Factors influencing the airport customer experience:

A case study of Auckland International Airport's customers

Erwin Losekoot

A thesis submitted to

Auckland University of Technology

in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

2015

Faculty of Business and Law

Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the factors influencing the airport customer experience. Much current research and management effort on airports focuses on efficiency, effectiveness, speed of processing and rankings on international league tables. These measures seem to reward those airports which can best move the largest number of passengers and their luggage. The writer of this study believed that the 'experience' of the 'airport customer' (passengers and those meeting or farewelling them) is not being given sufficient prominence at a time when it is recognised that the 'experience economy' can add value and create customer loyalty.

New Zealand's largest airport was the case study location for this research, and 120 interviews were undertaken in the airport environment with people who were experiencing the airport, either as arriving or departing passengers, or those greeting or farewelling them. In addition, 10 interviews were undertaken with airport management to explore their perceptions of the airport customer experience. All interviews with airport customers were undertaken in the land-side food court area of the international terminal. A plan of the airport is provided in Appendix 2 to assist the reader in understanding the layout of the airport. The guided conversations were focused on encouraging participants to share their perspective of the airport customer experience in order to build on what is already known from the quantitative surveys of passengers which are the more common form of research into airports. Together with the above data, the writer also kept a detailed research diary with observations made over the course of the data gathering phase. Hermeneutics guided the interpretive process which resulted in a number of overarching themes or notions which form the basis of this study's findings. These include processes, people, physical environment and 'placeness'. However, the research also uncovered what the writer has termed a 'personal travel philosophy'. There was a significant number of people who, despite delays and other obstacles to their travel plans, appeared to be remarkably content with their lot at the airport, and this term is used to describe that group.

The research concludes with a proposed model of the airport customer experience addressing five aspects – physical environment, processing, people, placeness and personal travel philosophy – and provides recommendations for airport management and opportunities for further academic research both in airports and in congruous areas

such as hospitals. Airport management must spend time making people feel welcome if these spaces are to be perceived as hospitable places. The contribution that this thesis makes to the body of knowledge is a deeper understanding of the factors influencing the airport customer experience in the customers' own words. It allows the voices of airport customers to be heard in a way that has not previously happened, in part because the dominant paradigm is a positivist one of facts, figures, benchmarks and league tables. By taking the time to listen carefully in an open-ended discussion, this research has identified much of what the airport customer really feels about the space they are obliged to spend an increasing amount of time in.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

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.

Signed _____

Date _____

Acknowledgements

This thesis could not have been completed without the support of many people.

I would like to thank the management of Auckland International Airport Ltd. for listening patiently to my initial plan and allowing me access to the terminal building.

The managers of other organisations operating at the airport whether as government departments, consultants, contractors or concessionaires.

The many airport customers who gave me their time and thoughts on their experiences either at the time or later by e-mail.

My supervisors Professor Dr J Nevan Wright and Associate Professor Dr Michael Lück.

AUT who awarded me a Vice-Chancellor's Doctoral Study Award scholarship for six months allowing me to complete the study.

Professor Liz Smythe and members of the Heideggerian discussion group who met on wet Wednesday afternoons in Akoranga.

Dr Larry Powell who helped me to see how Heidegger, hermeneutics and Maslow are all connected through a search for the meaning of things.

Julia Sibley and the Savoy Educational Trust who gave me my opening into the academic environment through their sponsorship of the Sir Hugh Wontner Lectureship.

My children, who have come to understand the cost of doing a PhD.

My three External Examiners: Emeritus Prof. Richard Butler; Prof. Arch Woodside and Reader Dr. Peter Lugosi who gave me helpful suggestions and feedback which have improved this thesis.

Finally I would like to thank those colleagues who surrounded me at the start of this journey at The Scottish Hotel School, University of Strathclyde in Glasgow and those who supported me to finish it at Auckland University of Technology in Auckland.

To the memory of my grandfather Stephanus Franken who I never met and who never got to finish his PhD.

This thesis was granted ethics approval (Ref: 12/69) by AUTEC on 15 May 2012.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Aim and scope of the research

Airports are major economic drivers not just for a city or region, but often for the whole country. They (and the city they are located in) may also act as a cultural and symbolic gateway to a country (Lohmann & Duval, 2014). It is therefore desirable that those using the airport have a positive experience. However, airport management face considerable challenges as there are many different segments of airport users, from luxury to budget, and frequent business flyers to holiday travellers. Each may have different needs, and the airport must find a way to meet those needs. An additional challenge in doing this is that there are many different organisations involved in the creation of the airport customer's experience, ranging from private to public, retail to regulatory. In this study the needs of the customer will be investigated using a phenomenological approach with the focus being on the customer's lived experience rather than the priorities of the airport management, which is the focus of much existing airport research.

Previous research which will also be reviewed in this thesis focused on airport efficiency rather than on the lived experience of those using the facility. As New Zealand's largest airport (twice the size of Wellington airport), it is used by 14 million passengers a year, over 70% of international visitors to New Zealand, and the international terminal is therefore a crucial gateway to the entire country. Semi-structured interviews, participant and non-participant observation were used in this study, as well as document analysis and netnography data gathering methods in the exploratory phase of this research (Rageh, Melewar, & Woodside, 2013). Poulston and Pernecky (2014, p. 16) point out that "exploratory research requires not only personal interest and passion about the selected research topic but also demands substantial fieldwork".

There are many organisations and businesses operating within the footprint of the modern airport, including transport operators, retailers, tour operators and hotel and restaurant operators. These are outside the scope of this study which focuses specifically on the airport customer – those people making use of the facilities in the actual airport terminal. The 'airport customer' includes those who find themselves at the airport but who may not be flying in or out on the day on which they were interviewed.

Rationale and significance of the study

The research question is 'what factors influence the airport customer experience?'. This merits investigation because airports act as an increasingly important node in modern society whether for business, leisure or to allow globally-located families to stay connected. They have considerable economic, political and social impacts on the environment that they are located in (Thompson & Clements, 2003). It is expected that international gateway airports will represent and personify entire countries and cultures while at the same time operating efficiently enough to make a major economic contribution to the region and to the wider country. New Zealand's International Visitor Arrivals Survey (Statistics New Zealand, 2013) estimates that 70% of international visitors to New Zealand come through Auckland International Airport and therefore form their first impressions of the country through their experiences in the terminal building. Likewise, those leaving the country by air have their last experience of 'kiwi hospitality' at the airport. Factories are built for efficiency, shopping malls for a variety of retail experiences, and theme parks for entertainment, but an airport increasingly needs to address all three objectives of efficiency, retail experiences and entertainment. Fuller and Harley (2004, p. 41) describe airports post the 9/11 attacks as being "part mall, part theme park, part check-point". In an ever more competitive global environment, airports must be cost-effective, with competitive landing fees, fast turnaround times and few delays. They must also protect travellers from terrorism and other crime, protect the host country from contraband and disease, be sensitive to the different circumstances and motivations people have for travelling (business, leisure, sad/joyful family occasions, education or an OE – the common name for a young New Zealander's Overseas Experience) and provide people with an ultimately satisfying and rewarding experience. The airport must achieve this irrespective of how frequently or rarely people travel, how much or little they understand how an airport works, or how much or little they have paid for the experience.

Airports already gather a considerable amount of information on customers for the purposes of national security, for economic reasons, for benchmarking their performance against other airports and also in response to government targets that have been set partially out of concern for the monopolistic environment many airports operate in. Statistics New Zealand produces the monthly *International Visitor Arrivals to New Zealand* which is compiled from the *Travel and Migration Dataset* (Statistics New Zealand, 2013) made up of electronic records supplied by the New Zealand

Customs Service (NZCS) and from the arrival and departure cards which all passengers travelling through the airport are required to complete. Similar important data harvesting exercises occur in other countries – through the Federal Aviation Administration and the Transportation Security Administration in the USA and the Canada Border Security Administration (CBSA) in Canada. A number of national agencies collect this 'advance passenger information data' for the purposes of screening for potential security risks. These exercises may collect such data as name, date of birth, gender, citizenship, travel document data, itineraries and addresses, ticket payment information and contact telephone numbers (Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, 2010). In New Zealand such information is collected by the New Zealand Customs Service (NZCS).

In addition to information for security screening, much of the routinely gathered information on airport performance is collected for economic decision-making and monitoring (such as for Statistics New Zealand, www.stats.govt.nz) or for internal management information systems (for example by AIAL Ltd who own Auckland Airport, www.aucklandairport.co.nz). Often the focus of this is to do with accountability, efficiency and effectiveness, rather than to achieve a deeper understanding of the customer experience. The 'voice of the customer' is therefore arguably not the primary reason for this data collection, and is therefore not reflected in much of the management data currently gathered. Harkonen (2012) makes the point that any person travelling generates data on their movements. In some cases this might be deliberate (postings on social media), in others it might be because someone else 'tags' a picture of the traveller, or it may be that surveillance cameras or toll booths track movements. It is argued by the author that this data and its collection by electronic means or by brief questionnaires is reductionist, whereas a phenomenological approach is anti-reductionist or about 'seeing the bigger picture' from the perspective of the airport customer. Brotherton (2005, p. 152) makes the point that "many traditional data collection instruments and procedures tend to corrupt the validity of the data they collect". Whilst a well-run airport operation is more likely to deliver a satisfactory experience than a chaotic one, such management systems may not be the ones which put the customer first, or even measure what the customer actually experiences or values. Yet as Morgan, Lugosi and Ritchie (2010, p. 7) point out, "poor experiences of services, such as transportation, accommodation and food service could lead to an overall poor experience of a destination". Global airport customer satisfaction awards, such as the Airport Council International's *Airport Service Quality Awards* run by ACI/DKMA and

the SKYTRAX *World Airport Awards*, are excellent management benchmarking tools, allowing airports to compare themselves with 'best in class' airports in their region, or of their size. The ACI survey covers seventeen areas including availability of parking and trolleys, waiting times at check in, security and baggage reclaim, information screens and signage, shopping and restaurants, availability and cleanliness of washrooms, general cleanliness and comfort of waiting areas. In 2014 the SKYTRAX world's best airport was voted to be Singapore Changi. Auckland airport was voted *best airport in the Australia Pacific region* for the fifth year in a row, the *best airport staff service for Australia Pacific* for the second year running, and second in the *best airport between 10 and 20 million annual passengers* (behind Vancouver International Airport). A summary of the top and bottom of the recorded Top 100 airports for 2012-2015 is provided (no reliable data is available on the *worst* airports). There appears to be a remarkable consistency in the top airports, and no consistency at all in the list of the bottom five.

Table 1.1: The top and bottom airports in the Top 100 airports listing on Skytrax

	2015		2014		2013		2012
				The Best			
1	Singapore Changi		Singapore Changi		Singapore Changi		Incheon Int.
2	Incheon Int.		Incheon Int.		Incheon Int.		Singapore Changi
3	Munich		Munich		Amsterdam Schiphol		Hong Kong Int.
4	Hong Kong Int.		Hong Kong Int.		Hong Kong Int.		Amsterdam Schiphol
5	Tokyo Int.		Amsterdam Schiphol		Beijing Int.		Beijing Int.
				The Worst			
96	Detroit Wayne		Chicago O'Hare		Geneva		Newark Int.
97	Malta		Charlotte/ Douglas		Pittsburgh		Philadelphia
98	Los Angeles		Warsaw		Sanya Int.		Moscow Sheremetyevo
99	Raleigh-Durham		Fukuoka		Berlin Schoenefeld		Salt Lake City
100	Mauritius		Philadelphia		Tel Aviv		Cairo

Source: www.worldairportawards.com (2015–2012)

This focus on tangible facilities and processes means that such benchmarking activities are very much delivering the answers to questions that management ask in order to better operate their facilities and more efficiently allocate their resources for the ultimate benefit of management and shareholders. There is, for example, an opportunity

4

for airport management teams to suggest questions they would like the survey companies to ask travellers. Yet there is little opportunity in these programmes to ask the travelling public and other users of the airport what their 'lived experience' (van Manen, 1990; 2014) is, and what *they* feel are the important issues in their airport experience. As Leonhardt (2000, para. 4) writes about domestic air travel in the USA, "Customer complaints to the Department of transportation have almost doubled. Virtually every independent measure of customer satisfaction has declined".

Airport surveys also focus primarily on the travellers (particularly departing passengers), ignoring farewellers and greeters, who are also customers of the airport and who therefore have (and contribute to others') airport experiences in these eponymous liminal spaces (La Shure, 2005; Merriman, 2004). It is acknowledged that the original meaning of the term 'liminality' as used by Turner (1969) was to describe people who eluded classification and categorisation – people who were about to be invested in a position of authority or social role and were therefore no longer 'normal' but had not yet assumed their new identity and therefore were temporarily required to be obedient and humble. The term comes from the Latin for 'threshold' or *'limen'* and the airport is regarded as such a threshold. The airport customer is often stripped of their status and identity while they are processed. Their biometric details are stored in a virtual space. Once through security (once they are considered to be clean or 'sterile'), they have left the country they were in but have not arrived in the one they are travelling to. This geographical understanding of the term 'liminal' is the one used in this thesis.

In order to address the aim of this research, namely to identify the factors influencing the airport customer experience, and thereby develop a deeper understanding of the airport customer experience using Auckland International Airport as a case study, this research has two objectives:

1. To develop a model of the factors influencing the airport customer experience, so as

2. To better understand the airport customer experience.

The research question *'What are the factors influencing the airport customer experience?'* is addressed through a mixed methods approach using qualitative research tools. Both qualitative and quantitative data was gathered in order to analyse existing published material as well as carrying out a series of interviews with customers of the airport and management responsible for the provision of services and facilities to these

customers (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). This variety of sources allowed triangulation of the data gathered in order to develop a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973, p. 5) of the airport experience although as not all of Geertz' conditions were met in this study it would be more appropriate to describe the data as 'rich description', as far as possible using the respondents' own words and supporting the analysis with other forms of data. A number of researchers have used the term 'traveller narratives' to describe data gathered from travellers in an unstructured manner, and this term may well be appropriate to the approach used in this study (Rozier-Rich & Santos, 2011; Vrana & Zafiropoulos, 2010; Daniels, Rodgers, &Wiggins, 2005; Noy, 2004; Obenour, 2004; Galani-Moutafi, 2000). A range of photographs illustrating how Auckland airport attempts to give the facility a 'sense of place' are included in Appendix 3. In addition to interviews with passengers and service providers, participant and non-participant observation and an exploratory 'netnography' analysis of customer-generated blogs and internet postings was conducted. Marshall and Rossman (2011) welcome the fact that researchers are no longer spending all their time defending a qualitative approach to research, and can instead focus on explaining the appropriateness of the chosen approach. McCabe and Stokoe (2010, p. 1118) argue there has been a shift, "towards qualitative methodologies and on understanding peoples endogenous experiences of tourism and holidays".

Caelli (2001) warns that the way in which one intends to conduct a study (the method) must be consistent with the philosophical and epistemological beliefs of the researcher. Discussing the experience of elderly people with cancer using a phenomenological study, Thomé, Esbensen, Dykes and Hallberg (2004, p. 408) explained

> …it is important to encourage the old person to describe his/her illness experience to increase understanding about what is meaningful for him/her to provide individual support and appropriate care.

While the airport customer experience is fortunately not normally a 'life or death' situation, it is argued that a phenomenological study leading to a better understanding will enable airport management to provide appropriate and above all meaningful care for airport customers.

History and context of the airport used in this study

Any customer experience is influenced by its context and history. The experience that Auckland airport customers have in 2014 is influenced by events, developments and decisions made in the past. This section therefore summarises the development of the

airport and some of the key events that led to the current AIAL-owned facility used by 14 million passengers per year.

The airport opened on 29 January 1966 on a twenty hectare site originally leased for £1 per month from a dairy farmer in 1928 by the Auckland Aero Club (Thompson & Clements, 2003). Construction of the current airport began in 1960 as a base for TEAL, New Zealand's international carrier. The year before New Zealand had welcomed a total of 56 299 international visitors and it was deemed essential to have a modern airport for this number to increase. Thirty-two local authorities agreed to contribute to the airport project estimated to cost £4.5 million, although that estimate was soon raised to £7.5 million to accommodate new aircraft weighing up to 225,000 kg each. This process was facilitated by Auckland City Council which ran the project until the Auckland Regional Authority (later to become Auckland Regional Council and now part of the Auckland 'supercity' administrative area) assumed control in 1964. A 'house shift' from Whenuapai to Auckland International Airport took place a week before the start of operations on 24 November 1965. A torch was carried from Auckland Town Hall by Olympic Gold Medallist Peter Snell and other athletes to the airport at Mangere. At the official opening on Saturday 29 January 1966, the Prime Minister Keith Holyoake said,

> The opening of Auckland International Airport at Mangere on 29 January 1966 is a milestone in the history of New Zealand aviation and of Auckland in particular. It represents much planning, £10 million in money and five years of physical work. It signifies Auckland's growing importance as a commercial centre and as a gateway to New Zealand (Thompson & Clements, 2003, p. 118).

The first challenge management faced was that "congestion and long delays quickly became a large and frustrating part of the Auckland airport experience" (Thompson & Clements, 2003, p. 123). A permanent terminal building was due to have replaced the temporary structure (a converted cargo shed) by the end of 1969. The press indicated their concern that temporary buildings had a habit of becoming permanent in New Zealand and raised the point that Auckland International Airport symbolised the whole nation, not just Auckland. Developments in aircraft size also made clear that any buildings would need to be built around the aircraft that landed in Auckland. The Ministry of Works Sectional Architect, Frank Ponder, is reported to have said that "designing an airport terminal complex was rather like solving a giant jigsaw puzzle" (Thompson & Clements, 2003, p. 133). When the new international terminal building finally opened on 16 December 1977 it covered 30 600m^2 (by 2003 it was three times

that size) had taken twelve years to complete (nine years late) and cost $25m. However, "this was definitely a New Zealand airport – and one that proudly showed off its heritage" (p. 157). The old interim terminal and former cargo shed was re-opened as a domestic terminal on 20 August 1979 and is still in use in 2014 although it has been extensively remodelled and refurbished many times since then. The Airport Authorities Amendment Act 1986 led the way for the creation of 'corporatised' airports and the Establishment Board of Auckland International Airport Limited in 1987 who reported that,

> The airport operation is essentially a business concern and should be operated according to sound business practice. This requires a clear perception of the needs of its clients, the users of the airport, and the ability to respond to these needs in a commercial manner (Thompson & Clements, 2003, p. 185).

The report led to the Auckland Airport Act 1987 and the establishment of Auckland International Airport Limited on 1 April 1988. However, there were considerable challenges to be addressed:

> Years of short-sighted local government management had earned the airport a poor reputation: congestion, delays, poor ventilation, substandard food and government department service standards were often the first things that came into visitors' minds when they thought about the airport (Thompson & Clements, 2003, p. 196).

2007 saw a $2.6 bn. bid for Auckland International Airport by Dubai Aerospace Enterprise for a 51% shareholding. There was a fear that direct flights to New Zealand would be reduced requiring stop-overs in Sydney, Australia for anyone wishing to travel to Auckland. In 2008 the NZ Finance Minister introduced legislation specifically to prevent Auckland International Airport being sold to overseas investors. The new legislation requires an assessment by the Overseas Investment Commission to review the sales of strategic infrastructure or 'sensitive land' under the powers of the Overseas Investment Act and restricting foreign ownership to 49% with individual foreign investors limited to 20%. It also proposed that a majority of the airport board should be New Zealand citizens. This prevented the sale of 40% of AIAL to the Canadian Pension Plan Investment Board for $1.8 bn., which was considered a very generous offer by many analysts, and the current Prime Minister John Key, (who was then in opposition), has stated the National Party would have approved the sale if they had been in power at the time of the bid. As at July 2011, AIAL had over 50 000 shareholders, with the largest single shareholder being Auckland City Council with a 22.58% shareholding.

The popularity of 'mum-and-dad' small investors in the airport perhaps indicates the importance Kiwis attach to the airport facility (Thompson & Clements, 2003).

The airport formed a joint venture with Marriott-Host (the foodservice division of the US hotel group) in September 1989 to upgrade the quality of food and beverage provision at the airport. AIAL was also one of the first airports in the world to allow passengers to purchase duty-free goods on arrival as well as departure. The 1990 Land Use Development Plan covered two decades to 2010 and included another runway as well as more car parking, international standard hotels, leisure facilities and a shopping centre. There was also a suggestion for a cinema complex. It was explicitly designed to chart a plan for moving from a transport node to a destination in its own right within the wider Auckland metropolitan area – almost 'a city within a city'. Planners were keen to emulate the success of Singapore's Changi airport. What made Auckland International Airport unusual compared to other global airports was its ability to expand as it had always been planned outside the main conurbation – allowing it to be one of the few airports to operate without a no-fly curfew at night time. The outcomes of these changes can be seen in the fact that by 1992, 45% of AIAL's income was derived from 'non-aeronautical' or 'commercial' activities. By 2000, Auckland International Airport was beginning to see the development of three distinct areas – a commercial park, a business park and an airport shopping centre.

1990 was Auckland International Airport's 25th anniversary as well as the 150th anniversary of the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi between the Māori Chiefs and the British Crown. This was therefore a good opportunity to build closer links with the *tangata whenua*, the local Māori people, and a *hui* (gathering) was held at the Tamaki Makaurau Marae at Mangere. In 1994 the Māori Queen, Dame Te Atairangikaahu and members of the Tainui tribe presented Māori carvings from a totara log to AIAL. The *tomokanga* (or 'Māori gateway' as many refer to it) has become a popular backdrop for photographs and is to many a symbol of arrival, or of returning home. In 1995 AIAL bought the Percival Gull 6 G-ADPR monoplane in which Jean Batten had made the first direct solo flight from England to New Zealand in 1936 to add to the noteworthy items held at the airport. That year also saw the establishment of Auckland International Airport's 'Bluecoats' officially called 'Ambassadors'. These (mostly retired) volunteer Aucklanders provide hospitality, information and help to visitors. Other airports have since replicated this idea.

The challenge of operating an airport is shown by the number of government agencies that operate at Auckland International Airport:

- *Airways corporation of New Zealand*. Manages NZ air space divided into Flight Information Regions.

- *Department of Internal Affairs*. Facilitates VIP and ceremonial visits.

- *Civil Aviation Authority of New Zealand*. Overseas the safety of pilots, aircraft and passengers and provides search and rescue services. CAA provides AIA with their operating licence and monitors security and safety at the airport.

- *Aviation Security Service of New Zealand*. Controls access, patrols security areas, searches aircraft and screens travellers and baggage.

- *New Zealand Customs Service*. Ensures passengers have valid traffic documentation, intercept contraband and collect any taxes due.

- *New Zealand Immigration Service*. Airport risk management and interviewing suspicious passengers in Auckland or at overseas airports.

- *Ministry for Primary Industries Biosecurity NZ*. Provides a quarantine service to detect pests and diseases (formerly the *Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry*)

- *New Zealand Police*. Deal with general misdemeanours, work with Immigration, Customs and MAF, reviews firearms movements, assist in movement of prisoners, provide security for VIPs.

Although AIAL employs only three hundred staff directly, there are almost 12,000 people employed at the airport, which is operational 365 days a year for 24 hours a day. It has a total of 48 'stands' for aircraft, including two which are large enough to accommodate the Airbus A380 holding over 550 passengers. 23 international passenger and freight airlines fly from Auckland to 35 destinations worldwide resulting in over 100 international and 300 domestic flights per day. The airport has 8,300 car parking spaces on site and 100 retail outlets in 16 000 square metres for travellers and those farewelling them. Forecasts are for Auckland International Airport to grow to accommodating 24 million international and domestic passengers by 2025 from the current figure of 13 million (Auckland Airport Fast Facts, 2011). Duval and Schiff (2011) note that for a country of 4.3 million people, it received 2.4 million visitors in

2009 who spent NZ$9.3m, or 16% of the country's export earnings. This brief overview of the history and development of the airport is important for the context of this study as it demonstrates the complexity of developing a facility which can satisfy a very diverse group of stakeholders and illustrates the complexity of the decision-making challenges that airport management and others operating at the airport face in creating an airport experience that users will be satisfied with and which New Zealanders will be proud of.

The aim of this study is to investigate the factors influencing airport customer experiences using Auckland International Airport's International Terminal as a case study. For the purpose of this study the 'customer' will be regarded as departing and arriving passengers and those farewelling and welcoming them (farewelling is a local term to describe saying goodbye to people). The study also identifies other significant 'airport customers' such as airport staff or local business employees using the airport's retail, restaurants, meeting and other facilities.

Outline of the study

This thesis consists of six chapters.

The first chapter explains the reasons for the study, identifies the objectives and states the research question. The concept of the 'airport customer' being more than just travellers is introduced. Also included in the first chapter is the rationale for selecting Auckland International Airport, along with pertinent background information regarding Auckland International Airport.

Chapter Two reviews past historical and current literature relevant to this research question to provide a holistic understanding of the airport environment, management challenges and the concept of place, non-place, placelessness and liminal space. This chapter identifies the gaps in the literature that shaped the research question and therefore the appropriate research methods for this study. It concludes by identifying the gap in the academic literature that this thesis will address, namely the factors influencing the lived experience of being an airport customer at Auckland International Airport. This gap is the contribution to knowledge that this thesis addresses.

Chapter Three discusses the research philosophy and methodology adopted to answer the research question. These accord with the ontological and epistemological position of the writer, and this is explained and reflected on. It also clarifies what is within the scope of this study.

Chapter Four provides a summary and analysis of the data gathered.

Chapter Five evaluates the findings arising from the research and relates this back to the literature and the research question. It also presents a number of possible conceptual models of the factors influencing the airport customer experience, based on the findings from the fieldwork.

Chapter Six concludes this thesis with a restatement of the research objectives, a summary of the findings and a discussion of the contribution of this study into the airport customer experience to the body of knowledge. It presents the final model of the factors influencing the airport customer experience, drawing on the developmental conceptual models discussed in Chapter Five. Limitations of the study are noted in the research issues section of this chapter, before concluding with recommendations for management and opportunities for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Introduction

Having explained the context in which this study seeks to investigate the factors influencing the airport customer experience in Chapter One, this chapter will discuss and critique the existing knowledge on this topic. Before identifying the topics to be reviewed, it may be useful to clarify the purpose of the literature review in this doctoral thesis. Boote and Beile (2005) stress the role that a thorough literature review plays – without it, they argue, it is very hard to do good research that will in turn contribute to the body of knowledge. They suggest that a literature review must do considerably more than merely providing "an exhaustive summary of prior research" (Boote & Beile, 2005, p. 3). While they acknowledge that a literature review should set the scope and context of the research, they urge researchers to also critically examine the claims made, the evidence provided, and the research methods used. By doing this, it will be possible for others who come after them to compare their results with those of others. They propose five categories of evidence which they use to score the literature reviews of a selection of theses. These are: coverage, synthesis, methodology, significance and rhetoric, and this literature review aims to address these in this critique of the existing body of knowledge on the airport customer experience.

Interestingly for researchers with a positivist perspective, they warn against PhD candidates merely re-using the literature review from their research proposal in their final body of work. Instead, they argue, the final literature review should be influenced by their methodology and data gathered during the study in a more cyclical and iterative approach and acknowledge that,

> This might mean rereading the literature in light of subsequent findings or analysis, or reading new literature to address emerging findings or ideas (Boote & Beile, 2005, p. 11).

This literature review of the airport customer experience very much followed the model of such an iterative approach. While an initial survey of the literature was certainly completed and critiqued by the university's postgraduate thesis committee, it addressed areas such as the role and purpose of airports, performance measurement at airports, and the management of airports. Once the data started to be gathered and reflected on, it became clear that in order to make a contribution to knowledge, this study needed to do

something more than replicate the existing survey approaches to customer satisfaction at airports, using Auckland airport as a case study. Furthermore, a phenomenological approach to the lived experience of the airport customer would generate new insights rather than validating existing positivist and post-positivist studies. A developing interest in the meanings that people attributed to their airport experiences led the writer to consult colleagues and literature in social geography, the meaning of place and space, and Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology. Lew and Duval (2008, p. 229) explain that "geography has frequently been defined as the study of space and place".

Within the hospitality literature Botterill (2000) was found to have discussed the question 'how can we know hospitality'. In answering that question he explains the history of academic and scientific research, pointing out that the very scientists who once rebelled against the power of the Church to decide what should be studied and how, are now the establishment and promote positivist research with the support of business. Hospitality's social constructionist approach, he argues, is unlikely to find answers using questionnaire tools that have "become the social scientist's positivist flag… data derived from the questionnaire offers itself for quantification and statistical testing" (Botterill, 2000, p. 183). He suggests that the socially constructed world of hospitality is too complex for "such simplistic association between research findings and reality" (Botterill, 2000, p. 186), but that the focus in hermeneutics on 'meaning' and 'subjectivity' makes it a very good tool, especially where the researcher uses conversational methods to gather their data.

All of these required further reading, evaluation and synthesis of the literature and provided valuable new insights.

While Boote and Beile's (2005) research has therefore been valuable in reflecting on the development and direction of this thesis, Maxwell (2006) makes a number of criticisms of their approach. In particular he proposes that the literature review in a thesis should be one that is relevant to the research question, rather than a thorough and exhaustive evaluation of the current state of research on the topic. He argues that together with an unsophisticated and uncritical summary of previous research, many doctoral literature reviews provide a 'foundationalist' approach, where everything that has been written on a topic is reported on. He feels this leads to disjointed and confusing literature reviews with the reader required to decipher what the 'golden thread' might be that ties it all together. He urges, therefore, that a PhD literature review, while taking on board Boote

and Beile's (2005) five categories, should also be "one focused on relevance rather than comprehensiveness" (Maxwell, 2006, p. 31).

In that context, this chapter will now consider the existing literature on airports. It starts with the literature on the history of airports and the management of airports as a service operation. Following that is a discussion on the nature of hospitality and the customer experience. Finally, the notion of 'place and space' is examined in the context of the airport environment.

The development of airports

This section will review the literature of the history and development of airports and consider research into the management of airports. Gordon (2008) takes a historical perspective and starts with author and poet Rudyard Kipling's comparison of air travel with arriving by boat, train or bus and his prediction in 1907 that,

> The time is near when men will receive their normal impressions of a new country suddenly and in plan, not slowly and in perspective; when the word 'inaccessible', as applied to any given spot on the surface of the globe, will cease to have any meaning. (Gordon, 2008, p. 8)

Gordon stresses the importance of an airport providing a grand entrance to a city or country, and the fact that those who travelled were the wealthy and successful elite of a country. Celebrity pilots such as Charles Lindbergh were used to promote air travel as safe after his 1927 solo non-stop flight across the Atlantic to Le Bourget near Paris. Amelia Earhart followed his feat in 1932, and Jean Batten flew solo from England to Australia in 1934 and to New Zealand in 1936 (Aimer, 2013; Gordon, 2008). These early celebrity pioneers were used to draw attention away from the statistics which showed flying was dangerous with regular fatalities. With increasing numbers of wealthy business people, celebrities and politicians travelling, it became necessary to find an equivalent to the confidence inspiring grand railway stations of the 19th century. Cities and countries recognised that airports needed to combine "beauty as well as orderliness of technical procedures" (Gordon, 2008, p. 47). The building which housed Croydon airport near London, UK was compared to a stately home and Littorio airport in Rome to a Renaissance palace, although there was regularly friction between style and functionality. The solidity of these early airports was designed to build confidence in air travel (although the Moorish-themed Boeing Airport in Burbank, California is said to have resembled the Court of Lions at the Alhambra). Le Corbusier, the Swiss-born artist and architect imagined a city built around an airport, calling it "a city made

for speed" (Gordon, 2008, p. 69) with landing platforms on the roof of skyscrapers, although he did not actually fly on an aircraft until 1928. It was after this experience that Le Corbusier is said to have started to conceive airports as open, light and airy creations which are "just sky, grass and concrete runways…two dimensional architecture. An airport should be naked" (Gordon, 2008, p. 84). However, not all architects concurred with this view. Joseph Hudnott, Dean of Architecture at Harvard University disagreed that airports had a symbolic role and felt that they should focus on solving the problems of efficient baggage handling and embarkation and disembarkation of passengers. Architect John Wood compared an airport terminal to a gangplank between land and air craft and argued,

> A successful airport should be operated like a smoothly functioning organism, providing a steady and fluent movement of aircraft, passengers, merchandise, mail and surface vehicles. (Gordon, 2008, p. 104)

By the 1950s large airports such as New York's LaGuardia were being criticised for dirty conditions, delayed and cancelled flights and poor public address systems which led to journalists commenting on the airport experience being "Ordeal-by-Loudspeaker" (Gordon, 2008, p. 145) and references to angry travellers and lost luggage.

Airport management were also beginning to realise the potential of large numbers of people with little to do and money to spend. A 1947 *Fortune* magazine piece commented that retail revenues made up one-third of airport revenue thanks to travellers and "greeters and handkerchief wavers" (Gordon, 2008, p. 154). Hyatt hotels opened its first airport hotel at Los Angeles International Airport in 1954, and Ansel Talbert of the *New York Herald Tribune* is credited with having coined the phrase 'airport city' in 1953 when he described the collection of banks, retail and entertainment facilities available at airports in the USA. Rayner (1998, p. 6) points out that "as airports become cyberized and malled up, the downtown cities they serve become increasingly redundant to the business traveller". Schaafsma, Amkreutz and Güller (2008) recognise in their book on the economic, social and environmental impact of airports on the cities they border, that terms such as "airport city", "aerotropolis", and "airport corridor" need to be defined, discussed and understood if they are to be mutually beneficial. Berlin Templehof airport was the base for the world's first passenger airline (later to become Lufthansa) in 1909. London was served by Croydon for aircraft and Southampton for sea-planes. While European airlines developed to support distant colonies, in the USA it was the government mail contracts that provided financial security. Smaller European

countries grouped together to form an airline (SAS for the Scandinavian countries) or focused on becoming an international transfer point for aircraft (KLM's Schiphol airport, Amsterdam). Schaafsma et al. (2008, p. 101) propose a model of the "airport corridor", with an "airport city" developing immediately around the airport, but also an elongated "airport corridor" linking the "airport city" to the existing "city center". They furthermore suggest that while smaller airports benefit from functions and facilities available in the existing city (e.g. Boston), larger airports may actually provide facilities which make the city more attractive (e.g. Dallas). Schaafsma et al. (2008, p. 109) quote architect Rem Koolhaas (1995) as saying,

> The airport is a new type of city, perhaps the most coherent of a fresh generation of post-industrial cities. In this the terminal building is its marketplace, cathedral and municipal town hall all rolled into one.

They argue that the development of the airport city mirrors that of the railways and railway stations in Europe and the USA last century and make the point that railway companies derived much benefit from their non-core business of renting out office and retail space in their buildings to companies servicing the travelling public. While traditional airports exist on the fringes of existing conurbations and focus on being efficient and accessible through reducing congestion, they argue that an airport city "is part of an economic system and an environment with many different players" (Schaafsma et al., 2008, p. 112). The difference is between an infrastructure company and one that is fully commercial and competitive. Malhotra, Prasad and VS (2014, p. 6) state that,

> In their transition from infrastructure providers to service providers, airports now focus on improving passenger services, better revenue generation and increasing shareholders value.

They conclude their discussion with the observation that cities are made up of human activity and interaction. While it is perhaps easy to see that an airport city is populated by employees, business people and passengers, there also needs to be a relationship with the wider community who quite possibly do not possess the economic or social capital to participate in or benefit from the proximity of an airport city. Indeed, airports may actually have closer links with other airports than with their immediate geographical hinterland, particularly in developing regions, although it might be argued that airports could be an excellent example of the somewhat controversial and contested term 'pro-poor tourism' by giving a less developed region the opportunity to benefit from

economic growth and facilitate poverty alleviation (Butler, Curran, & O'Gorman, 2013).

Albert Heino, chief architect for United Airlines had a very uncompromising view of the role and purpose of airports and insisted in 1945 that "an air terminal is a machine" rather than an object of civic pride (Gordon, 2008, p. 164). Fuller and Harley (2004, p. 17) agree, claiming that "the airport is a machine for processing things from land to air" and pointing out that what an airport is actually depends on where you are in the machine, and how and why you are moving through it.

One of the challenges that airport management and designers faced and still face is that airports must respond to changes in aircraft design. Hal Blackburn who flew the first TWA flight from LaGuardia to Paris in February 1946 is reported to have said "To the best of my knowledge I never landed on a completed airport" (Gordon, 2008, p. 167). Fuller and Harley (2004, p. 5) observe that "airports signify the rise in a new type of urban form – 'metastable forms', which are constantly changing, yet appear stable". The recent changes at Auckland International Airport, for example, were driven in part by the need to accommodate the Emirates Airlines Airbus A380s which could disembark twice as many passengers in one go as any other aircraft before them. This constant need to adapt and re-invent the structure makes airports different from other structures, and architecture critic Kidder-Smith coined a phrase to describe the functional but still aesthetic look at that many airports have, which makes them different from any other structure – 'airport-ness'. Despite this, Gordon (2008, p. 168) summarised what for many was still the ultimate goal of the increasingly complex airport environments of the second half of the 20th century.

> The holy grail for airport planners, however, was how to move large numbers of people between terminal and plane.

This suggests that the dominant discourse in airport management has very much been around an engineering perspective with a focus on efficiency rather than on the impact of that space on the airport customer experience. Yet terminal buildings were also increasingly being used as advertising for the airlines that used them. Saarinen's terminal at Idlewind (now JFK Airport in New York) was inspired by the Sydney Opera House and he is said to have wanted to emphasize feelings of movement and of transition for TWA's terminal. Artworks were chosen to represent and emphasize movement. The opening of Heathrow airport's Terminal 5 for BA and earlier this year the re-opening of Terminal 2 for Star Alliance airlines (including Air Canada, Air New

Zealand, Lufthansa, Scandinavian, Singapore and United airlines) perhaps shows the enduring desire for airlines to also have some control over the airport customer experience. Ezeh and Harris (2007, p. 59) start their piece on the importance of the servicescape (Bitner, 1990, 1992) with the 1943 quote from Winston Churchill that "we shape our buildings and afterwards, they shape us". Augé (1995) presents the vision of architects when he wrote,

> Airports, railway stations, bridges, and some hypermarkets are imagined by the greatest architects as communal spaces able to give those who use them, travellers, customers or clients, a feeling that neither time nor beauty are absent from their history (Augé, 1995, p. xxii).

Gordon (2008) reports that by the late 1960s there was already starting to be some disquiet with the similarity between airports internationally calling it "an unsettling sense of sameness" (p. 214). He regrets the disappearance of "the stylish restaurants and cocktail lounges of the 1960s" (p. 219) in airports, which have been replaced by ubiquitous standardised fast food outlets "where herds of rumpled travellers waited in line to buy processed snacks" (p. 219). Fuller and Harley (2004, p. 42) observe that "every airport speaks English" and "newness" actually becomes "sameness". A similar observation is made by McNeill (2005a) who discussed the influence of the architecture firm of *Norman Foster and Partners* on international airport design and the impact of this is discussed in a later section in this thesis on the meaning of airport 'space'.

The requirement of airports to cope with ever-increasing numbers of passengers boarding and disembarking from ever-larger aircraft led to the development at many airports of "the finger", also referred to as an "above ground tunnel", a "hallway without end" and even an "above-ground chute" (Gordon, 2008, p. 221). While these structures may well have been efficient, secure and kept passengers safe and dry in all weathers,

> Departure lounges became shadowless holding tanks, saturated with Muzak and fluorescent lighting. The experience was ersatz and vacuum-sealed from beginning to end (Gordon, 2008, p. 221).

Furthermore, passengers and those meeting and farewelling them found the experience increasingly disorientating and requiring ever more (often confusing) signage to make sense of it. Fuller and Harley (2004, p. 88) point out that "in an airport the passenger is a navigator more than a reader. Scenes are made and unmade" stressing the sense of transience that underpins an airport experience. If, however, the traveller does not

manage to match their biometric data, passwords or documentation with what the system says their identity is, they will be prevented from proceeding. In the 1960s English-born architectural historian and University of California Professor Reyner Banham described airports as resembling "a demented amoeba" (Gordon, 2008, p. 225). Adey (2006b, p. 75) compared airports to websites, saying they 'exhibit the same lack of permanence as the website'. He goes on to clarify that while airports may not move physically, its role as a node for the mobility of people, material and information means that is seen by many as in a state of permanent flux. Airports began to regularly appear in novels such as Arthur Hailey's 1968 novel *Airport* and usually in a negative light. Douglas Adams' novel *The long dark tea-time of the soul* starts in London's Heathrow airport with the words,

> It can hardly be a coincidence that no language has ever produced the expression "As pretty as an airport". Airports are ugly. Some are very ugly. Some attain a degree of ugliness that can only be the result of a special effort. This ugliness arises because airports are full of people who are tired, cross… and architects have on the whole tried to reflect this in their design. They have sought to highlight the tiredness and crossness motif with brutal shapes and nerve-jangling colours (Adams, 1988, p. 1).

Hall, Timothy and Duval (2004, p. 2) note that "tourism is irrevocably bound up with the concept of security", and Gordon (2008, p. 229) explains "Indeed, the airport was now seen as an allegory for all that was dehumanising in modern life". What made this considerably worse was the issue of security. Gordon reports that 75 000 passengers experienced a hi-jacking in the years 1969-1978 resulting in considerably increased security measures and "passengers who had once been treated like royalty were now presumed guilty until proven innocent" (Gordon, 2008, p. 233), a situation intensified by the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York in 2001. In a reversal of Le Corbusier's 'naked airport' which was almost transparent, the new style of airport architecture was to have areas which would allow the identification and separation of 'sterile' areas from those open to the general public. Dodge and Kitchin (2005, 2004) suggest that the modern traveller passes through numerous coded spaces which monitor and allow or refuse progress through the airport and leave behind a record of their presence. They outline that,

> In the airport, check in is verified by unique passenger and ticket codes; progress from check-in to plane door is sanctioned by surveillance codes and security checks; routes through the airport are guided by flight codes, departure gate

numbers, terminal numbers displayed and updated on monitors (Dodge & Kitchin, 2004, p. 198).

Their concern is that most travellers have very little idea about what the codes they use to access their e-ticket mean, or what information they contain about the passenger, leading to Banham's panopticon or Foucault's 'docile bodies' allowing national governments of countries they have not yet arrived in to screen the passenger for undesirable characteristics, behaviours or associations. Rhoades and Waguespack (2008) make the observation that the effect of 9/11 was to make travellers more accepting of intrusive and lengthy security processes, although the primary focus of their study was airlines rather than airports.

Fuller and Harley (2004, p. 44) also note the changing status of people as they are processed through the airport explaining,

> It also involves the incorporeal transformation of the travelling body into a series of processing categories, like citizen, passenger, baggage allowance, threat (code red) or innocent.

Gordon (2008, p. 236) further commented that, "transparency was now limited to the X-ray devices that scanned passengers and their personal effects, reversing and internalizing the 'view'". Comparisons were made with prisons, and indeed some architects have worked on both panopticon-like institutions (Foucault, 1977). Architect Norman Foster's designs have sought to address this, starting with Stansted airport near London where transparency and openness was the goal, and all the technical elements were routed underground. Helping this was Foster's goal of ensuring that travellers moved in a straight line through the airport towards aircraft which they could see from the moment they entered the building. At the same time as the flow of people through the airport was speeded up, architects and management were keen to move away from an impression of speed and movement, and instead installed quiet spaces or 'oases' where international business travellers - also known as the 'kinetic elite' (Sheller & Urry, 2006) – could find some peace and tranquillity. Kuala Lumpur's rain forest at the centre of the airport and Amsterdam Schiphol's recliner lounge and library are examples of this, as are the more exclusive executive lounges in airports across the globe. Fuller and Harley (2004, p. 11) describe airports as "a mobile polis of invasive security procedures and hyper-surveillance mixed in with the comfy banality of global franchising". Gordon finishes his discussion of the history of what he calls "the world's most revolutionary structure" with the perhaps rather depressing warning that airports

have become a testing ground for such technology as RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) necklaces and the controversial 'back-scatter' machines that are capable of creating an image of a traveller's naked body, that the buildings have become ever more spectacular but ever more uniform at the same time, and that ever more information is required from travellers and shared or used in whatever way the authorities see fit. He concludes that,

> All passengers, regardless of age, gender or physical condition are treated as potential terrorists, guilty until proven otherwise. The ritual of passenger processing has become more like an exercise in obedience training. A "good" passenger waits patiently in line with boarding pass and passport ready for inspection, walks through the scanning portal when ordered to do so, and never, but never, talks back, complains or questions the authority of airport personnel… at this point in the twenty-first century, all vestiges of utopia have been lost. (Gordon, 2008, p. 261)

Management of airports

Having outlined the literature on the history and development of airports, this section provides an overview of the existing knowledge on the management of airports. In a field with relatively little academic literature on the management of airports, Graham (2001) stands out with her comprehensive approach. She suggests in her preface that one reason for the lack of published literature on airports is due to the focus of many academics on the airline sector rather than the airports those machines dock at. The airline business has seen considerable drama in terms of developments, personalities, mergers, takeovers and bankruptcies in recent decades. Whilst acknowledging that there is a considerable amount of very specialist technical and engineering knowledge involved in the management of airports, she suggests that, in the end, an airport is a business, with considerable economic benefits to a region and country, as well as environmental costs. The basic function of an airport, she argues, is (Graham, 2001, p. 1),

> To enable passengers and freight to transfer from surface to air modes of transport and to allow airlines to take off and land. The basic airport infrastructure consists of runways, taxiways, apron space, gates, passenger and freight terminals, and ground transport interchanges… Airports also offer a wide variety of commercial facilities ranging from shops and restaurants to hotels, conference centres and business parks.

She acknowledges that part of the complexity of managing airports comes from the fact that the airport owner/operator/management company actually delivers only a small

proportion of the airport's services, with the rest coming from specialist sub-contractors or even government departments (e.g. Immigration, Customs, Biosecurity, Police in the case of New Zealand). In addition the ownership of airports may include stakeholders from local and national government and international infrastructure companies but also very local investors and environmental organisations, all adding to the complexity, as noted in Chapter One of this thesis.

Graham (2001) identifies 1978 as the date airlines in the USA started to move towards airline deregulation, and that this in turn precipitated a requirement for airports to move from being a government-owned provider of infrastructure services ("a public utility with public service obligations" (Graham, 2001, p. 11)) to one focused on the needs of their customers, whether that is airlines, retailers and other businesses and organisations operating at the airport, or the airport customer – the end user. Fodness and Murray (2007) agree, saying that until the 1980s, airports were viewed by many as a government owned and managed public utility. A greater emphasis was gradually put on financial management, marketing and the ability to generate revenue from non-aeronautical services. Organisational structures changed gradually to more closely resemble service organisations focused on the needs of the consumer rather than those of manufacturing functions with efficient operations as their goal. Graham (2001) reports that as early as 1984 Amsterdam Schiphol airport was generating more revenue from non-aeronautical sources than from aircraft-related activities although she also claims that statistics show that on average larger airports (greater than 25m passengers p.a.) had a larger percentage of commercial to aeronautical revenue than smaller airports (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Airport operating revenue sources

Aeronautical	Non-aeronautical
Landing fees	Concessions
Passenger fees	Rents
Aircraft parking fees	Direct sales (shops/catering etc. provided by the airport operator)
Handling fees (if provided by operator)	
Other aeronautical fees (air traffic control, lighting, airbridge)	Car park (if provided by the airport operator)
	Recharges (gas, water, electricity)
	Other non-aeronautical revenue (consultancy, visitor and business services, property development etc.)

Source: (Graham, 2001, p. 55)

Graham suggests that there has always been some disquiet about this as airports are seen by many as national symbols and therefore politically sensitive and not free to act in a purely commercial manner. Duval (2005, p. 450) in a study on public perceptions of airline alliances found that the public expected a "national airline" to have "ownership proportions that are substantially 'national' or local". In addition, airports are frequently in a monopolistic situation as there may be considerable barriers to entry for potential competitors. As Rhoades, Waguespack and Young (2000, p. 257) note, "airports, consumers and policy makers must now deal with questions of how, where and on what the money is to be spent". The first major airport privatisation happened in 1987 and was BAA plc in the UK which owned three London and four Scottish airports. A 2009 UK Competition Commission ruling has since forced it to sell off a number of those due to fears of such a monopoly situation. In the Pacific region, Auckland airport was privatised in 1998 and Sydney in 2001. One of the outcomes of privatisation is that airports are usually required to agree to price regulations such as a cost per passenger which they can charge airlines, but are also "required to undertake quality of service monitoring and to provide evidence of this to the regulator" (Graham, 2001, p. 33). The facilities and service quality audits that are conducted by organisations such as ACI/ASQ and Skytrax and discussed in Chapter One not only provide league tables and benchmarking management information, but also provide evidence to regulators that their targets are being met. It could also be argued that these awards facilitate 'knowledge transfer' activities between organisations operating in a similar environment (Weidenfeld, Williams, & Butler, 2010). Graham (2001) also suggests that as people gain more experience of different airports they will develop higher expectations of those they visit. She also acknowledges that it is often easier for smaller regional airports to score more highly on customer satisfaction surveys than some of the largest hub-and-spoke airports because people identify with and feel a sense of ownership and pride for 'their' airport. Those who score highly in such international surveys and league tables see it as a good marketing opportunity. Fodness and Murray (2007) are critical of much of this kind of benchmarking activity, claiming it is used by managers to monitor service performance measures and that they are "suspect because these measures are typically derived from managers rather than from passengers, thus lacking a true customer perspective" (Fodness & Murray, 2007, p. 492). They also warn that those aspects most likely to be measured are those which are easiest to operationalize or make quick improvements on, leading to management time being taken up making changes and improving quality on aspects which may not be important

to the customer. Researching a related topic which has an impact on the airport customer's experience, Cutting (2012) investigated the level of 'aviation English' spoken by front-line airport staff across such roles as security guards, ground handlers, catering staff and bus drivers. She makes the point that catering staff and bus drivers used more 'politeness markers' in their spoken English with airport users, although it was noted that the formal language used by security staff "could be a compensation for their threatening to slow passengers' transit, interfering in their private belongings and invading their body space" (Cutting, 2012, p. 12).

The most developed airports (e.g. Amsterdam Schiphol but also now Singapore Changi and Incheon, South Korea) are actively creating the 'airport city' concept, a twenty-four hour a day facility with retail, business, leisure and accommodation offerings (Schaafsma et al., 2008). Those who are successful at this development may aim to then take an ownership stake in other airports, both nationally and internationally. The owners of Wellington Airport in New Zealand (Infratil) also have a stake in overseas airports, and the operator of Auckland airport (AIAL) also has a stake in Queenstown airport and in North Queensland airports Cairns and Mackay in Australia. Graham (2001) argues that modern airport management must have skills in airfield and terminal management, security, facilities and safety management, but also now in cost control, marketing, meeting customer needs and quality management. She argues that a higher priority has started to be given to commercial facilities which were previously regarded as secondary to satisfying the airlines. Some of this pressure is coming from airlines who see the increase in commercial revenues as an opportunity to reduce their aeronautical fees to the airport, although business travellers are still likely to set a higher priority on efficient processing than on extensive facilities. 22% of passengers in one survey said they had no interest in shopping at airports and would not be purchasing anything (Graham, 2001, p. 129). One survey attempted to capture the different motivations people have for shopping at airports, and these are summarised in the following table (Table 2.2):

Table 2.2: Motivations for airport terminal shopping

Type of shopping	Examples
Entertainment shopping	Gifts and novelties
Purposive shopping	Confectionery, toiletries, books
Time-pressed shopping	Last minute/emergency purchases
Convenience shopping	Wide choice of brands available
Essential shopping	Restaurants/ForEx/Insurance
Lifestyle shopping	Luxury brands

Source: (Graham, 2001, p. 130)

Some airports are also recognising the purchasing power of those greeting or farewelling travellers, airport staff and employees of local businesses with an increase in land-side retail offerings. These may include supermarkets, pharmacies, banks and beauticians as well as hospitality operations. Some may cater specifically for those meeting travellers by offering flowers and gifts or even customised welcome banners (at Schiphol airport these can be printed from a vending machine). The longer hours which units at the airport can operate for may give them a competitive advantage over the high street retailers. It is estimated that less than 50% of customers at Amsterdam Schiphol's shopping 'plaza' are passengers (Graham, 2001).

Many airports spent the last years of the 20th century working hard to improve the quality and range of retail and food and beverage offerings in the terminal buildings, often by bringing in well-known high street brands. They have also been keen to be seen to match or beat high street prices to address the perception of exploiting a 'captive' market. Writing about UK based BAA shortly after its privatisation in 1987, Graham (2001, p. 151) claims,

> The airport group gained a reputation in the press of being a "rip-off" airport in terms of the value for money of the goods on offer and the associated quality of service.

An example of how airports have tried to address this is Kuala Lumpur's 'Priced to Please' sticker campaign where qualifying retailers are recognised as having competitive prices compared to the high street. In other cases concessionaires are required to guarantee to match prices they offer on the high street in their airport outlets. However one consequence of the high street brand proliferation at airports has been a growing uniformity and standardisation of product and service offerings across all airports, irrespective of their geographical location, leading to what Graham (2001, p. 136) refers to as 'brand fatigue' for the frequent international airport customer. It is

therefore useful to focus on the literature addressing the physical environment in which organisations deliver their service offering to the customer.

The concept of the 'servicescape' is often used in management literature and is very relevant to the management of the airport environment which influences the airport customer experience. Kotler (1973) discusses the importance of attractive atmospherics, and also mentions the important part that airline staff uniforms play in instilling confidence in passengers, but within hospitality and tourism Booms and Bitner (1982) could be considered to have started the discussion in the *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly* by considering the importance of the physical environment on the customer's perception and how 'tangible clues' can be used to improve the sale of services. Bitner's 1990 study on the importance of the physical environment used a mixed method experimental methodology gathering qualitative and quantitative data by inviting travellers waiting to board an aircraft to comment on a hypothetical travel agency experience. One of her recommendations is that it is essential for organisations to be "motivating service employees to be *marketers* rather than functionaries" (emphasis in original) (Bitner, 1990, p. 80). Bitner's 1992 paper goes on to discuss what is now recognised as the 'servicescape model' although in that paper it is still called a "framework for understanding environment-user relationships in service organizations" (Bitner, 1992, p. 60). The model outlines the components of the physical environment which make up an organisation's 'servicescape' and its impact on both customers and staff in terms of their desire to stay and interact with others or to avoid contact and minimise time spent there. Indeed, Bitner uses the airport environment as an example of the impact of the servicescape on those seeking to accomplish a goal;

> For example, assume that a traveller enters an airport and (1) is confused because he or she cannot find signage giving directions to the assigned gate and (2) is emotionally distressed because of crowds, poor acoustics, and high temperature. The traveller is unable to carry out the purpose for entering the environment… (Bitner, 1992, p. 61).

The paper precedes this discussion with a typology matrix comparing complexity of the servicescape (elaborate or lean) with the differing requirements of self-service, interpersonal (involving employees and customers) and remote (employees only) environments. An ATM location requires a different servicescape to a health clinic. This typology has considerable relevance to the airport environment as this involves customers and employees interacting, but increasingly also remote or self-service scenarios facilitated by technology. Bitner's ideas have been applied by a number of

academics in many different environments. Countryman and Jang (2006) investigate the elements that make up a hotel lobby and used structural equation modelling to research the impact of the individual elements on the hotel guest, whose first impression of a hotel frequently come from the lobby. They found that style, colours and lighting were the key influences in a customer's impression of the lobby area, with colours being the most important, although they warned hoteliers not to opt for neutral colours. Harris and Ezeh (2008) applied the concept of the servicescape to restaurants in the UK. They point out that few disagree that particular aspects of the servicescape affect behaviour, but there is very little empirical evidence linking the servicescape to purchase decisions. Their study used correlation and multiple regression analysis to establish that there was a link between the servicescape and loyalty intentions. However, the authors conclude by discussing the limitations of their study and suggest "other studies could make attempts to apply this global configuration to other service settings like hotels, airports, banks and hospitals' (Harris & Ezeh, 2008, p. 411). Breazeale and Ponder (2013) combine qualitative (photo elicitation) and quantitative (multi-step cluster analysis) techniques to examine the relationship between the servicescape of a number of retail venues and consumers' self-image. The research argues this is important as customers use visual cues gained immediately from the available servicescape to decide whether the 'visual retail servicescape' creates a storyline that they wish to be a part of. It is suggested that "retailers expend resources to attract customers by creating customer-pleasing store environments" (Breazeale & Ponder, 2013, p. 840) and concludes by suggesting that other venues (including 'travel terminals') might benefit from this kind of study. One aspect that may prove challenging for an airport environment which is expected to cater to a wide range of customers is that they found that participants had a clear idea of the kind of people they would expect to find in that particular outlet. In the ones they liked, it was 'people like them'. This is challenging for airport management as, as Grove and Fisk (1997) point out, many negative experiences are caused by other customers (in their study of a theme park), rather than as a result of service failures by employees.

Two contributions to the servicescape debate have not tested the model themselves but instead tried to provide a systematic review of the available literature (Ezeh & Harris, 2007; Mari & Poggesi, 2013). Ezeh and Harris (2007) summarise the components of the servicescape into three factors – ambient, design and social, and outline the impact that the servicescape can have on emotions and the customers' perceived control over the situation they find themselves in – something which could be critical in a customer's

airport experience. These authors also make the point that much research concentrates on one aspect of the servicescape, whereas the customer experiences a variety of stimuli at the same time. Finally, they warn that the online environment (though virtual) should also be considered a 'servicescape' in which customers either feel a sense of belonging or want to minimise their time spent there. Mari and Poggesi (2013) provide a review of 188 academic journal papers on the topic of the servicescape and classified papers into one of three categories – 'classical studies', 'new insights' and 'emerging trends'. They note the increased interest in the area with 68% of papers on the topic being published within the past ten years. More than 25% of papers on the servicescape have appeared in the *Journal of Business Research* and the *Journal of Retailing*. While many studies tried to separate out individual aspects such as music, lighting, temperature or smell (e.g. Goldkuhl and Styvén (2007) on scent), they claim more recent studies have focused on a more holistic view, and in particular the experience as seen by the customer. Emerging trends have of course encompassed the internet, with studies of the 'virtual servicescape' but also on the 'dark side' of the servicescape focusing on the 'avoidance' aspect of the model and dysfunctional customer behaviour. Rosenbaum and Wong's (2007) paper used a 700 respondent questionnaire to evaluate tourist experiences in Hawaii and concludes that tourists in that destination experience "partake in artificial cultural experiences that commit to past, stylized representations of local cultures" (Rosenbaum & Wong, 2007, p. 162). The reality, the authors argue, is that Polynesian destinations have the same problems with drug use, gambling, prostitution and HIV infection as do many other tourist destinations. Mari and Poggesi's (2013) final observation is that 85% of the papers they reviewed used a quantitative methodology, suggesting that qualitative approaches may yet yield new insights to the interaction between the customer, the employees, and the physical environment they share.

Signage is an important part of the servicescape and is the focus of a series of airport-related papers published (mainly in the *Journal of Air Transport Management*) on the topic of 'wayfinding' (Churchill, Dada, de Barros, & Wirasinghe, 2008; Lam, Tam, Wong & Wirasinghe, 2003; Tam, 2011; Tam & Lam, 2004). Defined as "the ease with which airport patrons can navigate through the built environment of the terminal", the writers acknowledge that this leads to "frustration, stress and missing flights" (Churchill et al., 2008, p. 151). Using almost exclusively quantitative methods and with backgrounds in engineering and management science, the authors mentioned above propose a number of measures including a 'visibility index' to measure the ease of

orientation and also the complexity of the terminal buildings investigated (Calgary and Hong Kong airports). Tam (2011) proposes that anything that minimises the time taken to get through a terminal and which reduces uncertainty will improve customer satisfaction with the airport. An interesting development by Lam et al. (2003) is the classification of airport facilities into 'primary' (compulsory for passengers such as check-in, departure/boarding gates) and 'secondary' (optional depending on customer needs and desires). Tam and Lam (2004) produce a matrix mapping the importance passengers ascribe to facilities (weight) against 'ease of finding' (visibility index). The results should be of interest to airport management wishing to improve the experience of airport customers and thereby reducing frustration and stress (and possibly even missed or delayed flights).

One paper that certainly takes an interpretivist approach is Venkatraman and Nelson (2008). They report on a qualitative study of the experiences of well-educated and relatively affluent Chinese customers who they asked to take photographs of a Starbucks outlet in Beijing which they then discussed in in-depth interviews using 'photo-elicitation' to overcome any reticence in venturing an opinion. The researchers justify their research approach by explaining that as a consumer experience is subjective and different for each individual it "can only credibly be reported by informants who are in the setting" (Venkatraman & Nelson, 2008, p. 1011). What they bring to the discussion is the perspective that while large multinational corporation may use the servicescape to guarantee a consistent global consumer experience, the users of a service impose their own interpretation and values onto the experience and thereby "transform it into a consumptionscape when they act on and 'twist' its resources to achieve their own purposes" (Venkatraman & Nelson, 2008, p. 1010). They differentiate between the 'servicescape' which an organisation's marketing team create in order to influence consumer behaviour and the 'consumptionscape' which is the way in which consumers actually use the space and in which they have significant experiences and memorable moments (Manzo, 2003). In this way, they argue, Starbucks coffee shops "become meaningful because they become interwoven with the narrative of people's lives" (Venkatraman & Nelson, 2008, p. 1013). The other aspect raised is the issue of 'authenticity'. While some respondents felt that Starbucks had customised its offering for the Chinese market with furniture and other decorations, others went there because it was perceived as 'American culture' and therefore very different to anything they were used to in China. The authors point out the irony that Starbucks in

the USA was created to represent authentic Italian coffee culture which begs the question – whose authenticity is authentic? (Frochot & Batat, 2013).

Another study using interpretive and grounded data approaches investigated the onboard cruiseship environment in what the author (Kwortnik, 2008) calls a 'shipscape'. He found that the lived experience of being on a cruise was "a complex physical and social context that must accomplish many things to produce a vacation experience at sea" (Kwortnik, 2008, p. 305). He also found that fellow passengers had a potentially negative impact on the cruise experience, particularly if they were deemed to be 'different', and concluded that more work needs to be done "on the experiential and symbolic dimensions of the leisure cruise experience" (Kwortnik, 2008, p. 308). This was perhaps in reference to Urry (2003, p. 61) who says that "travelling people move along various transportation scapes".

To conclude this discussion on the servicescape as an important part of the airport customer experience, it is interesting to reflect on the contribution of Aubert-Gamet and Cova (1999) who argue that organisations should "manage servicescapes not only as non-places of economic Servuction but also as common places of societal ritualization" (Aubert-Gamet & Cova, 1999, p. 37). Building on Langeard and Eiglier's 'servuction model' (Langeard, Bateson, Lovelock, & Eiglier, 1981) they suggest that in a postmodern world, shopping centres, hotels and airports have become 'non-places'. Investigating people's relationship with the spaces they inhabit requires a combination of anthropology, ecology, sociology and semiotics. Having enjoyed the freedom, solitariness and anonymity of shopping malls, they argue the postmodern consumer is seeking to find a common place which is neither private (the home) nor public (the street) – somewhere where they can experience 'shared emotion' with others. They suggest that these are the meeting places for postmodern tribes, made up of business and leisure travellers, refugees and asylum seekers. Urry (2003, p. 61) makes the point that these 'non-places of modernity' are precisely the place where "such very different travelling people intermittently encounter each other". Yet many places where communities could build up prevent this through their policies, procedures and physical environment:

> It is in this way that conditions of circulation are set up in areas where individuals are only meant to interact with texts started by legal entities or institutions (airlines, traffic police, banks, hotel chains); this is the case for all information technology-based service encounters… Non-places welcome every

day more and more individuals who leave behind their identity at the entrance barrier (Aubert-Gamet & Cova, 1999, p. 40).

They argue that such places as hotel lobbies, airports and shopping malls do not need to have an unwritten rule of 'people invisibility' where "like non-places, the malls seem to exempt people who frequent them from noticing each other" (Aubert-Gamet & Cova, 1999, p. 41). This mirrors Heidegger's thoughts about the difference between a 'building' and a 'dwelling' (Heidegger, 1971) and what turns one into the other (Manzo, 2003).

The above discussion has identified the history and development of management approaches and understanding in the airport environment. However, it concluded with the observation that airports are becoming increasingly ubiquitous. This is perhaps one of the reasons why airports are trying to create a unique 'space' for 'their' airport customers. The next section will therefore consider the issue of space in the context of airports.

Space

Airports have gradually moved from being a modern transport hub with the emphasis on efficiency to a post-modern consumption experience with shopping malls, entertainment, meeting and leisure facilities including restaurants and overnight accommodation. Economic imperatives to maximise revenue for the (often) privatised corporations running many major airports means that consumption has to a certain extent replaced transportation as the reason for people being there. For this reason it is important to consider the 'space' that an airport occupies and within which people have airport experiences.

The concept of space is not particularly well-represented in the business, management or hospitality academic literature. However, a chance discussion with a colleague (himself a geographer by training) and with a fellow tourism academic at Otago University led the writer to an analysis of the geography literature, particularly social geography. Concepts such as 'liminal spaces', in the sense of 'spaces in transition' had a very clear application to the research question as it is precisely the customer experience of such spaces which this thesis is seeking to investigate (Merriman, 2004; A. Wood, 2003). Many other authors borrow the term 'non-place' to describe some people's perception of the airport and other transport nodes. Most often this term is credited to Augé who wrote *Non-Lieux, Introduction à une anthropologie de la*

supermodernité in 1992, although many academics use the English translation/interpretation by John Howe (*Non-places: An introduction to supermodernity*) which is the one used by this writer and referenced as Augé (1995). It is useful to go back to Augé's (translated) words to evaluate what he actually meant by the term 'non-place', and how this can help to understand the factors influencing the airport customer experience. Augé acknowledges that everything is relative, and that the place versus non-place distinction is probably more of a scale concept. However he warns that increased globalisation and the rising importance of "spaces of circulation, consumption and communication" (Augé, 1995, p. ix) increases the likelihood that,

> The same hotel chains, the same television networks are cinched tightly round the globe, so that we feel constrained by uniformity, by universal sameness, and to cross international borders brings no more profound variety than is found walking between theatres on Broadway or rides at Disneyland (Augé, 1995, p. xii).

The translator of Augé (1995) explains in a footnote that the term 'non-place' comes from 'non-lieu' which has the sense in French legal language of an accused person in court being told that there are 'no grounds' for prosecuting and that they are free to go. Augé (1995, p. 82) observes that "the user of a non-place is always required to prove his innocence". This points to the fact that in the modern environment (sometimes referred to as 'mallification' or the privatisation of previously public spaces), the public needs a reason to be there or they may be moved on by private security guards as found in gated communities or corporate campuses. He also reminds readers of the increase in private spaces requiring people accessing them to have the 'right' credit card, frequent flyer card or even supermarket loyalty card. Indeed, in the USA and Latin America there are already 'private' towns. The aspect of security and non-places is addressed by Sharma (2009, p. 129) who summarises the dichotomy of airports well, describing a non-place (in which she includes "airports, theme parks, highway stops, chain hotels, entertainment mega mall complexes and refugee camps") as having 'homogeneous architecture' and 'purified and pacified interiors'. She points out that they are often the backdrop for "the sad life of the lost traveller/citizen in the tragedy of contemporary civic life", yet at the same time, those same non-places,

> Are replete with the most up to date surveillance technologies to 'find' and sort the population into various categories – consumer, citizen, terrorist, and frequent flyer to name a few (Sharma, 2009, p. 129).

Morris (1988, p. 2) discusses the role of motels "as a place of escape yet a home-away-from-home". Writing from a feminist perspective she seems ambivalent about them – on the one way they represent a liberation from domestic duties, on the other they provide yet another venue for underpaid and undervalued employment. However, she also has some observations that are very relevant to this study. She refers to motels as having a 'transcendental homelessness' about them and that, "Motels in fact *demolish* sense-regime of place, locale, and 'history'. They memorialize only movement, speed, and perpetual circulation" (Morris, 1988, p. 3).

She argues that it is speed that creates this sense of placelessness, precisely because a motel provides temporary accommodation, calling it "a transit-place, a fixed address for temporary lodgement" and "the users of transit-spaces, transit-towns (like airports) are spectral – tenants… for a few hours" (Morris, 1988, p. 6). Perhaps this, she muses, is why

> in countless fictional motels, gangsters, lovers, psychopaths, drifters, and defaulters come to motels to be killed, seized, abandoned, or imprisoned as well as to hide, to escape, to recover – in transit between many kinds of prison, and many attempts at release (Morris, 1988, p. 41).

The sense of placeless at airports is also acknowledged by Rowley and Slack (1999), although they argue that it is even compounded in an airport setting by the multiple time zones that people's bodies are on. They suggest that airports are good examples of post-modern environments where location and time lose meaning to those inhabiting it. Their approach of observing people using departure lounges in Europe, the USA and South Africa prevented them from hearing first-hand from travellers about their experiences but it also meant that they were free to observe anyone and everyone. They were critical of the servicescape of airports and made the point that "little attempt is made to locate customers in time. The lounges are universally well lit, so it is always day" (Rowley & Slack, 1999, p. 369). This loss of meaning and a sense of who one is, is also noted by Augé (1995, p. 83) when he explains,

> a person entering the space of non-place is relieved of his usual determinants… subjected to a gentle form of possession, to which he surrenders himself with more or less talent or conviction, he tastes for a while – like anyone who is possessed – the passive joys of identity-loss, and the more active pleasure of role playing… the passenger through non-places retrieves his identity only at Customs, at the tollbooth, at the check-out counter.

It is interesting that Augé appears to be saying that not all non-places are necessarily bad. Relph (1976) makes the admission that in his previous writing he has given the impression that 'place' was good, and therefore 'placelessness' was bad. The creeping effect of what he calls 'museumisation' is as least as dangerous because it encourages "the preservation, reconstruction and idealisation of history" and therefore may lead to inauthenticity (Relph, 1976, p. v).

This situation of placelessness and lack of identity is exacerbated by the arrival of an 'architectural elite' who design signature structures, whom every country courts. McNeill (2005a, 2005b) discusses the impact of the success of celebrity architect Sir Norman Foster on global architecture, including several airports (Hong Kong, Beijing, Stansted), and the challenge of having a particular look or signature in global architectural design while still reflecting the environment a building stands in. Augé (1995, p. xiv) quotes another celebrity architect, Rem Koolhaas who believes that the prestige of having an 'x' designed building in their city outweighs cultural and historical considerations and is reported to have said 'F*** the context'. Yet it is precisely the context that Augé claims is the difference between place and non-place. While he singles out transport nodes such as airports, train stations and motorway stations as potential non-places, he makes the point that their lack of identity results from a lack of connection with the past. Motorways bypassing towns with a historical or cultural contribution to a region's identity deprive the traveller of the opportunity to engage with or learn from their presence in a place. Augé argues that the speed of modern transport methods contributes to this sense of displacement, using the example of a high-speed European TGV train travelling so fast through a town that the passenger is not able to read the station name from the sign. In order for something to have a sense of 'place' there needs to be a 'shared identity', a 'particular identity' or even a 'singular identity' as spaces are inherently social spaces. Augé (1995, p. 65) borrows the terms 'geometric space' and 'anthropological space' from *Phenomenologie de la perception* by Merleau-Ponty, and although the term 'non-place' is now commonly attributed to Augé, he himself credits de Certeau (1984) with the origins of the term, saying "the distinction between places and non-places derives from the opposition between place and space" (Augé, 1995, p. 64). He goes on to explain that for a geometrical space to become a place, it needs people to give a meaning to it. de Certeau himself in turn acknowledges Merleau-Ponty's thinking saying

Merleau-Ponty distinguishes a "geometrical" space ("a homogeneous and isotropic spatiality," analogous to our "place") from another "spatiality" which he called and "anthropological space" (de Certeau, 1984, p. 117).

Augé does, however, develop the term to include the symbolic value of a place. He suggests that language, customs and cultural norms create such an anthropological space, and that anthropological spaces "have three characteristics in common. They want to be – people want them to be – places of identity, or relations and of history" (Augé, 1995, p. 43). Geometric space becomes anthropological space once people use it in some way (for work, shopping, leisure etc.), but Augé also uses the term 'symbolized space of place' and explains,

> the word 'non-place' designates two complementary but distinct realities: spaces formed in relation to certain ends (transport, transit, commerce, leisure), and the relations that individuals have with these spaces (Augé, 1995, p. 76).

He regrets the fact that travellers can now by-pass a historic settlement and the only awareness they have of its existence is a sign by the side of the road explaining its significance saying "the traveller is absolved of the need to stop or even to look" (Augé, 1995, p. 78). However he acknowledges that the sense of anonymity that some travellers may feel in such spaces could actually be a welcome relief from the daily pressures that their identity in familiar surroundings can bring. Helpfully using an airport example he explains,

> Non-place creates the shared identity of passengers, customers or Sunday drivers. No doubt the relative anonymity that goes with this temporary identity can even be felt as a liberation, by people who, for a time, have only to keep in line, go where they are told, check their appearance. As soon as his passport or identity card has been checked, the passenger for the next flight, freed from the weight of his luggage and everyday responsibilities, rushes into the 'duty-free' space' (Augé, 1995, p. 81).

Pütz (2012) uses the idea of non-places and develops the idea of 'non-events'. Using participant observation in nine airports, he identifies airport checkpoints as places where the people moving through them practice what Goffman called 'civil inattention'. This is where travellers waiting to pass through a security point or even a supermarket till queue manage to ignore what is happening right in front of them – it is considered rude to notice the person in front of them and what they are doing. He argues that this is done in order to facilitate speedy transit through airport security and to minimise face-to-face interaction which might prove embarrassing or uncomfortable. It is, he argues "a

display of good intentions and the mutual right to mind one's own business" (Pütz, 2012, p. 155). People do this, he argues, because

> A traveler wants to fly safely with minimal delays. Airport security prioritizes security over mobility, but both travellers and screeners have an interest in smooth operations at security checkpoints. To facilitate mobility and maintain flows, interactions at checkpoints are routinized (Pütz, 2012, p. 157).

Pütz also makes the point that in his observation research, he noted that anyone who was not a 'normalized body' such as the elderly, babies or those with mobility issues often had considerable difficulty negotiating the security screening processes. This is significant because he shows that "the checkpoint standardizes procedures, reduces contingency, and normalizes travelers" (Pütz, 2012, p. 179). All of these processes, he argues, create a non-place in which a non-event happens.

Gottdiener (2001) expands on Augé's comments above and makes an original contribution to the understanding of the airport customer experience. While the book may at first appear as an entertaining 'airport bookshop' reflections of a regular traveller who is forced into (what he calls) 'bi-coastalism' where he lives in California but teaches in New York, he has also held the Professor of Sociology position at the Universities of Buffalo, California, Colorado and CUNY. His observations are very relevant to this study because it provides an emic, participant observation perspective of the airport experience, but with considerable analytical insight, which is very rare. He acknowledges that,

> Air travel is also increasingly inconvenient… Meals, overcrowding, abusive passengers, cramped seating, poor cabin service and the sheer boredom of being stranded in air terminals for inhumanely long waits are also on the growing list of laments from consumers (Gottdiener, 2001, p. 2).

One reason for this, he suggests, is because airports are not there purely for the passengers – they have a role in retailing, shipping and logistics and even manufacturing. He uses the word 'liminal space' to describe airports saying, "airports might be considered liminal spaces *par excellence* because of their function as a threshold" (Gottdiener, 2001, p. 9) and quotes *New York Times Magazine* writer Richard Rayner (1998) discussing the 'subculture of the business homeless'. Indeed, Gottdiener suggests that the genuine homeless use the airport terminal building precisely because they will not stand out with all their possessions in a bag from the 'genuine' traveller temporarily stranded at the airport. He captures the transience of the

airport experience and describes some of the illicit activities that people engage in at airports, but at the same time acknowledges the fact that the combination of people, services and architecture create a 'temporary dwelling'. This temporary dwelling 'hosts' many different people, as Sheller and Urry (2006, p. 207) record,

> All the world seems to be on the move. Asylum seekers, international students, terrorists, members of diasporas, holidaymakers, business people, sports stars, refugees, backpackers, commuters, the early retired, young mobile professionals, prostitutes, armed forces – these and many others fill the world's airports, buses, ships and trains.

Gottdiener explains that "traveling alone strips both men and women of their family and work status and frees up identity so that it is pliable and chameleon-like" (Gottdiener, 2001, p. 38). He is fascinated (perhaps because he is a sociologist) by the fact that "time spent in terminals is dead time, a blank period during which we already find ourselves forgetting the experience while it is still happening" but at the same time the liminality of the space allows for a speeded up reality as "a temporary container of the human drama" (Gottdiener, 2001, p. 21) in what he calls "this contemporary process of *transient* social interaction" (Gottdiener, 2001, p. 31).

Augé (1995) reminds readers that the word 'space' has been adopted by politicians ('European judicial space'), by business ('advertising space'), urban planners ('green space') and even hospitality businesses ('meeting space'). He explains what he believes de Certeau meant when he used the term 'non-place' – "a sort of negative quality of space, an absence of the place from itself" (Augé, 1995, p. 69). Augé also points out a paradox in the world of 'supermodernity' which we now find ourselves in. He speaks of "a paradox of non-place: a foreigner lost in a country he does not know (a 'passing stranger') can feel at home there only in the anonymity of motorways, service stations, big stores or hotel chains" (Augé, 1995, p. 86). Fuller and Harley (2004, p. 38) agree with this observation, arguing that,

> While all airports may not be identical, there is a sameness to them throughout the world. Wherever the traveller is in the world, they know where they are when they're at the airport. They're on their way to somewhere else.

While Augé is perhaps the better-known writer on place and space, it should be noted that Edward Relph's (1976) book *Place and Placelessness* already discussed many of the themes that Augé was to write about. Explaining Relph's contribution to the understanding of the importance of place, Seamon (1996, p. 5) wrote "Relph's interest

was the human experience of *place*, which he argued was a fundamental aspect of peoples' existence in the world". He focuses on Relph's discussion of 'insideness' and 'outsideness', adding, "if a person feels inside a place, he or she is here rather than there, safe rather than threatened, enclosed rather than exposed, at ease rather than stressed" (Seamon, 1996, p. 5). Relph claims there are some places (he uses the examples of the Acropolis in Greece and Tintern Abbey in the UK) which are truly unique, and "at the other extreme there are the convenient and practical examples of airports and petrol stations where standardisation dominates and uniqueness is subservient" (Relph, 1976, p. v). Augé (1995, p. 63) summarises his perhaps somewhat pessimistic perspective on place as follows,

> If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place. The hypothesis advanced here is that supermodernity produces non-places, meaning spaces which are not themselves anthropological places, and which, unlike Baudelairian modernity, do not integrate the earlier places… A world where people are born in the clinic and die in hospital, where transit points and temporary abodes are proliferating under luxurious or inhuman conditions (hotel chains and squats, holiday clubs and refugee camps)… where the habitué of supermarkets, slot machines and credit cards communicates wordlessly, through gestures, with an abstract, unmediated commerce; a world thus surrendered to solitary individuality, to the fleeting, the temporary and ephemeral…

He goes so far as to suggest that it would be possible to quantify and measure the scale of these 'non-places' by adding together all the space taken up by transport infrastructure, but also hotels, theme parks and retail complexes. One exception to this acceptance of transport facilities as non-places is Hamilton and Alexander's (2013) study of the way local communities in Scotland volunteered to 'adopt' railway stations that would otherwise have been closed and gave them a new (local) identity and therefore suggest that such non-places can become a reflection of the pride of the local community. The people they interviewed saw the railway stations they tended as a gateway to their community. This was a strong motivator for volunteers to become involved and invest a considerable amount of their own time in the project (this was their research question). Airports also have the potential for such a 'gateway' role. Rowley and Slack (1999) investigating the impact that airport retailers have on the traveller's experience found that retail outlets have an important role in creating an identity. They visited ten different international and domestic airport departure lounges, where they observed and made notes on the servicescape, the range of outlets, the way

in which the people were communicated with, and their perception of the overall customer experience. They categorised their findings into luxury goods, travel goods, refreshments and traditional national/regional products. In their study all customers were in transit and were, as they put it, "forcibly waiting" (Rowley & Slack, 1999, p. 372). Their observations included the following aspects which are relevant to this study: while English was the main language of communication, the customer groups were very heterogeneous in terms of race, age and class of travel/purpose of travel (a fact also noted by Fodness and Murray (2007); some travellers were clearly much more familiar with the airport layout than others, leading to some being clearly disorientated in terms of both time and place and also showing an inability to understand the price they were paying for items due to unfamiliarity with foreign currency; while there were many family groups, lone male shoppers were clearly in the majority in the airports they studied. In their conclusion, they suggest that "the experience of the airport departure lounge is significantly determined by the physical environment and the facilities on offer" (Rowley & Slack, 1999, p. 374). They suggest that while there is certainly a level of sameness, if one looks carefully there are often local cultural identities on display in airport departure lounges. Likewise, Sharma (2009, p. 132) argues that what appear to be 'non-places' populated by "a rising class of itinerant elite who are bound by time-sharing practices" which "maintains a close circle of the corporate elite together through the worshipping of similar rites in all countries" are in fact distinctly different if one looks more closely.

> The insistence that the spacious and pacified (purified) interiors disorients the consumer/traveller and erases the local is made without regard as the non-place is not just magically made clean nor spacious simply as some whimsical condition of post-modernity. Non-places are built environments that are not only built by people but cleaned by people. (Sharma, 2009, p. 146).

She concludes with the comment that what is happening at airports and other 'non-places' is very important for society to reflect on as "more and more spaces have begun to emulate the look and feel of the modern airport" (Sharma, 2009, p. 146). This is therefore a good point at which to consider the relatively new academic subject of 'mobilities'.

The academic who links this discussion on space, security and the next section on the mobilities literature is Peter Adey. He claims that the issues and contradictions of mobility and security are present everywhere in modern society – "in cities, shopping malls or outdoor 'public' spaces" (Adey, 2004a, p. 500). However he warns that much

of this technology has been trialled in airports before being used more widely, and for this reason airport security developments should be closely monitored than happens at present – perhaps because they are regarded by many as non-places (Adey, 2004b; 2007; 2009).

The mobilities literature

The term 'mobilities' has been used in many different contexts and by many different people. However, in the context of hospitality and tourism, it is most often associated with the work of John Urry, a sociologist at Lancaster University in the UK (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Urry, 2001, 2002, 2004), although he himself acknowledges that it was within geography that the mobilities paradigm emerged. Sheller and Urry (2006, p. 207) acknowledge that it has had its origins in many fields, including "anthropology, cultural studies, geography, migration studies, science and technology studies, tourism and transport studies, and sociology". They are also quick to explain that they are not suggesting this is some grand new theory, but instead a recognition the world is speeding up, and that this 'liquid modernity' is creating pockets of extreme mobility and immobility, wealth and poverty, security and insecurity, connectivity and disconnection. Adey (2007, p. 515) speaks of "the immobilities which airports induce" and passengers are held in spaces where they are watched or where they become spectators.

Urry also suggests that in the past geographers have taken for granted the need for travel and focused on the patterns of movement, rather than the social pressures for it, as sociologists would do. In a paper focusing on 'transports of delights' rather than of despair (holocaust, asylum seekers, migrants), he uses statistics from the WTO and others to demonstrate the extremely large number of people moving around the globe (although his figures are pre-September 11), and that those movements lead to the travel and tourism industry being a significant contributor to world GDP, exports and employment, and also account for 30% of worldwide carbon-dioxide emissions. Urry suggests that there are few countries in the world where the golden arches of McDonald's restaurants or Microsoft's Windows logo are not recognised and that things are changing so fast that it no longer makes sense to talk about dichotomies such as real/virtual or mobile/immobile as everything is circulating to some extent in what he calls a 'networked society' (Urry, 2004). However, despite all the technological advances there are certain things that require "co-presence" and a "compulsion to proximity" (Urry, 2004, p. 29). He suggests six reasons for travel – legal/economic/familial; social (trust-building) obligations; 'quality' time obligations;

place obligations (seeing something for yourself); live (concert) obligations and object obligations (e.g. to sign a contract) (Urry, 2002). This makes transportation networks such as airports a critical element. McNeill (2009) proposes that the airport hotel is another critical part of this network, particularly in Europe, where borders are becoming less relevant and where airports and the hotels surrounding them become "multimodal interchange nodes" (McNeill, 2009, p. 221) for "time-poor cash-rich travellers" (p. 227). These hotels are increasingly of a range of standards, and continue the tradition of providing temporary respite and rest from movement for professional travellers. Urry suggests that the modern preference for teams to work together on projects only increases the number of people travelling (Urry, 2002). The increased use of virtual meeting and communications, leads to an interesting phenomenon – "the more that people connect in cyberspace, the more they seem to travel" (Urry, 2004, p. 32). This is true even for the 'digital nomads' who travel with an ever-increasing array of communications technology. Urry points out that "this mobile life is felt by mobile workers to be lonely" (Urry, 2004, p. 35). Yet he also makes the claim that "there is, more or less, no country in the world that is not a significant receiver of visitors" (Urry, 2001, p. 237) and suggests that mobility is now regarded as a 'right' by many. He asks if technology can eliminate the need for travel, asking "why bother with the risks, uncertainties and frustration of corporeal movement" (Urry, 2002, p. 256), but he has answered his own question by stating, "different social groups require or feel obligated to experience at least intermittent moments of such proximity, and this makes corporeal travel necessary" (Urry, 2001, p. 241), and then provides ten reasons why people feel the need for 'physical proximity' through 'corporeal mobility'. These views suggest that airports will play an important part in global business and social networks for many years to come, making them an important area for academic study.

Fuller and Harley (2004, p. 104) explain that airports are a paradox in that they are "a structure designed for connection" containing many thresholds, yet at the same time "airports create some of the most anonymous zones in the world". These create liminal spaces. The airport environment is often referred to as a 'liminal space'. La Shure (2005) explains that the term 'liminal' comes from the Latin 'limen' referring to the bottom part of a doorway that needs to be crossed to enter the space on the other side. He describes it as a mid-point, or a temporary state. Anthropologists use the term to describe the point at which children are initiated into adulthood at puberty, or when a recently married couple goes away from the people they know on their honeymoon to start a new phase in their lives. To use the term 'liminal space' for an airport therefore

encapsulates this sense of a life-changing decision from which one cannot return as the same person.

Urry (2001) argues that motels, because they usually have rooms facing straight onto the road and lack a lobby or area to gather, are designed to circulate people rather than provide a meeting point. Yet Rowley and Slack (1999, p. 375) suggest that "travelers in transit in international airport lounges form a transient community". Gottdiener (2001, p. 30) describes one particular delayed flight experience (emphasis in original).

> By 3:00 a.m. we had all pretty much introduced ourselves to each other and had created a *temporary community*, united most directly by our profound, mutual hatred of our bargain carrier and its poor service.

However he also goes on to explain that one of the pet hates of regular travellers or 'road warriors' is a chatty neighbour when all the frequent flyer wants to do is answer e-mails and catch up with voicemail messages. He suggests that among users of executive lounges at airport "the airport norm is of *non*-interaction. People are expected to keep to themselves in airports" (Gottdiener, 2001, p. 35). Han, Ham, Yang and Baek (2012) studied 'airline lounge' users in Incheon airport, Korea. They found that the key attributes were image, accessibility, atmosphere, food and beverage offerings and the overall space available to users. They make the interesting observation that the airport lounge "varies from being a glorified waiting area to an exclusive retreat" (Han et al., 2012, p. 1103). They do however quote a 2004 survey for Business Travel World that claims that airline passengers rated the importance of such lounges very low, although this perhaps reflects a desire by regular travellers not to be seen to be swayed by such 'incidentals' as food and drink. They also make the distinction between an airline lounge operated by or on behalf of the airline and designed to promote the airline, and not the airport itself, which is the focus of this study.

In an interesting perspective on the idea of mobility, precisely because it suggests that people do not travel between city nodes in the network, Rayner (1998, p. 5) suggests that the goal of airport management is,

> To persuade the business traveller that he need never leave the airport. He can fly in, rent a conference room provided by the airport, one of the airline clubs or an airport hotel, then fly out with the tang of jet fuel never quite forgotten. He might even decide to come to the airport and do business even though he is not travelling.

In his conclusion, Urry (2002, p. 270) suggests rather re-assuringly for those interested in researching travel and mobility that "the need for physical co-presence and corporeal travel would appear to be with us for a long time yet". However, he also warns that while co-presence is desirable in many situations, coerced mobility is as undesirable as coerced immobility. While the 21ˢᵗ century facilitates the mobility of some, it also emphasizes the immobility of others. As Sheller and Urry (2006, p. 208) point out,

> Issues of movement, of too little movement or too much, or of the wrong sort or at the wrong time, are central to many lives and many organisations.

They suggest that this mobility has a part to play in global epidemics such as SARS in Asia and BSE in Europe (the most recent example would be the Ebola virus in Africa), terrorism and even the mobility of obesity through the introduction of 'fast food' to new cultures. Mobility has consequences, both good and bad, depending on the amount of control individuals have, or perceive that they do. This raises the question of whether mobility should always be regarded as a good thing – but who decides who can travel?

A critical part of mobility is the welcome that people receive when they get to their destination. How one is welcomed and made to feel is a major part of the impressions people have of a location or destination. Nouwen (1975) is writing from a Christian monastic perspective. He argues that people who have travelled far away from family, friends and recognisable landmarks are often on "a painful search for a hospitable place", and it is the responsibility of the people of the place they arrive in "to offer an open and hospitable space where strangers can cast off their strangeness and become our fellow human beings" (Nouwen, 1975, p. 46). By doing this, he argues, we can change the *hostis* (enemy) into a *hospes* (guest).

Hospitality

This literature review has so far outlined the historical development of airports, the management of airports and then an overview of the academic knowledge on the meaning of space. Following the discussion of the new paradigm of 'mobilities' above, this section considers the nature of hospitality before then going on to review the hospitable experience in the airport environment. This is important in the creation of the airport customer experience because, as Lugosi (2011, p. 88) explains, "transactions of hospitality create spaces that enable the construction of shared expressions or experiences of culture".

The word hospitality comes from the word hostility – fear of the stranger (who might according to the Bible be an angel in disguise sent from God) and this was traditionally one of the reasons for offering hospitality. This was because a stranger shown hospitality would be obliged to not harm their hosts. Burgess (1982, p. 54) calls this "a guarantee of reciprocity". Germann Molz and Gibson (2007, p. 1) start their edited book on hospitality with the words,

> Hospitality is a profoundly evocative concept that reverberates with cultural, political and ethical undertones. It conjures up a jumbled collage of images and senses drawn from ancient mythology, cultural traditions, scriptural references, tourism metaphors, regional stereotypes, national narratives, and government policies.

They question where hospitality might occur, between whom, and what giving and receiving hospitality does to the giver and the receiver – does it enrich or weaken people? The term 'hospitality', they claim, contains a paradox – it represents a welcoming into one's home (a fixed point which does not move precisely because it is a cultural, political social and historical manifestation of identity and ownership) by the 'host' of the 'traveller' (who is by definition 'on the move' and not 'at home'). They refer to the law of 'universal hospitality' – that people should be able to travel freely and unharmed. Nouwen (1975, p. 48) warns however that,

> We can say that during the last years strangers have become more and more subject to hostility than to hospitality. In fact, we have protected our apartments with dogs and double locks, our buildings with vigilant doormen, our roads with anti-hitchhike signs, our subways with security guards, our airports with safety officials.

He concludes with the rather depressing observation that, "in our world the assumption is that strangers are a potential danger and that it is up to them to disprove it" (Nouwen, 1975, p. 49). This idea of hospitality as protection is also raised by Burgess (1982) who considers the role of gift exchange using a symbolic interactionist perspective. He suggests that the act of extending hospitality, particularly to strangers could be seen as a gift – a gift which then places social, moral and symbolic obligations on the recipient. He quotes Jochelsen (1926) as saying that "hospitality turns enemies into friends and strengthens the amicable relationships between groups" (Burgess, 1982, p. 50). Ottenbacher, Harrington and Parsa (2009, p. 265) argue that to the ancient Greeks, "any violation of the duties of hospitality was likely to provoke the wrath of the gods". Much of this 'gift giving' is ritualistic (toys at birth; religious icons at christening; household

items at weddings and gold watches on retirement), and the giving and receiving of gifts follows socially-prescribed behaviour (being grateful for socks and hand-knitted jumpers at Christmas, etc.). Just as hospitality and hostility are closely related concepts, Burgess (1982) explains that in ancient German the word 'gift' actually meant poison, and acts of hospitality and gift-giving can also be seen as "instruments to gain the advantages of status, influence, power and security" (Burgess, 1982, p. 52). He also raises an issue which may be very relevant to the airport customer experience, namely that hospitality events require all those present to play their part in the 'performance' of hospitality, and thereby contribute to others' (dis)satisfaction with the experience and concludes by saying that "sociability is the general rule in such circumstances, enabling social contact between strangers, acquaintances, friends and family" (Burgess, 1982, p. 56).

A relatively small group of academics worked hard at the turn of the century to 'unpack' the meaning of hospitality (Brotherton, 2005; Lashley & Morrison, 2000, 2003; Lynch, 2005; Morrison, 2002; R. C. Wood, 1994a, 1994b). Brotherton's (1999, p. 168) definition of hospitality is a starting point for many:

> A contemporaneous human exchange, which is voluntarily entered into, and designed to enhance the mutual wellbeing of the parties concerned through the provision of accommodation and food or drink.

This definition is criticised by Hemmington (2007, p. 749) who points out that it "fails to capture any sense of the exciting, vibrant and creative industry in the real world". Andrews offers that "hospitality is essentially about the creation and extension of relationships" (Andrews, 2000, p. 251), and Lashley (2008, p. 69) insists that "hospitality is rooted in social engagement" and that at its most basic is about hosts being concerned for the comfort of their guests, both physiological and emotional, although he acknowledges that these mutual obligations to give and receive and act appropriately "have lost their moral and religious authority" (p. 72). He suggests that researchers from fields such as anthropology, social geography, history and sociology have a contribution to make to the discussion. As an example, Lynch (2005) uses 'sociological impressionism' in his analysis of the homestay sector in Scotland. Morrison (2002) argues that hospitality is *both* 'business' *and* 'cultural phenomenon'.

Aramberri (2001) in contrast, in a very strong rejection of the idea of the ongoing existence of the 'host-guest paradigm', argues that anthropologists' mapping of their analysis of distant tribal rituals onto modern tourism service provision is misguided –

tour operators and others are 'just taking care of business'. He proposes (Aramberri, 2001, p. 746)

> that the nonmaterial reciprocity of the old covenant is gone and that no amount of mourning will bring it back to life. If the covenant is gone, so are the fuzzy codes of mutual rights and duties that spelled its details. Now the main tie that binds the contracting parties is the deliverance of services – commodities – on the part of the hosts, and payment in cash for the tab they have been running on behalf of the guests. In fact, the hosts are no longer hosts, just providers of services, while the guests are no longer guests, just customers.

King (1995) pre-dates these discussions when she makes an early attempt at answering the question of what hospitality actually is, in particular in a hospital context. She identifies 'private hospitality' in the home and 'commercial hospitality' provided for profit although she does not provide evidence for these assertions. King (1995, p. 223) also points out that historically, those who provided hospitality to those of high standing did so because it "was a way to advance or solidify one's social, political or economic status". She goes on to claim that the modern hotel industry of commercial hotels, resorts, rooming house and royal courts led to the establishment of the differing 'grades' of accommodation that exist today. O'Gorman (2009, p. 778) comments on this 'questionable rhetoric' about the origins of hospitality and argues that "these two approaches are further characterised by sweeping statements not backed up with any apparent empirical research evidence" before going on to show that there is considerable empirical evidence of hospitality being provided in Mesopotamia circa 2000 BC as well as in Roman Pompeii in 79 AD and in Persian caravanserai around 700 AD. He also disagrees with Bardi (2007) who claims that Statler, Hilton and Marriott 'invented' the hospitality industry at the start of the 20th Century, although Statler is recognised as having developed standard operating procedures and requiring his employees to give courteous service to every paying guest, irrespective of their appearance or position in society. Statler eventually sold his hotels to Conrad Hilton who developed the group into the well-known global chain of hotels (including several in New Zealand). What the above authors do all agree on is that there is a difference between domestic hospitality for friends and family and commercial hospitality. O'Connor (2005, p. 270) puts this very succinctly when describing the process of checking out of a hotel:

> As far as the guest is concerned, every act of hospitableness throughout the duration of their stay/meal/drink will be perceived as being relatively genuine,

regardless of the standard of service, up to the point of payment, when the moment they have been so paranoid about is realised.

Lashley and Morrison (2003) settle on the term 'commercial friendship' but also make the point that it is often a matter of scale – the regular guest can be befriended, hundreds of new faces per night (as is common in airport hotels) cannot. Brotherton (1999) makes the point that there was considerable debate and effort expended to arrive at an agreed definition of 'hospitality' in the early 1990, but at the start of the new millennium academics were no closer. Furthermore, he has little patience for those who suggest that 'hospitality' is synonymous with 'hospitableness' and a sense of 'feeling at home'. As he rather bluntly puts it, "if an individual has a miserable home life the last thing they would wish to be made to feel is as though they were at home" (Brotherton, 1999, p. 167). Instead, he argues, hospitality should be about feeling special. Another example he uses is that the provision of food, drink and accommodation in a prison to inmates does not mean that it is a 'hospitable' environment. He therefore raises the question of whether academic research should be less about the constituent elements of the hospitality product and "more focused on the nature and implications of the hospitality exchange", something which Hemmington (2007) clearly does. Perhaps this is also what Riley (1984, p. 107) means when he warns of a "wholesale substitution of personal services by 'things' and 'touches'" – the mint on the pillow at turndown service time supposedly representing personal service and attention.

The publication of *In Search of Hospitality* (Lashley & Morrison, 2000) was an attempt to capture the state of knowledge about the concept of hospitality and its management and was contributed to by a number of key hospitality academics. They acknowledge that there is a difference between hospitality in the private and the commercial domains, arguing that in commercial hospitality (Lashley, 2000, p. 13),

> For the host, motives for being hospitable are mostly ulterior, the desire to supply just that amount of hospitality that will ensure guest satisfaction, limit complaint and hopefully generate a return visit whilst turning a profit.

However, Lashley (2008) points out that the domestic 'ideal' of hospitality is often used, even if only implicitly, as a benchmark against which to judge a hospitality business' performance.

In search of a 'coherent philosophical foundation', O'Gorman (2007) considers the contribution that Derrida has made to the understanding of the hospitality phenomenon. He argues that 'hospitality' is increasingly recognised as being larger than hospitality

'management' or 'industry'. Derrida's skill in deconstruction of concepts means that people look afresh at things that they had previously taken for granted. This was also what Heidegger was trying to do with the concept of 'da-sein', and as Derrida's thesis was on Husserl, Heidegger's mentor, this congruence is not a surprise. Both Heidegger and Derrida have influenced the writer of this thesis when trying to uncover what the actual experiences are of airport customers, rather than relying on the vicarious tool of airport surveys and questionnaires. Supporting this view, Bogicevic, Yang, Bilgihan and Bujisic (2013, p. 3) point out that,

> a large number of airline and airport management companies have measured passengers' perceptions of service provided, without clearly understanding passengers' expectations.

Lynch, Germann Molz, McIntosh, Lugosi and Lashley (2011) argue in the opening editorial of a new journal titled *Hospitality & Society* that the only way to do justice to the concept of hospitality is by using interdisciplinary approaches with academics from different disciplines and methodologies but also by including reflective practitioners in the discussion. This has been done very enthusiastically in the nursing literature as demonstrated by Patten (1994), Severt, Aiello, Elswick and Cyr (2008) and Randall and Senior (1994). Within hospitality Lynch et al. (2011) warn against seeing it purely as an 'economic activity' where interactions between people are no more than 'commercial exchanges' of 'commodities' such as food, drink and beds (Lynch et al., 2011). They express concern that the 'covenant' of hospitality has been broken and that hosts have become 'service providers' and guests 'customers' (as does Aramberri, 2001), and conclude that rather than seeing 'hospitality' as being about food, drink and accommodation, in 'hospitality studies', "Hospitality is constructed by, but also productive of, certain contexts, spaces, politics, objects, social roles and relations" (Lynch et al., 2011, p. 14).

This section has attempted to summarise what the literature says about the nature of hospitality. What has been shown is that it is, despite its long pedigree, still a very live and even controversial debate. However, perhaps O'Gorman (2007, p. 201) puts it most succinctly when he suggests that,

> Hospitality cannot be resolved on the pages of an academic journal; the true gift of hospitality is an act of generosity experienced by the "guest", which turns a stranger into a friend for a limited period of time.

If an airport can achieve this, then perhaps airports and the airport customer experiences that are created within them can truly be hospitable ones.

The customer experience

The idea of the 'customer experience' has been researched for many years now, but as Morgan et al. (2010) point out, several hospitality and tourism journals have devoted special issues to the topic in recent years, suggesting an increase in interest and focus (e.g. Walls, Okumus, Wang, & Kwun, 2011a, 2011b). Perhaps the best known authors on 'experience' within hospitality and tourism are Pine and Gilmore (Gilmore & Pine, 1997, 2002a, 2002b; Pine & Gilmore, 1998, 2002). They argue that today's customer desires a customised, personal experience. The challenge for the manufacturer of the product or service is how to do this in a cost-effective manner. While customisation creates added value, it also adds complexity and therefore cost. Furthermore, it is not always clear to management what it is that would add value for the customer. This may be a very small thing such as remembering what an airline passenger likes to drink, but how much better would it be if the airline understood that on a way to a conference passengers like to drink soft drinks, yet on the way back after a successful conference they would appreciate a large malt whisky! What Gilmore and Pine (1997, p. 95) point out is that the most successful organisations will know their customers so well that that they can "help identify their largely unarticulated needs". This, they argue, requires a fundamental shift in perspective, from a 'supply chain' mindset where products and services are pushed down the chain to a 'demand chain' with an intense focus on what the customer would like to see. Organisations have had to move from extracting undifferentiated commodities to staging experiences in a progressive increase of economic value (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). They argue that services can be transformed into experiences if there is a stage – and what better stage than an airport? They quote Sir Colin Marshall of BA as aiming to move the airline from a form of transportation to "a respite from the traveler's normal frenetic life" (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, p. 99). Often such experiences require, and are made more memorable by, the involvement and participation of the customer in the experience. Done well, this allows hospitality businesses to avoid the 'commodity trap'. They also warn, however, that the easiest way to be memorable to your customers is to fail to deliver – whether that is a lost reservation for an anniversary dinner, mistakes at a wedding, or even a missed wake-up call in an airport hotel (Gilmore & Pine, 2002b). The way many organisations are trying to package their customer experiences is through a theme or an identity, whether that is

Las Vegas airport's slot machines or Ritz Carlton hotels' subtle motto guaranteeing service excellence through promising 'ladies and gentlemen serving ladies and gentlemen'.

Cohen (1979) raised the issue of tourists' search for 'authentic experiences' versus a temporary escape from daily life, while Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) and Hirschman (1984, 1985, 1986) were among the early academics to investigate the characteristics of consumers motivated to seek 'experiences' using qualitative or 'humanistic' approaches, rather than regarding people as information processors and rational decision-makers in a positivist manner. As they say, "this experiential perspective is phenomenological in spirit" (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982, p. 132) because it relies on reflexive contributions from participants rather than externally verifiable measures. They close by urging researchers to move from a focus on measuring 'directly observable' factors which do not necessarily explain why consumers behave in the way they do saying that "recent consumer research has tended to neglect the equally important experiential aspects of consumption" (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982, p. 139). Gnoth and Matteucci (2014, p. 4) agree with this, commenting that much current tourism experience research "is often submerged in unwieldy supply models couched in behaviouristic stimulus-response theories". Relph (1976, p. ii) argues that "both geography and place are, at their core, phenomena of experience that can best be explicated phenomenologically". Woodside, Sood and Miller (2008) suggest that consumers use extraordinary experiences (both good and bad) as props to build an identity as a traveller, or even as a cathartic experience. Another consumer behaviour researcher (Williams, 2006, p. 490) warns that,

> Whilst many tourism and hospitality businesses seek feedback through such mechanisms and guest questionnaires, experiential marketing requires more innovative and creative solutions.

This perspective echoes the view of Pullman, McGuire and Cleveland (2005) who suggest that the real value in customer questionnaires comes not from the ability to measure satisfaction and create league tables but instead from closer attention to the comments that customers write. They warn that "qualitative information has been the neglected stepchild of the guest surveys because of its "messiness" and the complexity of interpreting it" (Pullman et al., 2005, p. 342) but that the increasing sophistication of publicly available software is starting to make analysis of this form of data much easier. Prentice, Witt and Hamer (1998) warn that a focus on sociodemographic and

segmentation data is in danger of obscuring the 'experiential' messages that should be drawn from research data. McCabe and Stokoe (2004) suggest that in their research interviewees who were 'computer operators' identified themselves as 'sky divers' because that was what they were doing in that location, therefore limiting the usefulness of categories which are socially constructed to create a social reality (McCabe, 2001). Holbrook (2006) argues that research should be focused on what the customer or consumer values. Edensor (2000, p. 322) warns that "much energy has been expended on drawing up tourist typologies" which explain little and then become fixed in stone. Lashley (2008) makes the point that in a study of 'memorable meals', very few respondents described the actual food in any detail, focusing instead on the occasion and the company they were in. Le Bel (2005, p. 437) argues for a fundamental change in perspective:

> Engineering and marketing pleasurable experiences requires an important shift in mindset: the customer experience is a company's most valuable asset and not its physical plant or its service delivery systems and processes.

This perspective is also discussed by Hemmington (2007) who proposes there has been a fundamental shift in customer expectations, with the best hospitality organisations not focusing on delivering what the customer has asked for but instead aiming to deliver what the customer does not yet realise they want or need. He claims that (Hemmington, 2007, p. 752) "Hospitality businesses should design their guest experiences to include 'lots of little surprises', or 'sparkling moments'".

Airport-specific experience research includes Fodness and Murray (2007), who used frequent flyers in US airports to conduct 100 in-depth interviews and six focus groups, as well as evaluating 1500 customer comments on an airport website to identify the expectations and experiences of US domestic airports, although they then use this knowledge to create a list of 65 'airport service quality themes' in a survey sent out to 1765 frequent flyers to test nine hypotheses. Their goal was to identify the factors which would entice frequent flyers to choose one airport over another, and is therefore most useful in the USA domestic market, where travellers do actually have some choice as to where to fly from. The geography of New Zealand means that air travellers have limited choices in terms of airports when flying, particularly internationally.

As suggested above, the relationship between the physical surroundings and the customer's experience of a phenomenon is very important. This is discussed by Burgess (1982, p. 53) who points out that "whilst expensive silverware and table settings are

used for symbolic purposes at hospitality events, the event itself is experiential, time-related and perishable". Williams (2006) uses the example of Starbucks who have very successfully converted a routine domestic morning activity (drinking coffee) into a sensory experience to be shared with friends. He argues that if tourism organisations are to create a distinctive sustainable identity then it needs to move beyond marketing of existing products and services.

> Tourism and hospitality marketing, too often grounded in positivistic assumptions, viewing consumption as an internalised state, has to begin to respond to alternative orientations… Experiential marketing helps firms to avoid the commodification trap. (Williams, 2006, p. 493)

Among the best-known academic studies on experience are Wallendorf and Arnould (1991) and Arnould and Price (1993). The first considers the rituals people adhere to during a national family holiday (Thanksgiving) in the USA. The second is a study of the 'extraordinary experience' that participants on a 'multiday river rafting trip' on the Colorado river have. These studies are important because they report on the opposite extremes of experiences – mundane, tightly-scripted family occasions and exciting (even dangerous) situations where strangers are literally thrown together in an experience which creates shared experiences and identities. As one of the paper's authors reflect, "How could so many awful things add up to a positive experience?" (Arnould & Price, 1993, p. 28). Both studies also used multiple types of data and strategies over an extended period to collect as rich a picture as possible of the phenomenon being investigated.

Gnoth and Matteucci (2014) suggest that travellers use past experience (Heidegger uses the term 'autopoiesis' meaning autoproduction) to negotiate their way through tourist situations (enculturation) and decide when they plan their travels how much new or unknown experiences they feel they can cope with. They argue that this allows tourists to reflect on "what it means to be an individual and to experience the world in an existentially authentic manner" (Gnoth & Matteucci, 2014, p. 6). They propose a model where the tourist chooses to rediscover their own 'being' (in which they use existing patterns of behaviour to interpret new situations) or chooses to 'become' someone different through exploring new experiences. These categorisations might yield interesting new insights if applied to airport customers and perhaps help to explain why some travellers stick to 'tried and tested' routines or are prepared to engage in new experiences.

A New Zealand poet summarised many people's experiences of airports in his poem *Airport blues* (Ireland, 2007, p. 18),

> *Airport blues*
>
> Yet the most dispiriting part of it all
>
> is the last, oozy crawl along the corridor
>
> to the tube that pours you into the hull.
>
> It's the way you also make sausages.

Yet maybe an airport *can* become the 'third place' that Oldenburg and Brissett (1982, p. 265) explain as being "characterized in terms of sociability and nondiscursive symbolism", at least for the regular traveller. They use the term for bars, cafés and other places which are not the office or the home but somewhere where people can come into contact with people who are different to themselves. Airports have different lines for different classes of travellers at check-in and often even separate out 'budget' airlines into different terminals (or Perth's dedicated FIFO terminal for employees of mining firms in Western Australia), and Urry (2003, p. 12) makes the point that "movement and power are now inextricably linked" leading to the development of a 'kinetic elite' who move through transport nodes such as airports much more smoothly than others. However, viewing public places such as airports positively, it could be argued that,

> In such places one meets and enjoys a human being who, incidentally and secondarily, repairs appliances or teaches school… The third place, while rarely the forum for dramatic or high-intensity excitement, does involve its participants in spontaneous and free-wheeling social experiences. (Oldenburg and Brissett (1982, p. 277)

In their conclusion they suggest that modern Americans are disillusioned and discontent with their lot, precisely because their lives no longer provide them with the opportunity to have genuinely new experiences in the company of people they would otherwise never have met. Perhaps this will be the role of the 21st Century airport.

The aim of this research is to investigate the factors influencing the airport customer experience, thereby developing a better understanding of the customer experience of airports in order to fill a gap in the literature and for the benefit of airport management to better serve the needs of their customers. This study considers a variety of users of the airport, including arriving and departing passengers, greeters and farewellers, and others using the airport facilities. This extends what is known about 'airport customers'

as it takes a phenomenological approach and includes all airport users, rather than just focusing on airline passengers, which are the focus of many (largely quantitative) airport surveys conducted on behalf of government and industry organisations. Research questions should be emerge from but at the same time address a gap in the literature. This chapter has explained the context in which the airport customer experience takes place. It has shown that the gap is in a phenomenological understanding of the customer experience in the liminal space that an airport represents in the time of 'supermodernity' (Augé, 1995). While there has been work done in the fields of geography and sociology, there is very little in the fields of hospitality, business and management, apart from R. C. Wood's (1994a) study of culture and social control, Lugosi's studies of hospitable spaces (2008, 2009) and Rowley and Slack's (1999, p. 374) study which found that "the experience of the airport departure lounge is significantly determined by the physical environment and the facilities on offer to customers". This study develops this idea further through direct interviews with airport customers.

A research question should additionally influence the approach taken – methodology should both help to frame the question and also indicate some of the most appropriate tools of analysis to investigate this same question (van Manen, 2011). The next chapter will explain how the selected research approach helps in achieving this goal of understanding the airport customer experience by identifying the factors influencing the airport customer experience.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

Chapter 1 gave an outline of the methodological approach underpinning this study. This chapter will give a more detailed ontological and epistemological justification of the position taken by the researcher and the rationale for the use of a case study approach by considering the literature on methodologies used to investigate tourism and hospitality experiences and how this knowledge is used in this study. The choice of methodology must be a fundamental part of the research design, and can only be made with the research question in mind. As Van Maanen (1979, p. 540) stated, "methodology in the social sciences is far too important to be left to the methodologists". This chapter will reflect on the selection of methodologies arising from the choice of ontology (what is) and epistemology (how we know). The research carried out for this study was conducted with approval from AUT's Ethics Committee under AUTEC number 12/69. The committee made a number of helpful and constructive recommendations which were incorporated into the fieldwork.

Speaking of the increasingly dominant methodological approaches used in tourism and hospitality research, Lugosi, Lynch and Morrison (2009, p. 1469) write that in the field of hospitality studies,

> Researchers often adhere to phenomenological or constructivist ontologies adopting experimental research methods associated with the more recent historical moments of qualitative research where researcher reflexivity is stressed in order to foreground the subjective process in the construction of knowledge.

They suggest this is a welcome development as this reverses the trend that has seen researchers "follow too slavishly the precepts of positivism and neo-classical economics" (p. 1466) and that both tourism and hospitality studies "have moved beyond the straightjacketed fascination with positivistic research" (p. 1467). Aramberri (2001, p. 739) criticises much positivist research for contributing little to the development of theory saying,

> If one cannot build some theoretical thread, or more accurately threads, below the *maelstrom* of case studies and econometric approaches that usually count more Greek letters than the *Anabasis*, the profession will get no respect.

While agreeing that this is a positive development, this researcher accepts that qualitative researchers have often not given the reader sufficient information on how and why the data was gathered (Laverty, 2003; Maggs-Rapport, 2001), relying instead on what O'Gorman, MacLaren and Bryce (2014, p. 2) refer to as "invocation by citation", arguing that others have used a similar approach as the sole justification for their use. This study therefore aims to map out clearly how the researcher, using a subjective ontology and an interpretivist and phenomenological epistemology, gathered, conceptualised and interpreted the largely qualitative interview data through the lens of his own personal lived experiences (van Manen, 1990). As Dorsch, Fisk and Grove (2014, p. 2) point out "the early struggles to establish service as a legitimate area of concern within academia are long gone", but it is still important for researchers to lead the reader through their research journey.

Wolcott (1990) expresses some concern about the enthusiasm of academics for labelling research but accepts that not to understand the differences between approaches may lead to 'haphazard descriptiveness' and so he argues that

> Qualitative research and researchers alike are better served, I firmly believe, when critical distinctions among approaches are recognized and respected rather than allowed to blend into one vast but undifferentiated celebration of the range of human possibility. (Wolcott, 1990, p. 54)

However Gummesson (2003, p. 482) is unequivocal when he starts his paper with the words "Let's stop fooling ourselves: All research is interpretive… There is interpretation all along, from the very start of a research project until the very end."

The research question

The question this study seeks to answer is 'what are the factors influencing the airport customer experience?' Answering this question will allow a better understanding of the factors influencing the customer experience of airports in order to fill a gap in the literature and the current body of knowledge. Pernecky and Jamal (2010) suggest that tourism is an appropriate field for phenomenological enquiry as it addressed the study of lived experience and Stake (1990) explains that context is critical in qualitative research. The fact that a tourism setting frequently involves multiple stakeholders contributing to a tourism experience means that a holistic perspective is required (Morgan et al., 2010). Guba (1987) explains that physicist research gave rise to the 'black box' model of research where researchers made changes to a controlled environment and then inferred knowledge from that – and that this has been the

dominant paradigm for many years. However Conroy (2003), Morgan et al. (2010) and O'Gorman (2005, 2007), argue that hospitality and tourism research will always need to be a multi-disciplinary (but predominantly interpretivist) one. The experience of travelling through an airport cannot therefore be isolated from the physical environment or the meanings and symbolism attached to it in the view of the writer. At the start of his book documenting a week at Heathrow Airport in the UK, philosopher de Botton (2009, p. 13) explained that,

> Had one been asked to take a Martian to visit a single place that neatly captures the gamut of themes running through our civilisation – from our faith in technology to our destruction of nature, from our interconnectedness to our romanticising of travel – then it would have to be to the departures and arrivals hall that one would head.

As the ontological and epistemological positions taken by a researcher influences everything that happens in a research project, the next section will clarify the author's understanding of these concepts.

Ontology and epistemology

Laverty (2003, p. 26) uses the following accessible definitions for the key terms in any academic research project:

> "Ontology – what is the form and nature of reality and what can be known about it?
>
> Epistemology – What is the nature of the relationship between the knower and what can be known?"

Holden and Lynch (2004) ask how is it possible to gain knowledge of the world we live in. They also use the interesting analogy that 'methodology' is the 'toolkit' that researchers use to investigate their research question. It is helpful to clarify why an understanding of one's ontological and epistemological position is so important for a researcher. As Pernecky and Jamal (2010) explain, a researcher's understanding of these two terms will determine the methods used to investigate the phenomenon in question. Bazeley (2004) argues that it is important that the choice of a particular research method should be driven by the research question – an exploratory study or one requiring a detailed understanding of a phenomenon is most likely to be using qualitative methods such as interviews or observation, from a purposively-chosen sample, and will often result in semi-structured data which will require interpretation by the researcher.

From an ontological perspective, the dominant paradigm in the area of tourism has been a quantitative, positivist, 'Cartesian' one despite the fact that tourism is fundamentally about lived experiences (Morgan et al., 2010). This is perhaps in part because of "the hegemonic place of scientific method in our society and its institutions of higher education" (McCaffrey, Raffin-Bouchal & Moules, 2012, p. 217). Laverty (2003) suggests that this dominance of quantitative methodologies is partially a matter of convenience and accessibility. However, it is worth taking a few moments to consider how this came about.

In Europe in the Middle Ages all knowledge came from the Church, and religious authorities defined how and why things happened (Angen, 2000). In an attempt to break away from this control, there was a movement arguing that things could only be true if they could be proven to be so, rather than as an act of faith or because someone in authority said it was so. This movement led to the Cartesian dualist paradigm, where the researcher regarded themselves as separate from the phenomenon they were investigating, with what would now be described as an objective, ontological, positivist approach using mainly quantitative data. The aim of such 'scientists' was to conduct research looking for the 'right' answer, with high levels of validity (measuring what it is supposed to measure) and reliability (producing consistent results) which would allow them to claim some level of generalisability. Hirschman (1986) pointed out that in the three decades before her paper, there had only been one paper published in the *Journal of Marketing* which did not use positivist research methods. She suggests this is due to the focus in marketing on logistics, costs and efficiency. Perhaps the same could be said of much airport-related research. The suggestion within tourism and hospitality, however, is that the positivist idea of the one 'right answer' is no longer a realistic goal (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Lynch, 2005; Prentice, Witt, & Hamer, 1998).

Wolcott (1990, p. 63), writing at the end of what has sometimes been referred to as 'the paradigm wars', points out that,

> A precondition for every quantitative study is a qualitative judgement about what is to count (i.e. be studied) and, as the old saw goes, even the most resolute of qualitative researchers have been known to number their pages.

A move away from the Cartesian, objective ontological model was influenced by work by Edmund Husserl in the early 20th Century on phenomenology although his background was in mathematics and science teaching, and therefore to a certain extent still a positivist perspective. However, his interest was increasingly on his subjects'

perceptions of what they were experiencing, rather than in what had actually taken place (which he found was not always the same). His approach was therefore to try and separate the researcher's knowledge and perspective from the analysis of what they were observing. By doing this 'bracketing' of prior experience and knowledge, he believed he could arrive at an objective (and therefore more 'scientific') analysis when studying a phenomenon. Another German philosopher, Heidegger, started his career working with Husserl, although he came from a theological rather than a scientific background. He therefore believed that an individual could never truly separate themselves from their background and historical perspective or 'pre-understanding'. As a result, subjects and researchers would never be truly objective and scientific in their analysis of situations in the Cartesian way, and Heidegger's phenomenology differs significantly from that of Husserl. McCaffrey et al. (2012, p. 217) point out that "we recognise where we stand in part through our understanding of where we have come from". Pernecky and Jamal (2010) describe Heidegger's work on *'da-sein'* or 'being there' as being about understanding and thinking. The assumption that satisfaction is merely a ratio of expectation to perception is too simplistic according to Morgan et al. (2010). Slevitch (2011) warns that interpretivists believe they can only access reality through their own minds. This means that everything is someone's interpretation of the event. Fortunately, thanks to the internet, travellers' experiences are also increasingly recorded and shared on social media as well as in other media, in interviews and through emic and etic observation. This development provides the opportunity for 'thick description' (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994; Geertz, 1973) as well as triangulation using different sources and research methods and provides the researcher with the opportunity to investigate a situation from multiple perspectives and to 'interrogate' the data in an iterative or 'hermeneutic' manner similar to the way that biblical scholars interpreted religious texts in the past. Botterill (2000, p. 191) explains that "throughout the hermeneutical approach there is an underlying *humanism* that presumes that human nature is meaningful and unified". As Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006, p. 4) point out when explaining the development of their hermeneutical study,

> Although presented as a linear, step-by-step procedure, the research analysis was an iterative and reflexive process.

The airport is an environment that people find themselves in – often without much choice. Once there they are encouraged to engage in food and beverage experiences and 'retail therapy', but at the same time the reality is that they are being physically held in a series of secure and sterile spaces and processed in order to efficiently fill and empty

aircraft which need to arrive and depart on a tight schedule. This contradiction of hospitality and control is reminiscent of Derrida's (2000a, 2000b) 'hostipitality', and is therefore very appropriate for a Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenological investigation as it researches the 'experience' of the airport customer, whether they are travellers, meeters and greeters or 'farewellers' (as they are known in New Zealand).

A key term in Heidegger's *Being and Time* published in 1927 as *Sein und Zeit* is the term 'Da-sein' which has often been translated as 'being there' or more literally 'there being'. Heidegger was keen to hyphenate the term to avoid it being translated as simply being about 'existence'. Heidegger (1953/1996) is thought to have wanted it to be understood as a more active and involved experience of being somewhere specific. This was one reason for wanting to conduct this particular study in the actual airport building, while airport customers were immersed in the experience. As Inwood (1997, p. 45) explains,

> What Dasein understands is not so much any particular item in its environment as a whole and its own place in it. But Dasein does not simply understand its environment as one might understand an alien text or culture from which one is entirely disengaged.

Phenomenology and hermeneutics

Prasad (2002) suggests that Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) should be regarded as the father of hermeneutics as we understand it today because he proposed that it should be seen as a general theory of interpretation and understanding of (not just religious) texts. Dowling (2007) provides an overview of the development of phenomenology in her paper 'From Husserl to van Manen'. In it she explains that Husserl was at the positivist end of the scale, followed by Merleau-Ponty (a post-positivist), Heidegger as interpretivist and Gadamer as constructivist, before phenomenology became to be regarded not just as a philosophy (associated with Husserl, Heidegger, Gadamer, Merleau-Ponty and Derrida) but also as a research method popular in nursing, particularly in North America and referred to by some as 'new phenomenology' (Dowling, 2007, p. 131). However, she also warns that there is a difference between Husserlian descriptive phenomenology and Heideggerian interpretive phenomenology with the latter not only acknowledging but actually incorporating the researcher's beliefs and experiences into the analysis of the data. She quotes van Manen as discussing the 'phenomenological nod' although van Manen himself credits the Dutch anthropologist Buytendijk with the term and explained that,

> … a good phenomenological description is collected by lived experience and recollects lived experience – is validated by lived experience and it validates lived experience (van Manen, 1990, p. 27).

Gill (2014, p. 118) explains that "phenomenology is both a philosophical movement and a family of qualitative research methodologies" and claims that "van Manen straddles both descriptive and interpretive phenomenology" (Gill, 2014, p. 124). Manzo (2003, p. 48) agrees that phenomenology is important for the understanding of people's attachment to places saying "phenomenology focuses on the meanings and experiences of places via a descriptive, qualitative discovery of things in their own terms". Van Manen (1990) discusses the use of phenomenology in academic research and suggests that there are a number of orientations (transcendental, existential, hermeneutical, linguistical, ethical and experimental) and offers a number of approaches that can be used to gather the data on 'lived experiences' (describing, gathering, interviewing, observing, fictional and imaginal experiences). He suggests that what phenomenological research does is to 'borrow' the experiences of others from their accounts of situations they have found themselves in. However, he warns that the researcher's starting point is already an interpretation – or "transformations of those experiences" as he calls them (van Manen, 1990, p. 54) – of what actually happened, relying on an *account* of the situation rather than the actual *event*. This is perhaps what he means when he describes phenomenological enquiry as an enquiry into meaning (van Manen, 2011). He also emphasises that such research has the potential to deliver very practical recommendations, but warns that poor focus and a lack of methodological rigour in (for example) interviews can result in large quantities of data (often in the form of anecdotes or stories) that however provide insufficiently detailed examples and therefore could lead the researcher to speculate and rely on personal and unsubstantiated opinions rather than being supported by the data, which is essential for the credibility of an interpretation. B. A. Smith (1998) stressed the importance of supporting statements with illustrative quotes. His study was of a group of alcoholics and how they saw their lives. The study was therefore fraught with potential research ethics issues, and Smith provides a very detailed description of how he did his best to ensure that it was the voice of the participant that came through. He lists ten actions taken to ensure that others would have confidence in his findings, and a number of these have been adopted in this study. He undertook the interviews, recorded the interviews, transcribed them himself and then reread them many times in order to immerse himself in the data. B. A. Smith (1998) identified themes and then went back to the text to see if these were

supported by the data and how they linked back in to the whole. The airport customer experience is likewise made up of many issues which were grouped into themes and then related back to the stories participants have told, looking for evidence to support the interpretations. B. A. Smith (1998) argued that such an approach is using the hermeneutic circle. Gummesson (2003, p. 484) explains simply that "hermeneutics is a general methodology for interpretation". McCaffrey et al. (2012, p. 217) stress the importance of dialogue and debate in hermeneutics, giving the opportunity to discuss, reflect on and revise one's thinking. They point out that

> the dynamic of the reflexive hermeneutic circle allows for, indeed expects, the iterative questioning and shifting of one's assumptions.

Following Smith's lead, for this study the writer immersed himself in the data and like Smith, when 'writing up' repeatedly went back to the data to ensure the text and data linked supported one another. As Smith used 'expert nurses' to validate themes he had identified and interpreted, this study has used three fellow academics in the fields of business, hospitality and tourism to review the data and ensure that the data matched the themes identified by the writer. B. A. Smith (1998) also makes the point that no attempt was made to claim generalisability because of the lack of randomization or representativeness. It could be argued that approaching random airport customers as was done in this study is likely to result in a representative sample but rather than claiming 'generalizability', the writer would prefer to focus on the 'transferability' of findings to other airport settings and 'trustworthiness' of the interpretations. McCool, Butler, Buckley, Weaver and Wheeller (2013, p. 217) do however warn that "the mental models we carry around influence our behaviour (and even the evidence we may see in scientific exploration)". Finally, B. A. Smith (1998) argues that it is essential that research participants be able to use their own words when describing their experiences. However, despite all these measures, Caelli (2001) points out that the 'ideal' of phenomenological reductionism (where one removes one's own preconceptions) will fail simply because the participants do not suspend or otherwise separate their own pre-conceptions and assumptions. The data will therefore always be an interpretation, seen through a particular individual's experiential lens.

This thesis is based on interviews carried out by the writer, recorded by the writer, and then transcribed by the writer. This was as a result of the desire to stay as close as possible to the data – to ensure that this research would always be transparently grounded in the data. If the model of the airport customer experience was to develop

from actual customer experiences and their description of those experiences, then it seemed obvious that the researcher would need to be as closely involved as possible in building a relationship with interviewees, gathering, processing and analysing of the data. van Manen (1990, p. 63) points out that "the hermeneutic interview tends to turn the interviewees into participants or collaborators". Kunda (2013) also warns that ethnographic-type studies are unlikely to break down into a clear process of data collection, analysis and writing up in that order, and urges researchers to start writing early and often, but to accept that there will be "numerous time-consuming iterations" (Kunda, 2013, p. 18).

Pernecky and Jamal (2010) discuss 'hermeneutic phenomenology', a term frequently associated with the work of Heidegger who was interested in an 'existential phenomenology' or 'being' in the concrete world, building on Husserl's 1930s research into the 'transcendental ego'. Van Manen (2011) argues that a phenomenological approach to research should be considered hermeneutical as the data is interpreted by the researcher, with 'meaning' drawn from the experience of others, as opposed to merely observed and recorded. Pernecky and Jamal (2010, p. 1070) propose that,

> in hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher is an intrinsic part of the interpretation that emerges and he/she cannot be "bracketed" out of the process. The matter of pre-understandings, prejudices or pre-judgements, which both Heidegger and Gadamer show are intricately part of one's being … cannot be isolated scientifically.

An overview of the ontological, epistemological and methodological implications of such an approach to research is demonstrated in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Research approach

Reason for research	**To study lived experience**: Understanding how experiences are interpreted and understood (the meanings of these experiences to the participants involved).
Ontology	**(Being in the world) Realist**: The World and Nature can be accessed by means of our *being-in-the-world*: we make sense of our being and *lifeworld* (the world we live in) through reflective representation and analysis. All understanding of our *being-in the-world* is perspectival and shaped by pre-understanding, historicity, culture, practice, background, language etc.). There is a "realness" to the world and to our experiences; *Da-sein's* involvement plays a crucial role in constructing "truth".
Epistemology	**Hermeneutic**: The main focus is on interpretation, context, and language; what counts as "truth" is based on interpretation, co-construction and reflective participation. Both the researcher and the participant are self-interpreting beings who live in the "real" world and hence both play an important role in the process of arriving at understanding through dialogue and interpretation. Language plays a key role.
Methodology	**Interpretive and dialogic**: The researcher seeks to interpret and understand the lived experience; searches for meaning, analyses, critiques, and negotiates between theory and data, and is guided by hermeneutic phenomenology. The focus is on relationship between self and other rather than "subjective" or "objective" stance. *Method*: Interviews and participant observation, writing rich description aimed at understanding and meaning. Co-construction, reflexivity, and historicity are important guiding principles to the interpretive task.

Source: (Pernecky & Jamal, 2010, p. 1067)

Caelli (2001, p. 275) warns that the researcher must be aware of the difference between 'Methodology' which she describes as "the philosophical framework that must be assimilated" in order to work within the accepted academic assumptions and 'method' which is the actual research technique and procedure.

Given the above guidelines, it is important to reflect on how the data would be gathered and evaluated. For example, Bird (2005, p. 227) warns that "transcription is the act of (re)presenting original oral language in written form". Therefore any transcriptions are already an interpretation of what the interviewee was saying (which in turn is their interpretation of their experience at the airport – and which may or may not agree with others' interpretation). Bird advises researchers to acknowledge that some form of analysis is already taking place during the transcription process "thus making

transcription 'an integral process' in qualitative analysis" (Bird, 2005, p. 230). Her research interest in interpretive methodologies, hermeneutics and phenomenology meant that she was focused more on 'qualities' rather than 'quantities' in the data. Arnould and Thompson (2005, p. 869) argue that many studies into marketing "remain oriented around microeconomic theory, cognitive psychology, experimental design, and quantitative analytical methods". This dominant positivist approach was an important insight for this research because it explained the slight unease felt by the writer about using NVivo qualitative data analysis software (Johnston, 2006) although it undoubtedly has advantages over the traditional exercise of sitting on the floor in an office surrounded by carefully cut up strips of paper containing interview quotes. The availability of software which does this for the researcher seems a considerable leap forward, but what if it creates a barrier between the researcher and the data? Gibbs (2007) points out that many of what are now regarded as seminal studies were conducted without the aid of such tools. Furthermore, McCaffrey et al. (2012, p. 219) warn about the dangers of the "objectification of words as entities to be counted" and that in doing so the meaning and context behind those words may be lost to researchers. Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 392) quote Marshall (1981) who describes very clearly the disquiet felt by this writer saying, "I'm a bit unsure about this, because this seems to *rob* the individual case of its wholeness" (emphasis in original).

Fortunately there is an increasing amount of literature with researchers reflecting on the usefulness of such tools. Bringer, Johnston and Brackenridge (2004) give a useful synopsis of the background to and rationale for what is now known as NVivo (formerly NUD*IST). They point out that the first computer programmes in this field were used for content analysis which allowed frequency counts, so the software effectively quantified qualitative data. Johnston (2006) points out that the ability to code and classify qualitative data may attract quantitative researchers who are not familiar with the interpretivist approach to data analysis. Bringer et al. (2006) address the concern that the software may distance the researcher from the data by arguing that, in fact, such software can release the researcher from mundane activities to identify themes, or to write reflections and memos as suggested in grounded theory. Johnston (2006, p. 383) warns of "the coding trap" where novice users of the software feel they need to code every line of text, and then end up with a very descriptive rather than thematic analysis. Bringer et al. (2004, p. 253) also suggest that the Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) tool facilitates a visible paper-trail through the researcher's reflections and conceptualisations in what they call an "electronic audit

trail". The most recent release of NVivo also allows researchers to import audio and PDF files which has opened up the possibility to import journal papers into the software and to 'code' the literature review in much the same way as interview transcripts and field notes. This extends the audit trail backwards into the literature review and even into the emergence of a methodology that the researcher is comfortable with. In the case of this research, NVivo was not employed until the data was actually being gathered, and after the initial management interviews were completed. Glaser (1965) highlights the challenge qualitative researchers face, saying,

> often the only way a researcher can obtain any data, or data that is accurate, is some combination of observing what is going on, talking in rather loose, sharing fashion, with the people in the situation, and reading some form of document that they have written (Glaser, 1965, p. 436).

Glaser (1965) recommends reviewing the data in order to identify 'new properties' and writing memos on these reflections – memos which can now also be coded in NVivo (Bringer et al., 2004). Glaser's 'constant comparative method' approach of sharing insights and understandings with participants was observed in the data gathering process for this study. By asking participants to reflect in very general and open-ended terms what their airport experience had been, responses were sometimes rather guarded and lacking in detail. The writer was initially consciously trying to 'bracket' his own experiences. However, as the interview/conversation progressed, and some of his own experiences with check-in processes, airport delays, preferences for particular airports or acts of kindness by other travellers or airport staff were revealed, the research participants either started to recall or felt more comfortable to share their own experiences. It is perhaps not surprising that two people feel more comfortable sharing personal experiences when they understand more about the other person. This suggests that it may not be helpful to 'bracket' one's own experiences in a qualitative study which seeks a deep understanding of the phenomenon of the airport customer experience.

Bringer et al. (2004) conclude their paper by stating that CAQDAS certainly has the potential to add to the rigour of qualitative analysis, but note that any researcher using such tools should ensure they are able to answer questions on the appropriateness of such tools in the light of their chosen epistemological position. Johnston (2006) supports this and suggests that in addition to the 'technical learning curve' involved in mastering a new software package there is also a 'methodological learning curve', particularly for new researchers. The steepness of this learning curve should not be

underestimated, and a detailed research diary will help provide the evidence of this journey. Fortunately the writer was advised to keep a research log at the beginning of the research project.

As has been demonstrated in the preceding discussion, a considerable amount of time was spent by the writer learning about CAQDAS such as NVivo. A number of fellow researchers had warned very early on that such a tool might be regarded as reductionist, and that if the stated aim of the research was to develop an understanding of the lived experience of the airport customer, then perhaps this was not the best approach. After coding a number of interviews, the writer's conclusion was that although NVivo broke up people's experiences into measurable and quantifiable segments which could therefore be more easily retrieved, it was not necessarily helping to develop a better understanding of the overall experience of being in an airport. It was therefore decided, with some regret given the resources given to mastering the process, not to use NVivo for this particular study. This mirrors Marshall's (1981) observation in her research on women managers when she expresses her misgiving about dividing up someone's story into categories for the purpose of analysis. "I'm a bit unsure about this, because this seems to *rob* the individual case of its wholeness" (as cited in Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 392).

One research approach which had considerable appeal in the early stages of this research journey is 'symbolic interactionism'. Frochot and Batat (2013, p. v) argue that "tourism researchers have demonstrated the superiority of emotions in the understanding of the experiences and their conceptualisation". The next section briefly considers the relevance of this approach to the study of the airport customer experience, and concludes with an explanation of why it informed the research approach but finally it was decided not to follow a purely symbolic interactionist approach in this study.

Symbolic interactionism and airport research

As Blumer (1940, p. 707) points out when making the case for 'symbolic interactionism', "many of the primary and basic observations of human conduct are necessarily a matter of judgement and inference". He warns that while positivist researchers may therefore be keen to dismiss qualitative research as unscientific, these same researchers may actually want to reflect on their own (quantitative) contributions to the academic body of knowledge as,

The result has been a plethora of censuses, tests, scales, scoring devices, and minor experiments all yielding a vast amount of scattered propositions. It is not an unfair judgement to declare that these efforts with their resulting information have done little to clarify concepts. (Blumer, 1940, p. 708).

He makes the point that in order for a theoretical contribution to have credibility and value, it must be grounded in the data, or, as he puts it, "must remain in intimate relation with empirical fact" (Blumer, 1940, p. 713). He warns that researchers will find it very difficult to generalise from or empirically validate qualitative data, saying that an assessment of findings in terms of reasonableness, plausibility and usefulness will be more productive. Blumer uses three underlying principles, or 'premises' as he calls them, to define the nature of the symbolic interactionism movement (Blumer, 1969):

- People respond to things because of the meanings those things have for them (contemporary examples might include such items as a wedding ring, hejab, moko [Māori facial tattoo], passport, executive lounge/frequent flyer card).

- These things have meaning because they influence the way one interacts with others and because of the source of that meaning, i.e. the interaction between people.

- These things have meaning through a process of interpretation by the individual regarding the thing or experience.

While much of the above discussion helped clarify the methodological approach and would fit extremely well in the epistemological approach taken by the writer, the last 'premise' perhaps prevents a strict application of Blumer's symbolic interactionism to this study. It was the intention of the writer to hermeneutically evaluate and interrogate the 'lived experiences' of airport customers by using the voices of the interviewees and then through a process of thematic analysis. It was not the intention of the writer to interpret the airport customer experiences through a strictly symbolic interactionist perspective. However, it is important for a researcher to recognise and to be sensitive to the fact that particular items, processes or experiences that airport customers have may have significant (and different) meanings for those individuals.

Airports have a symbolic role in people's lives, and many of the activities undertaken by or observed at airports have symbolic value which airport customers must interpret and respond to (for example the instructions of aviation security officers who indicate with their own bodies the position they want a traveller to adopt for a 'wand search', or the apparently general conversations about one's planned itinerary with immigrations or customs officials).

Thematic analysis

Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) claim that the argument that qualitative research is not a valid method of research has now been dismissed, but they warn that it is still the researcher's responsibility to provide a clear trail of 'breadcrumbs' in order for the study to have integrity and credibility. Moules (2002, p. 17) explains,

> A good interpretation takes the reader to a place that is recognizable, having either been there before, or in simply believing that it is possible.

In order to have confidence in a piece of research the researcher should demonstrate competence in research techniques and integrity in interpretation. This means being explicit about the theoretical approach being used, congruence between the methodology and the actual methods used, what the researcher has done to ensure academic rigour and the pre-suppositions used to interpret the data (Caelli, 2001; Caelli, Ray, & Mill, 2003). Findings should be accompanied by quotations supporting the interpretation (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Thematic analysis is a tool for identifying patterns across a range of interviews, observation or other forms of data after repeated re-readings (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Qualitative research is criticised for lacking rigour and therefore credibility (Patton, 1999) in comparison to the hypothesis testing and verifiable test results of quantitative research, and has led to the perception that in qualitative research "anything goes" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 95). On the other hand it can be argued that researchers should have the confidence to select "a method that is appropriate to your research question, rather than falling victim to 'methodolatry'" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 97). While some of this criticism of qualitative research methods such as thematic analysis may be justified, others have suggested this perception is due not to a lack of methodological skills amongst qualitative researchers but because they have not adequately described the steps they have taken to conduct their research and analysis (Mehmetoglu & Altinay, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) provide a very detailed explanation of how the method of thematic analysis can be used and then reported when assessing one's own or others' research. Perhaps one of the weaknesses of thematic analysis is the very fact that it is a seemingly relatively accessible tool (unlike much statistical software-based analysis) and therefore popular with novice researchers. Researchers using thematic analysis must be prepared to prove that the choice of method is not "simply carried out by someone without the knowledge or skills to perform a supposedly more sophisticated" analytical approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006,

p. 97). Bazeley (2007, 2009) agrees, explaining that many researchers simply restate the common phrase 'themes emerged from the data' and that often "themes that are presented are often simply labels for metacategories" (Bazeley, 2009, p. 7). She urges researchers to share data segments with colleagues to confirm their own interpretation or to prompt new insights, and warns that 'themes' which closely match the literature or are simply restatements of interview questions can hardly be said to have 'emerged from the data'. Her research was conducted and the identified themes were shared with a fellow researcher working within a similar paradigm and her study supervisor, thereby confirming the plausibility of the interpretation.

In order for the research to contribute to knowledge it must do more than listing each theme in order but instead help to build a more detailed picture of a particular phenomenon (Bazeley, 2009). Bazeley urges researchers to avoid these traps by using a 'describe-compare-relate' process for each theme (or category as she sometimes calls them) in which they *describe* a theme, *compare* the theme for differences with others already identified and *relate* the category to others already identified. She claims this is how theory actually does emerge directly from the data. She uses Miles and Huberman's (1994) phrase that "the researcher moves from describing to explaining, through a 'ladder of abstraction'" (Bazeley, 2009, p. 13). In her conclusion she explains that a researcher knows they have 'arrived' at their contribution to knowledge because, despite all the complexities known to the researcher, the final model is often very simple. She answers the question Richards (2009) asks about what would be satisfactory and says that the researcher knows they have 'arrived' when five 'signs of sufficiency' have been met (Bazeley, 2009, p. 20) – "simplicity; elegance and balance; completeness; robustness and sense to the audience". Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006, p. 4) support these authors, arguing, "a 'good code' is one that captures the qualitative richness of the phenomenon".

As this thesis seeks to investigate how the airport customer experience is constructed, it takes a constructionist approach, and the tools that have been used to evaluate the data is considered to be the appropriate epistemology to prevent the researcher crossing epistemological boundaries between realist and constructionist perspectives. That the writer conducted the interviews and observations and then transcribed them himself meant that he was already very familiar with the data prior to the analysis phase. It is also recognised that a hermeneutic process of constantly going back to the data is essential to ensure that themes emerge transparently from the data in what may be

described as the 'constant comparative method' (Glaser, 1965). Glaser also warned that such an approach may mean that two researchers considering the same data will come to slightly different conclusions. The focus of the approach is on "generating and plausibly suggesting (not provisionally testing) many properties and hypotheses about a *general* phenomenon" (Glaser, 1965, p. 438). As the role of qualitative research is to build theory rather than testing it, it is essential that the reader understands how the data led to the formulation of the new theoretical insight. As Geertz (1973, p. 5) explained, "doing ethnography is like trying to read … a manuscript – foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries…".

The approach this study used in order to analyse the interviews and observations of the airport customer was based on Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). With its roots in Husserl's concept of 'consciousness', Heidegger's 'hermeneutics' and Blumer's 'symbolic interactionism', IPA has more recently been discussed in the nursing and psychology literature (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008; Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005; J. A. Smith, 2004). Gill (2014, p. 126) explains that "IPA aims to explore in detail how participants make sense of their personal and social world". Within the hospitality literature, Morrison and O'Gorman (2008) use a similar approach. Another study by O'Gorman and Gillespie (2010) developed an analytical framework based on IPA to evaluate the use of storytelling as part of communicating leaders' visions for their organisations. They carried out a hermeneutic analysis of the role of storytelling by twenty leaders of internationally successful hospitality businesses. They did this through a clear hermeneutical cycle which involved the identification of pre-suppositions and pre-understanding, investigating the phenomenon, reflecting on the data to identify key themes and then going back to the data to interrogate the interview data in the light of those key themes. Each of these iterations yielded a richer understanding of the phenomenon under investigation and linked the themes more closely to the data. Of particular relevance to this research, O'Gorman and Gillespie (2010) identified three levels of analysis. The first involved a 'thematic analysis' in which common themes were identified between the different stories the leaders told. Common items included using stories to develop and share core values, symbols and ceremonies. Following this was a reflective phase in which "six principle categories of storytelling were identified" which all the leaders shared (O'Gorman & Gillespie, 2010, p. 670). They were 'develop vision and mission', 'manage change', 'share values', 'develop trust', 'motivate employees' and 'direct and influence employees'. These were evaluated by academic peers to ensure that the data supported these categories. Finally,

they describe a second round of reflection which led to the identification of examples of these six uses of storytelling. An example for 'motivate employees' included "enthuse and energise, captivate, motivate, show achievement, encourage creativity, engage participation" (O'Gorman & Gillespie, 2010, p. 674).

This approach can very usefully be applied to this study. In analysing the data, the writer first immersed himself in the data, asking the question 'how does what this interviewee say help with an understanding of the airport customer experience? From this emerged common themes which other airport customers shared. This was iteratively related back to the data as well as being debated with academic colleagues and airport users in order to ensure that the data supported these interpretations. In the second reflective phase these themes were interrogated in order to identify relationships and sub-categories or hierarchies within and between the themes.

The writer was fortunate to be able to conduct all the primary research himself and to have the time to transcribe all the recorded interviews personally. A number of pilot interviews were conducted with colleagues who were familiar with the airport as they were regular travellers. This allowed testing of the recording equipment, ethics documentation sign-off and note taking procedures. This familiarity with every individual interview meant that there was a clear thread between what was being said in individual interviews and the identification of themes. Once all the interviews had been transcribed, each interview was printed out on a separate sheet of paper (with a code to allow traceability later) and each was interrogated with the following questions:

- How does this interview relate to my research question?

- How does it contribute to a better understanding of the airport customer experience?

This was done in order to avoid a reductionist effect where a particular statement might have a different meaning if it was taken out of context. This way themes could be identified but each 'airport story' would still be complete, with (as far as possible) all the nuances intact.

From this initial trawl through the data the following 'categories' and 'sub-categories' were identified (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Initial coding outputs

Categories
Physical environment; meeting customer needs; efficiency; expectations v perceptions; sense of place v placelessness; understanding of the airport environment and processes; personal travel philosophy; purpose of travel; facilities; commercial v hospitable; culture and authenticity; sense of ownership; other people; role of the airport; image or brand; suggestions for improvements
Sub-categories
Processes; unexpected travel; privacy; services; assistance; welcome; people; security/controlling; doing nothing; hospitality; coming home; comparison with other airports; previous visits; history; identity; personal travel needs/disabilities/special needs; Emirates airlines; accepting blame for problems; enduring airports; access to the airport; improvements; social occasions; pride; technology; friendly; problems resolved; wayfinding; the internet; connecting flights; passing the time; doing nothing; customer suggestions; smoking; reasonableness; pre-flight behaviour; executive facilities

It is important in this intense focus to recognise that all of this work is being done within one case study of an airport and one location (Auckland, New Zealand). The implications of this are considered in the next section on the case study approach. As R. C. Wood (1994a, p. 66) points out in his sociological study of social control in British hotels,

> The evidence drawn upon in constructing the argument is largely British in origin and such ethnocentricity has clear limitations. The arguments are presented with an awareness that they may have only limited application to other cultures and settings.

The same could be said of this study in New Zealand in a mid-sized international airport terminal. R. C. Wood (1994a, 1994b) does suggest that despite the limitations of culturally-specific studies, they do have the opportunity to stimulate reflection, debate and further research.

The case study approach

Siggelkow (2007) provides a compelling set of reasons as to why management research should use case study research in addition to large sample studies. Butler (1997) suggests that exploratory case studies are particularly valuable when existing paradigms seem to fail to adequately explain a phenomenon anymore, or to look beyond what is currently known. It is accepted that case studies offer a detailed examination of one situation, and many feel that it is not wise to try to generalise from a case study to the wider population. There are however increasing claims that case studies can offer 'transferability' if not 'generalisability' (Guba, 1981; Malone, McCabe & Smith, 2014;

Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012; Polit & Beck, 2010). Irrespective of the specific context of a particular case study, "the goal of every author is to write a paper that readers (and reviewers) find convincing" (Siggelkow, 2007, p. 20). This means making a strong argument as to why the selected case matters. Andrade (2009, p. 45) makes such a case when he explains "it provides an opportunity to get a deep insight into the problem under study". Hair, Money, Samouel and Page (2007) support this arguing that case studies focus on a particular event, firm or industry sector. They suggest that its strength lies in the fact that it allows researchers to gain a full picture of the situation being investigated in its natural setting. They warn that comparing very different scenarios may not be a helpful strategy. Hussey and Hussey (1997, p. 66) suggest that case studies are often described as 'exploratory research', particularly if there is not an extensive theoretical body of knowledge to draw on. They suggest that case studies could be classified into four categories – descriptive, illustrative, experimental and explanatory case studies. The writer suggests that this study fits most readily into the 'explanatory' category as it attempts to uncover the factors influencing the airport customer experience. This research considers the airport customer experience, whereas other research is focused on the efficient management of the airport rather than on the lived experience of those using the airport. Concerning the choice of case study location, Auckland airport is twice the size of any airport in New Zealand in terms of passenger numbers (14m). This means that a comparison with (for example) Wellington (5.4m) or Christchurch (5.5m) airports is not likely to yield helpful comparative data. Looking overseas, Sydney has 40m, Brisbane 21m, and further afield KLIA has 35m, Hong Kong 63m and London 73m passengers per annum. Only Perth airport in western Australia has similar numbers to Auckland (14m) but 10m of those are domestic passengers making them very different to Auckland's customers (data sourced from various airport websites). Stake (1995, p. xi) points out that "a case study is expected to catch the complexity of a single case", and using just Auckland airport's international terminal for this research is appropriate because within that one case are many travellers, greeters, farewellers and other airport customers of different ages, nationalities, motivations for travel, experience of travel and classes and reasons for being in the airport. The way in which this complexity will be captured is to use the approach of gathering data from multiple sources. While the majority of this study is based on interviews with airport customers, information from official airport websites, from airport award schemes such as ASQ and Skytrax, from customer-generated websites such as TripAdvisor and Foursquare, and from personal observation is also

included. Despite the fact that Yin (2009) is sometimes seen as taking a rather positivist approach to case studies, with an emphasis on design, replication and internal validity (Eisenhardt, 1989) Yin also makes the point that there is no clear end point for the collection of data in a case study methodology. He suggests that data collection should continue until there is confirming data from different sources, and that there is enough evidence gathered to consider (and reject) contrasting hypotheses. Yin (2009) suggests that there are six main sources of evidence for case study research, that no one source is necessarily better than any other, and that the strongest research will use as many sources of evidence as possible. Woodside (2010) agrees explaining that case study research uses both multiple methods and multiple time periods in order to achieve 'deep understanding'. While the sources noted below are likely to generate qualitative data, Holden and Lynch (2004) suggest that coding of case study data has led to an increase in the use of statistical analysis of results, although this study only makes limited use of descriptive statistics. Stall-Meadows and Hyle (2010) offer an interesting approach to generalising from multiple case studies using a meta-analysis of four case studies from an original list of eighteen.

In Table 3.3 below, the left-hand column lists Yin's main categories of evidence. On the right are examples of data that will be used in this study.

Table 3.3: Sources of evidence

Yin's (2009) categories: Source/Type of evidence	Data this case study gathers from a variety of sources
Documentation	Public records such as press releases, newsletters, annual reports and news reports, e-mail correspondence, meeting minutes, previous studies, blogs and other user-generated content
Archival records	Historical statistical data, organisational data, budgets, consultancy reports, plans and survey data
Interviews	With airport management, arriving and departing passengers, those greeting and farewelling people and other users of the airport facilities
Direct observation	Field notes, diary entries, photographs
Participant observation	Notes and personal observations from travelling and being an airport customer
Physical artefacts	Architecture of the building, furnishings, artwork, cultural displays/symbols, signage

Source: Adapted from (Yin, 2009, p. 102)

Yin suggests that an "interview" in a case study may be more of a "guided conversation" (Yin, 2009, p. 106). This very much fits with the phenomenological approach of this research and the desire for the voice of the consumer to be heard discussing their 'lived experience' (van Manen, 1990). Woodside (2010) also acknowledges that "when you meet someone for the first time, you are not meeting that person, you are meeting his representative" (Woodside, 2010, p. x). This makes the ability to triangulate the findings by using multiple sources very important. Yin (2009) recommends three 'principles'– to use multiple sources, to build a database of data as supporting evidence for claims made (for example by using NVivo or other CAQDAS), and to maintain a transparent 'chain of evidence'. However, others have pointed out that Yin's approach is "a relatively narrow view of case study research" (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 60) and that it has been heavily influenced by positivist thinking. Woodside (2010) argues that the prime objective of a case study researcher should be a detailed and deep understanding of the subjects of the research.

Saturation

One of the challenges of qualitative research is knowing when to stop gathering new primary data. It is often difficult in academic research to know populations and samples which can then allow reliability and confidence levels to be calculated. In the case of this research it is known that Auckland processed just over 14m passengers per annum, with 55% of these using the international terminal where this study was conducted. However, this study consciously uses the term 'airport customer', therefore including those farewelling or meeting/greeting travellers, those in transit through Auckland, and those who may just be visiting the airport for business or leisure purposes. All of these individuals interact with the airport, its facilities and services, and are therefore consumers of the airport experience and have something to contribute to this research, yet a population is not known. A 1995 survey of 47 European airports found meeters and greeters made up 34% of total customer volumes (Graham, 2001, p. 132) which would make a conservative estimate of total airport customers for Auckland airport somewhere around 18.7 million people per annum, but there are no verifiable statistics on this. One way to address this issue is to use a formula such as Money suggests. He argued that in cases where the population was unknown, the following formula could be used to establish a level of confidence in the results (Remenyi, Williams, Money, & Swartz, 1998, p. 197):

$$N = \frac{4p(100\text{-}p)}{E^2}$$

Where: p = the percentage of the population

N= the sample size

E= the desired accuracy level (+/- a given % deviation)

As the total population is not known in this study, Remenyi et al. (1998) suggest using the following formula to calculate the margin of error:

$$E = \frac{\sqrt{4p(100\text{-}p)}}{N}$$

Assuming that 120 interviewees are 50% of the population, the margin of error will be:

E= 4 x 50(100-50) = 200 x 50 = 10000/120 = 83

$\sqrt{83} = 9.13$

Therefore, with a sample of 120, there is a 95% confidence level that the result will be accurate within a range of +/- 9.13%. Significantly larger sample sizes do not, in practice, significantly improve the confidence level in the results (Wright, 2001).

However, Remenyi (2002, p. 39) warns that "it is often the case that it just would not make sense for a researcher to use quantitative tools to explore certain types of questions". While the above calculation suggests that positivist researchers could have a reasonable level of confidence in the results of this study, as this research has taken an interpretivist and phenomenological approach, an approach more aligned with this epistemology would be to use the concept of data saturation. Moules (2002, p. 14) reminds her readers that,

> hermeneutic inquiry is not validated by numbers but by the completeness of examining the topic under study and the fullness and depth to which the interpretation extends understanding.

Slevitch (2011, p. 78) likewise argues that, "sample size becomes irrelevant in qualitative methodology… Samples are evaluated based on the ability to provide important and rich information".

However, this does not give a researcher any guidance on what would be an acceptable sample size. More worrying perhaps, is the warning by Caelli et al. (2003, p. 9) that,

> While saturation has a distinct theoretically embedded meaning in grounded theory, its ubiquitous and non-selective use risks rendering the term meaningless to the qualitative research community.

Morse (1995) and Bowen (2008) both note that much qualitative research contains the assurance that data was collected until saturation was achieved. Morse (1995) clarifies her position, saying "saturation is defined as 'data adequacy' and operationalized as collecting data until no new information is obtained" (Morse, 1995, p. 147). She urges researchers to resist the temptation to count occurrences in the data ("frequency counts are out") (Morse, 1995, p. 148) and focus on gathering as wide a range of responses and observations as possible, particularly in the early stages. By doing this it minimises the chance that an important aspect of the phenomenon is overlooked. Morse (1995) points out that while this aspect may not be statistically significant, it may well hold the key to an understanding of the area under investigation. Instead, she argues that "researchers cease data collection when they have enough data to build a comprehensive and convincing theory. That is, saturation occurs" (Morse, 1995, p. 148).

Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) agree, saying saturation has become the 'gold standard', certainly in the area of health science research. Their literature review found sample sizes of six to two hundred, although the majority of studies appear to be based on less than forty interviews. They suggest that when interviews no longer change the researcher's 'code book' saturation can be assumed, and that additional interviews "would tend to seriously diminish returns on time (and money)" if further interviews were conducted (Guest et al., 2006, p. 72). The conclusion of their study was that no significant new insights were obtained after the first twelve in-depth interviews, although they acknowledge that an 'expert panel' or at least a relatively homogenous group were more likely to agree on key issues than a less well-informed sample. Bowen (2008) explains that the concept of saturation comes from grounded theory, so it is unsurprising that Glaser and Strauss (1967) discuss the concept of 'theoretical saturation' describing it as something that happens when a researcher is both collecting and analysing data continuously. They argue that "theoretical saturation suggests that what has been missed will probably have little modifying effect on the theory" and that the researcher can move on to other areas (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 112). In order to reach this point of saturation, Morse (1995) suggests that researchers should aim for a cohesive sample which contains the characteristics of relevance to the research question; use theoretical sampling to avoid replication; focus particularly on 'negative'

cases which appear to contradict the emerging theory, and ensure the sample provides full and rich data with ample examples to illustrate the researcher's conceptualisations.

A word of warning in the literature on saturation is that it is important not to claim saturation simply in order to meet project deadlines, to delete categories that do not fit, or because the researchers has reached 'saturation by triviality' where the data gathered is not rich enough to allow any meaningful analysis (Richards, 2009, p. 144). Bowen (2008, p. 150) advises that "premature closure will not produce a durable, stable, or workable theory". In a similar vein Morse (1995, p. 149) warns "if one does not have the blocks with which to build, one cannot build".

This study carried out initial categorisation and evaluation of the data after 20, 50 and 100 interviews before finally stopping data gathering at 120 airport customers. No new themes were identified after 100 interviews had taken place. In addition, a number of longer interviews took place with invited seasoned travellers away from the airport environment to determine if any significant topics were being systematically missed by the nature of the data gathering mechanism (mainly relatively short interviews carried out in the airport environment and during the actual airport experience). While these longer interviews were very interesting and helpful, no new themes were identified.

Objectivity through triangulation

A common criticism of qualitative research is that it is too heavily dependent on interpretation by the researcher, and that it therefore lacks reliability (i.e. cannot produce consistent results) and validity (does not actually measure what it ought to measure). Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006, p. 3) make the point that,

> Interpretive research still requires a trail of evidence throughout the research process to demonstrate credibility or trustworthiness.

Stake (1995, p. 114) warns that "many findings from social science studies are subtly influenced by the way that researchers approach their work" and that the researcher must guard against this in order to have confidence in their findings. A number of authors have explicitly addressed this issue. Hirschman (1986, p. 239) states when discussing 'humanistic methods' that "they are viewed primarily as hypothesis-generation devices whose results would be validated by more rigorous quantitative procedures". She suggests that phenomenological researchers, instead of trying to match positivist research criteria, should instead be aiming for their research to be judged on the criteria of "credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability"

(Hirschman, 1986, p. 244). In addition, given the ontological and epistemological stance taken by a phenomenological researcher and accepting that prior experience and understanding cannot be 'bracketed' so as not to influence data gathering or interpretation, a researcher should accept that there will be some element of subjectivity and bias in their interpretation of the data (Cavana, Delahaye, & Sekaran, 2001). Researchers are recommended to describe and reflect on their personal history in order to be aware of their frame of reference. Riemer (1977) reminds readers that having an emic understanding of a phenomenon can also make the researcher more sensitive and perceptive, causing less upset to the subjects and developing a level of trust that etic research might not be able to do (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994). Angen (2000) believes that validity is a moral issue for qualitative researchers rather than an empirically verifiable one. As Hirschman (1986, p. 245) says when discussing credibility in 'humanistic inquiry', "ultimately as in all scientific endeavors, one is either believed or not believed; assigning a number will not make the research 'better'". She advises instead that researchers could appoint 'auditors' – researchers in the field who can review the evidence and reflective diaries etc., to ensure that conclusions can be traced back to the data. In addition, researchers can use various forms of triangulation to compare their findings from different perspectives. Triangulation compares results from a number of different methods, sources and researchers (Cavana et al., 2001; Hair et al., 2007; Mays & Pope, 2000; Patton, 1999). Methods of triangulation may include:

- Researcher – subject: checking the researcher's interpretation of the data with the interviewee;

- Multiple sources: using interviews with different stakeholders and documentary analysis to view a phenomenon or activity from different perspectives;

- Various data collection methods: interviews, observation, netnography, qualitative and quantitative data gathering approaches;

- A review of the literature;

- Multiple researchers: using several researchers to review the data to see if they draw similar conclusions from the data presented, and

- Different theoretical lenses focused on the same research question.

However, all of the above researchers warn that gathering and assessing such 'tacit knowledge' in a rigorous way is very challenging. Researcher integrity and credibility is essential and academic authors can help considerably by using numerous quotes showing that the analysis and findings are grounded in the data and are supported with

relevant examples. The researcher must explain very clearly all the steps taken – what was done, why and how. Cavana et al. (2001, p. 134) remind researchers that qualitative research "attempts to come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of naturally occurring phenomena in the social world". Riemer (1977) points out that such triangulation activities will inevitably increase the cost and time taken to conduct research. Patton (1999) also makes the observation that using different approaches to data gathering may result in different findings simply because they are testing slightly different things, and not necessarily because one of the methods is wrong.

> Finding such inconsistencies ought not to be viewed as weakening the credibility of results, but rather as offering opportunities for deeper insights into the relationship between inquiry approach and the phenomenon under study. (Patton, 1999, p. 1193)

Morse (1991) discusses the presence of both qualitative and quantitative data and research methods in a single study and warns that while triangulation may be appropriate, researchers should not assume that having both types of data or even different ways of gathering them within one study is necessarily the same as 'triangulation'. She points out that ethnographic research actually requires interviews, participant observation, documentary analysis and questionnaires, and that a study that uses these does not necessarily mean that 'triangulation' has been carried out. She also states that "research methods are merely tools, instruments to be used to facilitate understanding" (Morse, 1991, p. 122). Another word of caution comes from Angen (2000, p. 384) who concludes her discussion on qualitative methods and triangulation by warning that researchers should not use such techniques to mimic positivist approaches to research as they would then be "in danger of making qualitative research into bad quantitative research". A very clear description of the steps a qualitative researcher *can* take is provided by B. A. Smith (1998). He outlines a very detailed set of guidelines for researchers using hermeneutic phenomenology to ensure that they are as confident as they possibly can be in their data, while remaining true to their ontological position. These include having thick, vivid description, building a relationship with participants, ensuring high levels of accuracy in transcription from audio recordings, a clear audit trail, a reflexive journal including explicit discussion of the researcher's theoretical perspective, peer debriefing, independent theme validation and where possible participant validation with respondents commenting on the researcher's interpretation. Smith's focus on just six participants made a hermeneutic cycle practically possible and ensured that they seem to have almost taken on the role of co-

researchers. However, discussing the role of the researcher in hermeneutic research, Moules (2002, p. 12) warns,

> In one sense all writing is autobiographical. I cannot remove my subjectivity from my work, but I can take it up with a sense of responsibility in recognizing how it translates into the way I listen to my participants, what I hear, what stands out to me, and how I interpret it.

Cutcliffe and McKenna (2002, p. 611) agree with this and additionally explain that "knowing in the qualitative paradigm may well, at least in part, be a product of the reciprocal relationship between researcher and the participants".

In conclusion to this part of the chapter, Marshall and Rossman (2011, p. 2) summarise the overarching driving force behind many qualitative researchers when they say,

> Many qualitative researchers, despite their various methodological stances, tend to espouse some common values and enact a family or procedures for the conduct of a study. They are intrigued by the complexity of social interactions expressed in daily life and by the meanings that the participants themselves attribute to these interactions. Qualitative research is pragmatic, interpretive, and grounded in the lived experience of people.

Methods

Interviews with airport customers

After obtaining ethics approval from the AUT Ethics Committee (AUTEC Ref: 12/69), the majority of the data for this thesis was gathered from people using the foodcourt area of the International Terminal at Auckland International Airport. Gill (2014, p. 128) explains that,

> Phenomenological studies utilize homogenous and purposive samples. They recruit participants who can offer a meaningful perspective of the phenomenon of interest who share a certain lived experience.

These interviews were conducted with the permission and support of Auckland International Airport Limited (AIAL) the management company which owns the airport. More details on the sample are given in Chapter Four: Findings. Once the participants had consented to take part in the research, all interviews were recorded where the participant agreed to that. A 92% response rate was achieved (130 people were approached and 120 agreed to participate). As many of these interviews relied on the participants having time to respond, interviews varied in time from five minutes to more than 30 minutes. All interviews took place in the airport building and while airport

customers were immersed in their own 'airport experience', although some did reflect back on previous airport experiences as a comparison. Some were about to depart, some had just arrived, and some were greeting or farewelling travellers.

In order to ensure that the environment and form of data gathering was not unduly influencing the participants and that important themes were not being missed due to the choice of data gathering techniques, it was suggested by a fellow researcher that a number of longer interviews might be conducted with regular travellers away from the airport environment. This might highlight if there were important elements of the airport experience which participants in this study had failed to mention or perhaps felt unable to discuss because of the data gathering approach used. Two such interviews were conducted lasting an hour each. Woodside and Wilson (1995, p. 37) suggest that long interviews provide a "thick description of the process". The two long-interview participants had self-identified themselves as regular travellers who would like to contribute to the research. This matches the comment from Woodside and Wilson (1995) that long interviews often have very high co-operation and completion rates compared to other forms of primary research although the low number and specific context did not lend itself to generalisation. The appropriate ethics processes were followed before they were interviewed. While they were very informative and enjoyable guided conversations (Yin, 2009) and perhaps more relaxed than those undertaken in the airport, neither long interview uncovered any new themes, thereby reassuring the writer about the saturation achieved during the chosen data gathering approach.

Interviews with official airport organisations

The initial approach to the airport was to AIAL management. This was done for several main reasons. Firstly, to highlight the aims of the research and the potential value of the research to management. Secondly, to gain buy-in from management so that the writer could operate relatively autonomously within the airport environment. Both of these were achieved. The third and final reason for approaching management was to see what information on the airport customer experience was already held within the organisation, and whether AIAL would be prepared to share this information. Interviews were conducted with several senior members of AIAL – the Customer Services Manager; the Retail and Commercial Services General Manager (who was later promoted to CEO), the Property General Manager and an Urban Design Consultant to AIAL. On the basis of the information gathered, further interviews were arranged with other senior managers in organisations operating at the airport – the NZ Customs

Service; Aviation Security, NZ Police, the manager and volunteer information staff (the 'Bluecoats') and representatives of taxi drivers operating at the airport. No information already held by AIAL on the airport customer experience was made available to the researcher so all information used in this study was gathered personally by the researcher for the specific purpose of this study or available from public sources online.

Observation

Observation is a valuable tool in ethnographic and phenomenological research. This is because what a research participant may say in an interview may not be what they actually do (even though they may believe they do). During the course of this study the writer conducted some exploratory participant and non-participant observation. While this information was recorded in the Research Diary and in photographs taken by the writer, it was not used as an explicit research method. However, a detailed Research Diary was maintained by the writer throughout the study, including reflections, conversations with academic colleagues, comments from people with whom the research was discussed, and particular incidents observed at the airport. This included photographs of particular artefacts, key moments and particular events. A selection of these photographs together with a brief discussion of the use of photography in academic research is contained within Appendix 3 of this study.

However, what was outside the scope of this research was the ability to follow an airport user through the process and observe what they did with a view to later interviewing them about that. This idea is discussed in the section on opportunities for further research.

Other sources of feedback

A number of conference and seminar presentations made by the writer in the course of the study period (presentations to RGS 2012, RGS2013, 3MT2013 and CHME2014) also helped obtain feedback and new insights from academic peers. All of these form part of the triangulation process that aims to give confidence in the research findings. Hirschman (1986, p. 246) helpfully suggests,

> As Polanyi (1962, p. 302) has noted, if one's work is to become accepted to the corpus of social science, it should not be the result of hallucination, delusion or illusion.

The varied sources of information and research methods all contributed to the identification of emerging themes which form the basis for the findings presented in

Chapter Four, the analysis and discussion in Chapter Five, and the final model of the airport customer experience presented in Chapter 6.

The sample

In the course of the research 120 interviews were conducted with airport customers using the airport. In addition, 10 interviews were conducted with airport management (CEO AIAL, Director of Property, Customer Services Management team) and other organisations operating at the airport. These included Aviation Security Services, the New Zealand Customs Service, Emergency Services, the Bluecoat Airport Information volunteers and representatives of commercial transport operators at the airport (taxi drivers and corporate limousine chauffeurs) and are reported at the end of this chapter.

While the goal was not to gather detailed demographic data as might be the case for a quantitative and positivist study, a considerable amount of information became available to the writer as a result of observation and comprehensive field notes, or because the respondents volunteered information. It is therefore possible to broadly categorise the sample of airport customers interviewed.

Interviews were conducted in whatever size of groups presented themselves, and in whatever composition those groups were, in order to create the most natural and relaxed environment for the participants. 36% of groups were males only, 25% were females only, and 39% were groups made up of both males and females. This would suggest that the most common travelling party was mixed, followed by male only groups or individual male travellers. This is of interest as the gender make up of groups using the airport may affect their airport experience or the activities they engage in while they are airport customers.

Forty percent of interviewees were at the airport on their own, 37% were there with a partner/friend/relative, and 23% had come to the airport in a group of three or more.

Ethnicity was not explicitly asked, although often during the course of the conversation the interviewee volunteered their ethnicity. Where this did not happen the writer estimated ethnicity. Again, while this data is rather speculative, it may well be of interest to researchers and management to have an understanding of the ethnic diversity or homogeneity of airport customers. The airport was asked if such data was collected but while nationality of departing and arriving passengers is recorded, no attempt is currently made to gather information on ethnicity or cultural origins. Furthermore, many

immigrants to New Zealand prefer, when asked, to identify as 'New Zealanders' or more colloquially as 'kiwis' rather than by their ethnicity. Also, New Zealand is a country which has seen considerable immigration over generations, so nationality statistics would not necessarily capture the ethnic diversity of people using the airport. In this study 89% of interviewees were white, 6% were Māori/Pasifika or Aborigine, 5% were from the Indian sub-continent, 3% were Far East Asian and 3% were South American. This compares with official statistics for the New Zealand population (Ministry of Social Development, 2010) of 77% European/Other, 15% Māori, 7% Pacific, 10% Asian and Indian sub-continent, 0.9% other (totals do not equal 100 as the government survey allows participants to identify with several ethnicities). While the respondents to the research were therefore seen to be overwhelmingly ethnically white, the proportions do not appear to be too dissimilar from the official statistics. Where there are differences this may perhaps be attributed to the fact that this survey was conducted in the food court area and those who did not use this facility would therefore not have been included. Also, very large groups were avoided due to the difficulty of having a large group discussion in a public area and being able to record and transcribe such conversations. Pacific people regard large groups of family and friends farewelling a traveller as a sign of respect, and there were few independent travellers or couples from this group available for interview. No attempt was made to interview the regular large groups of Pasifika using the airport during the course of the research for the reason given above. This is perhaps one reason for their relative under-representation in the sample for this study.

By using the foodcourt area of the airport instead of the arrivals or check-in areas it was not possible to accurately measure the number of airport customers who were departing or arriving on that particular occasion. While the majority seemed to be flying on the occasion of their interview, a number had just arrived and were waiting for others, or were there to farewell family and friends. In each case participants were invited to reflect on all their airport experiences, not just the current one. This meant that although some respondents were not travelling on that particular occasion, they were still sharing valuable information on their airport experiences and were therefore suitable to be included in this study. Being a relatively small airport, departing and arriving passengers share many of the same facilities and therefore have more in common than may be the case in some larger airports.

Another aspect that is often addressed in airport surveys is whether someone is a regular or occasional traveller. However, the write felt this to be a rather contradictory indicator of people's airport experiences. On the one hand it could be argued that a regular traveller 'knows the ropes' and therefore finds it easier to get around and finds the experience less stressful. However, they may also have lost their enthusiasm for the airport and be less 'engaged' or observant than someone for whom the airport is a new experience. This was why this was not a specific question in the interviews, although quite a number did comment about the familiarity they felt with certain airports and how that made them feel.

Over the whole period of the primary data gathering process, only ten people approached by the writer declined to be interviewed. While the writer did not have the experience of Bosworth, Campbell, Demby, Ferranti and Santos (2005) who interviewed prisoners, there was a sensitivity to the fact that the potential subjects were 'trapped', if only by the volume of their luggage. This meant that the writer took considerable time to explain the purpose and process of the research to ensure that agreement was entered into voluntarily and with full knowledge of the facts. Where a reason was given for refusing, these included having to go and check in, not speaking enough English to converse, or travelling for sad reasons which they did not wish to discuss (these cases were recorded in field notes). On a number of occasions the male in the party agreed to participate before being told by the female companion that they did not have time. Interestingly a number of times people were initially disinterested, saying they 'did not wish to complete another questionnaire'. When, however, it was explained to them that this research involved no questionnaires but instead was seeking their opinions on their airport experience, respondents became enthusiastic to participate and share their personal thoughts on their airport experiences. This resonates with a comment from one of the authors discussed in the literature review section of this study. de Botton (2009) describes his feelings that a simple Likert scale questionnaire tool fails to capture the airport experience he had had while spending a week observing the airport. The idea that a simple six-point scale could capture the emotions de Botton had observed at first hand in the airport building seems to make him question the usefulness of the tables that the data would be collated into, or the inferences that senior management would draw from such tables. He explains (de Botton, 2009, p. 105),

> I was intercepted by a fellow employee of the airport who was conducting a
> survey of newly arrived passengers, gathering their impressions of the terminal,
> from the signage to the lighting, the eating to the passport stamping. The

responses were calibrated on a scale of 0 to 5, and the results would be tabulated as part of an internal review commissioned by the chief executive of Heathrow.

Reflection

Lugosi et al. (2009, p. 1471) urge hospitality researchers to acknowledge their own role in the creation of knowledge and argue that "hospitality researchers are certainly in need of locating themselves in relation to their object of study especially in a context where the purpose of research is highly contested". Given that the dominant paradigm in much airport focused research is positivist and the data quantitative, it could be argued that this is a 'contested' area. This section therefore briefly considers the role of the researcher in this study. While the writer was aware that he was fairly well-travelled and comfortable in airports, it was not until he asked a colleague to conduct a pre-suppositions or pre-assumptions interview (Cole & Avison, 2007; Rovio-Johansson & Liff, 2012; Sandberg, 2005) that he realised how much time he had spent in airports, and which therefore was very likely to affect his perception of his airport experience. It became clear that in the writer's case, travelling from a very early age as an 'unaccompanied minor' with British Caledonian Airways meant that a familiarity with the airport environment and an understanding of the purpose and processes of the airport were second nature to him. While this could be a disadvantage in terms of not noticing things which he might have regarded as ordinary everydayness, by interviewing others and listening carefully to their descriptions of their airport experiences, he could also use his own experiences to interpret their words. Also, travelling not just as a young child but also for business (with Executive Lounge access) and for leisure on budget airlines with a young family meant that he had an understanding that airport customers require different things on different occasions. What also came out was that he felt a particular affinity with several airports. Being of Dutch nationality means Amsterdam Schiphol airport always feels like coming home, but having spent much of his adult life in the UK, London Heathrow airport is very familiar. Now resident in New Zealand he also identifies with and understands the symbols and images Auckland airport is trying to present to the world. Botterill (2000, p. 194) argues that we must be aware of "the hospitality researcher's way of seeing" if we are to be aware of the preconceptions that act on our interpretation of the data.

Hirschman (1986) argues that it is very important for a researcher to operate within their own paradigm or world view, as this is most likely to lead to a well-conducted and

comprehensive piece of research. However, Holden and Lynch (2004) suggest that a thorough understanding of alternative world views and methodological approaches encourages researchers to question their own preferred approach. At the start of this study the researcher, coming from a business background and with an MBA qualification assumed that the resulting model would have a number of factors and that these could be identified and ranked – if not actually quantified. During the literature review phase of this study, it was gradually realised that not only did existing survey tools used at airports fail to capture the emotional experience of being in an airport, but the service operations and management literature provided few theories and frameworks that would help explain the phenomenon of the airport experience. Chance conversations with colleagues and academic peers resulted in a search of the social geography, anthropology and sociology literature and the discovery of authors such as Augé (1995), Blumer (1969), Relph (1976), Van Maanen (1978) and van Manen (1990). While it could be argued that these authors are some way from the original scope of the study, it was felt that the 'fit' with the data that was being generated was too good to be ignored. Also, Butler in McCool et al. (2013, p. 221) writes that "a geographical training at the time of my education involved an understanding of physical and human processes and their interaction". This change in focus has seen the movement of the writer's paradigm or 'world view' from one of critical realism to interpretivism, phenomenology and hermeneutics. Reassuringly, Morrison (2002, p. 165) seems to support a variety of approaches when she states,

> Situations of interest to hospitality researchers are so phenomenologically complex and changing that a multiplicity of meanings can be imposed.

As Relph (1976, p. iii) argues in his preface to *Place and Placelessness*, "both geography and place are, at their core, phenomena of experience that can best be explicated phenomenologically".

Delimitations of the research

The scope of this research was limited to one airport, the major international airport for the country. Interviews took place over six months between December 2012 and May 2013. This period includes the summer holidays in the southern hemisphere. This period also included the release of Peter Jackson's Hobbit films and the airport displayed models and statues from the films, which may have marginally influenced airport customer responses. Access to the 'airside' part of the airport building was not part of the research design as it would have restricted the research to passengers only.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

Having explained the methodological approach taken in this study, this chapter outlines and analyses the findings before going on to reflect on, discuss and relate the findings back to the literature in Chapter Five: Discussion. This chapter starts with a synopsis of the sample which provided the data, and how this sample compares demographically with the population of New Zealand. This study has used multiple sources of information, as is common in case study research (Hussey & Hussey, 1997). These have included interviews with airport customers, with airport management and with others operating at the airport (such as taxi drivers) but all with the focus of identifying the airport customer experience. In addition, information from airport and consumer websites, from discussions with academic peers in seminars and conferences and from the writer's research diary containing personal observations and reflections were utilised to build an understanding of the airport customer experience. Hair et al. (2007, p. 298) suggest that such "external peer review… can verify interpretations and conclusions". Eisenhardt (1989, p. 532) points out that good case study research "is highly iterative and tightly linked to the data" and this is something this study attempts to ensure.

In Chapter Three: Methodology the following table (Table 4.1) based on Yin's (2009) case study design was used to identify the proposed categories of data gathered for this study. In the table below are details of the actual data gathered during this research project. The primary data was drawn from 130 interviews with airport customers (120) and other organisations (10) operating at the airport and this approach has proved much more successful than was expected. The success of having people speak directly to the writer about their airport experiences has meant there was less requirement for a reliance on secondary data available in documents from archival records or online sources such as social media, blogs and other user generated content sites such as TripAdvisor, Facebook or Foursquare.

Table 4.1: Details of evidence used

Yin's (2009) categories: Source/Type of evidence	Data this case study gathers from a variety of sources
Documentation	AIAL annual reports; press coverage (New Zealand Herald newspaper); customer comments on Facebook, TripAdvisor and Foursquare online forums; documents made available on the AIAL website; AIAL 30 year strategic plan (2014); Airport Times monthly e-newsletters
Archival records	Existing survey data relevant to the airport customer experience; Skytrax; TripAdvisor; Foursquare
Interviews	130 interviews with airport customers and with AIAL management, Aviation Security, NZ Customs, Airport police, Airport transport providers, Airport urban designer.
Direct observation	Research diary, photographs
Participant observation	Notes and personal observations from travelling and being an airport customer meeting and farewelling people recorded in a Research Diary and audio recording devices; photographs
Physical artefacts	Jean Batten's plane used in 1936 for her solo flight from England to NZ; the Tomokanga (carved gateway); imagery of iconic New Zealand locations in photographs, 'Long White Café' name, the koru, Māori words in ceiling artwork, the 'tree' in the departures lounge, the silver fern on security staff uniforms; iconic New Zealand gifts in shops; kiwi humour in Mr Vintage t-shirts; poster about the kiwi 'OE' in Mac's Down Under Bar and Café; recordings of NZ bird calls.

Source: Adapted from Yin (2009, p. 102)

These sources are used in this chapter to verify, triangulate and contrast airport customer comments as well as those of the airport management team and other stakeholders.

While it has never been the intention of the writer to attempt to quantify qualitative data (one reason for rejecting the use of NVivo software), it has been suggested that it might be helpful for readers to have an understanding of the relative frequency of comments in their broad themes. This is not to suggest that those aspects which are raised more often are more important in the airport customer experience than those that are mentioned less (they may simply have been 'top of mind' at the time of the interview). The epistemological focus of this study is clearly on uncovering the 'meaning' rather than the 'frequency' of themes, and no generalisability is claimed for the findings. However,

if one was to do a simple categorisation and counting exercise, the following table shows the frequency with which topics were raised (some were raised multiple times and some interviewees raised several issues):

Table 4.2: Frequency of comments from airport customers

Theme	☺	☹	Total
Personal travel philosophy	24	6	30
Placeness	32	8	40
People	19	1	20
Processing	28	8	36
Physical environment	29	15	44

The next section seeks to unpack some of the emerging themes drawn from the data.

Themes

Both the airport customer interviews and the other interviews (management, transport operators, security and customs) were read and re-read for common themes. As they emerged from the data other interviews and other stakeholders in the airport experience were checked for similar or even contradictory comments. Initial themes that seemed to be present in the data were often in opposition to one another. Many comments were about the role of airports as a 'processor of people and goods' but at the same time there were a considerable number around the topic of a 'kiwi welcome' which both airport management and airport customers regarded as an important feature, even though neither group found it particularly easy to define exactly what that would look or feel like in advance of it 'happening'. Another obvious opposite was the contrast between 'security' and 'hospitality'. While some (for example Aviation Security personnel) were there to guarantee a secure and 'sterile' or 'clean' environment, others had a very specific 'hospitable' role (the Airport Bluecoats who are Information Volunteers). Yet despite a theoretically clear distinction in defined roles, everyone seemed to be conscious of their 'representational role' where they represented their department, the airport, and even the country of New Zealand. Staff seemed to be aware of the importance of first and last impressions as people transited through the airport into or out of New Zealand. It is also interesting to note that while some of the stories people tell of the hospitableness of the airport are arguable just people doing their jobs well (perhaps 'planned hospitality'), there are also many instances in the data of 'impromptu

hospitable actions' coming from Customs, Security, Retail, Facilities Management and Engineering personnel. These are often viewed by airport customers as 'genuine hospitality' precisely because it required people to step outside their 'official' role. Finally, what became very clear from reading and re-reading the interviews was the sense that there was, for most people, most definitely an 'airport experience' which was different to being in any other environment. This is the Da-sein or being-there that the writer was looking for in this research. A complicating factor that emerges from this study is that while there may well be certain underpinning fundamentals to a 'hospitable airport experience', it is experienced differently by each individual, and the airport and those who work in it must recognise the challenges of providing a homogeneous experience in a heterogeneous way.

These issues are explored in more detail and with supporting examples from the data and discussion in Chapter Five: Discussion. The findings have been grouped into a number of key themes which form the basis for that chapter and also become the foundation for the model of the airport customer experience which is presented in the final chapter. Caelli et al. (2003, p. 9) warn that there is an,

> increasing number of studies that report only the themes that were identified but fail entirely to take the research a further step to show what meaning lies behind the themes.

While it is important that the voice of the customer comes through, and 'in vivo' or 'in the words of the respondent' categories are identified, academic research should also aim to develop higher level thinking and make linkages and interpret meanings beyond the exact words of the respondent – this is the hermeneutical cycle and phenomenological analysis in action. The initial themes that were identified through repeated re-reading of the data, discussions with colleagues and feedback from conferences and seminars are:

- doing nothing;
- hospitality;
- purpose of the airport;
- security and safety;
- the physical environment;
- a sense of place, and
- personal travel philosophies.

After showing how these themes are evident in the data, a conceptual model outlining the meaning of the airport experience is proposed in the final chapter of this thesis. As the aim of this study was not to do a content analysis counting exercise, the presence or order of themes should not be taken to indicate frequency or importance (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006), although it is acknowledged that more accomplished travellers may well have different needs to more novice ones as proposed in the Travel Career Ladder (Pearce & Caltabiano, 1983; Pearce & Moscardo, 1985).

Other data sources

As discussed in the Methodology chapter, verification of the data was sought through triangulation. In order to verify the themes emerging from interviews with the airport customers and airport organisations, the writer analysed the collateral material produced by the airport during the period of the research. These included Annual Accounts for 2012 and 2013; the Auckland Airport Growth Strategy 2009 document; the Auckland Airport 'Airport of the Future' 30 year Masterplan to 2044 (presented in 2014), and the *Airport Times* bi-monthly e-newsletters for the airport community. A third source of information was a limited review of customer generated content on the internet which referred to Auckland Airport, in particular from Tripadvisor.co.nz, Foursquare.com and Sleepinginairports.net.

As Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 77) note, "thematic analysis is a poorly demarcated, rarely acknowledged, yet widely used qualitative analytic method". They urge researchers to not only be clear in their own minds about what they did and how their themes came about, but also to make sure they have documented and explained their journey. They recommend an "ongoing reflexive dialogue" (p. 82) of how the patterns or themes were identified in the data, and warn against using the researcher's prompt words or interview topics as 'themes' which supposedly came from the data. Instead, they argue that repeatedly searching across the data (they call this a "recursive process') will eventually lead to the identification of "repeated patterns of meaning" (p. 86).

Using their 'phases of thematic analysis', the process followed for this study is outlined in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Stages of data analysis

Phase	Description
1 Data familiarisation	All interviews were conducted, recorded and transcribed by the writer. This made noting down initial ideas easier although several readings were required.
2 Generating codes	Every interview was transferred into a separate file which enabled initial codes to be generated.
3 Searching for themes	The same interviews were revisited to see if there were clustering of codes allowing identification of themes. Being so close to the data made it difficult to take a totally conceptual view. Discussions with colleagues and other researchers at conferences proved fruitful.
4 Reviewing themes	Themes were revisited to ensure that they related back to the data but were also significantly different from one another.
5 Defining / naming themes	Initial names for the themes were found to be appropriate when revised against the data. Descriptions of the themes were discussed with academic colleagues to ensure they were clear, did not overlap with other themes, and were grounded in the data.
6 Writing up	Multiple quotes were found within the data to support the themes - from the literature, secondary document analysis, primary interviews and research diary entries. The ones best summarising the themes and codes within the themes were used in the final write-up.

Source: Adapted from Braun & Clarke (2006, p. 87)

While the table presents this process as a logical, linear process, the reality was a more iterative and cyclical one which not only required revisions of themes, re-interrogation of the data and a number of additional longer interviews to confirm theoretical saturation (Bryman & Bell, 2011) but also familiarisation with new literature (for example in the field of social geography) and experimentation with CAQDAS such as NVivo.

The initial themes identified have been listed earlier, but it was also noted that there appeared to be dichotomies within the stories told by airport customers. Stories were about 'being processed' versus 'being welcomed'; 'security' versus 'hospitality'; 'Dasein' versus liminal 'non-places', 'caring' versus 'processing'.

These categories arose out of repeated re-reading of the interviews and so are closely grounded in the data. Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006, p. 2) warn that researchers should safeguard against "a fictional, non-existent world constructed by the researcher". This is a pertinent warning as the identified themes are not in any kind of taxonomy,

and are too eclectic to provide a cohesive picture of the airport customer experience, and therefore the researcher must identify and name patterns in the data. Individual users of the airport will always evaluate events and situations through their own interpretations of their lived experience in their own words. This makes it impossible to ever achieve total agreement on the factors or relative importance of the airport customer experience, even in a relatively small airport such as Auckland International Airport.

During the second reflective level which considered both the individual parts and the whole, a smaller number of overarching story threads than were noted earlier in this chapter became apparent. This is what Bazeley (2009, p. 13) calls "a higher level of abstraction" which could form the basis for the development of a model of the airport customer experience at Auckland International Airport. These were:

- Physical environment

- Processes

- People

- Placeness

- Personal Travel Philosophy (PTP)

It is proposed that attention to these five elements will ensure that everyone involved with the airport customer experience has a common focus – the delivery of a positive and memorable airport experience. If these aspects appear obvious, then it is worth remembering what Inwood (1997, p. 36) said about Heidegger, namely that,

> The world, then, and things in the world are normally inconspicuous to everyday Dasein. … What Heidegger notices, and presents in conceptual garb, is in a way obvious to anyone once it is pointed out to them.

Nichols (2000, p. 5) explains how he thinks Heidegger sees it – "For Heidegger, truth is first discovery (*apophansis*, 'letting be seen')" or "unconcealment".

It is therefore important to consider what the above four elements can uncover about the airport customer experience as lived by more than 38,000 passengers and their supporters every day of the year at Auckland International Airport's International Terminal.

The voices of respondents in the rest of this chapter are those of people who were physically in the airport terminal at the time of the interview. Some of them were about to travel. Others had just completed a journey. Another group were literally 'in transit' and partway to their final destination. A final group were greeters or farewellers for those travelling – but this final category were not only reflecting on their current airport experience but also on the many other times they had been in the terminal building to drop off or collect people, or as travellers themselves.

Additionally, a number of interviews were conducted with airport management and others operating facilities at the airport. These discussions were often from a supply perspective – what they were trying to deliver – but are still useful to bear in mind when reflecting on the actual airport customer experience. Their comments are discussed at the end of the chapter using the same broad categories as emerged from the analysis of the airport customers.

Physical environment

The first category of factors influencing the airport customer experience relate to the physical environment. This is for two main reasons. Firstly, the physical environment is the initial thing that people see on entering a facility, whether that be an airport, hotel, cruise ship or a large international railway station, and therefore creates that first impression that is so hard to later change, particularly if that initial impression was negative. Secondly, many customers use the physical environment to infer facts about the invisible aspects of an operation. Dirty toilets and dark spaces suggest a disinterested and disorganised management, and such impressions are likely to colour the way in which users interact with staff. One interviewee arriving back in Auckland after several years commented "when I left here four years ago, you felt like you were locked in after security" (Male, 30, 010313). Another similarly appreciated the new openness at the airport, including the viewing platform looking down onto the seating area and shops after security.

> The viewing platform is good. You can see people once they are through security – but you sometimes need to remind them to look up! (Male, 50, 150113)

Parking the car was for many people their first interaction with the airport and was therefore regularly commented on – "Car parking is pretty bad" (Male, 65, 040113); "it will cost me fifty bucks to get out of the airport car park" (Male, 60, 120313). Criticisms about the cost of parking were common, although others acknowledged that

it was good to still be able to park so close to the terminal building (unlike many European airports which have implemented anti-terrorism measures and excluded private cars). It might be argued that this is about 'value for money' of a 'service' rather than about the physical environment, but the balance between expense, convenience and proximity to the airport (i.e. parking close to the airport is more expensive than using off-site parking providers) means that parking is for many the first tangible aspect of the airport experience.

In a recent interview in the *New Zealand Herald* newspaper the current Chief Executive of Auckland Airport acknowledged customer feelings about parking, saying that the new Masterplan 2044 included 22 200 new parking spaces for both customers and staff, along with a rail link, giving airport customers more options for travelling to the airport in the future. He claimed,

> Public transport is a critical part of the future and a central part of our long-term vision. We need to make sure we have the right number of car parks for passengers and you can get $5/day to $40/day parking. (Gibson, 2014, para. 13)

A number of airport customers raised the issue of toilets, although in many cases it was to point out that Auckland airport was clearly working hard to ensure they were well-maintained with invitations on strategically located posters to text in their comments and electronic boards indicating when they were last cleaned and next due to be cleaned. One traveller made the point that,

> One thing we have not talked about is the loos. I probably go more often because I am nervous. There are always enough but it certainly impacts on the experience. There are so many people going through that it gets dirty really fast – especially if my fellow passengers are not doing their bit to look after them (Male, 40, 070314).

Another stated "The restrooms here are very clean compared to other major airports we have been in – these are pristine". (Female, 60, 140313). One said in an amused tone,

> I walked into the toilet here and thought "wow, it's clean!" Not only that, but it tells me how long until it will next be cleaned. (Male, 60, 150313)

The availability of cheap (preferably free) and fast internet access was a regular comment, although some suggested it would be better to have computer stations available so people would not have to travel with their electronic devices. Being able to contact family and friends to update them on progress and location was considered by many to be essential in the digital age. This again crosses the boundary between

physical and virtual facilities – should an airport provide physically-located internet kiosks, or is the 'service' of a fast wireless broadband facility sufficient in this day and age?

Others expressed a frustration at the time 'lost' by being in an airport and said that more should be done to allow airport users to create a virtual office in the airport. A regular comment was that other airports provide free internet and therefore its availability has perhaps become expected rather than a 'wow' factor. It was pointed out by one interviewee that only a small proportion of passengers have access to the Executive Lounges where such facilities are routinely provided. Also, greeters and farewellers interviewed in this study do not have access to the Executive Lounges. Around the time of the primary data gathering the airport management had implemented a new service allowing airport customers (anyone in the airport building with an internet –ready device) 30 minutes of free internet access, but there was still some confusion about this and not all staff were fully aware of the service. Despite this quite a number of airport customers had found and were using the free Wi-Fi service in the foodcourt area and many said similar things. "I am having breakfast and taking advantage of the free Wi-Fi. 30 minutes is enough" (Male, 20, 050213). A German backpacker had been dropped off at the airport by his touring companions because he assumed there would be unlimited free Wi-Fi "I thought I would go to the airport and chill out and use the free Wi-Fi" (Male, 20, 190313).

Closely related because of the increased use of electronic devices were comments about the limited availability of electric sockets to charge mobile devices clearly restricted airport customers' movements and this was commented on by many travellers as well as being noted in the writer's research log observation field notes. Clusters of strangers appeared to develop into temporary communities with a common need for electricity. As one passenger commented, "What do I want from airports? Somewhere to sit, Wi-Fi, power sockets" (Male, 30, 010313). A businessman travelling back to South America was sitting on the floor by a power socket and explained "I am waiting by the socket to charge my telephone" (Male, 50, 190313). Another claimed,

> In the US there are data ports everywhere. Here I get on my iPhone and I only get 30 minutes before I have to pay! It is also hard to find a plug to charge things. (Male, 50, 050213).

Having a separate domestic terminal and international terminal was not considered an issue by most customers.

> I walked across from Domestic. It was good to get off the plane and walk –
> especially as I have a four hour wait. It also caters for smokers which I find very
> important. (Female, 20, 020113)

While some were surprised at the lack of a train link between the terminals, quite a number welcomed the opportunity to stretch their legs before or after a long journey (although a number did suggest that in wet weather a covered walkway would be preferable to getting wet or being crammed on to the shuttle buses). "As you walk from Domestic to here (International) it is quite nice to see people sleeping under a tree" (Female, 60, 120313.) Another commented "It is lovely to see people asleep under a tree – what a lovely idea!"(Male, 30, 140313). While staff were quick to explain that travellers need only 'follow the green line', due to the ongoing development at the time of this primary research it had been covered over and as one frustrated traveller commented, "I asked which way to go and was told – follow the green line – but there is no green line!" (Female, 50, 010313). Another customer explained rather sheepishly why she followed the line – "usually I walk as I have not worked out where to get the bus" (Female, 40, 020113). While this might be regarded as a signage issue, it is interesting that the traveller did not feel able to ask for help to resolve this.

Seating was also a common topic for discussion. A number commented on the facilities larger airports such as Amsterdam Schiphol and Singapore Changi have for travellers to rest in (relative) comfort, and urged Auckland to develop a seating area with reclining seats and music, a television, cartoon channels for children, or even a movie theatre. Singapore has reclining chairs with built in alarm clocks so jetlagged travellers do not oversleep and miss their connections.

> What I think an airport really needs is a place to stretch out to sleep. I saw a very
> nice area at Changi surrounded by flowers and a water fountain. (Male, 30,
> 200313)

One backpacker suggested an area with bean-bags and micro-waves so people could heat things up themselves (as is found in many of New Zealand's backpacker hostels). A common criticism was, "there are no comfortable seats to relax in – all we found was this foodcourt" (Female, 20, 020113). Another said "We are looking for a comfortable lounge or something – where is that?" (Female, 50, 050213). An airport customer commented on the location of seating but also showed an understanding of the different roles of different parts of the airport.

> We are sitting here in the foodcourt but down there where people are departing, there are not enough seats. Downstairs is more about processing – that is quite efficient. (Female, 50, 230113)

Another traveller made a similar comment.

> The airport is pretty efficient. It does the job it is meant to do. People are friendly and efficient. Airports should be able to do both – be friendly and efficient. (Male, 50, 230113)

A mature traveller commented "I had to repack my suitcase and there was nowhere to sit apart from in the foodcourt – I would have preferred somewhere quieter and more private" (Female, 70, 010313). "There are not too many places to sit apart from in the café (Male, 60, 120313). A group of Americans who had flown in from Los Angeles were waiting in the food court area for several hours before a connecting flight to Dunedin and commented,

> It is small and there are not many places for food – and they are all American choices! When you come through the arrivals gate and you feel you are finally in New Zealand, you come upstairs and it's America! It is such a let-down for me … McDonald's and Subway. (Male, 50, 050213)

However another traveller who was sitting writing his travel journal while waiting for his flight said "I realise this is a comfortable place to hang out" (Male, 50, 270213).

Another traveller flying to the UK for a holiday commented "there is nothing kiwi about the airport. You look around here. You could be in any food court in any shopping mall" (Male, 60, 060312) although at the time of the interview he was sitting facing the Percival Gull plane Jean Batten used to fly solo from England to New Zealand in 1936! Another agreed but seemed to think a 'kiwi feel' was not important – at least for people arriving home.

> You just want to get through as quickly as possible. I don't think it is a particularly kiwi experience – as kiwis we just want to get home, but I suppose for visitors it might be nice. (Female, 30, 140313)

For some airport customers provision of food is more than just a convenience. One respondent explained "we will have food on the other side as one of our kids has an allergy and needs just before flying" (Male, 30, 040113) and he had clearly planned the family's journey around this need, demonstrating the importance of having accurate and current details of facilities available. Apart from food and beverage and retail facilities, quite a number of airport customers had recommendations for facilities that they felt

would pass the time. One interviewee who was in transit commented "I was thinking of going in to Auckland but there is enough here to keep me entertained" (Female, 20, 020113). Another pair of travellers who were contemplating a five hour wait suggested carpeted areas, comfortable chairs and bean bags. They were thinking about their longest stay (of 24 hours) and said,

> 24 hours in an airport – there's nothing worse. You're thinking where can I go that I am not going to get run over or get moved on? (Male, 30, 070213).

One airport customer gives a very good sense of what it is like to be 'stuck' in an airport,

> When I go to the USA I have about seven hours to wait and would like to be able to go to a movie theatre for some of it. Or maybe a museum or gallery to look at? Just something to look at while you are filling in those long hours – or even a shuttle bus to take people across to the shopping centre (Female, 70, 010313).

A very similar comment was made by a traveller of a different generation who said

> A lot more could be done by the airport in the way of entertainment. I would be happy to pay to watch a movie as I want to save my portable entertainment for on the flight (Female, 40, 281212)

The sense of space was a regular topic. In many cases this was related by airport customers to the amount of natural light coming into the airport building. Auckland compares favourably with other large international airports in that respect. "In China the airport was very dark" (Female, 20, 140313). Another said,

> The airport is nice and quiet if you don't have to travel at peak times. I think the airport is a really nice design – a really nice space. I like the light and stuff – Melbourne is old and 'skodey'… (Female, 30, 140313)

Processes

The second category deals with the way in which the airport uses the physical environment discussed previously to create something of value. Any organisation needs processes to move people and goods through their facility and airport check-in and security processing are two good examples of these processes. As one airport customer stated, "I just want it to be efficient and get through" (Male, 30, 010313). Another stated, "It does all the things I want it to – if you asked me what could be improved… I would be struggling" (Male, 60, 020113). Others pointed out that "getting through the system is quite straightforward" (Male, 50, 120313). Such 'sameness' does not appear

to be a problem for certain elements of the airport experience – "The check-in experience was the same as every other check-in experience at any airport anywhere in the world" (Female, 20, 020113) and "an airport is a functional processing operation" (Female, 50, 120313). Another showed their lack of a perceived need for human interaction "Check-in is too slow. The whole thing should be much more automated" (Female, 20, 050213). In fact, quite a number of travellers commented on how technology had reduced human contact and delays in a positive way. "We have the smart passports. That was very easy" (Female, 60, 040113) and "We like the smartgates. There were enough of them for us and there was someone offering help – that felt like a kiwi welcome" (Male, 60, 120313). Mature travellers seemed to have little problem with the smartgate technology "Loved the express lanes through customs – I'm 79 and I can use them!" (Male, 70, 140313). An American traveller who had been critical of other aspects of the airport commented, "been through a lot of customs and this is one of the best to get through – 25–30 minutes is great!" (Male, 50, 050213). Another discussed self-service at check-in saying,

> Great to have a bag drop that was really just that – a bag drop. Other places you have to do a whole second check-in. Being able to stick your own bag-tag on is good – but if you don't get the two sticky bits right you cannot get them apart again! (Female, 60, 150113)

Another agreed saying that she liked the control the self check-in machines gave her (to select seats for example) but "I found doing the bag tag thing a bit tricky though – you have seen it done so many times but don't really pay attention" (Female, 40, 200313). She raised another interesting issue about the finality of dealing with a machine.

> We got to the airport a little late and the machines had switched off as it was after the last check-in time. There was no way to argue your case – they were just off! (Female, 40, 200313)

An interesting observation from one customer regarding self check-in was that "it is much better using the self check-in as you can check in earlier than waiting for the desk to open" (Female, 30, 200313). However, in other cases the increasing ability to make one's own travel arrangements leads to an increased opportunity for errors to occur. Several travellers were spending a long time at the airport because they had self-booked flights on the wrong date. In another case there were problems with luggage.

> The last time I flew to the UK I booked my flights myself rather than through a travel agent. This meant my bags were not checked through. Also, in New Zealand if the plane is delayed they usually ask anyone with a connecting flight

to let the crew know and they try to help us make the connection. (Female, 50, 200313).

While everyone accepts the need for such processes and benefits from the smooth operation of such norms and procedures, the way in which the individual is engaged with or disempowered by the existing operation of them says a great deal to the individual about the organisation's attitude to them as an individual customer. A German backpacker doing a gap year in Australia had a long wait but was content, saying "I am very relaxed and just waiting here. I know how it works by now – to me it is a normal airport experience. It is basically what I have seen everywhere" (Male, 190313).

Regular airport customers seemed to understand that problems were an inevitable part of an airport experience but were quite clear that satisfaction with the airport depended on "how do they deal with hold-ups and situations" (Male, 20, 050213). On one occasion there was a power outage in the terminal building, and one regular traveller felt there was a real lack of communication and information. On another occasion that same traveller arrived to find that the self check-in kiosks were not working. This meant that they had to queue up and be checked in manually. When he finally boarded the flight he was told that the flight would be delayed by several hours, and he wondered if the machines had been deliberately disabled to slow travellers down and therefore reduce the amount of time they are waiting at the gate. Finally, he reminded the writer of the airport customer perspective when the processes in place for getting people onto their flights do not work as they should.

> Whether it is power outages, weather or technical problems, to us passengers it all comes down to one thing – we can't fly. (Male, 60, 200313)

Another customer suggested regular travellers have increased expectations and also made it clear what he felt the purpose of an airport was "The more travelling you do, the more important it becomes to have ease and comfort in order to be able to get through the operation of getting on a plane" (Male, 50, 120313).

There was often an acknowledgement by airport customers that airport staff could not always predict demand but did need to be seen to have the capacity to respond quickly.

> My flight came in at 01:00 from Singapore and I was impressed that there were just two people checking stuff to declare but within a few minutes there were lots more staff. Better than Hong Kong without a doubt – the people there are not particularly nice. They do not smile! For me, the attitude of security is very

important. The same in LAX and JFK – it is just a matter of doing their job. Airports can be quite sterile – all you see is security. Here they greet you. Customer service by security has a big impact. I was quite upset when I left New Zealand a few years ago and it was nice that they explained what was happening and things… I was in Dallas in Fort Worth and they made me take my shoes off while I had a leg in plaster and on crutches. They just did not care and watched me struggle. (Female, 20, 140313).

The above customer was English but travelling with a Kiwi and an Israeli so between them they had a considerable amount and variety of travel experiences and Auckland airport was seen to compare very favourably. A frequent traveller who travels for an international humanitarian organisation also commented positively on the processing aspect of Auckland airport,

It's efficient. I got through quickly. Quite a contrast to Australia (Melbourne). Last time it was the same experience. This airport stands out – no question about it. It is just efficient. They process passengers based on good faith. Service is good and people are kind to you. People say that New Zealand is like Australia but they are chalk and cheese. Every time I go to Australia I get searched – I have asked them if I am being profiled but they deny it and say it is random (Male, 50, 100113).

Another commented explicitly on the expectations created by reality/documentary programmes such as 'border control',

I found that security – after watching the TV programme – was a lot more relaxed than I was expecting. "Have you got any food? No? OK, come on in." I thought it would be a bit more stiff than that. (Male, 30, 150113)

These same processes also have an impact (as does the physical environment) on how easy or hard it is for staff to meet the needs of their customers. A family group commented "it is a good airport for young children – they took us to the front of the line" (Female, 30, 020113). This appears to be an example of airport staff interrupting the 'normal' process to help someone out.

Many of the comments from interviewees were suggestions as to how the airport could better serve their needs as customers. Some was around signage. One example was that it would be good if check-in counters had destinations or flight numbers above them – particularly for passengers running late and needing to be reassured that they were in the right place and could still check in. This sense of wanting reassurance came up regularly,

You walk a long way with very little signage and then you go through the shops… you don't really know where you are going. There is no signage for passport control. You CAN only go one way but…especially if you are tired and jet-lagged…it would be nice to have a sign saying 'go this way' (Female, 30, 010313).

Quite a number of respondents used the opportunity of the interview to ask for advice or directions at the airport, whether that was the location of the lifts, quiet areas for sleeping, or that there was a viewing platform looking across the runways to the Manukau harbour. When it was pointed out to some of these queries that the information was on the signs around the area the interview was taking place in, one interviewee responded "it is nicer talking to a person than reading a sign – and signs can sometimes be out of date" (Female, 50, 020113). Another regular comment was about the 'green line' which provides a signpost for those walking between the domestic and international terminals "It would be good if the green line was also painted across the pedestrian crossing" (Female, 50, 010313). Mature travellers seemed to particularly welcome regular re-assurance that they were in the right place or going in the right direction. As one traveller in transit from Dunedin to the Gold Coast in Australia noted "You have to always be keeping an eye on where you are going – Auckland has a very long walk from the arrival gate" (Female, 70, 010313). Related to the perceived long walk from the gate to immigration, one traveller pointed out that Dubai airport has strollers available at the gates which can then be dropped off when no longer required, and she made the point that as their flight had arrived late her daughter was asleep when they came off the flight and it would have been easier to be able to push her in a stroller.

Customers commented on the baggage processing. While some acknowledged that this might be the airline rather than the airport's responsibility, they were clear that it was a factor in their overall impression of the airport experience.

We'd love to get rid of our bags. Emirates have been really slow opening their desks – other airlines seem to be open much earlier. At least have a bag drop – we checked in online so all we want to do is drop off our bags. But that's Emirates' problem, not the airport. (Female, 60, 120313)

Interestingly given the above comment, another airport customer compared Auckland unfavourably with Emirates' home base. "Dubai works really well now – the fastest airport to get through and pick up bags" (Male, 50, 020113). However, there were also examples of a problem caused at another airport being resolved effectively by staff at Auckland airport, leaving a very favourable impression with the traveller.

We had a problem with baggage when we arrived. They lost our baggage in Sydney and we went all the way on to Whakatane but it arrived the following day! We were impressed with that. (Female, 70, 050213)

Our bags got lost in Australia but the service here was really good in trying to find them. (Male, 40, 251212).

Several were frustrated at the refusal of airlines (Emirates airlines was singled out by many) to take hold baggage until just a few hours before the flight. Others felt aggrieved that they felt they had upheld their side of the bargain by checking in online only to be confronted at the 'bag drop' facility with other passengers doing a full check-in at what they expected to be a very quick drop-off experience. Their frustration seemed to be not so much with the other passengers but with the airlines for not keeping the bag drop lane free. "There was only one person on check-in and there was a problem with one person so everyone else was delayed" (Female, 20, 050213). Luggage was also considered a significant inconvenience by those who were spending a considerable amount of time at the airport (10 – 24 hours). Having to guard their baggage interfered with the opportunity to do everything from going into Auckland, going across to the shopping centre on the airport perimeter, or even just sleeping. "I think it is very boring… with our cases we are stuck" (Male, 60, 190313).

While many airport customers reflected on the processes surrounding departure and airline and customs procedures, some also reflected back on things that had stood out at arrivals. One German couple who were flying to Fiji having toured New Zealand commented on the process for collecting rental cars at the airport.

We hired a car by internet but there are many rental car companies and you have to call them and they pick you up. It is not always clear where the telephones are and how to make the phone call. It works but it was unconvenient – you have to look and you have to ask. Sometimes there is a hand-written note saying "pick up the phone". We came from Bangkok so it is a twelve hour flight and you are tired. (Male, 60, 210113)

The number of airport customers who were spending a considerable amount of time at the airport (significantly more than the three hours one might be expected to arrive prior to a flight for processing) was noticeable. While some were there because of flight delays, the reasons for such extended stays were often to do with transportation e.g. hire car or campervan to drop off and not willing to pay for an extra day's hire – "We fly at 19:00h tonight but had to hand the car in earlier" (Male, 20, 140313); mismatched bus timetables or domestic flight connections; unfamiliarity with the location (a common

comment was that travellers had not been sure how long it would take to get to the airport and so wanted to be 'better safe than sorry');

> We stayed in Auckland on a campsite and we were not sure about getting the car back to the hire company. We did not want to get lost. If we had had trouble finding the drop-off we might have missed our flights. I would sooner be here in plenty of time. It's our own fault we have so much time to spend. (Male, 60, 190313)

Others reasons for spending extended periods of time at the airport included travelling with others who had had an earlier flight out or who were arriving later on; mistakes (wrong day; did not mean to travel via Auckland); too tired (passengers off cruise lines docked in Auckland) or just no money left to go into Auckland or on a tour (usually backpackers). One group of four when asked about their airport experience simply said "It's alright. Just sitting here waiting… yeah… naw" (Male, 50, 020113). Many of these airport users had been aware of the time they would have at the airport but were content or quietly resigned, and this is explored further in the section on 'personal travel philosophy'. A number of travellers pointed out that in order to benefit from cheaper regional flights they had to accept longer waits at Auckland airport. As one mature couple who were sitting reading a book and an iPad explained,

> We dropped our bags at Air New Zealand. We have a long wait. We have done coffee (twice), lunch, and read books. We are sitting around reading books. Provincial routes in New Zealand are very expensive so we had to fly on the cheapest flights – otherwise it would have cost as much to fly from Hawkes Bay as it would cost to fly to Melbourne. (Male, 60, 140313)

One traveller had settled in for a 26 hour wait at the airport. His round the world ticket required him to spend a night in New Zealand on his way back to Newcastle, UK. He explained he had no money left to travel into Auckland and so had settled in, saying "it's sort of an incarceration" but admitted,

> It's not bad. I've been to worse airports. Dubai is the worst airport. It is awful. It is cyclical and it feels like groundhog day. You see the same person come by every five minutes. Brisbane was good. Big sofas to sit on. I slept on the sofas on the viewing platform last night. It's the mental energy rather than the physical energy that I am starting to lack now. I maxed out my internet access with McDonald's yesterday so I am waiting for them to reset. I was just reading a pdf book but you need to get the seat by the socket. The big issue I've found with airports is having somewhere to get your head down. Brisbane has sofas the perfect size to lie on. (Male, 30, 150113)

The problem of finding a compromise between efficiency and being welcoming was highlighted recently by a colleague was aware of this research and who e-mailed from San Francisco airport. It also highlights the fact that a 'score' as used by many airport questionnaires is very dependent on the person's previous experiences in other airports and is therefore a highly subjective measure rather than being valid and reliable, as so often portrayed. She wrote,

> On the plane leaving Auckland I would have given it about 7 out of 10. It's now downgraded to 6 out of 10. Auckland understands procedure but not people. The reason is I am at San Francisco airport. It must be the most efficiently friendly airport in the world. They certainly understand customer service as it applies to tired in-transit passengers. Plane arrived just over an hour ago. I have been through security, passport, baggage transfer and am in the next terminal having gone through security here too. They have a sheet of paper about what you can do in and around the airport if in transit. Everyone was so happy and smiley. They have free Wi-Fi. About to decide what to do for the next few hours. (Female, 40, 160814)

It is interesting that some travellers clearly understand that there is a compromise between efficient and effective processes and a warm welcome. However, what is also notable in the above example is the weight she places on staff – they seem to understand that transit passengers will be disorientated after a long flight and may need assistance to navigate their way through or occupy their time. This leads logically into the next section of the findings for this study – the people who (co)create the airport customer experience.

People

This sections considers the interaction of airport staff with customers and how this contributes to the airport experience. The primary purpose of most organisations is to meet the needs of its customers in a profitable or at least cost-effective manner. Ideally, the physical environment and the processes discussed in previous sections would have been built on a sound understanding of the needs of the target market. Failure to do this builds inefficiency into the system. However, customer needs do change, and this is certainly the case for airports. Airports may have been built with pride as national status symbols or built at a time when those travelling by air were of a much more homogenous type and much smaller number than is the case in the 21st Century airport. In addition, changes in capacities and distances that aircraft can travel are putting increasing strain on not just the infrastructure of airports, but also on the staff operating them and customers using them. The Airbus A380 has doubled the number of

passengers that can arrive in one go compared to older aircraft. While some airports have successfully made the transformation to urban destinations in their own right (e. g. Singapore's Changi airport), others have clearly decided to focus on the processing aspect of the business (Perth Airport's Fly-In-Fly-Out terminal servicing Western Australia's mining industry). The reality for most is that airports are in a constant state of flux. This is not a new phenomenon as Gordon (2008, p. 167) records that veteran TWA pilot Hal Blackburn who flew the first TWA flight to Paris from the USA once said "To the best of my knowledge I never landed on a completed airport". All of these factors have a fundamental impact on the airport customer – those travelling but also those meeting, greeting and farewelling travellers.

While the fact that one is travelling for business and then for leisure on a following visit may not have a major impact on the needs which an airport user wants to satisfy, there are times when the purpose for the journey influences an airport user's desire to 'experience' an airport. One customer explained,

> I am travelling to see a friend who is not well. Trips like this are unexpected money that you are spending so you do not really have the money to spend at the airport (Female, 50, 010313).

Another couple found themselves in the unusual position of travelling on Christmas Day to go to a funeral while surrounded by festivities saying, "the staff are friendly especially as they are working Christmas Day but we are travelling for a sad reason – a funeral" (Female, 60, 251212). In a similar vein (but showing some dark humour) "I used to travel more frequently – depends who is dying" (Male, 60, 120313). The attitude of other airport customers also influenced people. A family travelling to Doha noted "drop-off was hectic. It was difficult to offload bags. A few people were getting hot and bothered about that" (Male, 50, 020113). One regular traveller was very critical of his fellow airport customers.

> The main problem in airports is that people do not listen. The world would be a better place if people were prepared to listen to others. Get here on time – rather than have an hour extra at home – be prepared. Follow the rules. If you are not there on time, the bus will go! I'm tired of people complaining. They do not realise what is going on around them – the 360 people waiting! People have to realise – if you are not there, the bus is gone! (Male, 60, 140313)

Many respondents commented positively about the sense of welcome they had arriving at Auckland. Typical was "the welcome as we came in to Auckland airport from the UK was great. We've never had a bad experience in Auckland" (Female, 60, 150113). She

also made an interesting observation that "staff here need a hospitality background to work here". In another case a traveller started her interview by saying "I love Auckland Airport" before going on to explain that she had fled from Zimbabwe 10 years ago with her two small children. When she arrived in Auckland, her first contact was with immigration personnel.

> If you arrive in an airport you get your first feeling if you feel secure or not. If you walk in and feel secure and welcomed you feel good. That was ten years ago. It was honesty, security, openness. People are officials doing their job not officious. They are just doing their job – that makes you feel safe. And if there is anything they pull you aside quietly. (Female, 50, 230113).

She concluded by commenting on the very large New Zealand flag which flies on the approach to Auckland Airport as is reported to be the largest New Zealand flag in the country "That flag outside – every time I see it my heart goes boom".

Airport customers have expectations which come from a variety of sources. Several commented on the fact that in the annual SKYTRAX awards Auckland Airport has been voted '12th best airport in the world' in 2013 (13th in 2012) and 'Best airport in Australia Pacific' as well as 'Best airport staff in Australia Pacific' and that this made them curious as to what had gained Auckland this accolade. One slightly disappointed customer commented "people should choose to have parties at the airport" (Female, 50, 010312) although the fact that she had flown in from Hong Kong International Airport and was flying out to Singapore Changi airport was perhaps a factor in her expectations. These two airports have managed to recapture the glamour and social status that air travel once represented (Gordon, 2008). The location of Auckland airport in what she considered to be a 'developed country' was another contributing point. This sense of expectation is a very personal factor though as another traveller commented that "the airport is much like New Zealand – pocket rocket". Another welcomed the relatively modest impression created by the airport, saying "the airport is not ostentatious – it is in proportion to the country" (Female, 40, 281212) and "I like that it is not too big and you can find everything – not like Frankfurt" (Female, 20, 150113). Quite a number recognised that an airport's facilities and size depended on the size of the market it served. As one traveller commented, "you can't really compare Auckland with other airports – we only have four-and-a-half million people" (Male, 30, 010313). However it should perhaps be noted that Hanover and Frankfurt airports are located in population centres considerably smaller than the 1.4m people living in the Auckland conurbation. Yet small was not seen as a problem for some – "Most of the airports I go to are

massive. Smaller is good because you are not on travelators or on buses" (Male, 50, 020113). There was evidence of some fairly sophisticated thinking around processing and purpose of travel from some airport customers:

> Airports have very little to do with aircraft and everything to do with land development. The directors of the airport need to think about customer relationships. I am surprised at the number of shops that exist here – do they really make money? (Male, 60, 150313)

> I suppose somewhere like Heathrow which is really busy, they need to focus on getting people through. Auckland is more for tourism so – it is more important (to be welcoming). (Female, 20, 050213)

> People here are a bit more patient and friendly. My feeling is that people are slightly happier in their jobs here than they are in similar jobs in the UK. Happy staff make a successful organisation. I've been through American airports and security are pretty unfriendly. (Female, 30, 120313)

> The airport seemed a bit more friendly and welcoming and easy to get around compared to Brisbane. We haven't checked in yet. We'll be hanging out for a while. Might go out and have a sleep on the grass. (Male, 50, 210113)

> The airport is fine. Where we come from, Heathrow and Gatwick, they are massive. They are very impersonal. Here there is an openness and a style about it – a bit like City Airport in London. Changi is nice but a bit overwhelming. (Female, 50, 270213)

Another airport customer compared her Auckland experience with travelling through Sydney airport and stressed how important she felt it was for security personnel to make children feel safe, particularly when making them do 'strange' things like walking through metal detectors.

> We had an hour in Sydney once and we found the Australian security staff absolutely oafish and boorish. When we came in here there was a delay and one of the security staff came down the line apologising for the delay and reminding us of the documentation we needed – that was nice. (Female, 60, 150113)

A mature and regular traveller explained that when coming back from Australia the metal pin in her knee had set the metal detector off at Sydney airport. She had all the paperwork from her doctor and they eventually let her through with a "You can go" but no apology or anything (Female, 60, 200313). What really upset her though was that she was travelling with her grandchildren and they were very brusquely ordered to 'stand over there' while their grandmother was interrogated.

A sense of feeling at home was important to many airport customers. During one longer interview the individual said,

> What you have woken my mind up to is the fact that the airport needs to cater more to the people of the city that the airport is in. It is *their* airport. If they do that well then the people visiting will also have a good experience. But how do you do that for Auckland? It is such a diverse city. But I am comfortable with my airport – Auckland airport is comfortable because it looks like Auckland. (Male, 40, 070314)

A similar comment from a female traveller was simply "it feels like home" (Female, 50, 070213). A regular comment from passengers was around their desire that someone should be seen to take responsibility for facilitating customers' interactions with the airport. They are not particularly interested in knowing who does what at an airport. As one frustrated passenger said "someone has to take responsibility for managing the customer experience at an airport!" (Male, 60, 010313). This issue of who is responsible for the airport customer experience is fundamental to the smooth running of the airport. As one customer commented, "I had some questions but as there was no-one at the help desk I went to the shop Kiwi Discovery and they helped me" (Male, 30, 010313). This expectation by airport customers that everyone operating at the airport is there to facilitate their experience is perhaps unique to airports and makes operating a concession at an airport (whether retail, food and beverage or facilities management) different to doing so on the high street or in a shopping mall. This should influence the choice of staff selected to operate outlets or airport customers will leave with a negative impression of the airport, irrespective of how efficient or effective the airport process has been. Failure to meet notified needs was regarded as very disappointing. One lady who said she needed to have her wheelchair on board the aircraft and who knew that there was only space for one had arrived early only to be told by Emirates that they were only prepared to carry her chair in the hold. She had called for the airline manager but what really annoyed her was that this was not the first time "The manager here dealt with it last time but now we have a repeat performance – they keep taking my wheelchair apart and damaging it" (Female, 50, 020113). Another interviewee was sitting in the foodcourt area looking tired and nervous. When approached, he explained that he was from Chile and his visa had expired but he had applied for an extension. It had not come through before his departure date so he was now sitting at the airport waiting for his flight the following day but hoping that a last-minute visa approval

would come through allowing him to stay. He was contemplating a night at the airport and asked,

> I can stay in the airport? It is legal? Will police stop me and ask what I am doing here? I can live in the airport like Tom Hanks movie? (Male, 40, 060313)

Another traveller who was on her way from Australia back to Norway and had decided not to travel into Auckland to stay in a hostel only to have to be back out for an early flight said "the immigration guy was worried about me staying here overnight, (but) there are always people at airports. It does not worry me anymore" (Female, 30, 150113). Another traveller who had spent the night at the airport prior to a flight to Germany said similar things "We slept in the viewing lounge. It is a nice atmosphere. We wanted to be safe and make sure we did not miss our flight home". (Male, 20, 150313). Two South American travellers explained how they came to spend the night at the airport.

> We made a mistake with our booking – we wanted to go to Melbourne but our tickets were via Auckland. It was very comfortable. The staff here have been very polite. We were very tired but people were very nice to us. We just slept here in the food court. (Male, 20, 270213)

The airport uses volunteers to staff information booths. Most of these are retired Aucklanders and due to their uniform are affectionately known as 'Bluecoats'. They are co-ordinated by a full-time member of staff. Typical of comments about the Bluecoats is, "the airport information guides are great. I know the guy who set them up – I would love to do that job" (Male, 65 040113). What these volunteers provide is a sense of 'hospitableness' which is a very important part of the New Zealand (both Pakeha and Māori) psyche, and therefore perhaps what one might expect to find in an airport if it is to reflect the culture of the country you are entering. One elderly couple remembered a service the Bluecoats used to provide in the arrivals hall by the baggage reclaim area, "there used to be free coffee – that was nice. It made you feel welcome. It was hot and it was given to you for free." (Female, 70, 050213). This sense of hospitality was explicitly addressed by some airport customers. In one case they reflected, "I would say, if you have the time, airports can be hospitable. Although – it's not the actual airport, but the people working in it" (Female, 70, 120312). A Danish citizen resident in New Zealand for many years was very glowing in his compliments about Auckland airport's hospitality.

> To be honest, I am really satisfied with the airport. It seems like everything works. It is clean. People are really friendly. As soon as you get off the plane and come into the building you feel welcome. People are really nice. It is easy to get in and out of customs and people are really friendly. People always have a smile on their faces and they are happy to see us. (Male, 60, 140413)

Another traveller who was waiting to be processed at customs took the time to watch how others were treated and commented "While I was waiting I was watching what was going on, and I was quite proud of how the New Zealand Customs staff dealt with some difficult customers". (Female, 60, 200313)

The airport is increasingly a meeting place not just for business but also for busy global families. As one family group of seven with ages ranging from 15–65 explained, "We are catching up here at the airport because three are getting on a plane to Melbourne, two have just arrived from Brisbane and two of us are picking up." (Female, 65, 040113). In another case a group of three explained that two of them were flying that day to Chicago (but on different flights) and the third was following a week later.

Placeness

> An airport needs to create an image of a country which will make visitors feel comfortable as soon as they hit the ground. (Male, 50, 120313)

One theme that came through very strongly in the data is that of a sense of place although it is a very polarising one. Some insisted that airports must have a unique identity and sense of place (but then disagreed on what that should be and again whether or not Auckland has 'it'), whereas others felt airports not only were a 'vanilla product' but also should remain so and be a virtually invisible and imperceptible element in the individual's travel experience – "Airports – they're just airports!" (Female, 30, 010313) and "Airports all seem the same to me" (Male, 30, 140313). However, many respondents recognised that airport management had worked hard to give the liminal place that an airport by definition is, a sense of location, history, purpose and identity. A traveller said "I live in Melbourne but Auckland is better. When you get off the plane the décor is great – and I like the birdsong" (Male, 65, 040113) and "I think it is nice to be greeted by the sounds of the forest" (Female, 50, 120313). Another compared Auckland to Brisbane (which was their destination that day) saying,

> I like the south Pacific island feel… the feel of the place… it feels relaxed – it is an island nation. New Zealand in general is very relaxed and that is noticeable at the airport. We've been to Brisbane – it is very commercial airport. There is no feel to it – it is just an airport. This is very different. Here you have artwork on

the walls… you know where you are. Brisbane is a transit camp – it is clinical and you would not think you were in Australia. (Female, 20, 040113)

The physical environment and layout also seems to give an airport an identity, as this fareweller explains.

I think it is a very good airport – and I've been to hundreds. It is well laid out. Most airports are long and thin and dead boring and you just walk from one pod to another pod. This one has a kind of wiggly path to it which makes it a bit more interesting. This is like a little village. This has definitely got a place atmosphere to it. (Male, 50, 150113)

Interestingly, he went on to say,

Mind you, this is the only airport I have ever been robbed at – in the departures lounge. That has never happened to me anywhere else – even in airports that are notorious for it like New York. (Male, 50, 150113)

Another airport customer acknowledged the state many people are in when they arrive at Auckland airport "I liked the Māori carving and the birdsong – even after a 28 hour journey" (Female, 20, 140313). Airport customers were often very quick to draw comparisons – both negative and positive – with other airports.

I would say Hong Kong would lead the way. Heathrow can be a complete a**e. I'd say that the American airports are awful in most cases. (Male, 50, 120313)

It (Auckland) is certainly less hectic than Heathrow - it was very chaotic. I think Auckland is very peaceful, and it helps that you have a bit of fresh air between domestic and international. KL is good – they virtually have two terminals. One is by the planes and the other with the train station. (Male, 70, 120313)

I have been through heaps of airports but Auckland is on top because I have never had any problem getting in or out. Whatever kind of problem you have someone will help solve it – and if the person who helps you cannot solve it they will find someone who can. (Male, 60, 140313)

Geographical concepts such as 'place', 'placelessness' and 'non-place' are useful starting points for the investigation of what makes an airport a 'place' instead of a transitional zone. Some felt a strong sense of ownership or belonging because they had seen the airport develop. "I remember when this airport was a grass strip – I went up in a Cessna. We were here at the opening too" (Male, 60, 020113). Another said "We've had a good trip – we were here on our honeymoon forty years ago" (Female, 60, 140313). Another said simply,

> Very smart, very modern, very clean. A very nice modern airport – we like it. You can't help comparing – sometimes you arrive at Heathrow (UK) and it is just so grubby. This is a good one and we have an affinity with the place. (Female, 70, 050213)

However, another passenger said that travelling with small children also made her more critical of other aspects and she commented on the first impression of New Zealand created by the number of smokers at the front entrance which she felt did not match the country's clean, green, healthy outdoors image.

One customer who had been very critical of other aspects of the airport was very complimentary when discussing the things that she felt gave the airport a sense of place.

> I do like the tree thing with the changing colours. We need more of that kind of stuff when you come through from Domestic. Also people see the Māori gate [the tomokanga or 'carved gateway'] and … they realise they have come to the right place! (Female, 50, 010313)

Another couple who were Māori but living in Australia and home for a holiday said "when you come in (to Auckland) you have the gate. That's important – especially for us" (Female, 30, 010313). The Tomokanga was unveiled and blessed in a dawn ceremony in October 2008 attended by the Chairman of the airport management company and the Māori king Te Arikinui Kiingi Tuheitia. The 2.8m high and 6m wide gateway is said to represent a spiritual portal between two realms as well as travel and migration. Almost five months' work by descendants of the Tainui tribe led by head carver Warren McGrath resulted in the gateway made of kauri and totara wood. Even those who did not have an understanding of its significance appreciated it "What stood out for us was the wood carving – very nice" (Male, 50, 050213). Another said "it is definitely kiwi in Arrivals – the big gate, and lots of Hobbit stuff" (Female, 20, 050213). There are few other places that perform a comparable function to Auckland Airport in terms of providing a cultural welcome for visitors to New Zealand. One respondent said of New Zealand's Wellington airport.

> There is something a little bit too barren about Wellington. The coffee shop is nice and the guys are really friendly but it is a bit pretentious – very Wellington. (Male, 40, 070314)

Kiwis coming back from overseas often commented rather proudly about the airport "I think it has something special" (Female, 50, 020113) and another used that precise word when describing the exhibits (such as Rugby World Cup, Lord of the Rings, Americas Cup) reflecting the events that New Zealand is involved in saying, "You've got to be

proud of the things that are happening here" (Male, 65, 040113). A German backpacker who had been travelling in New Zealand and was clearly a Tolkien fan said "There is a lot of Middle Earth stuff – I got my camera out and took pictures. I went to Hobbiton and Tongariro" (Male, 20, 190313). The sense of 'homecoming' comes out clearly in the following comment.

> The thing I really like is the Māori carving and then you turn the corner and you see the big windows across the Manukau harbour and … man …it's so clean. No smog. It makes you realise you are home again – clean and unpopulated. (Male, 30, 070213)

One traveller in their 40s commented excitedly "I thought the Hobbit stuff was great – I have a Hobbit stamp in my passport!" (Female, 40, 150113). Yet the national characteristic of understatement is perhaps reflected in another comment "I noticed a lot of *Lord of the Rings* stuff – I thought it was a bit overdone… a bit in-your-face" (Female, 30, 070213).

One way in which the management has tried to give the airport a 'sense of place' is to have New Zealand imagery in the form of photographs and ethnic and culturally significant symbols such as the silver fern or koru. This is commented on by many airport customers. "When you come in all the imagery is very kiwi – I think that is nice for people coming into the country" (Male, 50, 020113). Another thing that the airport does is play sounds that are uniquely New Zealand, for example the sound of Tui birdsong – a very distinctive sound. When asked to reflect on anything they felt was different about Auckland airport, one traveller became very animated.

> Oh – do you know what I really like about the airport? When you come back in from overseas, how you come down the corridors and they've got along the walls… the native plants and stuff and music playing. It's really cool. And the Tuis. I like that. And my parents tell me they like it as well. I think it is a nicer airport than some – like Brisbane. (Female, 20, 210113)

> When you come through the airport and hear the birdsong – that always makes me feel like I am home. (Female, 60, 270213)

While many appreciate this and feel it gives a sense of homecoming, not everyone is impressed. One traveller used some interesting words when they said, "the birds chirping is a bit strange in the lifeless corridors" (Female, 30, 010313). Another commented "What do people want for a 'kiwi feel' – a haka? The birdsong is nice (though) – typical New Zealand" (Female, 50, 140313).

The airport tries to reflect the interests of those travelling through the airport, or particular noteworthy events that are taking place in New Zealand. For the release of the Lord of the Rings films, there were posters, photographs and statues of the characters from the film and the locations in which filming took place. This was all in place during the majority of the field work element. Some were not impressed, saying

> There is a lot of Lord of the Rings stuff – but you can't say that is really New Zealand. It is a bit weird. Being a kiwi it annoys me a bit – there is a lot more to New Zealand than Lord of the Rings. (Female, 30, 010313)

Another commented,

> I am a kiwi but I find all this movie paraphernalia confusing. It worries me that this will become part of the New Zealand myth and it is not original myth. I don't like the Hobbit stuff. It is not who we are. It is not real and not authentic. (Female, 40, 020113)

However, she also went on to criticise what others might have understood by her 'original myth' phrase when she added,

> (The movie paraphernalia) is confusingly interspersed with the Māori culture stuff – which I also find a little parochial, by the way. The birdsong, on the other hand, is quite nice. It created some atmosphere. Sport is okay as it is part of our popular culture – that is really us. (Female, 40, 020113)

One traveller speaking of Auckland airport expressed some unease about the presence and use of cultural items.

> I have noticed the Māori stuff – I am a bit nervous about that. These are cultural icons that you are taking advantage of for business purposes. It does make me feel like I am home – a connection to Aotearoa but the use of the koru and Māori culture to create a sense of a business identity is to me a bit of a problem. I don't know how much Ngati Whatua (the local Māori iwi or 'tribe') have to say about business branding – but if they have been involved then that's totally cool. (Male, 40, 070314)

A considerable number of other respondents felt such use was fine saying, "When you come in all the imagery is very kiwi – All Blacks, green, Lord of the Rings – that is how people see us". (Male, 50, 020113). Another commented that she liked being welcomed with the phrase 'Kia Ora'. Four men who come to New Zealand every year from Australia on a three week fishing trip were sitting counting a large pile of small change to see if they could buy another round of drinks.

> The airport is the same as last year – pretty good. Pretty pricey. Coming in you have all the Māori stuff – that is kiwi. We like the Hobbit stuff – it was filmed here so why not? (Male, 50, 190313)

One airport customer who had recently returned from Incheon airport in Korea explained his response to cultural activities in airports,

> I was really impressed with Incheon airport. The good layout got you to walk around which was probably good to avoid DVT. There were cultural events going on like music groups – almost like a Disney Parade. There was also a museum in amongst the shops giving the place a cultural feel. (Male, 40, 200313)

Food was to many airport users a way of differentiating airports, and the presence of multinational fast food outlets was regularly commented on as disappointing. As one said, "I do not see any food places that might actually bake their own food – I like places that make fresh food" (Female, 50, 010313). This is a challenge as airport management explained that it is difficult to find local or independent operators who can guarantee to deliver a high-volume 24/7 food and beverage facility. Another suggested,

> More little local shops, like jewellery, craft or upmarket souvenir shops – and what about some more sandwiches rather than junk food. What about some little savoury pies and things? I had some American friends come to visit and they think they are great! Some home baking – New Zealand has a clean green image so healthy, home-made things would be nice (Female, 70, 010313)

There were also a significant number of airport customers who agreed with the poet Kevin Ireland who wrote a book titled '*Airports and other wasted days*' containing a poem with the line about airports being "a superbly organised mess of concrete walls, escalators and blind windows" (Ireland, 2007, p. 10). They were quite clear about their perspective on the importance of the airport to their travel experiences – "An airport is a place to get on a plane" (Male, 20, 251212). Another said Auckland airport "has all the amenities you need to waste a couple of hours before your flight" (020113).

The sameness of airports is a regular theme among airport customers. In the poem "The true alternative to airports" Ireland writes,

> Airports are trick mirrors. You step through
>
> and discover yourself in another airport –
>
> yet one that reminds you remarkably
>
> of the place you have left behind.
>
> (Ireland, 2007, p. 13)

Personal Travel Philosophy

While the above four categories were clearly all strong themes and were rather obvious at a fairly early stage of the research, what has also come through the data is that airport customers adopted a particular frame of mind or attitude which allowed them to cope with the airport environment. Often these are regular travellers for whom an airport holds little appeal. The writer has termed this phenomenon 'personal travel philosophy' (PTP) as this frame of mind affects how these people experience the airport. A common approach was simple avoidance – "Usually I prefer to be in the airport the least amount of time I can be" (Male, 50, 020113). In this case the interviewee and his companion were there unusually early because he wanted to book seats by the emergency exit for additional leg room, and airlines will only allocate those once they have seen that the traveller is fit and able to open the emergency door in case of an emergency. In this case, however, the airline (Emirates) had opened their check-in desk ahead of the scheduled time and all those seats were already allocated. He finished by saying he would drink coffee or read a book and added rather sweetly, "luckily my wife is with me this time". Another traveller explained, "I love people-watching. I can sit here all day – it is really interesting!" (Female, 50, 070213). A couple of backpackers returning to Saskatchewan, Canada after three months touring in Australia and New Zealand seemed in a likewise relaxed frame of mind despite planning to be at the airport overnight.

> Just flew in and flying out tomorrow. Instead of going in to the city we're just going to hang out at the airport for 24 hours. I like airports – there's something about them. I enjoy watching people at airports. Good to have time to hang out and relax. Not too much on our minds and there is nothing we have to do. (Male, 20, 210113)

Contrasting views were expressed by others who had had to drop a campervan off in the morning but was not flying out until the evening, or who had come off cruise ships and had a long wait at the airport.

> You can spend a lot of time doing nothing at airports. Most people are shopped out by the time they get to the airport. People just want to get on that plane and get home. Airports are the quickest way to get around but they are a pretty terrible way to travel. (Male, 50, 150313)

> You just have to sit and pass the time – that is all you can do. (Female, 60, 281212)

Another traveller who was travelling back to Ireland having arrived in Auckland on a cruise ship stated,

> This is where we have to be. If you were not flying you would not be here. You would not choose to hang out at an airport. (Male, 60, 281212)

Interestingly he claimed he would have spent the day doing things in the area if he could have checked in or left his luggage somewhere.

A previous very regular traveller had a considerable amount to say about airports and people's coping strategies. He explained that he had worked in the travel industry for a large part of his working life but,

> …after 26 years of flying and queuing and waiting and being in confined spaces… airports don't do it for me anymore. They make it as friendly as possible with plants and sunlight – they are all good things to have. But we move from here and get to sit in a confined box-like space in a plane. Simplistically, airports are not a destination. (Male, 60, 150313)

The airport customer went on to explain that he actually let his passport expire in 1998 so that he would not have to fly anymore. He suggested that airports could make the experience better by having more lounge chairs, better arrival and departure areas, more windows for both airport customers and staff, and ensuring that the process of getting through an airport was as straightforward and logical as possible, concluding

> I think the ease with which things happen or do not happen is a good measure of how successful an airport is. If things happen naturally and in a logical place… you do not want people dragging their suitcases into dead-ends. (Male, 60, 150313)

In some cases people were at the airport early for reasons outside their control. "We were there three hours beforehand as my parents like to get us to the airport early". (Male, 20, 050213).

Knowledge of the airport also seemed to be factor. In one case the traveller confided "I find airports stressful as I am not an experienced traveller" (Female, 60, 140313). Knowing certain 'survival tactics' made a considerable difference to people's comfort. These could be tips from other travellers or from websites containing user-generated content such as http://www.sleepinginairports.net; http://www.tripadvisor.co.nz or http://foursquare.com . One international traveller arriving from Sydney was waiting for a connecting flight from Domestic to Whangarei but explained why she was sitting in the International foodcourt area, saying, "I am waiting here for two hours for a

connection from Domestic but the Domestic terminal is not as nice to wait in" (Female, 40, 020113). She also commented that "being a small airport has plusses and minuses. There is definitely less on offer, but it is hard to get lost". In another case a traveller was surprised to be told to wait in the International Terminal because the Domestic Terminal is closed overnight. Travellers arriving or departing on the 'last flight' also commented that they felt the airport had closed down around them and there was nothing on offer for them.

Regular travellers also noted and acknowledged that the airport was working to improve the experience saying "the airport is a lot better than it was" (Female, 50, 040113) although in one case the 'improvement' quoted was better motorway access to the airport. Another was clearly still unimpressed by access to the airport.

> When we came by car from the south on the Motorway One and you turn left then the signs are not very clear. You don't know if you should turn left again or go straight on. Nobody cares about that. It is misleading and that makes it dangerous (Male, 60, 210113)

This shows how widely airport customers interpret their 'airport experience' to quite some way beyond the jurisdiction or influence of the airport management. In another case a traveller explained that he is a keen sportsman but never goes shooting within a week of flying because it would leave gun residue on his hands which might be picked up at security and lead to delays or even a refusal to let him board. Another told the story of a friend who has an Islamic name and "whenever he travels to the USA he makes sure he is smartly dressed and has had a shave and a haircut before he travels as he used to get stopped every time" (Female, 60, 200313).

A traveller explained what he wanted from an airport and how he 'gets through' the experience.

> We do not plan meals here. We just try to get here early to avoid the crush at check in … and then just hang around. Auckland airport is more like a mall than an airport. I just want a place to… travelling is tiring … I want a place to sit down and relax. I don't like travelling. I only travel because I have to. I don't see why people see it as glamorous. I think flying is just a means of getting where you want to be. (Male, 50, 020113)

This sense of having a ritual or a fixed process was reflected in a number of responses. In one case a traveller explained in great detail why he does what he does at the airport. After one flight two decades ago during which he imagined what could go wrong with a

flight (wings falling off), he developed a coping strategy, much to the chagrin of his partner.

> This is all about how I prepare myself to get on a plane. I never buy a single thing in an airport that is not consumable. I eat the food and I drink booze. It is part of my routine. I travel through a small number of airports – I know exactly where I am going. I have been known to have more than one beer at six in the morning. Once I have had a few beers I relax. They could give me better options for food and drink on the other side (airside) (Male, 40, 070314)

Arriving early was a regular stress reduction coping strategy. One couple over from the UK visiting their son explained,

> We are a bit early but I am one of those who likes to be here a bit early. Sit, have a coffee, chill a bit… instead of rushing in and wondering where you have to be. (Female, 60, 140313)

Interestingly, the above couple then asked the interviewer if they had to wait for their flight to be shown as 'Go to Gate' before they could go through security. As soon as they realised they could go through to the airside part of the airport they packed up and went straight through.

A fairly frequently mentioned frustration was the sense that as a traveller you had little choice or option – a monopoly situation. This often led to a perception that this lack of choice led to unreasonable charges.

> If you go around all the businesses that operate here you will find that their rent is extortionate. There is only one international airport. If you want to get out of the country you have to go to the international airport. (Male, 60, 120313)

His strongest comments were reserved for Australian airports, though.

> In Australia even the domestic airports are owned by Maquarie bank. They have a monopoly. Sydney is Maquarie bank. The government offloaded Sydney to the bank for a huge amount of money. You can't fart without being charged at Sydney – you can put that in your PhD! (Male, 60, 120313)

This sense of not quite having freedom of choice also led to one customer explaining that at Sydney airport the signage sends travellers through the shops instead of direct to the departure gates. Auckland airport, by contrast is "far better organised at check-in. I like coming here. It is attractive and easy to find your way around". (Female, 40, 150113)

While the image of unreasonably demanding travellers is now familiar to many thanks to the many reality television programmes on airlines and border control, the writer found a significant number of people who, as they say in Scotland, "don't want to be a bother" to those around them. In one case an airport customer in the foodcourt confided, "I hope the airplane does not serve lunch as I am not very hungry" (Female, 70, 120313) as she would feel rude refusing the airline personnel's hospitality. Another couple flying to LAX did not want to interrupt airport staff from their duties and explained "At each airport you kind of fumble around trying to work it out". (Female, 60, 140313).

An Austrian couple on their seventh visit to New Zealand who had been touring for seven weeks were sitting in the foodcourt drinking a beer. They explained that they had just heard that their Emirates flight was now delayed until 01:00 without any explanation – and it was her birthday. They appeared very relaxed and stoical as they reflected that "this airport is better than Heathrow, LAX or Frankfurt" and that they,

> flew with Singapore Airlines last year and were stuck at Changi for thirteen hours – that was terrible. One time in London (two weeks after Terminal 5 opened) we were delayed for five hours. We do not fly to Frankfurt or Paris.

A Chilean businessman who had been in Auckland on a business trip had just been told his flight had been delayed for eight hours but was very pleased with the way the airport had dealt with the problem,

> The airport is very good. Good information. They give me a telephone with Spanish assistance who told me the news in Spanish. They gave me the telephone of LAN Chile.

Suggestions

During the research airport customers often made suggestions as to what they felt the airport needed or could do to make their experience more enjoyable. In many cases these have already been discussed, but this section briefly summarises them because while some of these would take considerable investment in terms of time, space and finance, others were remarkably simple and really just required some 'thoughtfulness'. It is not clear whether these suggestions would have been made through the standard customer feedback forms, or whether it was the conversational nature of the interviews that prompted respondents to offer their suggestions in this way. They included a covered walkway from Domestic to International; more home-made food; small savoury pies; less American fast food fast food outlets; more seating away from food

outlets ("You always have to sit in those chairs and smell the food smell from Subway – there is no area to relax without those things all around you" (Female, 60, 210113)); flight numbers and destinations over the check-in desks; a movie theatre; gift wrapping paper sold in shops at the airport; the ability to deposit money at the airport instead of just cash machines that allow withdrawal of money; somewhere with bean-bags and micro-waves to heat up food; more power sockets, more free Wi-Fi access, a shuttle bus to the shopping centre; more seating at arrivals; music and early bag drop-off for online check-in travellers; a big TV screen and library books. One asked,

> I was thinking – is there somewhere you can get your nails done? I was just about to text my friend who works here to ask her. While you are waiting you could get your nails done – if they don't do it I think I should start up a business like that! (Female, 30, 140313)

One couple with a long wait mused, "on cruises they do not have that much room but there is always lots going on – how come they can do that?" (Male, 60, 190313).

Interestingly, a number of people commented that now that they had shared their opinions, they would like to see something done. "Please make sure all these grievances are solved next time I come through!" (said with a smile) (Male, 60, 120313) and "I think they should have someone to go around just having a chat with people – like you are doing" (Female, 60, 190313).

Airport management and other operators

In addition to interviewing airport customers, this study also wanted to incorporate the views of Auckland airport's management team and the views of other organisations operating at the airport. The next section considers the views of those tasked with delivering the airport experience (although in many cases they too are airport customers) keeping in mind the same themes of processes, people, physical environment and 'placeness' identified in the discussions with airport customers above.

In a public lecture at AUT in 2010, the then CEO of Auckland airport Simon Moutter explained how he saw the airport's role as rather straightforward – "To be a really great airport you must give great service to passengers, serve your airlines, and charge a modest price". He also added that,

> Our core competency at Auckland airport is adding value to the movement of people and goods – big business, parking, food, retail, property development and facilities that make that time more useful to people.

He added that one of the biggest challenges he faced was "dealing with the big fat monopoly tag" and winning "Top 10' airport status was an important step in addressing that perception. Moutter also claimed that many people see time spent at the airport as an 'overhead' incurred if you want to travel, and that developments such as the smart gate system helps reduce that overhead.

Another professional interviewed for this research was the founding partner of an Urban Design Consultancy who had worked closely with the directors of Auckland airport. He was very clear on what some people's experience of airports is, saying

> Who amongst us doesn't identify with the imagery of ceaseless arrivals and departures, departures and arrivals, where only the name of the airport changes.

Having worked on an urban design master plan for both Darwin airport in Australia and also Auckland airport he felt that airports were very stressful places, and that it is the role of management and designers to try and make it a calmer and more pleasant experience for those who use or work at the airport. He urged airport management to consider how they could make the process easier – for example by having kerbside luggage drop off facilities, or allowing travellers to drop their luggage in central Auckland, citing similar facilities at Hung Hom station in Hong Kong, or Paddington Station in London, UK. Finally, once airports have the processing right, he urged them to consider having more 'theatre' as part of the airport experience. Supporting this, an interview with two of the Directors of the airport (one of whom is now the CEO) highlighted that 45% of the airport's revenue is 'non-aeronautical', meaning that the customer experience is not only desirable, but also financially crucial. They explained that one challenge to this goal is the traditional division of the airport structure into 'engineering' and 'retail', and that a focus on the airport customer required a new vision, organisational structure and set of priorities. The airport has moved from being a 'transport node' to becoming an 'urban growth node' which has the potential to become a magnet for further growth and development and create an airport city or 'aeropolis'. While short-haul flights are primarily focused on efficiency, the role of Auckland airport as a gateway to the country was a high priority. They suggested that the need for airports to have a 'sense of place' was new to many who regarded airports as a "vanilla product – the same for everyone". Instead, they argued, a successful airport must be one which is "an interesting place to dwell". In addition, the mode of traffic taken to the airport influences people's mood before they even get to the airport. They acknowledged, though, that areas such as security always make people nervous, so the

more efficiently people are processed through those essential 'compulsory' elements of the airport, the more time they can relax and enjoy the retail and hospitality 'additional' offerings. Yet the symbolic role that the airport has for many should not be underestimated – and they strongly disagreed that airports were 'non-places' and nothing more than 'donuts in the sky', and recognised the danger of 'sameness' of airports in the 21st Century. The 'Tree Project' artwork in the departure lounge area at Auckland airport was one way of trying to make Auckland memorable in the eyes of the airport customer.

The challenges faced by the management company AIAL were highlighted by the airport's Customer Services Manager (CSM). She pointed out that much of her time was spent following up on complaints about airport toilets which were a very immediate cause of concern to airport customers because "the physical environment is higher on people's radar" (who also do not realise that there are 39 sets of toilets at the airport!). Cleanliness and hygiene were clear drivers of (dis)satisfaction for airport customers, together with helpful staff and a feeling of safety. She also made the very insightful observation that much of the airport's early processes create a 'halo effect' – a good check-in or security check experience means that airport customers are more likely to relax and enjoy the other services (and vice versa for a poor experience). Anything that made airport customers physically uncomfortable had a very negative effect on people's impressions of the airport. AIAL also had the challenge that airport customers view the whole airport as one 'experience' although AIAL only control a very small number of the 12 000 people who work at the airport – most work for private companies such as retail, hospitality or transport companies or government agencies. She explained,

> There is an attitude that 'the airport can fix all my problems'. We had an e-mail from a man who said his fiancée was leaving the country with another man and could we stop her!

The challenge of building relationships with airport customers is ironically made harder by communications technology – people greeting travellers can now check the arrival status of aircraft online and drive into the pick-up area only as people clear customs meaning they do not spend any time inside the airport building.

She claimed that kiwis were much harder on the airport's performance than visitors to New Zealand. There is a sense that people are thinking 'This is not the welcome I want for my family'. Any service failures experienced by family members (particularly by vulnerable ones such as the elderly or disabled) are taken very personally –far more so,

she claimed, than service failures in other situations. Haghighi, Baum and Shafti (2014, p. 262) in their study of customer loyalty in small hospitality businesses in Scotland argue that "it is critical to consider the customer as an important individual not as an interchangeable member of a target group" and the airport must find a way to connect with and satisfy airport customers at an individual level, despite the volume of people using the airport.

The CSM also explained that the airport must find a compromise on many levels – the airport must represent the community but be a commercial success, it must reflect the country but be global. Vancouver was mentioned as a very experiential airport – people can walk over rocks, pebbles and a river. These things make an airport stand out and avoid accusations of what some have called 'mallification', and she concluded by saying "a sense of place and ambience trump everything" and that "airports are about people, not just planes" or, as Lashley (2008, p. 82) says "individuals practice hospitableness".

One group whose sole role is one of hospitableness are the 'Bluecoat' airport information volunteers, or 'airport hospitality ambassadors' as they were called when the programme began in 1995. These retired Aucklanders (the youngest is 66 and the oldest 86 years old!) have information desks in the check-in, departure and arrivals areas landside and also in the departure area and customs hall airside. Interviews were conducted with a range of Bluecoats all of whom rotate around the various locations, and with their co-ordinator/manager who put their role into words very succinctly as "we are there to bring AIAL's motto of 'Making journeys better' to life". Questions asked of the Bluecoats depended on the location of the helpdesk but were usually around directions to things (toilets and rental cars), lost and found, the kinds of shops and restaurants landside/airside, or about recommendations for somewhere to stay or how to get there. When offering options, one Bluecoat explained, "you need to assess if they have lots of luggage, their age, do they need comfort or is cost important to them?" While many interactions with airport customers are very brief, one Bluecoat said that she particularly enjoyed the landside departures area desk because "people tell you stories – they tell you where they are going". While the role of the Bluecoats may seem to overlap with that of the iSite tourist information desk which is also at the airport, several Bluecoats explained that it took a lot longer to get a question answered at the iSite as people were booking hotel rooms there as well. Also, the Bluecoats felt they were more visible and in a more prominent position, and were often the first people

airport customers turned to for advice, even if that was a referral to the accommodation booking facility of iSite. They acknowledged that quite a number of the questions they were asked was for information available on the airport signage, although as one Bluecoat said,

> If you look at an airport… see how many signs there are! No wonder they don't look at signs. They have enough to think about without signs. It is easier to ask someone.

The final group of service providers approached for their perspective on the airport customer experience were the taxi drivers who have paid to have access to the airport forecourt to pick up fares. They were overwhelmingly negative about the airport and the charges they paid to access the airport in their taxis, but acknowledged that when it came to the customer experience, "I think people have a pretty good experience at Auckland Airport – people are friendly". When asked what comments airport customers make to the taxi drivers, one said "they complain about delays in getting through – particularly with the Airbus A380. The delays upset them". One traveller complained about being fined for having an apple in her bag which was found by a sniffer dog. She was fined several hundred dollars and told the driver "I will never come to New Zealand again". Another driver reminisced about the time when Qantas airlines handed out apples to passengers to help with sore ears on the descent into Auckland – "MAF went and had a word with the airline on that occasion!". Another driver commented on the friction caused by large groups, particularly in the arrivals area "large groups do not seem to use the area off to one side where they are supposed to go – the airport does not seem to cope with large groups". A final observation from one driver showed that they understood the frame of mind many passengers were in after long flights.

> You have to remember that people coming off planes are like sheep. They follow the people in front of them.

Having summarised the findings of this study from airport customers and others operating at the airport, the next chapter will now analyse these comments and develop a model of the airport customer experience at Auckland airport's International Terminal using the lived experience of those customers.

Chapter 5: Analysis and discussion

Introduction

The aim of this study is to investigate the factors influencing airport customer experiences using Auckland International Airport's International Terminal as a case study, with, as explained in Chapter One, the two objectives being:

1. To develop a model of the factors influencing the airport customer experience, so as,

2. To better understand the airport customer experience.

From the presentation of the data in Chapter Four, this chapter seeks to analyse the stories that people told about their airport experiences. Wolcott (1990) warns that the academic community feels a need to label the traditions within which they are working – whether for their own or institutional requirements, or as a result of 'academic posturing'.

> What we don't label, others will, leaving us at their mercy. We are better off to supply labels of our own, and to be upfront about the identifications we seek. (Wolcott, 1990, p. 45)

Given the above comments, this analysis is based around the principles of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). With its origins in Husserl's concept of 'consciousness', Heidegger's hermeneutics and Blumer's symbolic interactionism, this approach is discussed in healthcare and psychology by Biggerstaff and Thompson (2008), Reid et al. (2005) and J. A. Smith (2004) but also in logistics (Mangan, Lalwani, & Gardner, 2004). Within hospitality and tourism literature Morrison and O'Gorman (2008) and O'Gorman and Gillespie (2010) use the approach to evaluate the origins of hospitality and its management and the reliance of international hospitality leaders on storytelling as a way to communicate their vision to their employees.

The 'thematic phase' was a search for common themes or as Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006, p. 3) put it, "themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon". By gaining a better understanding of the key elements of their experiences, the intention is to propose a model showing the integration of customers with the physical environment, the process of moving through an airport, how people understand and interpret the liminal space they spend a considerable amount of time in, and whether a sense of 'placeness' helps them to better navigate their way through. The

airport is a large structure open to the public, yet privately-owned and fulfilling a variety of goals for a heterogeneous group of people who are sometimes under considerable emotional stress and time pressure. A better understanding of this experience will assist not just airport management, but management of any large structure, be that a hospital, museum, government building, shopping mall or theme park. Current academic literature often focuses on an economic model of efficiency and effectiveness. The proposed model in this study builds on this and contributes to understanding by incorporating the lived experience of customers in their own voices.

Ezeh and Harris (2007) highlight that as long ago as 1973, Kotler warned that the servicescape could one day be the dominant form of competition for organisations with very similar offerings. Despite this, there is still a paucity of empirical research into the customer's experience, particularly from a phenomenological perspective. This chapter revisits the themes that have emerged from the data and the literature, and proposes a number of models that could help to develop knowledge and understanding in this field. To do this the writer has used the stories told by airport customers about their experiences. This was considered to be a good way of accessing people's subjective impressions of their airport experience because, as Woodside et al. (2008, p. 100) point out "people think mostly in terms of stories".

This thesis was informed by Hirschman's (1986) comments that instead of trying to emulate positivist research goals of generalizability, qualitative researchers should bear in mind goals of credibility, transferability and confirmability. Triangulation is one way of working towards these goals, and while discussing the themes, evidence will be drawn in from sources in addition to the 130 interviews conducted and transcribed by the writer. Notes from research diaries, photographs taken during participant and non-participant observation were reviewed and analysed, and comments on social media and discussions at conferences and seminars with academic peers influenced these discussions.

Themes

The themes identified in the previous chapter (physical environment, processes, people, placeness and personal travel philosophy) are now discussed and related back to the literature discussed in Chapter Two: Literature review.

Physical environment

The physical environment is discussed in the introductory chapter in terms of the various roles and responsibilities of the different organisations operating at Auckland airport, and the importance of an understanding of the history of the development of the airport space since its opening in 1966. It also notes the importance of artefacts such as Jean Batten's 1936 Percival Gull monoplane. Chapter Two reflects on the global development of air travel and the increasing importance of a servicescape (Bitner, 1992) which is effective at moving large numbers of people while at the same time providing a pleasant environment in which airport customers can spend time and money, as the value of their purchasing power becomes apparent. It then contrasts this goal with the need to provide a secure and 'sterile' zone free of the threat of terrorism (Gordon, 2008; Gottdiener, 2001). The impact of temperature, noise and crowding on the customer's experience is acknowledged. Venkatraman and Nelson (2008) raise the interesting point that the way in which customers use the facilities provided may not always been what management intended, and they suggest that if the organisation is not watching very closely, they may not see that customers turn the management's intended 'servicescape' into a consumer-driven 'consumptionscape'. The temporary communities (Gottdiener, 2001) that develop during flight delays are an example of those as they tend to develop despite the authorities' management of the built environment.

Regular comments about a sense of space and openness seemed to set the scene for Auckland airport for many customers. This was reflected in comments about the viewing platform out to the aircraft, the smoking area after security on the roof of the airport, but also a feeling of being able to stay connected – whether that was being able to wave to loved ones looking down onto the airside area where the 'tree' artwork is now installed, or being able to access free and reliable Wi-Fi to contact home. This ability to stay connected or do something useful with the 'lost' hours spent waiting made a considerable difference to the airport experience. The availability of comfortable seating to relax together with a plentiful supply of power sockets all helped to make the (accepted) inevitable waits and delays that comprise the airport experience for many customers. The variety of facilities and retail outlets at Auckland airport was sometimes not compared favourably with large international airport terminals in other countries, although it was acknowledge by many that the relative small size of Auckland airport gave it a more relaxed and 'village' feel compared to larger airports with a wider range of facilities. Having a place to sleep was perhaps a more common theme than might be expected, with respondents not infrequently reporting twelve hour

or even longer stays at the airport. A wide range of suggestions were made for airport management to consider, although it was also acknowledged that airport and retail staff were helpful and regularly assisted with general airport queries. Many of these suggestions were about having something to do while waiting for flights.

The physical environment of an airport is there mainly for one simple purpose – to smooth the flow of people through a series of processes.

Processes

A major factor influencing the airport customer's experiences are their understanding of (and perception of fairness/reasonableness of) airport management processes. Confusing signage and announcements and unexplained delays cause frustration and uncertainty and in some cases genuine discomfort or even fear. The increasing use of self-service technology and the distancing of an organisation from its customers through technology or outsourcing means that customers may feel that the organisation is no longer interested in them. Classifying facilities into 'primary' and 'secondary' facilities (Lam et al., 2003) is a helpful way of identifying core and additional facilities and perhaps an indication of the priority with which airport management need to address concerns. Le Bel (2005, p. 446) sounds a warning note to those who believe there is a technical or process answer to every airport situation.

> The nature of procedural service lends itself well to specification with tools like blueprinting and process flow charts … an employee who checks in a customer without looking up from the computer screen has already led the customer to answer his/her own hypotheses about the type of service that can be expected.

Gilmore and Pine (2002a, p. 11) instead suggest that every organisation now needs a "Chief Experience Officer, or CXO, with the skills to design, script, construct and cast experiences". Airport and security management made the interesting observation that people want to be processed quickly, efficiently and fairly and with the minimum of delays so that they can then relax and enjoy the facilities on offer once they have been 'processed'. While some customers appreciated the presence of staff to guide them through and sort out any problems they may have with check-in processes, many others were happy to have this part of the airport experience as an efficient self-service process with minimal staff interaction. Much as with supermarkets, people's willingness to interact with machines appears to be high and growing. These standardised elements of the airport experience did not appear to be where people placed a high value on human interaction. A common frustration, on the other hand, appeared to be with processes that

were expected to be automated and fast (e.g. bag drop) and which turned out to be slow and repeating what had already been done online or at self check-in kiosks. Rather than the airport having to educate the airport customer, it seemed that customers of all ages were waiting for the airport processes to keep up with them.

Notwithstanding all of the above, which was true for the majority of airport customers, the human touch was considered to be extremely important where things had gone wrong. Often airport customers admitted that the fault was theirs, with incorrect reservations, misread travel documents, or simply confusion at check-in. While airport customers appear happy to take control of much of the process of moving through an airport, where errors occurred (however caused), there was an expectation that a knowledgeable person would be available to assist them to proceed through the process. A lack of information, or the appearance that the airport was not prepared for all eventualities when processes did not work was not considered acceptable. Mistakes and problems were accepted as inevitable in the global system that Auckland airport is a small part of, but a failure to have a carefully thought out 'Plan B' was not. If the airport customer could see a resolution to the problem being implemented by staff (preferably with a smile and good humour), then the initial break-down quickly became unimportant in their overall airport experience. A better understanding of the processes in play at an airport (because of TV programmes about airlines, airports and border security) seemed to make people more understanding of the challenges faced by airport staff in ensuring the smooth flow of customers through an airport. Airport customer also appreciated airport staff understanding that they might be feeling, tired, jetlagged and disoriented, and anticipating people's needs was regularly commented on very positively.

It was acknowledge by many that certain groups faced additional challenges in being processed, in particular the elderly, families with small children, novice travellers and groups (and even facilities for smokers). It seemed to be accepted that these categories of airport customers would not 'fit' through the standard channels, and respondents expected the airport to be able to expedite these groups through in a way that others would be able to follow their own required processes effectively. This appeared to be a combination on the part of the 'other customer' of a sense of hospitality (not wishing to see people struggle) and a somewhat selfish desire or even frustration to not be delayed by those who did not 'fit'.

Cleanliness of facilities was taken by many to be an indication of 'good management' – if they can keep the place looking nice and hygienic then they must be good at their jobs! The opposite was also commented on (although not in relation to Auckland but other airports they had flown from) that dirty facilities meant that airport customers had little confidence in the efficiency of (for example) passport control or baggage reclaim. Clear and logical signage also instilled confidence and a sense of control and reduced stress.

Perhaps not surprisingly, airport customers made little distinction between airline, airport or retail experiences – to the airport customer, 'the airport' had failed them (even when this was poor local authority signage or roadworks on the motorway approach to the airport). Confusing instructions from a car rental company reflected poorly on the airport.

As has been suggested above, the processes which occur within the physical environment of the airport terminal building are facilitated by the people using them.

People

The impact of people (both airport staff and the customers they seek to serve) is addressed in the literature review. Bitner (1992, p. 80) urges that service employees should 'act as marketers rather than functionaries', although this is easier to operationalize for retail and hospitality staff than customs and immigration officials. Aubert-Gamet and Cova (1999, p. 41) suggest that certain rules exist in such public spaces as shopping malls – an unwritten rule of "people invisibility" where no matter what one is doing, others are required to pretend that they have not seen anything. This is similar to what Pütz (2012) refers to as 'non-events' when a line of people waiting to go through a security checkpoint manage to ignore the fact that someone is being searched right in front of them. Gottdiener (2001, p. 31) speaks of "transient social interaction" and the fact that experiences in airports are being forgotten even as they are occurring, although he acknowledges that circumstances such as flight cancellations create the opportunity for the development of a 'temporary community'. Lugosi (2011) argues that hospitable actions create spaces for shared expression. As Rowley and Slack (1999, p. 372) put it, people are "forcibly waiting", although it is accepted that if one has money one can be part of the "kinetic elite" who have the cultural capital to move seamlessly across borders (Sheller & Urry, 2006). Urry (2002) also suggests that despite technological advances, there is no sign that people will choose to travel less. While

some find the airport a space of constant flow, movement and even excitement, the airport's compartmentalised and secure areas also highlight the immobility of others.

Two areas which have been treated separately in the literature review but which impact on the people at the airport are the topics of 'hospitality' and 'customer experience'. What links these two topics under the heading of 'people' is Nouwen's (1975, p. 46) observation that what people really desire is "an open and hospitable space". This is echoed by Germann Molz and Gibson's (2007) reference to the law of universal hospitality – the ability to travel freely and unharmed (Hemmington, 2007) builds on the initial work by Brotherton (1999) to create a definition of hospitality management by urging people not to lose sight of the excitement of hospitable experiences and to ensure that hospitality (even commercial hospitality) contains 'sparkling moments' which surprise and delight the visitor and go beyond what they might reasonably have expected. People really notice when someone takes personal responsibility for delivering hospitable experiences and there are numerous examples of this in the primary data.

O'Gorman's (2007) analysis of Derrida's contribution provides a philosophical perspective on hospitality which fits with Heidegger's concept of *da-sein* or 'being there' and leads in to the recent upsurge in interest in the 'customer experience' (Gilmore & Pine, 1997, 2002a, 2002b; Morgan et al., 2010) and 'extraordinary experiences' (Woodside et al., 2008). A deeper understanding of such experiences is only possible by using experiential research methods, argue Prentice et al. (2008). More management understanding of and attention to the lived experience of the airport customer will, it is argued by the writer, lead to the creation of a welcoming 'third place' as proposed by Oldenburg and Brissett (1982). However, the most carefully 'stage-managed' environment can easily be subverted by people who either do not understand or care for the norms. As Edensor (2000, p. 333) explains,

> A space that may seem carefully stage-managed, a scene containing choreographed and directed tourists, may be transformed by the presence of those who adhere to different norms. This emphasizes that stages can change continually, that different interpretations and performative strategies can undermine the materialization and deployment of managerial power.

This is similar to Venkatraman and Nelson's (2008) 'consumptionscapes' where customer 'subvert' the organisation's servicescape to make the space what they want it to be. An airport could be argued to be a 'third space' where people interact with other

airport customers who they might never otherwise share a space with, and with staff operating at the airport. This interaction provides an opportunity for memorable experiences which can be very positive or very negative. The 'processes' discussed in the section above must happen – but whether these are positive or negative experiences depends on the participants. While well-designed facilities are more likely to lead to satisfied customers, human encounters can easily create poor experiences or make difficult situations more bearable. Being welcomed with a smile was a regular first impression of Auckland airport (and one that stayed with airport customers – sometimes for years).

Airport customers who were travelling for serious reasons (for example funerals or memorial events) appreciated the sensitivity of staff in not processing them in the same way as 'normal' travellers. It was noted by a number of travellers and those farewelling them that a hospitality background was very important for staff to be able to deliver positive airport experiences. People by and large understood the necessity for procedures but regular comments were made about additional acts of kindness or thoughtfulness from airport staff – especially if these were from non customer contact roles. This was perceived as being 'genuine' hospitality.

Evaluation of customer experiences were very often in the form of comparisons – either over time, or in contrast with other airports. LAX, Sydney and Heathrow were often used as examples of airports to avoid if possible, although some did acknowledge that LAX and Heathrow had recently improved facilities and staff attitudes. There was also an acknowledgement that Auckland airport's (relatively) small size made for a more relaxed and enjoyable experience. While many accepted that larger airports could provide more variety in terms of facilities, a warm welcome and pleasant surroundings seemed to be at least as important as the number or variety of facilities. Some airport customers were extremely critical of their fellow travellers, making it clear that they felt not only were these people responsible for their own poor experiences, but their behaviour was also having a negative impact on others using the airport. The patience of Customs personnel with 'difficult' customers was noted and their ability to stay calm, polite and good humoured under such challenges was considered to be 'very kiwi' and a source of pride to those arriving 'back home'.

This sense of an 'appropriate' way of behaving at Auckland airport was linked by many to the physical location of the airport in New Zealand. This leads on to the next aspect of the airport customer experience, that of 'placeness'.

Placeness

There are a number of elements to 'placeness'. First is the desire to avoid the airport becoming a 'non-place' (Augé, 1995) or 'placeless' (Relph, 1976) which can be achieved through being geographically and historically derived from and grounded in its environment, both physically and culturally, as discussed in the context of Liverpool airport by Adey (2006a) and Kraftl and Adey (2008) who compared a school and an airport in an attempt to discover what makes them meaningful places. Secondly is the idea of 'self-image congruity' (Breazeale & Ponder, 2013) where people want to be in an environment which reflects positively their perceived self-image (as a sophisticated business traveller, a holidaymaker, a backpacker, etc.). Urry refers to shopping malls and other places where people now gather as "non-places of modernity" (Urry, 2003, p. 61). Heidegger (1971) highlights the difference between a 'building' which is merely a physical structure and a 'dwelling' which someone feels 'at home' in. Augé (1995) warns that the increasing globalisation makes non-places more likely, although he acknowledges that it is probably more accurate to regard non-places as being on a continuum rather than a distinct point or contrast to a 'place'. Sharma (2009) suggests that airports and theme parks have a lot in common with refugee camps, and Morris (1988) uses motels as an example of a place where people are tenants for just a few hours. McNeill (2005a) argues that the dominance of certain architects and their signature building styles ensures that even the buildings increasingly look the same. Fuller and Harley (2004) acknowledge the sameness of many of the world's airports, although they seem to suggest that it is not a major issue as people are not going to the airport – they are 'on the way to somewhere else' (Fuller & Harley, 2004, p. 38). Likewise Fodness and Murray (2007, p. 493) voice the opinion of many when they say "the airport is not a destination for air travellers. It is a transition point".

Several interviewees had no hesitation in volunteering that an airport has a gateway role for a country. They also felt that the airport should not be out of proportion to the country it 'represented', and that Auckland airport was small and friendly – much like New Zealand, they argued. Another felt that the airport had a 'south Pacific island feel'. The birdsong recording played as people walked to immigration was commented on by many, but particularly kiwis 'coming home', as was the Tomokanga carved gateway. The views of the open countryside looking across the Manukau harbour were important in showcasing the clean, green and '100% pure' slogan that New Zealand's tourist authority uses to promote the country.

Other aspects which airport customers felt gave the airport a 'sense of place' included displays of traditional artwork and forms such as the koru shape, displays of rugby items (surrounding the Rugby World Cup 2013) and a lots of movie paraphernalia surrounding the Tolkien films *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*. While not everyone felt that these displays were 'authentic' (Tolkien did not set his movies in New Zealand but the Director Sir Peter Jackson – a kiwi – filmed them in New Zealand), many people did agree that the movies were a great showcase for the country's natural beauty.

What also comes through from these and other comments (for example about the appropriateness of using Māori art and traditional forms in a commercial setting) is how easy it would be to misjudge people's responses, and even to cause considerable offence through the inappropriate or inauthentic use of such symbols. Many cities, regions and countries have marketing strategies to create and promote a particular identity. If these symbols do not reflect the values of the population and the experience of visitors, then such branding exercises are doomed to failure, and even to be counter-productive.

Finally in this discussion and illustration of themes is the personal attitude to travel which the airport customers carry within themselves.

Personal Travel Philosophy

Gottdiener (2001, p. 200) advises that,

> By expressing our needs as consumers and enlightened public leaders, we can transform our travel options from a dissonant, alien experience to a more harmonious one.

While the other categories of physical environment, processing, people and placeness became apparent early on in the analysis, or even during the data collection, this last category of 'Personal Travel Philosophy' or PTP, remained hidden for much longer. What started to surface was that certain airport customers had an attitude that allowed them to cope with the stresses of their airport experience, irrespective of whether the situations these airport customers found themselves in were positive or negative, or the fault of others (airport, airline, travel agent, acts of God!) or their own. It could be argued that these people have higher level of 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1986) or a better understanding of how to work within the 'social control' (Foucault, 1977) exerted in the airport environment. If cultural capital is accrued over time (and cannot be given away or sold on), then perhaps those individuals who appear relaxed and comfortable in

the airport environment have spent so much time in airports that they are better equipped to negotiate their way through an airport – even one with which they are not familiar. The writer accepts that the airport is a socially-constructed entity, and as Bourdieu argues that 'the social world is accumulated history', so perhaps the mistake is to regard the airport as an engineering challenge focused on the most efficient use of space and resources where everyone is treated equally through an impartial set of processes and procedures. These regular customers provide many benefits for the organisation. Not only do they provide free consultancy, benchmarking and informal training, they may perform the role of 'quasi-employee' including cleaning up, giving advice to others (for example on how to use self-check-in machines, passport scanners or how to attach luggage tags) and even entertaining other customers (Ford & Heaton, 2001). Lugosi (2007, p. 227) suggests,

> Customers play a key role in the production of commercial hospitality… their participation in the service delivery ensures that the operation functions efficiently.

Models of the airport customer experience

This section includes a number of models together with an explanation. This is not so that the reader can pick their favourite one, but in order to illustrate the development in thinking that occurred during this research. They are reproduced to address a common criticism of phenomenological research – that the writer jumps from data to themes without a trail of breadcrumbs showing how they have arrived at their destination. In doing so the writer aims to identify clearly the contribution to knowledge that this thesis is seeking to make. These models were developed as a result of an iterative engagement with the data and perhaps demonstrate a move from a very detailed and factual recording to a higher level of abstraction. They also reflect the valuable feedback from and discussions with fellow researchers and mentors. While they are derived from and grounded in the experiences of customers of Auckland airport, the aim has been to make them sufficiently general to allow for transferability to a different location – at least as a starting point to identify similarities and differences.

The thesis application model

This model was created after the initial presentation of the thesis proposal on the advice of the university's thesis committee made up of senior academics within the Business faculty. While the presentation was made without a formal model being introduced, feedback was received that the thesis committee wanted to see an overarching visual

representation of the elements that might be found to make up the airport customer experience. Using an Ishikawa fishbone cause-and-effect format, this model shows the pre-understanding of the writer about the components that might make up the airport customer experience.
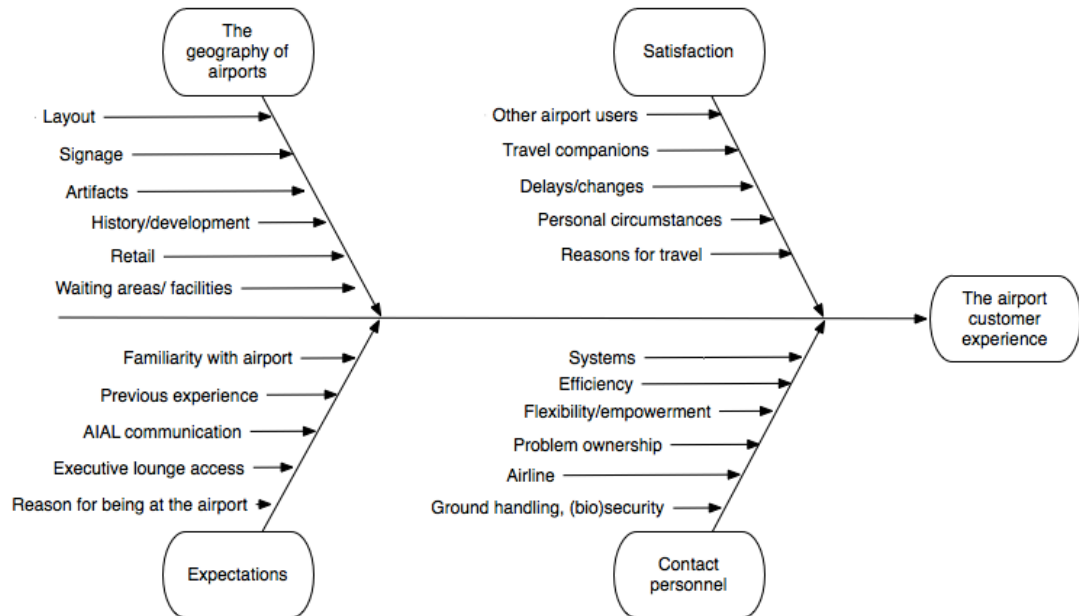

Figure 5.1: The thesis application model

This model was certainly a very helpful starting point and stepping stone, but it became clear very quickly to the writer that this model was built on the paradigm of a management perspective, perhaps reflecting the writer's own MBA background. This initial model also reflected what was already known and assessed in internal organisational and external government KPIs, benchmarking exercises and quality assessment exercises such as Skytrax and ACI Airport Service Quality research tools.

Once the data started to be gathered and reflected on, it became apparent very quickly that what was important to airport customers, and the way that airport customers experience the airport environment, was not necessarily the same as the way airport management saw it. This led, after considerable amounts of reading of annual reports, blogs, customer-generated online content on TripAdvisor, Facebook and Foursquare websites, to a model where the voice of the airport customer came through more strongly.
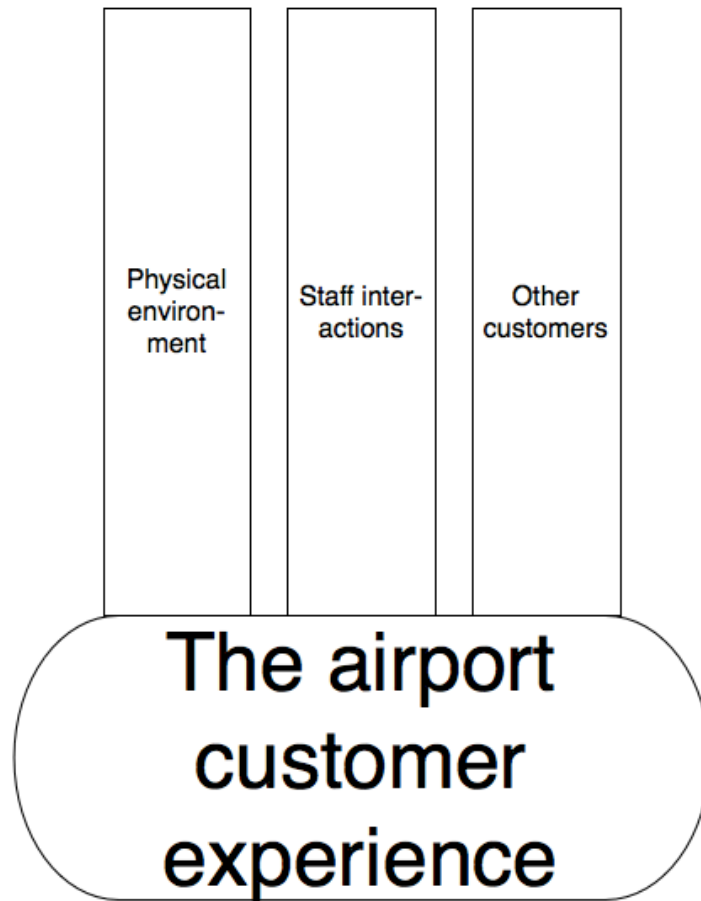
The early observations model

Figure 5.2: The early observations model

As a result of considerable time spent at the airport conducting interviews with management and airport customers, it became clear that there were a number of contributing factors to airport customers' experiences. Using the architecture of a classical airport design (one main building and piers or 'fingers' for aircraft docking) as found in many books on the history and development of some of the world's most iconic airports such as Idlewild (later JFK) in the USA or Berlin Tempelhof, this model attempted to capture the main elements which make up an airport experience – the physical environment (uplifting/depressing; clean/dirty; logical/confusing), staff interactions (availability/helpfulness/hospitableness/knowledgeable), and the impact of other customers on the airport experience. While this model does start to get at the core of what it means to be in an airport, it had two main weaknesses – firstly, the model assumes that all three 'piers' are equally important, and secondly the model adds very little to the Servuction model of Bateson and Hoffman (1999) which attempted to identify the process that created services (made up of the physical environment, the

service personnel, other customers and the invisible systems that ensured the service could be delivered).

Time spent drawing flowcharts of the processes and emotions that airport customers went through while transiting through an airport led to the next iteration of the model.

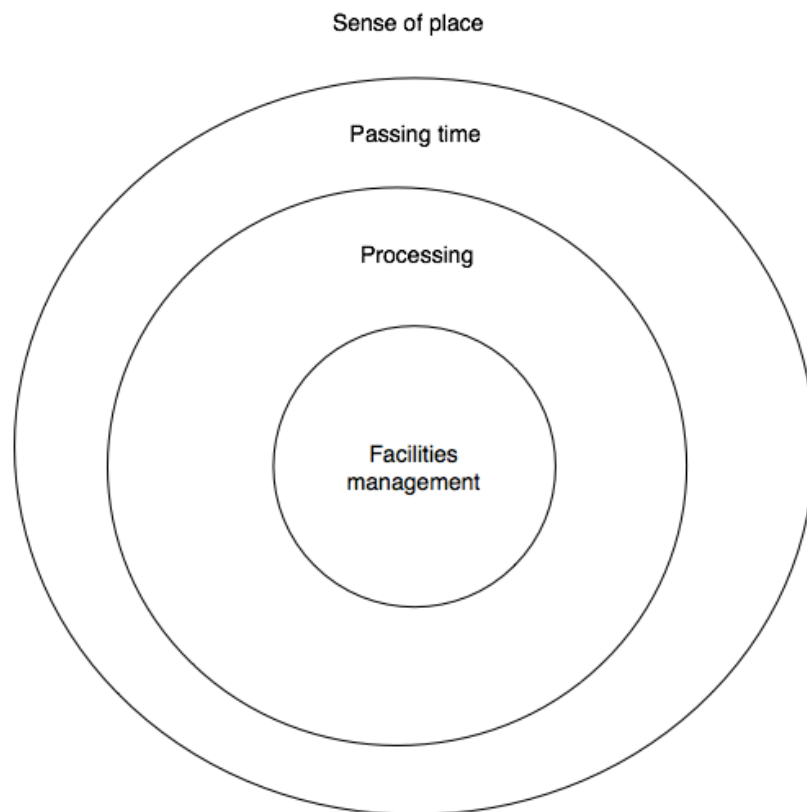**The concentric circles of experience model**

Sense of place

Passing time

Processing

Facilities management

Figure 5.3: The concentric circles of experience model

Following further interviews, observations, re-reading field notes and research diaries, reflections on online comments and photographs of actual airport journeys and familiarisation with the Heideggerian concept of 'Da-sein' (Nichols, 2000) and the geographical literature on place, space and liminal spaces (Adey, 2004a, 2004b, 2006a, 2006b, 2007; Adey, Budd, & Hubbard, 2007), it was realised that an airport experience had certain basic requirements which must first be fulfilled, but then higher order needs (in particular a sense of place – Augé, 1995; Relph, 1976) became dominant in a kind of variation of Maslow's hierarchy of needs from food and shelter at the base of the pyramid to self-actualisation at the peak. However, this model does not really capture the idea of a development, a set of building blocks, so while it explains the elements or

the components of the airport experience, it does not really have a sense of flow or progression.

It was at this time that it became clear that there were two main axes to the airport customer experience – one of efficiency, the other of a sense of place or identity. Placed together it then became possible to create a 2 x 2 matrix which showed at one extreme an inefficient airport with no distinguishing features and at the other a unique airport with a clear sense of its location and identity and a very efficient process for moving people and freight. It would therefore be theoretically possible to ask travellers and those greeting and farewelling them to score individual airports and airport experiences, and thereby populate the matrix with examples of such airports. This approach is common in much management research and is often used as a benchmarking tool or mapping exercise, to identify where one's product or service is just, how it compares to others offering similar products or services, and perhaps useful in identifying where one wants to be and what strategies to implement to get there.
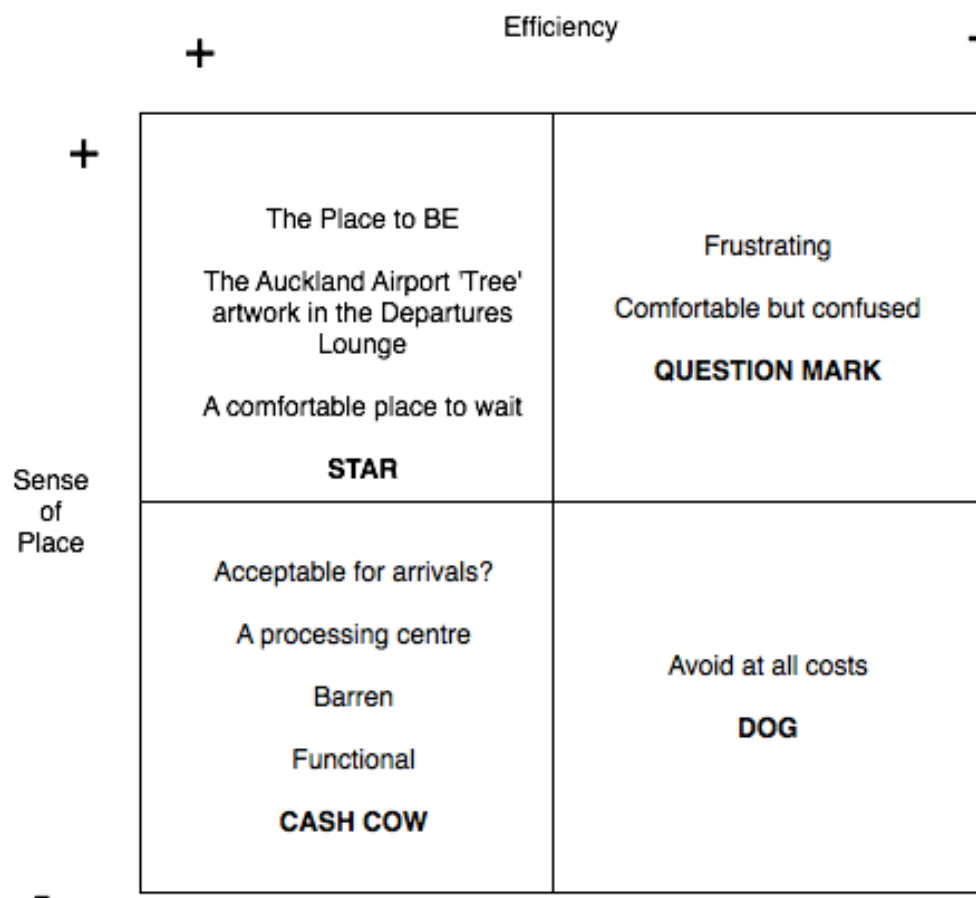
The benchmark mapping model

Figure 5.4: The benchmark mapping model

Source: Adapted from (Kotler, 1986, p. 63)

This model would probably be of considerable interest to airport management as it would allow a benchmarking and mapping exercise in terms of evaluating the airport process from the perspective of the consumer. This is perhaps what Weidenfeld et al. (2010) mean when they discuss knowledge transfer of ideas coming from other businesses operating in a similar environment. Bogicevic et al. (2013) suggest airport management have focused on precisely such benchmarking activities in order to identify 'service gaps'.

However, going back to the voice of the customer, the above model still does not really focus on the airport customer's own experience of the airport – a subjective, interpretivist and phenomenological perspective. It also does not accommodate the fact that arriving passengers may well find minimal facilities acceptable so long as they are processed politely, speedily and fairly, whereas departing travellers may wish more facilities, activities and a more stimulating environment. Le Bel (2005) argues that a customer's impression of an organisation's service depends on 'procedural' and 'convivial' service with the former meeting customer needs but the latter delivering an interpersonal experience. Le Bel (2005, p. 439) goes on to explain that,

> Outstanding conviviality combined with poor procedural performance conveys a message that while the company is well-intended, it lacks the know-how to solve customers' problems. On the other hand, flawless procedural service with no conviviality results in a cold and impersonal experience.

The final model in this chapter is therefore one that substantially captures this experience.

The airport customer experience model

Figure 5.5: The airport customer experience model

The aim of this model is to present the airport customer experience as seen by the airport user themselves. Using the departing traveller as a focus, it recognises the sequential nature of many people's airport experiences. On arrival at the airport they are concerned and anxious about getting checked in and through, and their focus is on being processed so they are 'in the system'. This is a rather functional stage of the airport experience, and if everything goes to plan is unlikely to be memorable. Once people have completed the obligatory stages, they then have the time and the inclination to look around and take in their environment. This 'passing time' stage is where an airport has the opportunity to show people its 'uniqueness' and 'locatedness' in terms of culture and identity. This is the point where Relph's (1976) 'placelessness' and Augé's (1995) 'non-places' can be refuted by airport management in terms of art work, cultural activities and historical artefacts which help the airport customer to orientate themselves to their location. This is where Arnould and Price's (1993) 'extraordinary experience'

can be created. Le Bel (2005) argues that some companies fail in their attempt to deliver such experiences because their focus is on 'functionality' rather than on delivering 'pleasure'. The sense of identity and pride that the respondents in this particular study expressed about Auckland airport is an extremely valuable asset, particularly as this sense of enthusiasm and excitement can affect other airport customers in just the same way that angry customers can influence the experiences of those around them (Grove & Fisk, 1997). This shared experience and identity is socially constructed and therefore difficult to measure using positivist measures such as standard questions and Likert scales as discussed in both the literature review and the methodology chapters of this study. Also, while standard assessment tools may well be able to provide measures of satisfaction with specific aspects of the airport experience, the model above seeks to recognise that the airport customer experience is a cumulative one, with a satisfactory processing experience allowing the individual to enjoy the facilities available for passing the time before their flight departs or the people they are greeting or farewelling have been processed. The 'top' level of this model suggests that if an airport customer has been effectively processed and entertained or made to feel welcome while they wait, then the airport develops a sense of place in their minds. It is acknowledged in the model that the level of excitement or anticipation that the airport customer feels while in the airport environment will also depend on the purpose of their visit, the motivation for their travel arrangements or even the companions they are travelling with. These will vary for different airport customers and may also vary for the same airport customer on different occasions (e.g. an academic travelling for teaching, for a conference, or with their family on holiday).

This chapter has built on the presentation of the findings in Chapter Four. It has discussed each of the themes identified, and related them back to the literature in order to address the gap in the knowledge presented at the conclusion of the literature review. This was done to demonstrate the contribution that this study makes to the body of knowledge, namely a phenomenological understanding of the lived experience of the airport customer at Auckland International Airport.

At the conclusion of the chapter the writer demonstrates how he has unpacked the airport customer experience through a series of developmental models representing the experiences of Auckland Airport's customers in their own words. Each model builds on the understanding developed from the previous one. However, as Bazeley (2009, p. 20) explains, the researcher knows they have 'arrived' when five 'signs of sufficiency' have

been met – simplicity, elegance and balance, completeness, robustness and sense to the audience. The last model in this chapter is therefore perhaps not quite there yet, if the above criteria are used, and therefore one further iteration is presented in the final chapter of this thesis, together with the conclusions of the study, the limitations, recommendations for management and opportunities for further research.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

Introduction

> Interpretation is not creation ex nihilo but a creative and reasoned formulation of ways of seeing a phenomenon with alertness and a leaning into possibility.

> (McCaffrey et al., 2012, p. 225)

This study used an interpretative approach to understand the phenomenon of the airport customer experience. As such, it aims to lean into the possibility that we can understand the experience of someone travelling through an airport such as Auckland International. As McCool et al. (2013) point out, UNWTO estimates are for international travel to rise at 3.3% until 2030, so this is a very relevant and useful area of study. In this final chapter a summary of the findings is provided, and the contribution to knowledge that this study has made is discussed. Any study has limitations, and these are acknowledged before making recommendations which will be of use to the management of the airport in the study and also of interest to managers of other airports, large international railway stations, hospital waiting areas and other spaces where people are obliged to congregate. This chapter also identifies opportunities for further academic research.

Urry (2001) writing about the experience of physically being somewhere (in nature, somewhere exciting, somewhere stimulating), says that the physical environment and the individual come together – "they are both objective and subjective, both part of the environment and part of the organism" (Urry, 2001, p. 243). Could this be what airports are to people and people are to airport experiences?

Morgan et al. (2010, p. 83) point out that,

> The majority of studies undertaken of experiences and quality have utilised quantitative perspectives and have been informed by post/positivistic paradigms, especially critical realism or pragmatism.

This research has used phenomenological approaches and applied them to an environment which is very familiar to many people and thereby sought to uncover some of the meanings which, although unstated, influence how airport customers interact with the physical environment, the processes and the others using that space. As Caelli (2003, p. 484) quoting from Spiegelberg (1982) says,

> Phenomenology is a determined effort to undo the effect of habitual patterns of thought and to return to the pristine innocence of first seeing.

By having a better understanding of these influences on a customer's behaviour in and reaction to the airport environment, it will be possible to more profitably satisfy an increasingly diverse and demanding customer group in a secure environment. Researching and analysing the phenomenon of people's airport experiences has required an open mind but also building on what is already known and the writer's personal experiences. As Caelli et al. (2003, p. 3) acknowledge, "humans construct knowledge out of their somewhat subjective engagement with objects in their world". However Siggelkow (2007, p. 21) very sensibly points out, "An open mind is good; an empty mind is not". de Botton (2009, p. 13) justifies his decision to spend a week documenting the experiences of people using London Heathrow airport's Terminal 5 with the following words,

> In a world full of chaos and irregularity, the terminal seemed a worthy and intriguing refuge of elegance and logic. Had one been asked to take a Martian to visit a single place that neatly captures the gamut of themes running through our civilisation – from our faith in technology to our destruction of nature, from our interconnectedness to our romanticising of travel – then it would have to be to the departures and arrivals halls that one would head.

Geertz (1973, p. 5) talks of mankind being "suspended in webs of significance" and that in order to understand those webs we do not need an "experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning". In a similar vein Holbrook (2005, p. 48) warns against, "a mechanical reliance on such self-imprisoning safeguards and such vision-restricting formulas" which are the feature of much positivist research. This study, in contrast, sought to use Weber's concept of 'verstehen' or 'understanding' of the lived experience of the airport customer. This is appropriate for a case study as "deep understanding of the actors, interactions, sentiments and behaviors occurring for a specific process through time should be seen as the principle objective by the case study researcher" (Woodside, 2010, p. 6).

Research objectives

This study started with two specific aims:

1. To understand the airport customer experience, and

2. To develop a model of the factors influencing the airport customer experience.

The research was grounded through an extensive literature review in business, hospitality, tourism and geography academic fields, followed by 130 interviews with

airport customers, management and other organisations operating at the airport. A hermeneutic phenomenological approach was used in order to analyse the data collected and interpret what respondents had said, as well as reviewing field notes, observations and reflections recorded in a research journal, all in a cyclical and iterative manner. Valuable in-depth discussions also took place with academic peers and at international conferences in the fields of hospitality management and geography between 2011 and 2014 (see Appendix 1 for research outputs from this research).

Summary of the findings

This study found that there are a number of key factors influencing the airport customer experience. These included:

1. The physical environment and facilities provided by the airport

2. The processes of the airport and those delivering them

3. The people at the airport (both staff and airport customers)

4. The sense of place created by the combination of all of the above, and

5. The personal attitude of airport customers

Contribution of the study

Caelli et al. (2003, p. 3) state that "the central aim of research is knowledge development". This research has contributed to the understanding of the way in which human beings interact with and respond to the built environment. More specifically, it investigates the personal and emotional experience of travelling through or visiting an international airport terminal. While much data is gathered at what is a convenient gateway to a country, there is a paucity of research into the extremely emotional environment of the eponymous liminal space that an international airport represents. Gill (2014) argues that phenomenology is a very powerful tool for understanding human experience in the context of organisational research, but is currently underutilised in the academic literature. It is particularly useful if the researcher can, at the same time, be engrossed in the specific detail of individual experiences and can also step back to see the larger conceptual picture. That is what this study has sought to do by answering 'how' and 'why' questions as Yin (2009) argues case studies should do.

At a time when there is an increase in what some have called the 'mallification' of public spaces (Briken & Eick, 2012; Steinert, 2009; Boyer, 1988), it is important to

understand how people respond to such spaces, especially with the increasingly commercial imperative of privatised organisations managing the entry and departure of travellers to a nation's territory. If people's transition into and out of a country can be a pleasurable and hospitable experience then this may well influence their desire to return or aid the spread of positive impressions of the nation as a whole across social and other media. Rowley and Slack (1999, p. 375) argue that airport customers are a form of "transient community", and that the environment they find themselves in conveys messages "about the values and culture of that community". de Botton (2002, p. 51) agrees, observing that,

> In roadside diners and late-night cafeterias, hotel lobbies and station cafés, we may dilute our feeling of isolation in a lonely public place and hence rediscover a distinctive sense of community.

This study seeks to provide an alternative to the efficiency paradigm which has been the dominant discourse in airport management research. Instead, it does what phenomenology sets out to do – to make obvious something that is normally inconspicuous or hidden (Inwood, 1997). Mintzberg (1979, p. 583) urges researchers to find out new things, and not be satisfied with confirming what was already known, saying,

> The field of organizational theory has, I believe, paid dearly for the obsession with rigor in the choice of methodology. Too many of the results would have been significant only in the statistical sense of the word.

Auckland airport is clearly good at what they do. In April 2014 the latest annual SKYTRAX awards were announced, and Auckland Airport won awards for:

1. Best airport in Australia Pacific (5th year in a row) ahead of Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne and Gold Coast (all Australian airports)

2. Best airport staff service for Australia Pacific (2nd year in a row) ahead of ahead of Perth (AUS), Brisbane (AUS), Christchurch (NZ) and Gold Coast (AUS)

3. 2nd globally in Best Airport between 10 – 20 million passengers behind Vancouver airport and ahead of Kansai, Helsinki and Abu Dhabi.

4. 12th Best Airport in the world behind Singapore, Incheon, Hong Kong and Amsterdam but ahead of Kansai, Kuala Lumpur, Brisbane and Dubai.

While the overall global ratings score composition is not revealed by Skytrax, the above categories do suggest that issues such as size, security, cleanliness, leisure facilities, dining, staff and baggage delivery all play a part in the overall rating.

In the years 2013 – 2015 Auckland Airport reached the following positions in global rankings: 15th (2015); 11th (2014) and 12th (2013). Each time they were not far behind airport which were considerably larger and better-resourced airports such as Hong Kong, Amsterdam, Beijing and Heathrow. Full listings for each year are available on www.worldairportawards.com under "The World's Top 100 Airports".

The previous chapter outlined a number of developmental models of the airport customer experience. The model that best depicts the airport customer experience developed by the writer for this research is as follows:
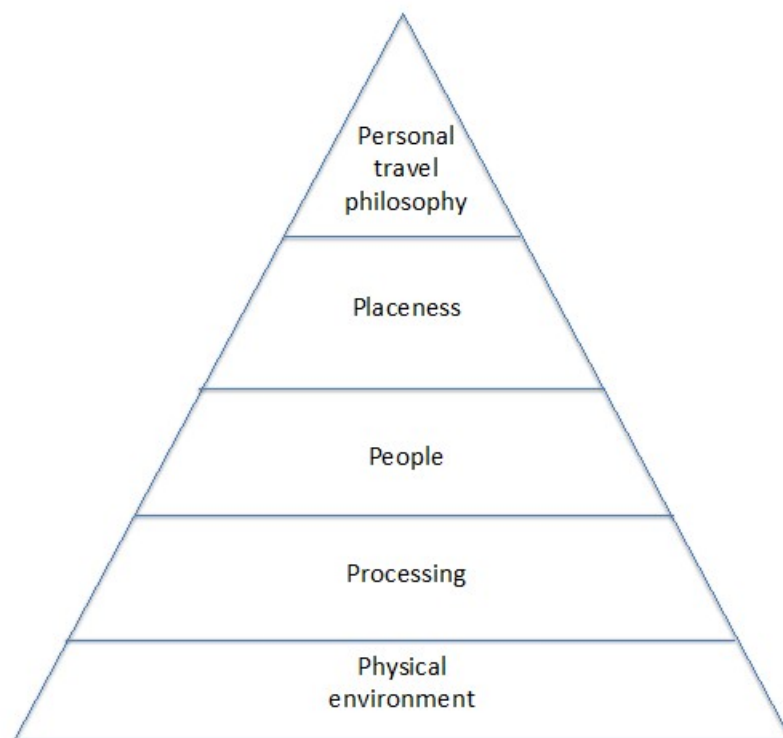

Figure 6.1: The model of the airport customer experience.

This model has been developed using an inductive approach and is closely grounded in the lived experience of those people using the airport. Each stage has been supported by direct quotes from the airport customers interviewed for this study, resulting in a model which reflects the voices of airport customers. These are shown in the table below:

Table 6.1: Quotes supporting the conceptual model

Personal Travel Philosophy This is where we have to be. If you were not travelling you would not be here – you would not choose to be at an airport. You just pass the time, watch people, read a book. That is all you can do. I have started my three hour countdown – time to kill. I would be happy to pay to be entertained or watch a movie. You spend so much time waiting around doing nothing. I think flying is just a means of getting where you want to be. The airport does all the things I want it to do. It has all the amenities you need to waste a couple of hours before your flight. In transit and was thinking about going into Auckland but there is enough here to keep me entertained. Usually I prefer to be in an airport the least amount of time I can be. When I shut my front door and I have checked-in – that is part of my holiday. I sit and watch people and relax.
Placeness Like the birdsong as you arrive. It's an airport – they all have a certain amount of the same things. It is appropriate to the country's economy and locality – it is not ostentatious. One good thing is when you arrive and walk outside and can see the sky – visitors from Hong Kong like seeing the sky. Nice to see the rugby match on. I find all this movie paraphernalia confusing. I don't like the Hobbit stuff – it is not who we are. I find the Māori culture stuff a little parochial too. The birdsong is quite nice. Sport is okay – that is part of our popular culture. The whole décor is very kiwiana – we are NZ but live in Australia and we think it is lovely. I like the way the koru is depicted on everything - other airports are pretty bland. When you come in all the imagery is very kiwi. All Blacks, green, Lord of the Rings – that is how people see us! You've got to be proud of the things that are happening here. When you get off the plane the décor is great – I like the birdsong. I like the South Pacific island feel – it feels relaxed. Here you have artwork all over the walls – you know where you are. When you come in you see space.
People Staff are friendly especially as they are working on Christmas Day. Bags got lost in Australia but the staff here were really good in trying to find them. They have people standing at the smart gate in case people don't know what to do. the Bluecoats are great – it is nicer talking to a person than reading a sign, and signs can sometimes be out of date. The airport information guides are great – I would love to do that job. Service is good and people are kind to you
Processing An airport is a place to get on a plane. Because I have an NZ passport I can use the smart gate - great! Everything is easy to get to and it is compact. If I am travelling I prefer not to shop. I do like the smart gate. Very fast – I would rather just get through. It is a lot better with the new motorway. It is just efficient – they process people in good faith
Physical environment Good facilities. I like Auckland airport – it is clean and airy. We like the aesthetics of the airport. One of the things I really don't like about airports is when they are always talking over the loud speaker – I don't hear that very often here. I like the natural light up here in the food court area. There are only so many shops that can sell the same souvenirs. A modern airport in a modern country should have more shopping and hotels. It would be nice to have flight numbers and destinations over the check-in desks as you like to know you are in the right place. Auckland airport is more like a mall than an airport – I just want a place to sit down and relax. Strollers (like in Dubai) would be good for families travelling with small children. There are no comfortable seats to relax in. Well signposted and easy to walk across from Domestic. Great that you can park your car right at the front door. The viewing platform is good – but you need to remind people to look up after security!

While it is argued that this model makes a contribution to knowledge, this model shares some features with the 'travel career ladder' (Pearce & Caltabiano, 1983; Pearce & Moscardo, 1985; Ryan, 1998). It also fits with Maslow's 'hierarchy of needs', although this is perhaps not surprising as Maslow was himself thought to have been a keen follower of Heidegger's thinking (although as Butler notes in McCool et al. (2013, p 226) "compared to security, shelter, food and water and the other elements noted by Maslow (1943), tourism is relatively unimportant"). It is however different from those models because it is directly derived from the lived experience of airport customers and has therefore emerged from the words of airport customers. This is something that has not been done before. Ryan's (1998, p. 951) warning to avoid "classifications being imposed upon qualitative data" is noted, and the writer has attempted to ensure that it is interview and other data, and not pre-suppositions, that have led to this model.

Discussions with other academics interested in this area has already led to discussions for collaboration on a more complex and comprehensive model and this is an area of ongoing research. This would suggest the characteristics of placeness, people, processes and physical environment are moderated by the individual's personal travel philosophy (in itself the result of factors such as psychological traits, the social context of travel and the context of reasons for travel) to reach an outcome (which might include satisfaction, word of mouth, return visit or avoidance, and coping strategies for future visits).

Research issues

Any research can only ever be a snapshot, and is therefore dated as soon as it is completed. As Caelli (2003, p. 482) argues, "qualitative research is not and should not be static". She warns that academic knowledge must be constantly open to review and revision. In addition, this research undertook an interpretivist study. This involved asking those who were passing through in one international airport over a six month period about their experience in English, so many people's airport experiences were unavoidably excluded from this analysis. Furthermore, as stated above this was an interpretive study requiring participants to describe their perceptions of events which were then transcribed and interpreted by the writer, The several levels of interpretation meant that anyone else seeking to replicate this study could come to slightly different conclusions about the relative importance of the themes identified, although efforts have been made to obtain the 'phenomenological nod' (van Manen, 1990). As with Fereday

and Muir-Cochrane (2006), the writer's PhD supervisors and fellow researchers were also important reviewers of proposed codes and themes.

This study focused on those visiting the public area of the airport. This means that those who did not spend any time in the public areas (because they were VIPs, had Executive Lounge access or were simply running late) would not have been approached for their views. Arguably the Executive Lounges 'belong' to the airlines and are therefore part of the 'airline' rather than the 'airport' experience, although it is acknowledged that many airport customers regard these elite facilities as part of the overall airport experience (the writer prefers to travel through Schiphol Amsterdam and avoid Hong Kong International and London Heathrow for exactly that reason). A further study could certainly specifically target this group of airport users if permission could be gained from the airlines to conduct such a study. However, as airlines (e.g. Emirates at Auckland airport) already gather customer satisfaction data from this group, and these individuals are paying a premium not to be disturbed, it is not clear how successful such a project would be. Furthermore, as Cohen (1979, p. 182) points out "the tourist does not exist as a type" and every individual's experience is influenced by their personal as well as their physical baggage, making every experience unique. Cohen also makes the point in the same paper that the purpose of travel (pleasure as opposed to necessity) will also influence their requirements. Finally, this study has not addressed the environmental challenges that airports face and McCool et al. (2013, p. 223) illustrate very succinctly what they call "the fantasy…of sustainable tourism", pointing out that initiatives such as carbon off-setting,

> simply means some companies continue emitting carbon, while others that would not or cannot emit carbon, get paid for not doing so, even when they might not be doing so anyway. As each plane flies, carbon is emitted, whether offset or not.

These are all important areas for further study, particularly for a country which prides itself on a clean and green image.

Recommendations for management

It is clear from the primary data that many of Auckland's airport customers are New Zealanders. A 2008 Ministry of Tourism *New Zealand Aviation Overview* (Ministry of Tourism, 2008) found that international air passengers were 54% overseas visitors, 44% New Zealand residents and 2% permanent migrants. Furthermore they found that 77% international flights were to destinations within three hours flying (Oceania) with the

remaining 23% being long-haul. 60% of flights were to Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne airports in Australia. NZ residents understandably feel a sense of ownership of and affection for it and are impressed with the efforts the airport management team and others are making to ensure that people's time at the airport is safe, comfortable, hospitable and even enjoyable. Likewise, if it was not up to their expectations they may also be the harshest of critics. It is acknowledged that there is a considerable amount of work that is carried out by airport management that travellers and those welcoming or farewelling them never see and therefore do not perhaps fully appreciate. However, the people interviewed for this study have also made a number of recommendations and suggestions which could help Auckland airport to continue to feature on awards league table with airports that are considerably larger, better equipped and with a larger throughput of travellers. These have been reported in this thesis, but King (1995, p. 231) had a word of warning for management,

> In the modern service organisation, top management usually has little direct contact with customers. Front line employees who deal with customers often have considerable insight into their preferences. However, warmth and courtesy on the part of the front line employee will not compensate for a failure of the organization to provide the resources required or to manage the processes effectively by which the host employee performs the service.

This is an interesting observation as several of the operators at the airport commented on the increasing lack of visibility of airport management in the public areas of the airport. The move of AIAL management to a new building some distance from the terminal building could make this visibility even more challenging. Lashley (2008, p. 82) argues that "guests need to feel that the hosts know what they want before they do themselves". Retrospective customer surveys are unlikely to give management the kind of information that the participants in this study have shared. Le Bel (2005) likewise argues for a new approach, saying,

> Experience marketing requires a different managerial perspective, one that focuses not on functions and benefits provided by the service or product, but on the emotions and the experiential process.

Likewise Burgess (1982, p. 52) urges management not to become too 'caught up' with administrative issues and to ensure they 'perform a more 'public host role' thus imposing a defined 'guest role' upon their clients'.

Auckland Airport recently launched its 30 year strategic plan. This includes a combined domestic and international terminal, a second runway leading to the ability to double the

number of flights to 260 000 p.a. by 2044 and to triple the number of passengers to 40 million a year ("Airport of the future", 2014). This is therefore an exciting opportunity to involve the airport's customers and their needs in the planning. While airport management was initially hesitant about the value of and relevance for the airport of this study, it is heartening to note that Auckland airport has recently run a major advertising campaign in the press, on their website and in association with popular Auckland radio station *MORE FM* under the headline 'Fond Farewells, Warm Welcome' which encouraged people at the airport to capture their greeting and farewelling moments on camera and then upload them to the airport Facebook page with the possibility to win a share of $25 000 prize money (MORE FM, 2014).

Specific recommendations to management could include:

1. Focus on the welcome – making airport customers feel welcome the moment they enter the airport building reduces stress and anxiety

2. Communication with airport customers - much distress is caused by airport customers not knowing what is happening. This is a very disempowering feeling and for people used to being in control of their personal and professional lives can be an extremely uncomfortable and alien experience

3. Be seen to be taking responsibility for issues – many things that delay an airport customer are not within the control of the airport management (e.g. weather, security, transportation delays outside the airport) but a refusal to explain what is being done to resolve the situation causes considerable stress to airport customers

4. A relaxation area – many airport customers appreciate the 'cosiness' of Auckland airport and accept that one downside of a smaller airport is a more limited variety of services. However, many customers feel that a relaxation space away from shops, food and other outlets with comfortable seating is not a luxury and could be provided within the existing footprint of the airport.

5. A more visible management presence – related to point 3 above, management need to have a more 'da-sein presence', being there in the airport terminal as and when situations develop, rather than relying on 'post hoc' surveys and other communication tools

6. A focus on the whole experience – airport customers do not know (or particularly care) who is at fault when something happens. They regard that airport as one (hopefully seamless) experience and a breakdown in any element of this experience will impact on their overall evaluation of the effectiveness of the management. This will require considerable networking and co-ordination across different departments, organisations and even locations.

The challenge that airport management faces is that the 21st Century airport customer wants to be in awe, wowed and proud of their airport, entertained, engaged and involved in the process, but also reassured by its comforting familiarity and sameness.

Further academic research opportunities

This research has sought to develop an understanding of the airport customer experience and develop a model to illustrate this. This model is only a starting point, and several conversations have already taken place to discuss how this model could be refined and improved upon. This will be a priority for the writer.

The issue of observational data was discussed at length in the viva. As discussed in the section on 'Observation', it would be very illuminating to be able to identify particular individuals or groups and follow them through the airport experience before interviewing them on their experiences. This might well highlight issues and challenges faced by those seeing to use the airport, particularly those with some form of disabling condition. In addition, it may answer some of the questions raised by the fact that a number of participants claimed to never do any shopping at the airport, yet revenues at airport retail units are 2 – 3 times higher than in similar units in shopping malls. The observation method of data gathering would also be useful in identifying the differences in airport usage and behaviour between different categories of airport users – young/old travellers; individual/group; local/international; regular/occasional airport users; business class/budget travellers, etc. It is suggested by Pearce and Caltabiano (1983, p. 17) that travellers' "mastery of the lower levels of the job or task"' leads them to seek higher level need satisfaction. Interestingly McCabe (2001) is rather critical of the ubiquity of Maslow's hierarchy of needs model in tourism studies, claiming that there is little empirical support for the intuitively logical pyramid. He argues for more ethnomethodological approaches as he criticises "the inability of empirical research to predict actual behaviour" (McCabe, 2001, p. 110).

Further research may seek to do comparative studies of other New Zealand airports (Christchurch and Wellington) or international airports with similar numbers of passenger movements and role to Auckland airport in Australia or Europe. Airports in Asia (Hong Kong's Chep Lap Kok airport and Singapore's Changi airport) or the Middle East (Dubai International Airport) are considerably larger in terms of aircraft movements and passenger numbers as they also function as hub airports and therefore may not provide an appropriate comparison at this stage. At the start of this thesis it was

noted that the scope of this study excluded many other businesses operating at the airport. These include shops, restaurants, hotels, entertainment venues, rental car companies and tour operators. It is acknowledge that these may also have an impact on the airport customer experience and further research may wish to investigate their contribution to the airport customer experience. Another interesting approach would be to follow McCabe and Stokoe (2004, p. 617) who suggest that, "the term 'tourist' is a culturally constructed category with associated negative category-bound activities and predicates". It would be fascinating to see how airport customers 'see' the 'other', i.e., backpackers, holiday makers, group versus individual tourists, regular business travellers.

This study has mainly used personal interviews as a data gathering method. However, in discussing ethnographic research methods Van Maanen (1979, p. 544) notes that "a central postulate of the ethnographic method is that people lie about the things that matter most to them". This statement is mirrored by Woodside (2010) when he explains that a first interview is often about someone presenting their image of themselves, rather than the real person. It would therefore be important to also conduct more participant observation in the structured methodical way of 'domain analysis' proposed by Spradley (1980) in his book *Participant observation*. What airport customers actually *do* at airports may be different to what they *say* they do. Few people admit to eating at McDonald's yet it is still the world's most successful fast food operator!

The contribution of this research to the body of knowledge about people's interactions with their environment could extend beyond the airport setting. While airports are fascinating places because of the large numbers of very heterogeneous individuals coming through one structure, that is only one context. This research could also be used to gain a better understanding of the way people respond to the physical and cultural environment of other large structures and organisations, as in the developing field of facilities management (Alexander, 1996). For example, how do patients and their visitors experience a large hospital complex? How do travellers experience large railway stations with international connections such as St. Pancras in the UK or Paris Gare du Nord in France? How do employees, visitors and contractors experience large corporate offices or government buildings? All of the above examples use venues where people often have no choice but to be there. It could be argued that an extreme example of 'forced hospitality' (Lynch, Morrison, & Lashley, 2007) – prisons – offer a similar environment to airports in some respects. It would also be interesting to investigate

what is the experience of visitors who choose to visit a theme park or a museum. While these are choices that people make rather than being forced to be there, as at an airport or hospital, these are still situations where people may find themselves in initially strange and confusing environments with a specific task to complete and time constraints. A better understanding of how customers and employees respond to the physical environment, the staff they interact with and the other users of the building will enable management to better serve their needs and ease the progress of customers through the structure. The 'self-perceived' role of airport customers (Lugosi, 2007) and the impact on their airport experience, whether that be at self-service check-in, security or in retail outlets or lounges would also be a fascinating area of further study, perhaps as a participant observer.

This study has used an exploratory case study of one airport to investigate the airport customer experience, and Butler (1997, p. 939) explains what he believes should be the goal of academic case study research,

> The real test of the exploratory case study is the extent to which it is successful in raising new questions, the richness of the story within a context and, above all, its ability to suggest a new way forward in theorizing.

This study has illustrated that for many, airports are very complex emotional and personal experiences. The better airport management understand these and other factors, the easier it will be for them to successfully care for their airport customers and give them a positive and memorable airport experience in this shared space.

References

Adams, D. (1988). *The long dark tea-time of the soul*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Adey, P. (2004a). Secured and sorted mobilities: Examples from the airport. *Surveillance & Society, 1*(4), 500-519.

Adey, P. (2004b). Surveillance at the airport: Surveilling mobility/mobilising surveillance. *Environment and Planning A, 36*, 1365–1380. doi:10.1068/a36159

Adey, P. (2006a). Airports and air-mindedness: Spacing, timing and using the Liverpool airport, 1929–1939. *Social and Cultural Geography, 7*(3), 343–363.doi:10.1080/14649360600714998

Adey, P. (2006b). If mobility is everything then it is nothing: Towards a relational politics of (im)mobilities. *Mobilities, 1*(1), 75–94.

Adey, P. (2007). 'May I have your attention': Airport geographies of spectatorship, position, and (im)mobility. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, 25*, 515–536. doi:10.1068/d69

Adey, P. (2009). Facing airport security: Affect, biopolitics, and the preemptive securitisation of the mobile body. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, 27*, 274-295. doi:10.1068/d0208

Aimer, P. (2013). Aviation. In *Te Ara—the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*. Retrieved from http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/aviation

Airport of the future. (2014, April). *Airport Times,* p. 1. Retrieved from http://www.aucklandairport.co.nz/Corporate/NewsAndMedia/Publications/AirportTimes.aspx

Alexander, K. (1996). *Facilities management*. London, UK: E & F Spon.

Andrade, A. D. (2009). Interpretive research aiming at theory building: Adopting and adapting the case study design. *The Qualitative Report, 14*(1), 42–60.

Andrews, H. (2000). Consuming hospitality on holiday. In C. Lashley & A. Morrison (Eds.), *In search of hospitality* (pp. 235–254). Oxford, UK: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Angen, M. J. (2000). Evaluating interpretive enquiry: Reviewing the validity debate and opening the dialogue. *Qualitative Health Research, 10*(3), 378–395. doi:10.1177/104973230001000308

Aramberri, J. (2001). The host should get lost: Paradigms in the tourism theory. *Annals of Tourism Research, 28*(3), 738–761.

Arnould, E. J., & Price, L. L. (1993). River magic: Extraordinary experience and the extended service encounter. *Journal of Consumer Research, 20*(1), 24–45.

Arnould, E. J., & Thompson, C. J. (2005). Consumer Culture Theory (CCT): Twenty years of research. *Journal of Consumer Research, 31*(4), 868–882.

Arnould, E. J., & Wallendorf, M. (1994). Market-oriented ethnography: Interpreting building and marketing strategy formulation. *Journal of Marketing Research, 31*(November) 484–504.

Aubert-Gamet, V., & Cova, B. (1999). Servicescapes: From modern non-places to postmodern common places. *Journal of Business Research, 44*, 37–45.

Auckland Airport Fast Facts. (2011). Auckland Airport Fast Facts. Available from: www.aucklandairport.co.nz

Augé, M. (1995). *Non-places: An introduction to supermodernity* (J. Howe, Trans.). London, UK: Verso.

Bateson, J. E. G. & Hoffman, K. D. (1999). *Managing services marketing.* Fort Worth, TX: The Dryden Press

Bazeley, P. (2004). Issues in mixing qualitative and quantitative approaches to research. In R. Buber, J. Gadner, & L. Richards (Eds.), *Applying qualitative methods to marketing management research* (pp. 141–156). London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bazeley, P. (2007). *Qualitative data analysis with NVivo*. London, UK: SAGE.

Bazeley, P. (2009). Analysing qualitative data: More than 'identifying themes'. *The Malaysian Journal of Qualitative Research, 2*(2), 6–22.

Biggerstaff, D., & Thompson, A. R. (2008). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA): A qualitative methodology of choice in healthcare research. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 5*(3), 214–224. doi:10.1080/14780880802314304

Bird, C. M. (2005). How I stopped dreading and learned to love transcription. *Qualitative Inquiry, 11*(2), 22–248. doi:10.1177/1077800404273413

Bitner, M. J. (1992). Servicescapes: The impact of physical surroundings on customers and employees. *Journal of Marketing, 56*(2), 57–71.

Bitner, M. J. (1990). Evaluating service encounters: The effects of physical surroundings and employee responses. *Journal of Marketing, 54*(2), 69–82.

Blumer, H. (1940). The problem of the concept in social psychology. *American Journal of Sociology, 45*(5), 707–719.

Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic Interactionism*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Bogicevic, V., Yang, W., Bilgihan, A., & Bujisic, M. (2013). Airport service quality drivers of passenger satisfaction. *Tourism Review, 68*(4), 3–18. doi:10.1108/TR-09-2013-0047

Booms, B. H. & Bitner, M. J. (1982). Marketing services by managing the environment. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly, 23*(1), 35–40. doi:10.1177/001088048202300107

Boote, D. N., & Beile, P. (2005). Scholars before researchers: On the centrality of the dissertation literature review in research preparation. *Educational Researcher, 34*(6), 3–15.

Bosworth, M., Campbell, D., Demby, B., Ferranti, S. M., & Santos, M. (2005). Doing prison research: Views from inside. *Qualitative Inquiry, 11*(2), 249–264. doi:10.1177/1077800404273410

Botterill, D. (2000). Social scientific ways of knowing hospitality. In C. Lashley & A. Morrison (Eds.), *In search of hospitality* (pp. 177–197). Oxford, UK: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (pp. 241-258). New York, NY: Greenwood.

Bowen, G. A. (2008). Naturalistic inquiry and the saturation concept: A research note. *Qualitative Research, 8*(1), 137–152. doi:10.1177/1468794107085301

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*, 77–101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Breazeale, M., & Ponder, N. (2013). Get the picture? Visual servicescapes and self-image congruity. *Journal of Business Research, 66*, 839–846. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.06.009

Bringer, J. D., Johnston, L. H., & Brackenridge, C. H. (2004). Maximising transparency in a doctoral thesis: The complexities of writing about the use of QSR*NVIVO within a grounded theory study. *Qualitative Research, 4*(2), 247–265. doi:10.1177/1468794104044434

Brotherton, B. (1999). Towards a definitive view of the nature of hospitality and hospitality management. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 11*(4), 165–173.

Brotherton, B. (2005). The nature of hospitality: Customer perceptions and implications. *Tourism and Hospitality Planning & Development, 2*(3), 139–153. doi:10.1080/14790530500399218

Bryman, A., & Bell, E. (2011). *Business Research Methods.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Burgess, J. (1982). Perspectives on gift exchange and hospitable behaviour. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 1*(1), 49–57.

Butler, R. (1997). Stories and experiments in social enquiry. *Organizational Studies, 18*(6), 927–948. doi:10.1177/017084069701800602

Butler, R., Curran, R., & O'Gorman, K. D. (2013). Pro-poor tourism in a first world urban setting: Case study of Glasgow Govan. *International Journal of Tourism Research, 15*, 443–457. doi:10.1002/jtr.1888

Caelli, K. (2001). Engaging with phenomenology: Is it more of a challenge than it needs to be? *Qualitative Health Research, 11*(2), 273–281. doi:10.1177/104973201129118993

Caelli, K. (2003). Commentary by Caelli. *Western Journal of Nursing Research, 25*(5), 482–484. doi:10.1177/0193945903253910

Caelli, K., Ray, L., & Mill, J. (2003). 'Clear as mud': Toward greater clarity in generic qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 2*(2), 1–13.

Cavana, R. Y., Delahaye, B. L., & Sekaran, U. (2001). *Applied business research: Qualitative and quantitative methods*. Milton, Australia: John Wiley & Sons.

Churchill, A., Dada, E., de Barros, A. G., & Wirasinghe, S. C. (2008). Quantifying and validating measures of airport terminal wayfinding. *Journal of Air Transport Management, 14*(3) 151–158. doi:10.1016/j.jairtraman.2008.03.005

Cohen, E. (1979). A phenomenology of tourist experiences. *Sociology, 13*, 179–201. doi:10.1177/003803857901300203

Cole, M., & Avison, D. (2007). The potential of hermeneutics in information systems research. *European Journal of Information Systems, 16*, 820–833. doi:10.1057/palgrave.ejis.3000725

Conroy, S. A. (2003). A pathway for interpretive phenomenology. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods. 2*(3), 36–62.

Countryman, C. C., & Jang, S. C. (2006). The effects of atmospheric elements on customer impression: The case of hotel lobbies. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 18*(7), 534–545. doi:10.1108/09596110610702968

Culkin, N., Smith, D., & Fletcher, J. (1999). Meeting the information needs of marketing in the twenty-first century. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning, 17*(1), 6–12.

Cutcliffe, J. R., & McKenna, H. P. (2002). When do we know that we know? Considering the truth of research findings and the craft of qualitative research. *International Journal of Nursing Studies, 39*, 611–618.

Cutting, J. (2012). English for airport ground staff. *English for specific purposes, 31*(1), 3–13. doi:10.1016/j.esp.2011.06.002

Daniels, M. J., Rodgers, E. B. D., & Wiggins, B. P. (2005). "Travel Tales"; an interactive analysis of constraints and negotiations to pleasure travel as experienced by persons with physical disabilities. *Tourism Management, 26*, 9191-930. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2004.06.010

de Botton, A. (2002). *The art of travel*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

de Botton, A. (2009). *A week at the airport*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

de Certeau, M. (1984). *The practice of everyday life* (S. F. Rendall, Trans.). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Derrida, J. (2000a). Hostipitality. Tr. Barry Stocker/Forbes Morlock. *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities, 5*(3), 3–18. doi:10.1080/09697250020034706

Derrida, J. (2000b). *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle invites Jacques Derrida to respond.* Tr. Rachel Boulby. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Dodge, M., & Kitchin, R. (2004). Flying through code/space: The real virtuality of air travel. *Environment and Planning A, 36*, 195–211.

Dodge, M., & Kitchin, R. (2005). Code and the transduction of space. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 95*(1), 162–180.

Dorsch, M. J., Fisk, R. P., & Grove, S. J. (2014). The frontiers in service conference: A 20-year retrospective. *The Service Industries Journal, 34*(6), 477–494. doi:1080/02642069.2014.870160

Dowling, M. (2007). From Husserl to van Manen: A review of different phenomenological approaches. *International Journal of Nursing Studies, 44*(1), 131–142. doi:10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2005.11.026

Duval, D. T. (2005). Public/stakeholder perceptions of airline alliances: The New Zealand experience. *Journal of Air Transport Management, 11*, 448–454. doi:10.1016/j.jairtraman.2005.07.005

Duval, D. T. & Schiff, A. (2011). Effect of air services availability on international visitors to New Zealand. *Journal of Air Transport Management, 17*, 175–180. doi:10.1016/j.jairtraman.2010.12.006

Edensor, T. (2000). Staging performances: Tourists as performers. *Annals of Tourism Research, 27*(2), 322–344.

Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Building theories from case study research. *Academy of Management Review, 14*(4), 532–550.

Ezeh, C., & Harris, L. C. (2007). Servicescape research: A review and research agenda. *The Marketing Review, 7*(1), 59–78. doi:10.1362/146934707X180677

Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 5*(1), 1–11.

Fodness, D., & Murray, B. (2007). Passengers' expectations of airport service quality. *Journal of Services Marketing, 21*(7), 492–506. doi:10.1108/08876040710824852

Ford, R. C., & Heaton, C. P. (2001). Managing your guest as a quasi-employee. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly, 42*(2), 46–55.

Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (A. Sheridan, Trans.). New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Frochot, I., & Batat, W. (2013). *Marketing and designing the tourist experience*. Oxford, UK: Goodfellow.

Fuller, G., & Harley, R. (2004). *Aviopolis: A book about airports*. London, UK: Black Dog Publishing.

Galani-Moutafi, V. (2000). The self and the other: Traveler, Ethnographer, Tourist. *Annals of Tourism Research, 27*(1), 203-224.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures: selected essays.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Germann Molz, J., & Gibson, S. (2007). *Mobilizing hospitality: The ethics of social relations in a mobile world*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing.

Gibbs, G. (2007). *Analyzing qualitative data*. London, UK: SAGE.

Gibson, A. (2014, March 29). Airport boost for Auckland. *The New Zealand Herald*. Retrieved from http://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/news/article.cfm?c_id=3&objectid=11228364

Gill, M. J. (2014). The possibilities of phenomenology for organizational research. *Organizational Research Methods, 17*(2), 118-137. doi:10.1177/1094428113518348

Gilmore, J. H., & Pine, B. J., II. (1997). The four faces of mass customization. *Harvard Business Review*, 75(1), 91–101.

Gilmore, J. H., & Pine, B. J., II. (2002a). Customer experience places: The new offering frontier. *Strategy & Leadership, 30*(4), 4–11. doi:10.1108/10878570210435306

Gilmore, J. H., & Pine, B. J., II. (2002b, June). Differentiating hospitality operations via experiences: Why selling services is not enough. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly, 43*, 87–96. doi:10.1177/0010880402433009

Glaser, B. G. (1965). The constant comparative method of qualitative analysis. *Social Problems, 12*(4), 436–445.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. London, UK: Transaction Publishers.

Gnoth, J., & Matteucci, X. (2014). A phenomenological view of the behavioural tourism research literature. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research, 8*(1), 3–21. doi:10.1108/IJCTHR-01-2014-0005

Goldkuhl, L., & Styvén, M. (2007). Sensing the scent of service success. *European Journal of Marketing, 41*(11/12), 1297–1305. doi:10.1108/03090560710821189

Gordon, A. (2008). *Naked airport: A cultural history of the world's most revolutionary structure*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Gottdiener, M. (2001). *Life in the air: Surviving the new culture of air travel*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Graham, A. (2001). *Managing airports: An international perspective.* Oxford, UK: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Grove, S. J., & Fisk, R. P. (1997). The impact of other customers on service experiences: A critical incident examination of "Getting along". *Journal of Retailing, 73*(1), 63–85.

Guba, E. G. (1981). ERIC/ECTJ Annual Review Paper: Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *Educational Communication and Technology, 29*(2), 75–91.

Guba, E. G. (1987). What have we learned about naturalistic evaluation? *Evaluation Practice, 8*(1), 23–43.

Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods, 18*(1), 59–82. doi:10.1177/1525822X05279903

Gummesson, E. (2003). All research is interpretive! *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, 18*(6/7), 482–492. doi:10.1108/08858620310492365

Haghighi, A. M., Baum, T., & Shafti, F. (2013). Dimensions of customer loyalty in hospitality micro-enterprises. *The Service Industries Journal, 34*(3), 251–273. doi:10/1080/02642069.2013.763928

Hair, J. H., Money, A. H., Samouel, P., & Page, P. (2007). *Research methods for business*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons.

Hall, C. M., Timothy, D. J., & Duval, D. T. (2004). Security and tourism. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing, 15*(1), 1–18. doi:10.1300/J073v15n02_01

Hamilton, K., & Alexander, M. J. (2013). Organic community tourism: A co-created approach. *Annals of Tourism Research, 42*, 169–190. doi:10.1016/j.annals.2013.01.015

Han, S., Ham, S., Yang, I., & Baek, S. (2012). Passengers' perceptions of airline lounges: Importance of attributes that determine usage and service quality measurement. *Tourism Management, 33*(5) 1103–1111. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2011.11.023

Harkonen, J. M. (2012, August 16). From data gathering to data analytics [Web log post]. Retrieved from http://jmharkonen.wordpress.com/2012/08/16/from-data-gathering-to-data-analytics/

Harris, L. C., & Ezeh, C. (2008). Servicescape and loyalty intentions: An empirical investigation. *European Journal of Marketing, 42*(3/4), 390–422. doi:10.1108/03090560810852995

Heidegger, M. (1971). *Poetry, language, thought* (A. Hofstadter, Trans.). New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Heidegger, M. (1953/1996). *Being and time: A translation of sein und seit* (J. Stambaugh, Trans.). Albany, NY: State University of New York.

Hemmington, N. (2007). From service to experience: Understanding and defining the hospitality business. *Service Industries Journal, 27*(6), 747–755. doi:10.1080/02642060701453221

Hirschman, E. C. (1984). Experience seeking: A subjectivist perspective of consumption. *Journal of Business Research, 12*, 115–136.

Hirschman, E. C. (1986). Humanistic inquiry in marketing research: Philosophy, method and criteria. *Journal of Marketing Research, 23*(3), 237–249.

Holbrook, M. B. (2005). Customer value and autoethnography: Subjective personal introspection and the meanings of a photograph collection. *Journal of Business Research, 58*, 45–61. doi:10.1016/S0148-2963(03)00079-1

Holbrook, M. B. (2006). Consumption experience, customer value and subjective personal introspection: An illustrative photographic essay. *Journal of Business Research, 59*, 714-725. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2006.01.008

Holbrook, M. B., & Hirschman, E. C. (1982). The experiential aspects of consumption: Consumer fantasies, feelings and fun. *Journal of Consumer Research, 9*(2), 132–140.

Holden, M. T., & Lynch, P. (2004). Choosing the appropriate methodology: Understanding research philosophy. *The Marketing Review, 4*, 39–409.

Hussey, J., & Hussey, R. (1997). *Business Research: A practical guide for undergraduate and postgraduate students*. Hampshire, UK: Palgrave

Inwood, M. (1997). *Heidegger: A very short introduction.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Ireland, K. (2007). *Airports and other wasted days*. Christchurch, NZ: Hazard Press.

Johnston, L. (2006). Software and method: Reflections on teaching and using QSR NVivo in doctoral research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 9*(5), 379–391. doi:10.1080/13645570600659433

Kalargyrou, V., & Woods, R. H. (2011). Wanted: training competencies for the twenty-first century. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 23*(3), 361-376. doi:10.1108/09596111111122532

King, C. A. (1995). Viewpoint: What is hospitality? *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 14*(3/4), 219–234.

Kotler, P. (1973). Atmospherics as a marketing tool. *Journal of Retailing, 49*(4), 48–64.

Kotler, P. (1986). *Principles of marketing*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Kraftl, P. & Adey, P. (2008). Architecture/Affect/Inhabitation: Geographies of Being-In Buildings. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 98*(1), 213-231. doi:10.1080/00045600701734687

Kunda, G. (2013). Reflections on becoming an ethnographer. *Journal of Organizational Ethnography, 2*(1), 4–22. doi:10.1108/JOE-12-2012-0061

Kwortnik, R. J. (2008). Shipscape influence on the leisure cruise experience. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research, 2*(4), 289–311. doi:10.1108/17506180810908961

La Shure, C. (2005, October 18). *What is liminality?* Retrieved from http://www.liminality.org/about/whatisliminality/

Langeard, E., Bateson, J., Lovelock, C., & Eiglier, P. (1981). *Services Marketing: New insights from consumers and managers* (Report No. 81-104). Cambridge, MA: Marketing Science Institute.

Lashley, C. (2000). Towards a theoretical understanding. In C. Lashley & A. Morrison (Eds.), *In search of hospitality* (pp. 1–17). Oxford, UK: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Lashley, C. (2008). Studying hospitality: Insights from Social Sciences. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism, 8*(1), 69–84. doi:10.1080/15022250701880745

Lashley, C., & Morrison, A. (Eds.). (2000). *In search of hospitality*. Oxford, UK: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Lashley, C., & Morrison, A. (2003, October). Hospitality as a 'commercial friendship'. *The Hospitality Review,* 31–36.

Lam, W. H. K., Tam, M.-L., Wong, S. C., & Wirasinghe, S. C. (2003). Wayfinding in the passenger terminal of Hong Kong International Airport. *Journal of Air Transport Management, 9*(2), 73–81.

Laverty, S. M. (2003). Hermeneutic phenomenology and phenomenology: A comparison of historical and methodological considerations. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 2*(3), 21–35.

Le Bel, J. L. (2005). Beyond the friendly skies: An integrative framework for managing the air travel experience. *Managing Service Quality, 15*(5), 437–451. doi:10.1108/09604520510617293

Leonhardt, D. (2000, June 25). Promises in the sky. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2000/06/25/travel/promises-in-the-sky.html

Lew, A. A. & Duval, D. T. (2008). Geography and tourism marketing: Topical and disciplinary perspectives. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 25*(3–4), 229–232. doi:10.1080/10548400802508077

Lohmann, G. & Duval, D. T. (2014). Destination morphology: A new framework to understand tourism-transport issues? *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management, 3*, 133–136. doi:10.1016/j.jdmm.2014.07.002

Lugosi, P. (2007). Consumer participation in commercial hospitality. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research, 1*(3), 227–236. doi:10.1108/17506180710817756

Lugosi, P. (2008). Hospitality spaces, hospitable moments: Consumer encounters and affective experiences in commercial settings. *Journal of Foodservice, 19,* 139–149.

Lugosi, P. (2009). The production of hospitable space: Commercial propositions and consumer co-creation in a bar operation. *Space and Culture, 12*(4), 396–411. doi:10.1177/1206331209348083

Lugosi, P. (2011). From food, work and organization to the study of hospitality and organization: Reconsidering the special issue of *Human Relations*, 61:7 (2008). *Hospitality & Society, 1*(1), 85–89. doi:10.1386/hosp.1.1.85_7

Lugosi, P., Lynch, P., & Morrison, A. (2009). Critical hospitality management research. *The Service Industries Journal, 29*(10), 1465–1478. doi:10.1080/02642060903038879

Lynch, P. (2005). Sociological impressionism in a hospitality context. *Annals of Tourism Research, 32*(3), 527–548. doi:10.1016/j.annals.2004.09.005

Lynch, P., Germann Molz, J., McIntosh, A., Lugosi, P., & Lashley, C. (2011). Editorial: Theorizing hospitality. *Hospitality & Society, 1*(1), 3–24. doi:10.1386/hosp.1.1.3_2

Lynch, P., Morrison, A., & Lashley, C. (Eds.), (2007). *Hospitality: A social lens*. Oxford, UK: Elsevier.

Malone, S., McCabe, S., & Smith, A. P. (2014). The role of hedonism in ethical tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research, 44*, 241–254. doi:10.1016/j.annals.2013.10.005

Malhotra, S., Prasad, B., & VS, P. (2014). *Runway to the future: Digital strategies for airports – thought leadership paper.* Retrieved from http://ey.com/mena

Maggs-Rapport, F. (2001). 'Best research practice': In pursuit of methodological rigour. *Journal of Advanced Nursing,* 35(3), 373–383.

Mangan, J., Lalwani, C., & Gardner, B. (2004). Combining Quantitative and qualitative methodologies in logistics research. *International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management, 34*(7), 565–578. doi:10.1108096000030410552258

Manzo, L. C. (2003). Beyond house and haven: Toward a revisioning of emotional relationships with places. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 23*, 47–61.

Mari, M., & Poggesi, S. (2013). Servicescape cues and customer behaviour: A systematic literature review and research agenda. *The Service Industries Journal, 33*(2), 171–199. doi:10.1080/02642069.2011.613934

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2011). *Designing qualitative research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Maxwell, J. A. (2006). Literature reviews of, and for, educational research: A commentary on Boote and Beile's "Scholars before Researchers". *Educational Researcher, 35*(9), 28–31.

Mays, N., & Pope, C. (2000). Qualitative research in health care: Assessing quality in qualitative research. *British Medical Journal, 320*(7226), 50–52.

McCabe, S. (2001). The problem of motivation in understanding the demand for leisure day visits. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Management, 10*(1), 107–113. doi:10.1300/J073v10n01_07

McCabe, S., & Stokoe, E. (2010). Have you been away? Holiday talk in everyday interaction. *Annals of Tourism Research, 37*(4), 1117–1140. doi:10.1016/j.annals.2010.05.001

McCabe, S., & Stokoe, E. H. (2004). Place and identity in tourists' accounts. *Annals of Tourism Research, 31*(3), 601–622. doi:10.10106/j.annals.2004.01.005

McCaffrey, G., Raffin-Bouchal, S., & Moules, N. J. (2012). Hermeneutics as research approach: A reappraisal. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 11*(3), 214–229.

McCool, S., Butler, R., Buckley, R., Weaver, D., & Wheeller, B. (2013). Is concept of sustainability utopian: Ideally perfect but impracticable? *Tourism Recreation Research, 38*(1), 213–242.

McNeill, D. (2005a). In search of the global architect: The case of Norman Foster (and partners). *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 29*(3), 501–515.

McNeill, D. (2005b). Skyscraper geography. *Progress in Human Geography, 29*(1), 41–55. doi:10.1191/0309132505ph527oa

McNeill, D. (2009). The airport hotel as business space. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography, 91*(3), 219–228.

Mehmetoglu, M., & Altinay, L. (2006). Examination of grounded theory analysis with an application to hospitality research. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 25*, 12–33. doi:10.1016/j.ijhm.2004.12.002

Merriman, P. (2004). Driving places: Marc Augé, non-places, and the geographies of England's M1 motorway. *Theory, Culture & Society, 21*(4/5), 145–167. doi:10.1177/0263276404046065

Ministry of Social Development. (2010) *The Social Report 2010: Te pūrongo oranga tangate 2010*. Retrieved from http://www.socialreport.msd.govt.nz/people/ethnic-composition-population.html

Mintzberg, H. (1979). An emerging strategy of "direct" research. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 24*(4), 582-589. doi:10.2307/2392364

MORE FM (2014). *Capture your moment at Auckland Airport*. Retrieved from http://www.morefm.co.nz/Win/CaptureYourMomentAtAucklandAirport.aspx

Morgan, M., Lugosi, P., & Ritchie, J. R. B. (2010). *The tourism and leisure experience.* Bristol, UK: Channel View Publications.

Morris, M. (1988). At Henry Parkes motel. *Cultural Studies, 2*(1), 1–47. doi:10.1080/09502388800490011

Morrison, A. (2002). Hospitality research: A pause for reflection. *International Journal of Tourism Research, 4*(3), 161–169.

Morrison, A., & O'Gorman, K. (2008). Hospitality studies and hospitality management: A symbiotic relationship. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 27*, 214–221. doi:10.1016/j.ijhm.2007.07.028

Morse, J. M. (1995). Editorial: The significance of saturation. *Qualitative Health Research, 5*(2), 147–149. doi:10.1177/104973239500500201

Morse, J. M. (1991). Approaches to qualitative-quantitative methodological triangulation. *Nursing Research, 40*(1), 120–123.

Ministry of Tourism. (2008). *New Zealand Aviation Overview: Flights, passengers and related statistics*. Wellington, NZ: Author.

Moules, N. J. (2002). Hermeneutic inquiry: Paying heed to history and Hermes. An ancestral, substantive and methodological tale. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 1*(3), 1–21.

Nichols, C. M. (2000). Primordial freedom: The authentic truth of dasein in Heidegger's 'Being and Time'. In D. Shikiar (Ed.), *Thinking fundamental, IWM junior visiting fellows conferences: Vol. 9.* Vienna, Austria: IWM.

Nouwen, H. J. M. (1975). *Reaching out: The three movements of the spiritual life.* New York, NY: Doubleday.

Noy, C. (2004). This trip really changed me: Backpackers' narratives of self-change. *Annals of Tourism Research, 31*(1), 78-102. doi:10.1016/j.annals.2003.08.004

Obenour, W. L. (2004). Understanding the meaning of the 'journey' to budget travellers. *The International Journal of Tourism Research, 6*, 1-15.

O'Connor, D. (2005). Viewpoint: Towards a new interpretation of "hospitality". *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 17*(3), 267–271. doi:10.1108/09596110510591954

Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada. (2010). Checking in: Your privacy rights at airports and border crossings. Retrieved from http://www.priv.gc.ca/resource/fs-fi/02_05_d_45_e.asp

O'Gorman, K. D. (2005). Modern hospitality: Lessons from the past. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management, 12*(2), 141–151.

O'Gorman, K. D. (2007). The hospitality phenomenon: Philosophical enlightenment. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research, 1*(3), 189–202. doi:10.1108/17506180710817729

O'Gorman, K. D. (2009). Origins of the commercial hospitality industry: From the fanciful to factual. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 21*(7), 777–790. doi:10.1108/09596110910985287

O'Gorman, K. D., & Gillespie, C. (2010). The mythological power of hospitality leaders? A hermeneutical investigation of their reliance on storytelling. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 22*(5), 659–680. doi:10.1108/09596111011053792

O'Gorman, K. D., MacLaren, A. C., & Bryce, D. (2014). A call for renewal in tourism ethnographic research: The researcher as both the subject and object of knowledge. *Current Issues in Tourism, 17*(1), p. 46–59. doi:10.1080/13683500.2012.718321

Oldenburg, R., & Brissett, D. (1982). The third place. *Qualitative Sociology, 5*(4), 265–284. doi:10.1007/BF00986754

Ottenbacher, M., Harrington, R., & Parsa, H. G. (2009). Defining the hospitality discipline: A discussion of pedagogical and research implications. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research, 33*(3), 263–283. doi:10.1177/1096348009338675

Patten, C. S. (1994). Understanding hospitality. *Nursing Management, 25*(3), 80A–80H.

Patton, M. Q. (1999). Enhancing the quality and reliability of qualitative analysis. *Health Service Research, 34*(5), 1189–1208.

Pearce, P. L., & Caltabiano, M. L. (1983). Inferring travel motivation from travelers' experiences. *Journal of Travel Research, 22*, 16–20. doi:10.1177/004728758302200203

Pearce, P. L., & Moscardo, G. M. (1985). The relationship between travellers' career levels and the concept of authenticity. *Australian Journal of Psychology, 37*(2), 157–174.

Pernecky, T., & Jamal, T. (2010). (Hermeneutic) phenomenology in tourism studies. *Annals of Tourism Research, 37*(4), 1055–1075. doi:10.1016/j.annals.2010.04.002

Petty, N. J., Thomson, O. P., & Stew, G. (2012). Masterclass: Ready for a paradigm shift? Part 2: Introducing qualitative research methodologies and methods. *Manual Therapy, 17*, 378–384. doi:10.1016/j.math.2012.03.004

Pine, B. J., II, & Gilmore, J. H. (1998). Welcome to the experience economy. *Harvard Business Review, 76*(4), 97–105.

Pine, B. J., II, & Gilmore, J. H. (2002). Experiences drive economic demand. *Economic trends, 6*, 32–34.

Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2010). Generalization in quantitative and qualitative research: Myths and strategies. *International Journal of Nursing Studies, 47*, 1451–1458. doi:10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2010.06.004

Poulston, J., & Pernecky, T. (2014). Customising new-age hospitality: An exploratory study of Sedona. *Hospitality & Society, 4*(1), 9–30. doi:10.1386/hosp.4.1.9_1

Prasad, A. (2002). The contest over meaning: Hermeneutics as an interpretive methodology for understanding texts. *Organizational Research Methods, 5*(1), 12-33.

Prentice, R. C., Witt, S. F., & Hamer, C. (1998). Tourism as experience: The case of heritage parks. *Annals of Tourism Research, 25*(1), 1–24.

Pullman, M., McGuire, K., & Cleveland, C. (2005). Let me count the words: Quantifying open-ended interactions with guests. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly, 46*(3), 323–343. doi:10.1177/0010880405276309

Pullman, M. E., & Robson, S. K. A. (2007). Visual methods: Using photographs to capture customers' experience with design. *Cornell Hotel and restaurant Administration Quarterly, 48*(2), 121-144.

Pütz, O. (2012). From non-places to non-events: The airport security checkpoint. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 41*(2), 154–188. doi: 10.1177/0891241611426431

Rakic, T. & Chambers, D. (2012). *An introduction to visual research methods in tourism*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Rageh, A., Melewar, T.C., & Woodside, A. (2013). Using netnography research method to reveal the underlying dimensions of the customer/tourist experience. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal, 16*(2), 126–149. doi:10.1108/13522751311317558

Randall, L., & Senior, M. (1994). A model for achieving quality in hospital hotel services. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 6*(1/2), 68–74. doi:10.1108/09596119410052161

Rayner, R. (1998, March 8). Nowhere, U.S.A. *The New York Times*, pp. 1–9. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/1998/03/08/magazine/nowhere-usa.html?module=Search&mabReward=relbias%3Ar&pagewanted=print

Reid, K., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2005). Exploring lived experience. *The Psychologist, 18*(1), 20–23.

Relph, E. (1976). *Place and placelessness*. London, UK: Pion.

Remenyi, D. (2002). Research strategies—Beyond the differences. *Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods, 1*(1), 38–41.

Remenyi, D., Williams, B., Money, A., & Swartz, E. (1998). *Doing research in business and management*. London, UK: SAGE.

Rhoades, D. L. & Waguespack, B. (2008). Twenty years of service quality performance in the US airline industry. *Managing Service Quality, 18*(1), 20–33. doi:10.1108/09604520810842821

Rhoades, D. L., Waguespack, B., & Young, S. (2000). Developing a quality index for US airports. *Managing Service Quality, 10*(4), 257–262.

Richards, L. (2009). *Handling qualitative data: A practical guide*. London, UK: SAGE.

Riemer, J. W. (1977). Varieties of opportunistic research. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 5*(4), 467–477.

Riley, M. (1984, June). Hotels and group identity. *Tourism Management,* 5(2), 102–109.

Rosenbaum, M. S., & Wong, I. A. (2007). The darker side of the servicescape: Investigating the Bali Syndrome. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research, 1*(2), 161–174. doi:10.1108/17506180710751696

Rozier-Rich, S. & Santos, C. A. (2011). Processing promotional travel narratives. *Tourism Management, 32*, 394-405. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2010.03.009

Rovio-Johansson, A., & Liff, R. (2012). Members' sense-making in a multi-professional team. *Journal of Health Organization and Management, 26*(5), 605–620. doi:10.1108/14777261211256936

Rowley, J., & Slack, F. (1999). The retail experience in airport departure lounges: Reaching for timelessness and placelessness. *International Marketing Review, 16*(4/5), 363–375.

Ryan, C. (1998). The travel career ladder: An appraisal. *Annals of Tourism Research, 25*(4), 936–957.

Sandberg, J. (2005). How do we justify knowledge produced within interpretive approaches. *Organizational Research Methods, 8*(1), 41–68. doi:10.1177/1094428104272000

Schaafsma, M., Amkreutz, J., & Güller, M. (2008). *Airport and city: Airport corridors – drivers of economic development*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: Schiphol Real Estate.

Seamon, D. (1996). A singular impact: Special section on the 20th birthday of Edward Relph's Place and Placelessness. *Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology Newsletter, 7*(3), 5–8.

Severt, D., Aiello, T., Elswick, S., & Cyr, C. (2008). Hospitality in hospitals. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 20*(6), 664–678. doi:10.1108/09596110810892227

Sharma, S. (2009). Baring life and lifestyle in the non-place. *Cultural Studies, 23*(1), 129–148. doi:10.1080/09502380802016246

Sheller, M., & Urry, J. (2006). The new mobilities paradigm. *Environment and Planning A, 38*, 207–226. doi:10.1068/a37268

Siggelkow, N. (2007). Persuasion with case studies. *Academy of Management Journal, 50*(1), 20–24.

Slevitch, L. (2011). Qualitative and quantitative methodologies compared: Ontological and epistemological perspectives. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism, 12*(1), 73–81.

Smith, J. K. (1983). Quantitative versus Qualitative research: An attempt to clarify the issue. *Educational Researcher, 12*(3), 6–13.

Smith, B. A. (1998). The problem drinker's lived experience of suffering: An exploration using hermeneutic phenomenology. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 27*, 213–222.

Smith, J. A. (2004). Reflecting on the development of interpretative phenomenological analysis and its contribution to qualitative research in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 1*(1), 39–54. doi:10.1191/1478088704qp004oa

Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant observation*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Stake, R. E. (1990). Situational context as influence on evaluation design and use. *Studies in Educational Evaluation, 16,* 231–246.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Stall-Meadows, C., & Hyle, A. (2010). Procedural methodology for a grounded meta-analysis of qualitative case studies. *International Journal of Consumer Studies, 34*, 412–418. doi:10.1111/j.1470-6431.201000882.x

Statistics New Zealand. (2013, April). *International Visitor Arrivals to New Zealand: April 2013*. Retrieved from http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/population/Migration/international-visitor-arrivals-apr-13.aspx

Sweeney, M. & Lynch, P. A. (2007). Explorations of the host's relationship with the commercial home. *Tourism and Hospitality Research, 7*(2), 100-108. doi:10.1057/palgrave.thr.6050042

Tam, M-.L. (2011). An optimization model for wayfinding problems in terminal building. *Journal of Air Transport Management, 17*, 74–79. doi:10.1016/j/jairtraman.2010.06.001

Tam, M.-L., & Lam, W. H. K. (2004). Determination of service levels for passenger orientation in Hong Kong International Airport. *Journal of Air Transport Management, 10*, 181–189. doi:10.1016/j/jairtraman.2003.10.011

Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (1998). *Mixed methodology: Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Thomé, B., Esbensen, B. A., Dykes, A.-K., & Hallberg, I. R. (2004). The meaning of having to live with cancer in old age. *European Journal of Cancer Care, 13*, 399–408.

Thompson, M., & Clements, A. (2003). *Where New Zealand touches the world*. Auckland, NZ: Pearson Education.

Turner, V. (1969). *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure*. Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing.

Urry, J. (2001). Transports of delight. *Leisure Studies, 20*, 237–245. doi:10.1080/0261436011009049

Urry, J. (2002). Mobility and proximity. *Sociology, 36*(2), 255–274. doi:10.1177/0038038502036002002

Urry, J. (2003). *Global complexity*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Urry, J. (2004). Connections. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space. 22*, 27–37. doi:10.1068/d322t

Van Maanen, J. (1978). The Asshole. In P. K. Manning & J. Van Maanen (Eds.), *Policing: A view from the Street* (pp. 221–238), Santa Monica, CA: Goodyear Publishing.

Van Maanen, J. (1979). The fact of fiction in organisational ethnography. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 24*(4), 539–550.

van Manen, M. (2014). *Phenomenology of Practice.* Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. Albany, NY: State University of New York.

van Manen, M. (1997). From meaning to method. *Qualitative Health Research, 7*(3), 345–369. doi:10.1177/104973239700700303

van Manen, M. (2011). Phenomenological inquiry. In *Phenomenology Online*. Retrieved from http://www.phenomenologyonline.com/inquiry/orientations-in-phenomenology/

Venkatraman, M. R., & Nelson, T. (2008). From servicescape to consumptionscape: A photo-elicitation study of Starbucks in the New China. *Journal of International Business Studies, 39*, 1010–1026. doi:10.1057/palgrave.jibs.8400353

Vrana, V. & Zafiropoulos, K. (2010). Locating central travelers' groups in travel blogs' social networks. *Journal of Enterprise Information Management, 23*(5), 595-609. doi:10.1108/17410391011083056

Wallendorf, M., & Arnould, E. J. (1991). "We gather together": Consumption rituals of Thanksgiving Day. *Journal of Consumer Research, 18*, 13–31.

Walls, A. R., Okumus, F., Wang, Y. R., & Kwun, D. J.-W. (2011a). An epistemological view of consumer experiences. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 30*, 10–21. doi:10.1016/j.ijhm.2010.03.008

Walls, A. R., Okumus, F., Wang, Y. R., & Kwun, D. J.-W. (2011b). Understanding the consumer experience: An exploratory study of luxury hotels. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management, 20*(2), 166–197. doi:10.1080/19368623.2011.536074

Weidenfeld, A., Williams, A. M., & Butler, R. W. (2010). Knowledge transfer and innovation among attractions. *Annals of Tourism Research, 37*(3), 604–626. doi:10.1016/j.annals.2009.12.001

Williams, A. (2006). Tourism and hospitality marketing: Fantasy, feeling and fun. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 18*(6), 482–495. doi:10.1108/09596110610681520

Wolcott, H. F. (1990). Making a study "more ethnographic". *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 19*(1), 44–72. doi:10.1177/089124190019001003

Wood, A. (2003). A rhetoric of ubiquity: Terminal space as omnitopia. *Communication Theory, 13*(3), 324–344.

Wood, R. C. (1994a). Hotel culture and social control. *Annals of Tourism Research, 21*, 65–80.

Wood, R. C. (1994b). Some theoretical perspectives on hospitality. In A. L. Seaton, C. L. Jenkins, R. C. Wood, P. U. C. Dieke, M. M. Bennett, L. R. McLellan, & R. Smith (Eds.), *Tourism: The State of the Art,* pp. 737–742. Chichester, UK: Wiley.

Woodside, A. G. (2010). *Case study research: Theory, methods, practice*. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing.

Woodside, A. G. (2004). Advancing from subjective to confirmatory personal introspection in consumer research. *Psychology & Marketing, 21*(12), 987-1010. doi:10.1002/mar.20034

Woodside, A. G., Sood, S., & Miller, K. E. (2008). When consumers and brands talk: Storytelling theory and research in psychology and marketing. *Psychology & Marketing, 25*(2), 97-145. doi:10.1002/mar.20203

Woodside, A. G., & Wilson, E. J. (1995). Applying the long interview in direct marketing research. *Journal of Direct Marketing, 9*(1), 37–55.

Wright, J. N. (2001). *A framework for operational harmony in decision-making* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Brunel University, London, UK.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Appendix 1:

Outputs from this research

Losekoot, E. & Wright, N. (2014, May). Heideggerian Da-sein in the airport customer experience. Paper presented at the Annual CHME Research Conference, Buxton, UK. (Awarded Best Conference Paper).

Losekoot, E., & Wright, N. (2013). A conceptual model of the management of creativity and innovation in airports. In J. Fountain & K. Moore (Eds.), *Tourism and global change: On the edge of something big. CAUTHE 2013 Conference Proceedings* (pp. 463–468). Christchurch, New Zealand.

Wright, N., & **Losekoot, E.** (2012). Interpretative Research Paradigms: Points of Difference. *Proceedings of the 11th European Conference on Research Methods* (pp. 416–422). Bolton, UK: University of Bolton

Losekoot E. (2012, July). *Security v Hospitality in airports - a pyrrhic victory?* Paper presented at the Security of Geography/Geography of Security Annual Conference, London, UK. Abstract retrieved from http://conference.rgs.org/conference/sessions/View.aspx?heading=Y&session=464efef4-8a95-45c7-96f6-2024754d4980

Schitko, D., & **Losekoot, E.** (2012). An investigation of the attitudes of travel and tourism intermediaries to mature travellers. *Journal of Tourism*, *13*(1), 61–78.

Losekoot, E., Wright, J. N. (2011, August/September). *Transporting people to new experiences: The role of airport spaces*. Paper presented at the Royal Geographical Society Annual International Conference, London, UK.

Schitko, D., **Losekoot, E.** (2011, June/July). *Is New Zealand ready for the Baby Boomers? Servicing senior travelers.* Paper presented at the Annals of Tourism Research: Advancing the Social Science of Tourism Conference, Guildford, UK.

Losekoot, E. (2000). Review of the book *Tourist customer service satisfaction: An encounter approach*, by F. P. Noe, M. Uysal, & V. P. Magnini. *Managing Service Quality, 21*(5), 570–572.
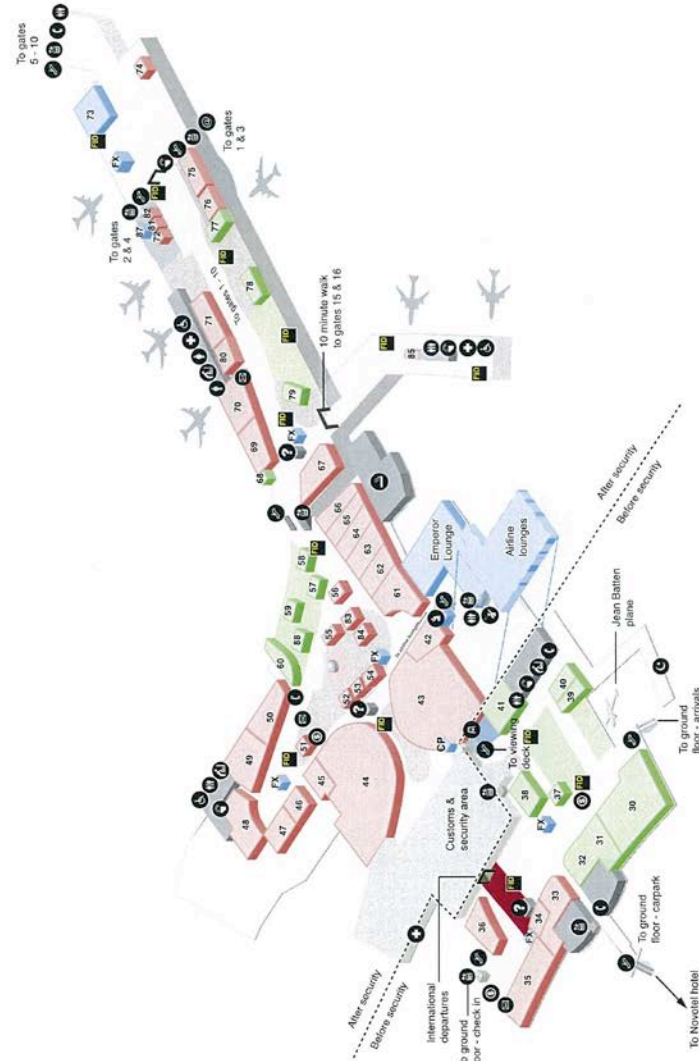
Appendix 2:

Plan of Auckland Airport terminal buildings

(Source: www.aucklandairport.co.nz)
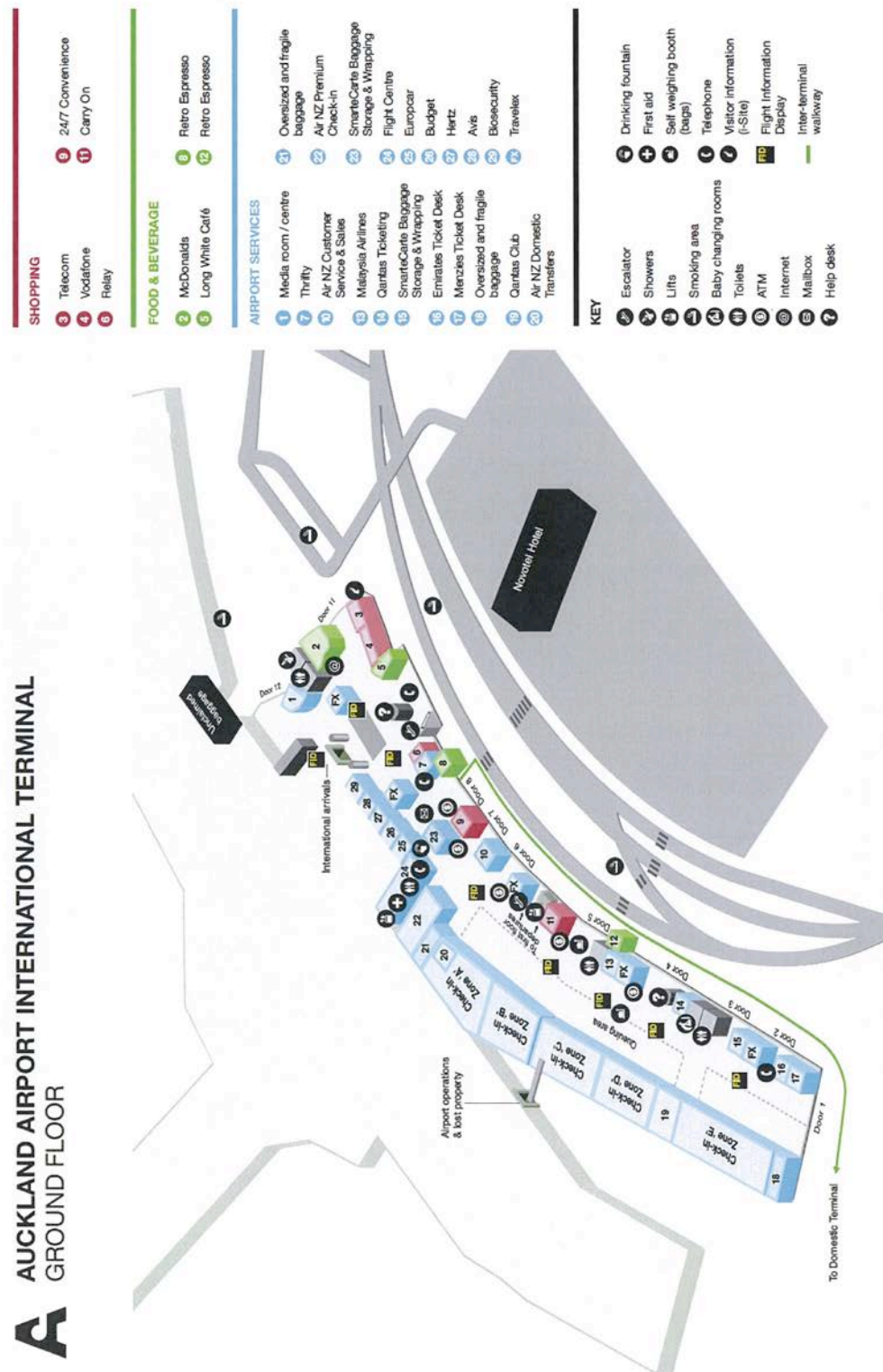
AUCKLAND AIRPORT INTERNATIONAL TERMINAL
FIRST FLOOR

SHOPPING

- 33 Around NZ
- 34 Travel Pharm
- 35 Relay
- 36 Kiwi Discovery
- 42 JR/Watches
- 43 JR/Duty Free
- 44 DFS Duty Free
- 45 Walker & Hall
- 46 Sunglass Hut
- 47 Beachculture
- 48 Adidas
- 49 Around NZ
- 50 Relay
- 52 Comvita
- 51 Benefit Cosmetics
- 53 M.A.C
- 54 Swatch
- 55 Lola and Grace
- 56 Whiskey Trail
- 61 Bookmarque

- 62 Travelpharm
- 63 Artport
- 64 Icebreaker
- 65 Merino Discovery
- 66 Kiwi Discovery
- 67 DFS Duty Free
- 69 JR/Duty Free
- 70 Think NZ
- 71 Relay
- 72 Sunglass Hut
- 73 Massage Café
- 75 Travel Pharm
- 76 Nature's Window
- 100 Casio G-Factory
- 81 Beats by Dre
- 82 Tech2Go
- 83 ECOYA
- 84 OPI Nail Bar
- 85 JR Duty Free

FOOD & BEVERAGE

- 30 Macs Bar
- 31 Hayama Sushi
- 32 Silk Road
- 37 Tank Juice Bar
- 38 Atomic Café
- 39 KFC
- 40 Subway
- 41 McDonalds
- 57 Juicy Details

- 58 DB Breweries Bar
- 59 Hayama Sushi
- 60 Shaky Isles
- 68 1Above
- 77 The Blue Bar
- 78 Burger King
- 79 Café Espresso
- 98 Kiwi Yo

AIRPORT SERVICES

- CP The Collection Point
- 73 International Transfer Services

- FX Travelex
- 97 Massage chairs

KEY

- 🅴 Escalator
- 🛗 Lifts
- ⛲ Drinking fountain
- ☎ Telephones
- ☪ Muslim prayer room
- ✝ Chapel
- 🚬 Smoking deck
- 🚼 Baby changing rooms
- 🚻 Toilets
- ♿ Accessible
- 🏧 ATM
- @ Internet
- 📮 Mailbox
- ❓ Help desk
- 🧸 Play area
- 🚿 Showers
- FID Flight Information Display

To gates 5 - 10

To gates 1 & 3

To gates 2 & 4

10 minute walk to gates 15 & 16

Emperor Lounge

Airline lounges

After security

Before security

Jean Batten plane

To ground floor - arrivals

Customs & security area

International departures

To ground floor - check in

To ground floor - carpark

To Novotel hotel

To viewing deck

Appendix 3:
Research, photography and airports as places or non-places

This appendix has been included at the request of the External Examiners of this thesis. It summarises the role that photography increasingly plays in academic research before going on to illustrate Auckland Airport's efforts to have a sense of place (something which many of the respondents in this study – though definitely not all - regularly commented on as being important to them).

Rakic and Chambers (2012) make the point that visual methods are becoming increasingly popular as a tool in academic research as well as being a good way to make research accessible to non-specialist audiences. This is found across a wide range of disciplines including tourism. They suggest that this is the case precisely because "much of tourism is about images" (Rakic & Chambers, 2012, p. 4). It is argued that researchers should be able to use photographs as 'data', particularly as it is often used together with other methods such as interviews, observation or content analysis. They conclude their discussion with the observation that the development and use of visual methods such as photography allow researchers to obtain an emic perspective without actually being there.

Others who have made use of photographs in their research include Sweeney and Lynch (2007) who used photographs taken of Scottish Bed and Breakfast 'commercial homes' to investigate the relationship hosts have with their homes. As they explain "photographs were taken of the décor and artefacts in the property. The photographs were taken as a visual aid and as a prompt to talk about the accommodation" (Sweeney & Lynch, 2007, p. 102). Countryman and Jang (2006) used photographs of hotel lobby areas to examine the impact of aspects of the servicescape, and came to the conclusion that colour was the most significant aspect of the servicescape. Using photographs instead of asking people in an actual lobby allowed them to use a more 'experimental' approach where factors could be controlled. Pullman and Robson (2007, p. 124), however, handed control to the research participants, saying "as travellers select images to photograph, they have a degree of control over the tangible evidence they bring back from their experience". They identified three approaches – photo journaling, photo interviewing and photo surveying. Each of these approaches could be used in the airport environment to facilitate airport customers' reflections on their environment. The

categories that emerged from the photographs taken of the hotel in Pullman and Robson's (2007) study included 'quality of experience', 'functionality', 'similarity to home', 'sense of place' and 'evidence of thoughtfulness'. Guests used the cameras to highlight both facilities and maintenance failures, but it also became apparent that they noticed little design touches that reflected the hotelier's thoughtfulness and customer focus. These categories could also be utilised in the analysis of an airport experience.

Kalargyrou and Woods (2011) asked training managers to collect images that they felt represented the hospitality industry they were a part of (hotel casinos in Las Vegas), and then discuss what these images said about their role in the hospitality industry. The authors argued that asking the interviewees to do this preparatory work meant that they arrived at the interview with something to contribute. The ten themes which emerged from these discussions included teamwork, inspiration, creativity, mentoring and keeping current as well as several others. The authors argue that the use of images meant that the researchers were able to dig "deeper into the unconscious observation of trainers" (Kalargyrou and Woods, 2011, p. 373).

Subjective Personal Introspection is used by both Holbrook (2005) and Woodside (2004, p. 988) to identify "the belief and evaluations held consciously and unconsciously by the informant. Holbrook famously uses his grandfather's photo albums to understand his experiences. Holbrook (2005, p. 46) explains,

> Because such memories are inherently suspect, they gain enhanced trustworthiness if they can be supported by relevant historical materials—memoirs, memorabilia, and mementos of various kinds. The need for such support elevates the importance of photographs and other archival artefacts that bear on the topics, themes, ideas, and issues of interest.

Interestingly he explains that the going backwards and forwards between the photographs, other forms of data and the reflections of the researcher is a form of hermeneutic cycle, something this writer has also argued for in this thesis.

Photography has been a lifelong passion of this writer since his father set up a black and white photographic darkroom in the bathroom at home. Taking and reflecting on photographs therefore seemed an entirely natural activity to supplement the interviews and observations. Indeed, quite a number of photographs used in conference presentations carried out during the completion of this study pre-dated the formal start of this PhD journey.

Rakic and Chambers (2012) warn that the use of photographs requires an engagement with the ethical implications of such as method. The photographs for this research were all taken by the writer in public areas of the airport building. Advice was sought from the AUT Ethics Committee about any ethical issues with this approach and as a result, in order to avoid airport customers being identifiable, individual faces were pixilated where it was deemed that they might be.

The aim of this discussion and the photographs following it is to provide a visual record of the research milieu as requested by the External Examiners. While the photographs were not explicitly evaluated, categorised and classified within this study, their presence acted as a reminder and an aide memoire for the researcher to reflect on the impact of the physical environment and the processes of an airport on the airport customer experience.

Airports have a very similar processing function whatever their size or wherever they are located. This can lead to a very standard physical structure, a fact compounded by the fact that a number of global architects build airports in different regions of the world. The traveller who may well arrive tired, jet-lagged and confused often has few visual clues as to where they actually are as they are led down anonymous corridors. The following images illustrate this:
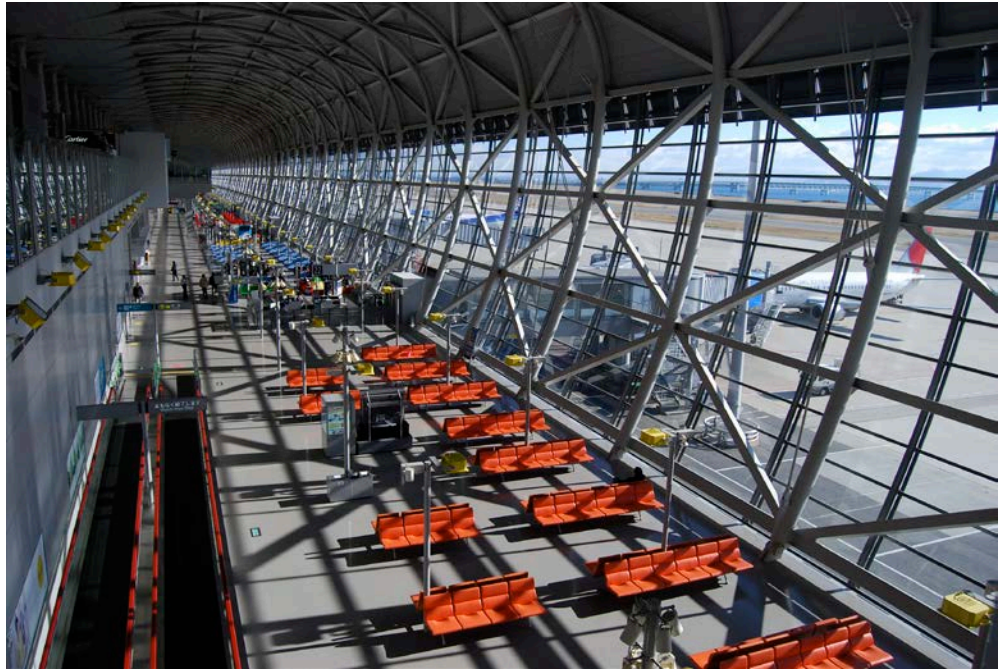
Nor is this sense of anonymity restricted to the structure of the building. Both the retail offering and even the people themselves are examples of ubiquitous branding:

Auckland airport makes claims in its corporate literature to wish to give airport customers a 'kiwi welcome'. The following images are some examples of how the writer feels the airport tries to create this 'sense of place':
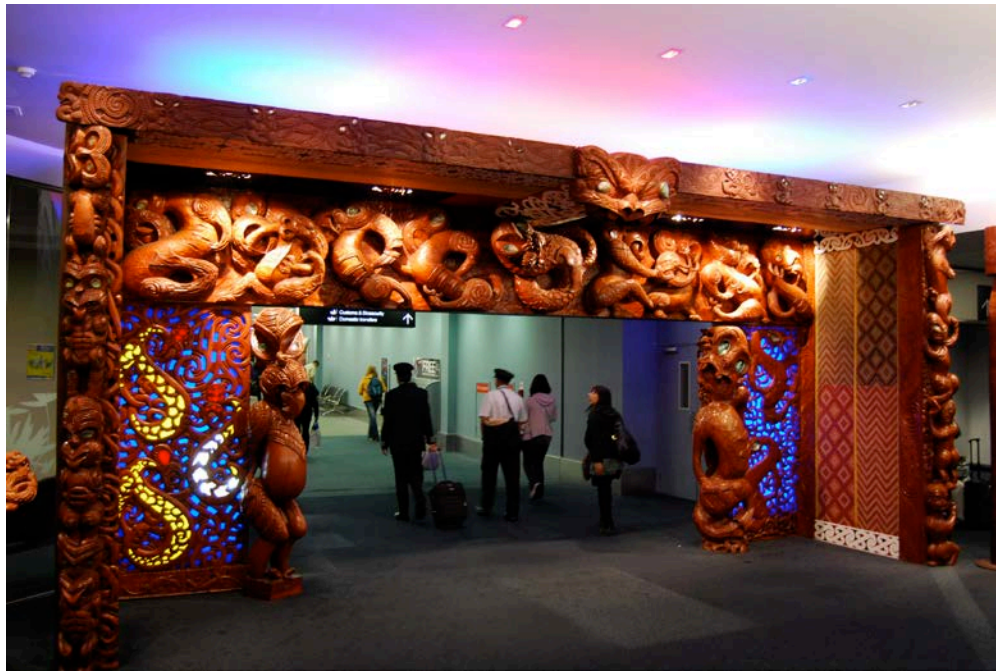
Perhaps the most striking image is the Tomokange (Māori carved gateway) which greets travellers as they move from the aircraft to immigration. Shortly after that they can look out across the Manukau Harbour and the Waitakere ranges. This sense of space was often commented on as being very New Zealand:

Coming through the arrivals area there is a mural symbolizing the Auckland landscape and the many volcanoes that form the backdrop for the city. Food and beverage offerings have also tried to contribute to this sense of place:

A showcasing of cultural artefacts and stories is also a recognized part of the creation of an experience. Auckland airport has a number of examples of this, including the original aircraft that pioneer aviator Jean Batten flew, the Sentinels used in The Hobbit movie directed in New Zealand by Sir Peter Jackson and a haka – the traditional Māori welcome performed by member of the local iwi or 'tribe'.

Departures has also seen an attempt to reflect the country, art shops, artwork on walls, and through the creation of a large 'tree' artwork which changes colour depending on the time of day or night, and which can have images projected:
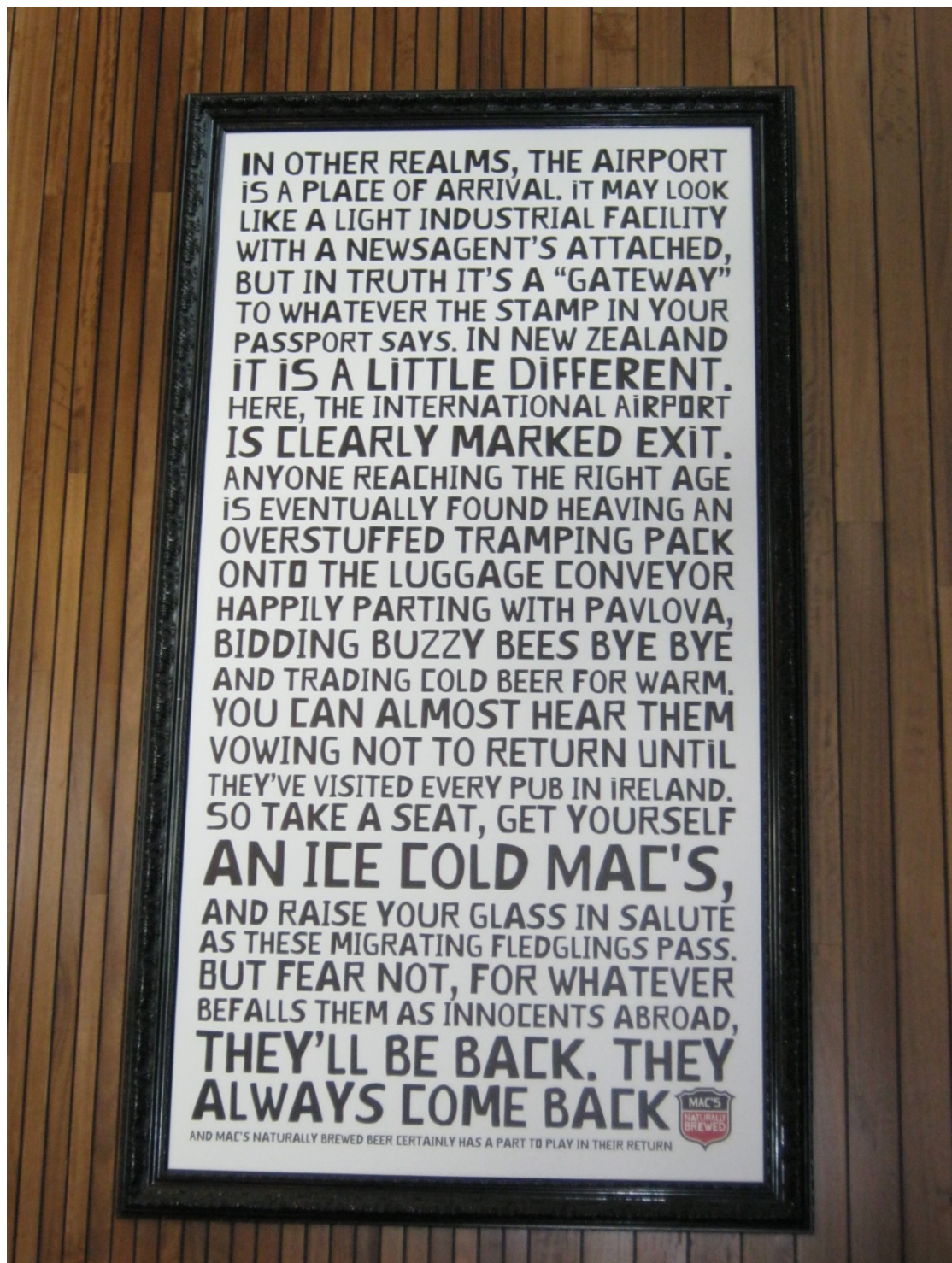
'Passing time' was a regular topic of conversation, and the images below show the difference between doing so at London Heathrow airport and Auckland.

The emotionally-charged atmosphere if the airport experience is humorously and very well summarized by a display in the Macs bar:

Airports as liminal spaces is discussed in this thesis. Two pictures which illustrate this 'zone of transition' or the invisible line between landside and airside are shown below: