Auckland University of Technology.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this study is to examine how employee's appearance affects the comfort level and perception of the customer at a restaurant.

What are the inclusion criteria?

Please read the following information before starting to participate:

1) The study targets people within New Zealand, namely, those who are currently living in NZ.
2) The present study invites New Zealand European, Chinese and Middle Eastern people to participate in the study.
3) The present study targets people who are18 years of age and above.

What will happen in this research?

The survey will include images followed by questions. There will be a restaurant image as well as a staff image and you will be asked to read a scenario under this image. This will be followed by questions you will need to answer to complete this survey.

Are there any discomfort, embarrassment and risks?

The participants will be anonymous since there no required questions asking for their personal details, such as, names, address and email. Demographic questions only require the participant's information which can be used in a comparison, such as, age, education level and so forth. In case the participants do not want to answer any of the questions, they are able to withdraw from the study or simply move on to the next question.

Are there any benefits?

Learning more about the behaviours of shoppers will be a benefit that will be generated from this research for retailers, marketers and researchers in different areas, such as, marketing and retailing. Also, the primary researcher, Halimah Alkhairi, will benefit since this research allows her to fulfil the required criteria for achieving her Master's from Auckland University of Technology. In addition, this research will benefit the participants because they are considered to be shoppers, in increasing their comfort as it will highlight what can increase or decrease this important factor (shopper's comfort) and thus working on serving them in a way which is able to enhance this factor.

How can I guarantee my privacy?

The survey will not require your name and all the data of the survey will be anonymised. Also, the data will not be linked back to any individual and it will be stored and destroyed safely. In addition, the data collected will remain confidential. The information will be kept in a safe (locked) place. You will not be identified in the final reporting. The findings will be reported in aggregate.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There will be an online survey to complete. This will take about 15 minutes as a maximum. This time will include the reading of the introductory page and filling out the survey.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You are invited to consider and respond to this invitation within one month.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Filling out the questionnaire will be taken as consent to partake in the research.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

You may view for a synopsis of the results by visiting the following URL: _____

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

If you have any concern, you are able to contact the research supervisors:

The primary supervisor: Dr Crystal Yap, crystal.yap@aut.ac.nz, +64 9 921 9999 ext. 5800

The secondary supervisor: Dr Megan Phillips, mphillip@aut.ac.nz, +64 9 921 9999 ext. 5428

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, Kate O'Connor, *ethics@aut.ac.nz*, 09 921 9999 ext. 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

RESEARCHER CONTACT DETAILS:

Halimah Alkhairi, halimahalkhairi@gmail.com, +64 21 024 75365

The Primary Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr Crystal Yap, crystal.yap@aut.ac.nz, +64 9 921 9999 ext. 5800

The Secondary Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr Megan Phillips, mphillip@aut.ac.nz, +64 9 921 9999 ext. 5428

Appendix C: The dining scenario

Imagine you have just entered this restaurant a new place you had booked for dinner. The friendly waitress greets you professionally at the entrance with a smile "Hello, how are you this evening? May I take your name and direct you to the coat check, while we prepare your table?" and asks do you have a booking? You reply yes, and give your name. The waitress promptly finds your booking and takes you to your table. Water is brought for you while you are sitting and the waitress begins to fill your glass whilst asking if you would like to begin with a drink from the menu. She gives you time to look at the menu, and then promptly returns to take your drink order. Whilst waiting for your drink you have a quick look through the menu and find a dish you would like to try. The waitress brings your drink and asks if you are ready to order? You say "yes" and order a dish.

Appendix D: Sample of the experimental stimuli images

Conventional Appearance vs. Unconventional Appearance:

High-End Restaurant:

Appendix E: The pre-test
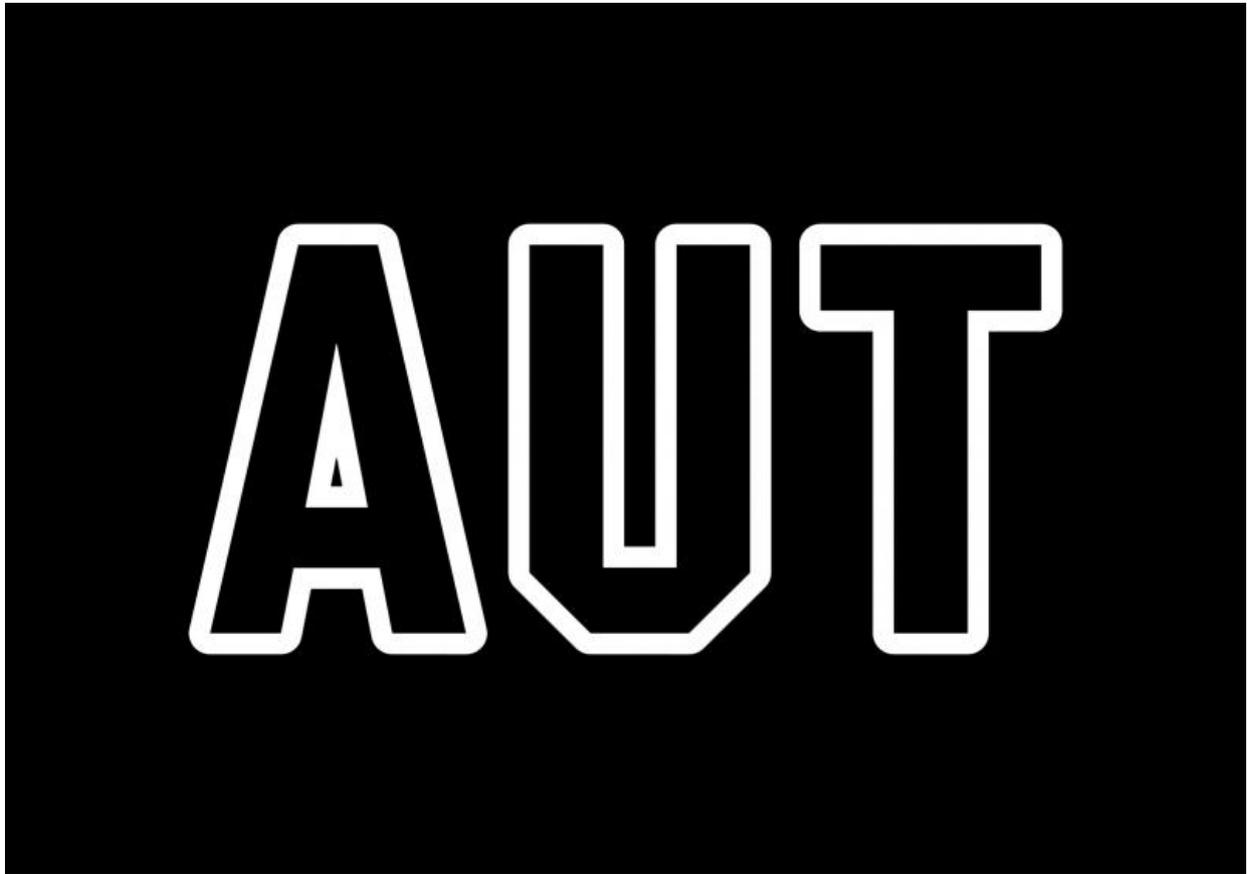
Project Title How the level of shopper's comfort influences their perceptions in the restaurant **An Invitation**
 Dear Sir/Madam,
 You are invited to participate in a research project which is interested in investigating the comfort level and perception toward the employee's appearance at a restaurant. This research will be conducted by Halimah Alkhairi, a student from the Department of Marketing, AUT Business School within the Faculty of Business, Economics & Law at Auckland University of Technology.
 What is the purpose of this research?
 The purpose of this study is to study customer's perceptions and their experiences in the restaurant setting.
 What are the inclusion criteria?
 Please read the following information before starting to participate: 1)   The study targets people currently living in NZ. 2)   The present study invites New Zealand European, Chinese and Middle Eastern people to participate in the study. 3)   The present study targets

people who are 18 years of age and above.

What will happen in this research?

The survey will include images followed by questions. There will be a restaurant image as well as a staff image and you will be asked to read a scenario under this image. This will be followed by questions you will need to answer to complete this survey.

Are there any discomfort, embarrassment and risks?

The participants will be anonymous since there no required questions asking for their personal details such as names, address and email. Demographic questions only require the participant's information which can be used in a comparison such as age, education level and so forth. In case the participants do not want to answer any of the questions, they are able to withdraw from the study or simply move on to the next question.

Are there any benefits?

Learning more about the customer's experience will be a benefit that will be generated from this research for retailers, marketers and researchers in different areas such as marketing and retailing. Also, the primary researcher, Halimah Alkhairi, will benefit since this research allows her to fulfil the required criteria for achieving her Master's from Auckland University of Technology.

How can I guarantee my privacy?

The survey will not require your name and all the data of the survey will be anonymised. Also, the data will not be linked back to any individual and it will be stored and destroyed safely. In addition, the data collected will remain confidential. The information will be kept in a safe (locked) place. You will not be identified in the final reporting. The findings will be reported in aggregate.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There will be an online survey to complete. This will take about five minutes as a maximum. This time will include the reading of the introductory page and filling out the survey.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You are invited to consider and respond to this invitation within one week.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Filling out the questionnaire will be taken as consent to partake in the research.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

Please contact the researcher (email:halimahalkhairi@gmail.com) should you wish a synopsis of the results

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

If you have any concern, you are able to contact the research supervisors: The primary supervisor: Dr Crystal Yap, crystal.yap@aut.ac.nz, +64 9 921 9999 ext 5800 The secondary supervisor: Dr Megan Phillips, mphillip@aut.ac.nz, +64 9 921 9999 ext 5428 Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, Kate O'Connor, ethics@aut.ac.nz, 09 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

Halimah Alkhairi, halimahalkhairi@gmail.com, +64 21 024 75365

The Primary Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr Crystal Yap, crystal.yap@aut.ac.nz, +64 9 921 9999 ext 5800

The Secondary Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr Megan Phillips, mphillip@aut.ac.nz, +64 9 921 9999 ext 5428 Many thanks for your assistance with this research project - your input is very much appreciated.

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Q Do you belong to.. (Please select one)

◯ New Zealand European (1)

◯ Chinese (2)

◯ Middle Eastern (3)

◯ Other (4)

Skip To: End of Survey If Do you belong to.. (Please select one) = Other

End of Block: Culture question

Start of Block: Conventional appearance

C

Q2 On a scale of 1-7, rate how you feel about the person's appearance?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Very unconventional	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very conventional
Very unfriendly	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very friendly
Very unapproachable	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very approachable

Please take a moment to review both of the images below

Q3 I feel this restaurant is

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Expensive	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Inexpensive
High-end	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Low-end
Upmarket	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Downmarket

Q4 On a scale of 1-7, how appropriate/acceptable/favourable is the waitress's appearance to the previous image for the current restaurant environment.

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Very inappropriate	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very appropriate
Very unacceptable	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very acceptable
Very unfavourable	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very favourable

End of Block: Conventional appearance

Start of Block: Unconventional appearance

Q1 On a scale of 1-7, rate how you feel about the person's appearance?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Very unconventional	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very conventional
Very unfriendly	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very friendly
Very unapproachable	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very approachable

Please take a moment to review both of the images below

Q3 I feel this restaurant is

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Expensive	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Inexpensive
High-end	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Low-end
Upmarket	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Downmarket

Q4 On a scale of 1-7, how appropriate/acceptable/favourable is the waitress's appearance to the previous image for the current restaurant environment.

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Very inappropriate	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very appropriate
Very unacceptable	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very acceptable
Very unfavourable	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very favourable

 Many thanks for your assistance with this research project - your input is very much appreciated

Appendix F: The main study

How the level of shopper's comfort influences their perceptions in the restaurant

Project TitleThe level of shopper comfort and its influence on perceptions of a restaurant.
An Invitation
Dear Sir/Madam,
You are invited to participate in a research project which is interested in investigating the comfort level and perception of the restaurant. This research will be conducted by Halimah Alkhairi, a student at the Department of Marketing, AUT Business School within the Faculty of Business, Economics & Law at Auckland University of Technology.
What is the purpose of this research?
The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of shopper comfort and perceptions of the restaurant.
What are the inclusion criteria?
Please read the following information before starting to participate:1)   The study targets people within New Zealand namely, those who are currently living in NZ.2)   The present study invites New Zealand European, Chinese and Middle Eastern people to participate in the

study.3)   The present study targets people who are 18 years of age and above.**What will happen in this research?**

The survey will include images followed by questions. There will be a restaurant image as well as a staff image and you will be asked to read a scenario under this image. This will be followed by questions you need to answer to complete this survey.

Are there any discomfort, embarrassment and risks?

Participation will be anonymous and there will be no personally identifying information collected such as names, address and email. If you do not want to answer any of the questions, you are able to withdraw from the study or simply move on to the next question, at any time.**Are there any benefits?**

Learning more about the behaviours of shoppers will be a benefit that will be generated from this research for retailers, marketers and researchers. Also, the primary researcher, Halimah Alkhairi, will benefit as this research allows her to fulfil the required criteria for achieving her Master's from Auckland University of Technology. In addition, this research will benefit consumers as it will highlight what can increase or decrease shopper comfort within a restaurant environment and thus enable retailers to work on serving customers in a way that will enhance this factor.**How can I guarantee my privacy?**

The survey will not require your name and the data will be anonymised. Also, the data will not be linked back to any individual and it will be stored and destroyed safely. In addition, the data collected will remain confidential. Information will be kept in a safe (locked) place. You will not be identified in the final reporting. The findings will be reported in aggregate.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There will be an online survey to complete. This will take about 15 minutes at a maximum. This time will include the reading of the introductory page and filling out the survey.**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

You are invited to consider and respond to this invitation within one month.**How do I agree to participate in this research?**

Filling out the questionnaire will be taken as consent to partake in the research.**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

You may view a synopsis of the results by visiting the following URL: _____**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

If you have any concern, you are able to contact the research supervisors:The primary supervisor: Dr Crystal Yap, crystal.yap@aut.ac.nz, +64 9 921 9999 ext 5800The secondary supervisor: Dr Megan Phillips, mphillip@aut.ac.nz, +64 9 921 9999 ext 5428Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, Kate O'Connor, ethics@aut.ac.nz, 09 921 9999 ext 6038.**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

Please keep this Information Sheet for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:Researcher Contact Details:Halimah Alkhairi, halimahalkhairi@gmail.com, +64 21 024 75365**The Primary Supervisor Contact Details:** Dr Crystal Yap, crystal.yap@aut.ac.nz, +64 9 921 9999 ext 5800**The Secondary Supervisor Contact Details:** Dr Megan Phillips, mphillip@aut.ac.nz, +64 9 921 9999 ext 5428Many thanks for your assistance with this research project - your input is very much appreciated.

End of Block: Participant Information Sheet

Q1 Do you belong to.. (Please select one)

○ New Zealand European (1)

○ Chinese (2)

○ Middle Eastern (3)

○ Other (4)

Skip To: End of Survey If Do you belong to.. (Please select one) = Other

End of Block: A

Start of Block: scenario

Instructions (steps to apply) * Please look at the high-end restaurant image and the image of the waitress above* Please take your time viewing these images. Really try and imagine being there. * Whilst reading the scenario below, please keep the above image in mind. **Dining Scenario** Imagine you have just entered this high-end restaurant, a place you have a reservation for dinner. The friendly waitress greets you professionally at the entrance with a smile "Hello, how are you this evening? May I take your name and direct you to the coat check, while we prepare your table?" and asks do you have a booking? You reply yes, and give your name. The waitress promptly finds your booking and takes you to your table. Water is brought for you while you are sitting and the waitress begins to fill your glass whilst asking if you would like to begin with a drink from the menu. She gives you time to look at the menu, and then promptly returns to take your drink order. Whilst waiting for your drink you have a quick look through the menu and find a dish you would like to try. The waitress brings your drink and asks if you are ready to order? You say "yes" and order a dish.

Reminder: Please keep the above scenario in mind while you are answering the following questions

Q60

Q61

- -

B **How comfortable do you feel in this restaurant?**

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Very uncomfortable	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very comfortable
Very uneasy	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very much at ease
Very tense	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very relaxed
Insecure	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Secure
Worried	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Worry free
Distressed	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Calm
Turbulent	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Serene
Troublesome	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Peace of mind

Q62

Q63

C In regards to the waitress in this restaurant, please answer the following questions:

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I can identify with the waitress in this restaurant (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am similar to the waitress in this restaurant (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The waitress is like me (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The waitress comes from a similar background to myself (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I fit right in with the waitress (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I liked the appearance of the waitress (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The waitress was dressed appropriately (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The waitress looked nice (8)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The waitress looked like she is my type of person (9)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q64

Q65

D **On a scale of 1-7, rate how likely you are to agree with the following**

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I would patronize this restaurant (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would be willing to visit this restaurant (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would be willing to repeat the experience at this restaurant with my friends (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would say positive things about going to this restaurant to my friends (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would recommend going to this restaurant to someone who seeks my advice (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would encourage friends and relatives to go to this restaurant (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Going to this restaurant is my first choice for	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

entertainment (7)							
I will go to this restaurant over the next few months (8)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would continue to go to this restaurant if the prices slightly increased (9)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I'd pay a higher price to go to this restaurant than I'd pay to go to other restaurant (10)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I like staying at this restaurant for long periods of time (11)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I enjoy spending time at this restaurant (12)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I frequently stay at this restaurant longer than I had planned (13)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q66

Q67

E Please rate how you feel *at the moment* about the restaurant you have been imagined

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
I enjoy it	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I hate it
I feel bored	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I feel interested
I dislike it	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I like it
I find it pleasurable	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I find it unpleasurable
I am very absorbed in this restaurant	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I am not at all very absorbed in this restaurant
It's no fun at all	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	It's a lot of fun
I find it energizing	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I find it tiring
It makes me depressed	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	It makes me happy
It's very pleasant	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	It's very unpleasant
I feel good physically while doing it	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I feel bad physically while doing it
It's very invigorating	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	It's not at all invigorating
I am very frustrated by it	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I am not at all frustrated by it
It's very gratifying	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	It's not at all gratifying
It's very exhilarating	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	It's not at all exhilarating
It's not at all stimulating	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	It's very stimulating
It gives me a strong sense of accomplishment	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	It does not give me any strong sense of

| | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | accomplishment at all |

| It's very refreshing | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | It's not at all refreshing |
| I felt as though I would rather be doing something else | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | I felt as though there was nothing else I would rather be doing |

Q68

Q69

To what extent do you agree with the statement

	Not at all (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	Very much so (7)
The staff members appearance strikes me as unconventional (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Please indicate which age group do you belong to

○ (18 – 29) (1)

○ (30 – 40) (2)

○ (41-51) (3)

○ (52-62) (4)

○ (63+) (5)

What is your gender (Please tick one)

○ Male (1)

○ Female (2)

Are you (Select all the apply)

☐ student (1)

☐ Company employee (2)

☐ Self-employed (3)

☐ Professional (4)

☐ Civil servant (5)

☐ Housewife/Househusband (6)

☐ Retired (7)

☐ Other_____ (Please specify) (8)

_____

Your education level is (Please tick one)

○ High school graduate or below (1)

○ Professional (2)

○ University graduate (3)

○ Postgraduate level (4)

What is your yearly income overall (Please tick one)

○ Less than $15,000 (1)

○ ($15,000 – $29,999) (2)

○ ($30,000- $49,999) (3)

○ ($50,000- $64,999) (4)

○ ($65,000-$80,000) (5)

○ Over $80,000 (6)

Q53 **Please answer the following questions:**

Q54 What do you think the purpose of this study was?

_____

Q55 What do you believe the questions being tested in this study are?

_____

Instructions (steps to apply) * Please look at the high-end restaurant image and the image of the waitress above* Please take your time viewing these images. Really try and imagine being there. * Whilst reading the scenario below, please keep the above image in mind. **Dining Scenario** Imagine you have just entered this high-end restaurant, a place you have a reservation for dinner. The friendly waitress greets you professionally at the entrance with a smile "Hello, how are you this evening? May I take your name and direct you to the coat check, while we prepare your table?" and asks do you have a booking? You reply yes, and give your name. The waitress promptly finds your booking and takes you to your table. Water is brought for you while you are sitting and the waitress begins to fill your glass whilst asking if you would like to begin with a drink from the menu. She gives you time to look at the menu, and then promptly returns to take your drink order. Whilst waiting for your drink you have a quick look through the menu and find a dish you would like to try. The waitress brings your drink and asks if you are ready to order? You say "yes" and order a dish.

Reminder: Please keep the above scenario in mind while you are answering the following questions

Q71

Q72

- -

Q44 **How comfortable do you feel in this restaurant?**

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Very uncomfortable	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very comfortable
Very uneasy	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very much at ease
Very tense	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very relaxed
Insecure	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Secure
Worried	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Worry free
Distressed	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Calm
Turbulent	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Serene
Troublesome	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Peace of mind

Q73

Q74

Q45 In regards to the waitress in this restaurant, please answer the following questions:

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I can identify with the waitress in this restaurant (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am similar to the waitress in this restaurant (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The waitress is like me (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The waitress comes from a similar background to myself (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I fit right in with the waitress (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I liked the appearance of the waitress (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The waitress was dressed appropriately (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The waitress looked nice (8)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The waitress looked like she is my type of person (9)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q75

Q76

Q46 On a scale of 1-7, rate how likely you are to agree with the following

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I would patronize this restaurant (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would be willing to visit this restaurant (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would be willing to repeat the experience at this restaurant with my friends (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would say positive things about going to this restaurant to my friends (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would recommend going to this restaurant to someone who seeks my advice (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would encourage friends and relatives to go to this restaurant (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Going to this restaurant is my first choice for	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

entertainment (7)						
I will go to this restaurant over the next few months (8)	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
I would continue to go to this restaurant if the prices slightly increased (9)	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
I'd pay a higher price to go to this restaurant than I'd pay to go to other restaurant (10)	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
I like staying at this restaurant for long periods of time (11)	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
I enjoy spending time at this restaurant (12)	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
I frequently stay at this restaurant longer than I had planned (13)	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Q77

Q78

Q52 Please rate how you feel *at the moment* about the restaurant you have been imagined

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
I enjoy it	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I hate it
I feel bored	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I feel interested
I dislike it	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I like it
I find it pleasurable	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I find it unpleasurable
I am very absorbed in this restaurant	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I am not at all very absorbed in this restaurant
It's no fun at all	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	It's a lot of fun
I find it energizing	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I find it tiring
It makes me depressed	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	It makes me happy
It's very pleasant	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	It's very unpleasant
I feel good physically while doing it	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I feel bad physically while doing it
It's very invigorating	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	It's not at all invigorating
I am very frustrated by it	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I am not at all frustrated by it
It's very gratifying	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	It's not at all gratifying
It's very exhilarating	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	It's not at all exhilarating
It's not at all stimulating	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	It's very stimulating
It gives me a strong sense of	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	It does not give me any strong

accomplishment								sense of accomplishment at all
It's very refreshing	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	It's not at all refreshing
I felt as though I would rather be doing something else	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I felt as though there was nothing else I would rather be doing

Q79

Q80

Q56 **To what extent do you agree with the statement**

	Not at all (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	Very much so (7)
The staff members appearance strikes me as unconventional (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q47 Please indicate which age group do you belong to

○ (18 – 29) (1)

○ (30 – 40) (2)

○ (41-51) (3)

○ (52-62) (4)

○ (63+) (5)

Q48 What is your gender (Please tick one)

○ Male (1)

○ Female (2)

Q49 Are you (Select all the apply)

☐ student (1)

☐ Company employee (2)

☐ Self-employed (3)

☐ Professional (4)

☐ Civil servant (5)

☐ Housewife/House husband (6)

☐ Retired (7)

☐ Other_____ (Please specify) (8)

_____

Q50 Your education level is (Please tick one)

◯ High school graduate or below (1)

◯ Professional (2)

◯ University graduate (3)

◯ Postgraduate level (4)

Q51 What is your yearly income overall (Please tick one)

◯ Less than $15,000 (1)

◯ ($15,000 – $29,999) (2)

◯ ($30,000- $49,999) (3)

◯ ($50,000- $64,999) (4)

◯ ($65,000-$80,000) (5)

◯ Over $80,000 (6)

End of Block: F- Demographic information.

Start of Block: G

Please answer the following questions:

What do you think the purpose of this study was?

_____

What do you believe the questions being tested in this study are?

_____

End of Block: G

Q57 Many thanks for your assistance with this research project - your input is very much appreciated.