PR personnel in Taiwanese hotels: preferences, policies, and hiring decisions: A case study in Taipei

by

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Attestation of Authorship

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

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Wei-Yu Cheng

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Abstract

Despite a larger number of female public relations (PR) practitioners, more men are in managerial positions in the global public relations industry. Other disparities, such as pay gaps, also exist between men and women. This global phenomenon has been widely discussed in the PR literature. Likewise, in the hospitality industry, women are facing similar inequalities. Noticeably, female PR practitioners in Taiwanese hotels outnumber male ones and also more women are in managerial positions.

Considering that there has been minimal research focusing on PR personnel's status in the hotel industry, this study sought to investigate this phenomenon in Taiwan. The aim of this study is to ascertain why there are more women than men employed in PR roles in Taiwanese hotels. The research also sought to discover what factors influence recruitment decisions when hiring PR personnel.

A qualitative, case study research methodology was adopted in this study to understand the issues concerning the gender diversity of PR roles and the selection requirements for PR personnel. The research was conducted with eight participants working in different hotels in Taipei, Taiwan, who were selected using a purposive sampling technique. Data was gathered from semi-structured interviews and then coded and analysed using the thematic analysis.

The research concluded that the stereotype about PR jobs is the main reason for there being more female PR personnel in Taiwanese hotels. The gender perception of a PR job sees PR as a woman's job. Feminine charm and ease of communications were found to be important for PR people within Taiwanese hotels to better communicate with chefs and media representatives. Women's higher attention to detail was revealed as one aspect as to why women are considered to be more suitable for PR roles. Some preferred qualifications may also cause women to have a higher chance of being employed. Interpersonal skills were identified as the most important requirement for PR personnel to have. Aesthetic labour to enable PR people to represent the hotel was also found to be important. Other influencing factors such as qualification, writing skills, analytical skills, and industry knowledge were also identified in this study. The study suggests that although PR is generally seen as a woman's job, some important skills and traits were identified as important.

Chapter 1 **Introduction**

This study focus is on exploring why there are more women than men employed in PR roles in Taiwanese hotels. Additionally, the factors that influence recruitment decisions are also explored. This chapter provides the research background and context, and the outline of the dissertation.

1.1   The research background

In the hospitality field, there have been studies examining the disparities that women have been facing in different ways. Some common inequalities include salary (McKay, 2011; Pinar, McCuddy, Birkan, & Kozak, 2011; Sparrowe & Iverson, 1999), hiring opportunities, promotions (Ng & Pine, 2003; Pinar et al., 2011), and career development (Ng & Pine, 2003; Pinar et al., 2011; Sparrowe & Iverson, 1999). The 'glass ceiling' and the 'old boy network' have been identified as the major barriers women usually face when attempting to be promoted and advance in the organisation (Aldoory & Toth, 2002; Mooney & Ryan, 2009; Ng & Pine, 2003; Pinar et al., 2011).

However in the Public Relations (PR) discipline, it seems there is a perception that women appear to have more opportunities for employment. In the late 1980s, the number of female employees in the discipline of public relations rose to over 50%; since then the number of female employees has steadily increased (Aldoory & Toth, 2002, 2004). The statistics from United States Department of Labor show that around 60% of employees in the PR industry are women nowadays (United States Department of Labor, 2010). Nevertheless, despite female PR practitioners outnumbering males, there are still fewer female PR managers (Aldoory & Toth, 2002, 2004; Grunig, Toth, & Hon, 2001).

Interestingly, the gender diversity of PR personnel in Taiwanese hotels is the opposite. Anecdotal evidence indicates that around 90% of marketing and PR personnel are women in Taiwanese hotels. However it is worth noting that gender discrimination in employment is prohibited under Taiwanese governmental regulations; in addition, no evidence of gender preference is noticed in recruitment advertisements. Nevertheless, Taiwanese hotels appear to prefer hiring women rather than men for marketing and PR roles.

However, research focusing on gender differences of PR personnel in the hospitality industry and why women are being selected as PR personnel has been minimal; the research has been emphasising on the PR industry or the hospitality industry separately (Aldoory & Toth, 2002; Hon & Brunner, 2000). Hence, the purpose of this study is twofold. Firstly, it aims to ascertain why there are more women than men employed as PR personnel in Taiwanese hotels. Secondly, this study will also attempt to identify what factors determine the recruitment decisions when hiring PR personnel in the hotels in Taiwan.

1.2   The research context

There are 70 International tourist hotels in Taiwan, 25 of which are located in Taipei, the capital of Taiwan (Council of Labor Affairs, 2006a). According to government regulations, international tourist hotels are required to have in-house business units which make additional profits (*Act for the Development of Tourism*, 2011; Council of Labor Affairs, 2006; Tsai, 2005). In accordance with this regulation, all of the hotels are equipped with a variety of in-house businesses: restaurants, cafes, and bakeries: they are generally called food and beverage departments.

In Taiwan, the services provided by food and beverage departments are as important as those from guest rooms. Some of the restaurants or bakeries even become more well-known than the hotel and can become one of the major profitable units of the hotels. To increase profits, food and beverage departments need to have a variety of products and promotions to stimulate sales and to attract customers. Marketing/PR departments within hotels are responsible for this by planning, coordinating, and executing various events based on customers' needs and market trends. Due to their similarity of function (selling and promotion), marketing and PR departments in Taiwanese hotels are usually combined together and take a lead role in a hotel's activities and events. To achieve that, PR personnel are required to discuss with chefs the seasonal menus and special events. Communicating with the chefs thus becomes a crucial daily task for PR personnel working in Taiwanese hotels. Apart from the general job duties of PR (e.g. spokesperson of the company, and building and maintaining the image and reputation), the daily job duties for PR personnel in Taiwanese hotels are detailed and consist of reviewing media coverage, monitoring current market trends,

solving customer complaints, and maintaining relationships with media representatives and chefs.

1.3   Research questions

The research aims to explore why more women are employed as PR personnel in the hotel industry in Taiwan; furthermore, factors that may influence recruitment decisions are expected to be discovered. Based on this purpose and the research context outlined above the following two research questions are proposed:

1. Why are more women than men employed as PR personnel in the Taiwanese hotels?
2. What factors influence recruitment decisions when hiring PR personnel in Taiwanese hotels?

1.4   Methods

As the research sought to ascertain why a large number of women are hired in PR roles in hotels in Taiwan and also to explore the influential factors for recruitment decisions for PR personnel, a qualitative methodology was adopted for this study. The primary research strategy adopted was a case study research design as this enabled the researcher to identify and understand the participants' opinions and experiences within the research context. The research was conducted in eight hotels located in Taipei, Taiwan. A semi-structured interview was used for the data collection method.

1.5   Overview of the dissertation

The dissertation is presented in a total of five chapters and, following the introduction, is organised as follows.

Chapter Two provides a review of literature to clarify this study and explicate the theoretical background. To begin, the definition of public relations and a body of literature on public relations are provided. It is followed by the explanation of the general PR role and specific PR job missions in the hotel industry. The status of women in PR roles and stereotypes towards women in the PR field are then briefly discussed. Most importantly, the theoretical framework employed in this study is then presented. Furthermore, the literature of the influencing factors which this study aims to identify is explored, including interpersonal skills and

aesthetic labour. The literature presented in this chapter includes not only hospitality journal and public relations, but also intersect with marketing, gender and work, and women and management.

Chapter Three presents the research design and methods used to answer the research questions. A qualitative exploratory research design and a case study research strategy were chosen for this study. An interpretivism paradigm is firstly presented and followed by a justification for its use in case study research strategy. The interpretivism paradigm sustains the concept that the knowledge and meanings of social phenomena are constructed by understanding the contexts and the participants' perspectives. Case study research strategy enables the researcher to conduct an in-depth investigation into a specific case and explore the factors and explanation behind it. Sample selection and data collection method of a semi-structured interview are then presented and the procedure for sample selection is also described. This is followed by the data analysis method. Finally, the limitations and ethical consideration of this study are discussed. In addition, this chapter also covers the issue of confidentiality, the Consent Form, and the participant Information Sheet.

In Chapter Four, the findings from the semi-structured interview are presented. This chapter aims to categorise and summarise all the findings under each coding theme and uncover the answers to the research questions. All the participants are presented in pseudonym to maintain confidentiality.

Chapter Five delivers a discussion of the findings. The requirement for Taiwanese hotels to have in-house business influences the job content for PR personnel. The important daily basis for PR people is to interact and coordinate with chefs, which has an impact on the requirement for the selection of PR personnel. The importance of interpersonal skills was outlined as the most important attributes for women dominating PR roles in Taiwanese hotels. It is also revealed that women do contribute their unique traits and outstanding ability to deliver the best performance in the PR industry. However, the sex-role stereotypes are still influential for women's position in PR roles. The final parts include the limitation of the research and discussion for future research direction.

Chapter 2 **Literature Review**

2.1   **Introduction**

This literature review explores the background of public relations and discusses the potential factors influencing recruitment decisions when hiring PR personnel in Taiwanese hotels. As the research is situated in both the PR and the hotel industries, the literature of both disciplines is reviewed. The review focuses on the background and the development of PR, the role of PR in the hotel industry, and women in PR. A theoretical framework for PR (Model of Communication Excellence – MCE) is outlined along with potential factors influencing PR recruitment: core knowledge, interpersonal skills, and aesthetic labour. This chapter concludes with a summary of the factors that have emerged from the literature.

2.2   **Public relations**

There are various definitions of PR, but most indicate that PR is related to communications and relationship management (Cameron, Wilcox, Reber, & Shin, 2008; Phillips, 2006; Theaker, 2012; Theaker & Yaxley, 2013).

A number of public relations scholars (Botan & Taylor, 2004; Ihlen & Ruler, 2007; Kent & Taylor, 2002) have argued that PR should play a co-creational role in an organisation. The co-creational perspective views PR as a partner to an organisation. PR should be involved in the organisation's decision-making process and create benefits together with organisations. The interest of research from this perspective is on the relationship building between the organisation and its stakeholders.

In 1987, the Institute of Public Relations pointed out the importance of building relationships by defining PR as "the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its public." (Panigyrakis & Veloutsou, 1998, p. 72).

The current belief of the contemporary PR industry supports this view by further suggesting that public relations should serve as a communication management function to maintain the relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders (Cameron et al., 2008; Phillips, 2006; Skinner, Essen, & Mersham, 2004; Theaker

& Yaxley, 2013). This view is captured by the Institute of Public Relations in the United Kingdom where they claim that, through PR, "clear and consistent communication helps organisations to achieve their goals, employees to work to their potential, customers to make informed choices, investors to make an accurate assessment of an organisation, and society to form fair judgements of industries, organisations, and issues" (Cameron et al., 2008, p. 28).

It is clear that the function of PR is to distribute information and communication in order to build goodwill, and seek to achieve mutual understanding between organisations and stakeholders. Furthermore, a PR department should manage the conflict between the organisations and the stakeholders through communications. Ultimately, by understanding the needs of organisations and stakeholders, it is expected that the PR function will be able to serve both parties' interest and pursue benefits for both (Cameron et al., 2008; Theaker & Yaxley, 2013). To achieve this, PR needs to monitor the stakeholders' perception of the organisations' performance while also monitoring the broad environmental issues (e.g. global warming or food safety) to identify potential concerns for organisations to respond accordingly (Heath, 2010; Theaker, 2012). The monitoring function enables PR to keep the organisation informed of the current trends (e.g. social and marketing trends) and be responsive to stakeholders' interests and opinions.

Other opinions further suggest that PR should gain stakeholders' understanding and acceptance by adding value to organisations and evaluating stakeholder's attitude and preferences through a series of strategy actions (Lautenslager, 2003; Theaker, 2012; Wakeman, 2007). Cameron et al. (2008) and Fawkes (2012) both suggest PR brings value to an organisation in a number of ways: increased brand awareness, maintenance of good reputation and the gaining of organisational support and acceptance from stakeholders.

Some contemporary organisations view the function of PR as playing a minor role, predominately a products promotion technique designed for selling (Kotler, Ang, Leong, & Tan, 2003). A common view of PR, however, is that it should play a wider role in organisational communications management (Botan & Taylor, 2004; Cameron et al., 2008; Kotler et al., 2003; Theaker, 2012). PR should be

responsible for managing and building the relationship between the organisations and the stakeholders through a variety of communication programmes (e.g. special events and press conferences). PR will also work with marketing to support product promotion. For example, PR can build the corporate image in a certain way that reflects favourably on its products. To do that, it is expected that PR understands the needs of both the organisation and the stakeholders and further builds a positive relationship. It is the role of PR to serve everyone's interests and provide satisfaction to maximise the benefits for all parties (Cameron et al., 2008; Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 2002; Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995; Phillips, 2006; Theaker, 2012; Theaker & Yaxley, 2013).

2.3   General PR role

The aims and goals of a PR department in an organisation are to determine what activities PR personnel need to carry out. According to Dozier and Broom (1995), two roles of PR personnel are categorised: technician and manager. Technicians are responsible for technical tasks, such as writing and editing, issuing press releases, and maintaining contacts with media representatives. On the other hand, managers are involved more in decision-making for communication-related plans and activities, for example, marketing/PR plans for organisations' reputation and products, and evaluating results of PR plans. The roles of technician and manager are different but may overlap occasionally. Most importantly, in the contemporary PR industry, most PR personnel perform both roles (Dozier & Broom, 1995; Theaker & Yaxley, 2013). PR personnel are usually responsible for not only drafting press releases but also creating events for organisations.

PR personnel are usually involved in a variety of activities which add benefit to an organisation including market research, media relations, crisis management, and managing special events (e.g. news conferences, trade shows, and exhibits) (Cameron et al., 2008; Dozier et al., 1995; Kotler et al., 2003; Skinner et al., 2004; Theaker & Yaxley, 2013). In order to conduct these activities, PR will apply different approaches, such as questionnaires and social networking to glean and interpret stakeholders' expectations and opinions for the organisation's products or services (Dozier et al., 1995; Theaker & Yaxley, 2013). In addition, PR is responsible for finding favourable stories or topics to attract the media in order to achieve the media coverage and deliver the message to stakeholders. Other

notable roles of PR include special events engagement, public-service activities (such as contributing money and time back to the community), and sponsorships (Cameron et al., 2008; Kotler et al., 2003; L'Etang, 2009; Skinner et al., 2004).

PR duties and activities are generally performed by two main groups of people; the employees of an organisation (staff members) or are outsourced to agency employees or independent consultants (Newsom, Turk, & Kruckeberg, 2004). By definition, staff members are those employed by a company with a job description determined by an organisation's needs (Newsom et al., 2004; Theaker & Yaxley, 2013), whereas PR consultants refer to individuals hired by clients to complete specific tasks (Newsom et al., 2004). Given the context of these definitions and the aims of this study, the PR practitioners under investigation are staff members.

These discussions have highlighted a variety of roles associated with PR. From a hotel perspective, PR personnel not only need to maintain media coverage (Denmark, 2007; Lanz & Fischhof, 2004), but also to shape corporate images and maintain reputation. Furthermore, creating databases/networks of media representatives and maintaining relationships with them to gain higher exposure rate in the public media are also important parts of PR job duties (Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services, 2010; Dietrich, 2007). To do that, PR personnel in hotels will conduct several activities including press relations, special event planning, targeted outreach for media coverage, organisation of press familiarisation trips, and newsletters (Kudrle & Sandler, 1995; Lanz & Fischhof, 2004). The most common promotion approach is to convey messages to consumers through press releases, official websites, and flyers or brochures. PR will place the stories of their hotels, restaurants or promotion packages and deals in these approaches to communicate with consumers (Lanz & Fischhof, 2004; Lin, 2007).

2.4   Women in PR roles

Currently there are significantly more women than men employed within the global PR industry. Reskin and Roos' (1990) research indicated that a disproportionate number of female employees occupied the PR industry. Aldoory and Toth (2002) also report that the number of women employed in PR has been trending upward since the late 1980s.

The steady increase in the numbers of women employed in PR has resulted in discussion on different aspects of gender difference, including salary (Aldoory & Toth, 2002; Grunig et al., 2001; Theaker, 2012), promotions (Aldoory & Toth, 2002; Grunig et al., 2001; Theaker, 2012), and sexual harassment (Aldoory & Toth, 2002; Creedon, 1991). It is indicated that, even though there are more women in PR, men still earn more than women (Cameron et al., 2008; Grunig et al., 2001; Long, 2012) and that women feel that a 'glass ceiling' exists which prevents them from achieving senior positions (Cameron et al., 2008; Heath, 2010). A number of studies (see for example, Aldoory & Toth, 2002, 2004; Grunig et al., 2001; Panigyrakis & Veloutsou, 1998) discuss the disparities women have been facing in this industry including salary and promotions. It is also acknowledged that women and men see themselves in different PR roles. Both Broom and Dozier (1986), and Toth and Grunig (1993) suggest that women see themselves as technicians while men see themselves as managers responsible for making communication plans, which results in salary disparity.

2.5   Stereotypes

There are two major perspectives that explain why a large number of women are employed in the public relations industry. From the job applicant's perspective, women may be more likely to apply for PR jobs because of the perception that the public relations industry may offer them better opportunities than other occupations (Aldoory & Toth, 2002; Cameron et al., 2008; Reskin & Roos, 1990). On the other hand, Donato (1990) suggests that employers believe women are more likely to have the required social skills for accomplishing PR activities, which may be related to feminine traits.

This perception may be caused by stereotypes. Stereotypes provide explanations as to why different groups of people are treated differently and may also explain why people act in certain ways (Crandall, Bahns, Warner, & Schaller, 2011; Segal, 1980). In addition, stereotypes may be able to explain why certain groups of people are seen as having specific roles in the society (Crandall et al., 2011; Grunig et al., 2001). DiCaprio (as cited in Creedon, 1991) defines a role as "a culturally prescribed mode of behaviour". Each individual has different roles in a society, for instance, life roles and occupational roles which generally match the societal norms of behaviours or expectations (Creedon, 1991). The roles

influenced by societal norms and further reinforced by parents, media, and so forth then turn to sex-role stereotypes. The stereotypes make people consider that certain jobs are more congruent with masculine characteristics whilst some jobs require more feminine traits and characteristics. Public relations is one of these occupations, as some feminine traits (e.g. sensitivity and perceptiveness) are relevant and beneficial in the public relations field (Creedon, 1991; Grunig et al., 2001).

Consequently, this sex-role stereotype may be able to provide an explanation for why there are more women employed in the PR industry. It may be because people consider PR is a woman's job, as women are perceived to have more feminine traits than men. Research (Cejka & Eagly, 1999; Glick, 1991) shows that the occupations dominated by women are perceived to require more feminine attributes for good job performance. Nevertheless, the sex-role stereotype is different from gender, which categorises people into groups (men and women) based on biological differences. In other words, it is not absolute for men to have masculine traits and women to have feminine traits. The feminine traits may be valuable for PR activities, yet not all women's characteristics or attributes are feminine (Grunig, Toth, & Hon, 2000). Some men may also be equipped with sensitivity which is seen as a feminine trait (Grunig et al., 2001). Albert, Escot and Fernández-Cornejo (2011) suggest that gender segregation of some jobs, for example secretaries, may be due to the continuance of stereotyped views concerning the suitability of women.

It is not conclusive that women or men are better for being PR personnel (Grunig et al., 2001; Theaker & Yaxley, 2013; Toth & Grunig, 1993), yet the female PR personnel still outnumber male ones in Taiwanese hotels. The rationales behind this phenomenon still remain uncertain to date, and will be investigated in this study.

2.6 Communication Excellence

The study has adopted the Model of Communication Excellence (MCE) as its framework (Dozier et al., 2002; Dozier et al., 1995). The MCE suggests that PR conduct a two-way symmetrical communication between an organisation and its stakeholders. The two-way symmetrical communication means that PR works as a neutral spokesman of both the organisation and its stakeholders to disseminate and receive messages and opinions (Dozier et al., 2002; Dozier et al., 1995; Heath, 2010; Theaker, 2012; Theaker & Yaxley, 2013). The two-way communication can prevent the stakeholders from being manipulated by the organisation conveying messages to the stakeholders; stakeholders can also express their opinions (Cameron, Cropp, & Reber, 2001; Theaker, 2012). In addition, the MCE indicates that excellent PR practice occurs where PR practitioners are able to be involved in the decision-making process with the organisational management level for communication plans based on information gathered from stakeholders. PR enables the building and management of positive relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders, particularly from a communications management perspective (Bowen, 2004; Dozier et al., 2002; Dozier et al., 1995; Theaker, 2012).

MCE provides a theoretical framework for explaining the role of PR employees (Dozier et al., 2002; Dozier et al., 1995). However, there has been a critique arguing that MCE serves as a normative model (Dozier et al., 2002; Holtzhausen, 2000; Yun, 2006). The criticism argues that, in real industry practice, PR practitioners are employed by the organisation. In such instances, instead of being a two-way communication channel, PR may intend to advocate for the organisation and neglect the stakeholders' feedback and opinions. Therefore, the communication between the organisation and its stakeholders will be more likely become one-way instead of an equal symmetrical communication (L'Etang, 1994). Despite this critique, the MCE is one of the most commonly cited theoretical frameworks in the public relations field and offers an ideal for PR practice (Cameron et al., 2001; Theaker & Yaxley, 2013).

Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (2002) state that "public relations is the management of communication between an organisation and its public", which emphasises the importance of communication skills. Dozier et al. (Dozier et al., 2002; 1995)

suggest that the core of public relations is communication skills. The importance of communication skills is captured within the Model of Communication Excellence (MCE) (Dozier et al., 1995) which suggests that core knowledge, shared expectations, and participative culture are the three necessary aspects required to achieve excellence in public relations. (Dozier et al., 1995).
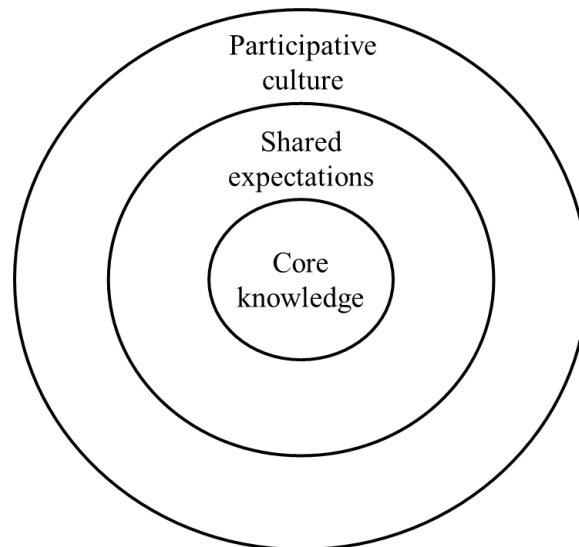
Figure 1: The Model of Communication Excellence (MCE)

Source: Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig (1995, p. 10)

2.6.1   Inner sphere of MCE: Core knowledge

The inner sphere of MCE is core knowledge. Core knowledge represents the knowledge that enables PR personnel to undertake the communication management function by conducting the two-way communication between the organisation and its stakeholders. Core knowledge enables PR practitioners to interpret information gathered from stakeholders and present it as a strategic communication plan to organisations. According to Dozier et al. (Dozier et al., 1995), knowledge of research methods and the ability to analyse the results of the research are required for successful two-way communication.

Adding to this, Newsom et al. (2004) argue that the knowledge of writing and marketing may also be beneficial for PR practitioners. Rawel (2003) and Theaker and Yaxley (2013) further indicate that the core knowledge and general

knowledge (e.g. writing and marketing) may be obtained from education (e.g. a communication / public relations or journalism related qualification or courses).

However, there is little evidence in the Taiwanese hotel industry that indicates PR personnel are required to have a relevant degree. Some of the recruitment advertisements indicate that a relevant degree is preferred but not necessary. In addition, what is the required knowledge for PR personnel in Taiwanese hotels remains unknown, which will be further explored in this study.

2.6.2 Middle sphere of MCE: Shared expectations

The middle sphere, shared expectations, refers to a common understanding of communication management function between the organisation and their PR personnel (Dozier et al., 1995). From the organisation's perspective, the management level, which is a group of individuals making decisions, sees PR personnel as communication advisers. The management level values, respects, and adopts PR personnel's opinions before their decision-making for organisational communication plans (Dozier et al., 1995). For instance, PR practitioners will provide advice on the potential reaction of the stakeholders towards the organisation's events or actions; the organisation then can make decisions accordingly to prevent possible issues or conflicts between the organisations and its stakeholders.

On the other hand, from the PR personnel's perspective, they are not limited to disseminating outward information, but they also serve to elicit feedback from stakeholders. PR people will provide appropriate advice to the organisations based on the stakeholders' opinions gathered and then provide a strategic communication plan which can satisfy both organisations and stakeholders. For example, PR personnel will design appropriate messages according to research results (e.g. questionnaires) and select the most suitable means to communicate with stakeholders. As this communication process repeats, PR people will know what the organisation's expectations are. The organisation and PR people will reach to a mutual understanding of communication management.

To achieve shared expectations, continuous communication between PR personnel and the organisation is necessary (Dozier et al., 2002; Dozier et al., 1995). It is necessary for PR people to be capable of communicating effectively

and accurately (Kent & Taylor, 2002). The interpersonal skills may then become an important skill for PR personnel to have and emerge as one of the potential factors to influence recruitment decisions; further discussion of interpersonal skills will be presented in the later paragraph.

2.6.3 Outer sphere of MCE: Participative culture

The outer aspect of the MCE is described as participative culture. This relates to certain aspects of an organisation's cultural values; team-working, innovation, empowerment, and employees' opinions. Dozier et al., (1995) identify organisational culture as one of the factors that influences communication excellence. There is an indication that organisations which have a participative culture and support female employees in various aspects will be more likely to achieve communication excellence (Dozier et al., 1995). An organisation with a participative culture is also more likely to conduct a symmetrical communication with internal stakeholders (employees) as they are more open-minded towards employees' ideas and opinions.

The concept of aesthetic labour, widely discussed in the hospitality literature, argues that the organisation tends to recruit people to fit and represent the organisation's image and culture. It may emerge to become one of the potential factors in this study. Further discussion of aesthetic labour will be provided in the following section.

2.7 Potential factors influencing recruitment decisions

Factors that potentially influence recruitment decisions, including interpersonal skills and aesthetic labour will be discussed in this section. Interpersonal skills and aesthetic labour may influence the recruitment decision and have an impact on the phenomenon of more female personnel in Taiwanese hotels.

2.7.1 Interpersonal skills

Interpersonal skills are defined as the acquired ability for effective interaction (Alge, Gresham, Heneman, Fox, & McMasters, 2002). Effective interpersonal skills can assist people to establish a positive relationship with each other and are viewed as a significant factor in delivering quality services (Kriegl, 2000; Samenfink, 1994). A number of researchers have illustrated the importance of

interpersonal skills in the hospitality industry. Raybould and Wilkins (2005) found that managers in Australian hotels highly value interpersonal skills; some specific aspects of interpersonal skills are revealed: oral and written communication (e.g. making business presentations and interpret business reports), teamwork, and leadership (e.g. communicating appropriately with other members of a work group). Tesone and Ricci (2006) also identify interpersonal skills as being important for hotel employees.

From a PR perspective, interpersonal skills are required by personnel to facilitate communication between the organisation and its stakeholders (Cameron et al., 2008; Dozier et al., 1995). Botan and Taylor (2004) suggest that interpersonal skills are required to create dialogue between the organisation and its stakeholders. In public relations practice, dialogue is usually described as communicating about issues with stakeholders; it may also help create more ethical relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders (Bowen, 2004a; Kent & Taylor, 2002). Kent and Taylor (2002) also suggest that a 'dialogue' should be an important part of successful PR execution. To successfully create the dialogue between two parties, some interpersonal skills are indicated, including listening, empathy, soliciting a variety of internal and external opinions, and so forth. These skills can be facilitated in the daily PR practice to assist PR personnel to obtain stakeholder opinions and build strong relationships with media representatives and other individuals.

In the PR industry, it is argued that women may have different communication styles compared to their counterparts (Grunig et al., 2001). Women tend to use conversation to build relationships and connections with others; unlike men who are more likely to express opinions and demonstrate their knowledge and skills in front of a large group (Grunig et al., 2001). Vinnicombe and Singh (2002) also indicated that women's interpersonal and communication styles are highly valued by employers, for instance, women may show a more caring and understanding manner for others (Broadbridge, 2007). Hence, interpersonal skills may be the factors that cause more female PR practitioners in Taiwanese hotels and also influence recruitment decisions when hiring PR personnel.

2.7.2 Aesthetic labour

Aesthetic labour refers to people who have the right personality and appearance required by organisations to match their brand images. Employers may tend to hire people who have a similar image that represents and fits the organisational image (Nickson & Warhurst, 2007). The definition of aesthetic labour given by Warhurst, Nickson, Cullen and Watt (2003, p. 185) is a "supply of embodied capacities and attributes possessed by employees at the point of entry into employment." The employers then can develop and transform employees' capacities and attributes into competitive advantages for their organisations through a series of actions (such as training) (Warhurst & Nickson, 2007).

Warhurst and Nickson (2007) further indicate the importance of 'style', for example, dress style or conversation style. It is suggested that the service employee is a part of the product, and the 'company style' should be seen within every aspect of service process (Nickson & Warhurst, 2007). Therefore, managers may endeavour to select the right people as their employees to fit their organisations' brand. Through the recruitment and selection process, employers tend to search for employees whose image matches that of the organisation. Employees will create the service style which fit their organisations by their dress code, voice/tones, or various ways of interactions. The brand image then could be constructed and reinforced through these service styles and service encounter details (Lopez, 2010; Pattinger, 2005).

There are many different aspects of aesthetic labour which are used to represent and organisation's image; body language, the sense of fashion and dress, grooming, deportment, and voice and accent (Pattinger, 2005). Research (Jackson, Goldthorpe, & Mills, 2005) also reveals that, despite possession of professional skills (e.g. writing skills), employers are looking for something additional which will distinguish the individuals from each other (e.g. personalities), which makes the person more suitable for a certain job.

Although there is no specific statement of whether men or women are better at aesthetic labour, the hospitality industry is still a female-dominated industry (Forseth, 2005; Quinn, 2008). It is women who are generally seen to be more gentle and patient toward customers (Lopez, 2010). In addition, it is indicated that

occasionally the appearance and styles that employers are looking for is deliberately sexualised (Warhurst & Nickson, 2009). It is assumed that employers may locate attractive women at service encounter positions, such as front desk or reception centre (Warhurst & Nickson, 2009). As discussed previously, PR's job description includes selling and promoting hotels' services and facilities. Moreover, as a management function for organisations, PR personnel are required to maintain the corporation's images and reputation. Thus, PR personnel will have to interact and communicate with external stakeholders for organisations. In this instance, organisations may tend to recruit PR personnel who fit more with their organisations' style and deliver the desired corporate images.

2.8   Conclusion

The literature review highlights that PR is a communication management function for organisations. Much of the hospitality literature has focused on the phenomenon of selecting aesthetic labour along with interpersonal skills. On the other hand, PR literature has concentrated more on the importance of interpersonal skills. The discussion of stereotyping in PR provides some insight to why it appears that more women are being employed in PR roles. The literature review has indicated some potential factors (core knowledge, interpersonal skills, and aesthetic labour) which may influence recruitment decisions when hiring PR personnel in Taiwanese hotels.

The first aspect of MCE indicates that core knowledge is important for PR personnel to conduct PR activities and is identified as one of the potential factors. In addition, as the core knowledge may be gained from education or other sources, whether a relevant qualification is necessary for PR personnel and also results in more women being hired in the hotel industry in Taiwan will also be investigated (Rawel, 2003).

Although men and women both value interpersonal skills as an important trait, women seem to see themselves carrying a softer interpersonal communication style than men (Brownell, 1994). Vinnicombe and Singh (2002) also argue that women tend to have a different range of interpersonal skills compared to men. In addition, some studies (Pattinger, 2005; Reskin & Roos, 1990) indicate that in some service situations customers prefer to be served by female employees rather

than male employees. Thus, interpersonal skills may be the factor causing more women to be employed for PR positions in Taiwanese hotels.

The concept of aesthetic labour is about looking for the employee who carries the 'right look and voice'. Although there is no specific evidence showing that aesthetic labour is related to gender difference, women still seem to be preferred by customers (Pattinger, 2005; Reskin & Roos, 1990). Research also shows that that both employers and employees see 'appearance' as an important element in the hospitality industry (Nickson & Warhurst, 2007). Although it could not be concluded that women have more chances being recruited as PR personnel for their aesthetics, women seem to be better at providing more satisfactory services and representing corporate images than their counterparts (Forseth, 2005; Quinn, 2008). Nevertheless, the relationship between aesthetic labour and recruitment decisions needs to be further investigated.

Chapter 3 **Methodology**

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an outline of the research design adopted in the study. A brief overview of the research as presented in Chapter one, is provided. It is followed by the selection of a qualitative research paradigm and the rationales for employing an interpretivism paradigm. The use of a case study research strategy is then explained, followed by the sample and research questions used in this study. The data collection procedures and the data analysis method are then outlined, followed by limitations, ethical considerations, and confidentiality.

3.2 Overview of the study and research questions

As the anecdotal evidence indicates that around 90% of marketing and PR personnel are women in Taiwanese hotels, this study has sought to explore the reason behind this phenomenon. Furthermore, the research aims to discover the rationales behind recruitment managers' decisions. The following research questions derived from the above research purpose are presented below:

1. Why are more women than men employed as PR personnel in Taiwanese hotels?
2. What factors influence recruitment decisions when hiring PR personnel?

3.3 Paradigms and perspective

Two major approaches are commonly adopted for research theory development, deductive theory testing and inductive theory building. Deductive research focuses on testing a known domain and seeks to establish objectivity. In contrast, inductive research emphasises the construction of the theory based on findings collected from people involved with the phenomenon being investigated (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). An inductive approach commences with research questions which allow the researcher to generate theory directly from the collected data. The aim of this study is to identify the factors that influence recruitment managers' decisions when hiring PR personnel. Inductive theory building was deemed to be more suitable for this study as the theory is drawn from the collected data.

Paradigms are defined by Guba and Lincoln (1994) as a set of beliefs and concepts of an individual's view of the world, which also represents an individual's place in this world. Paradigms shape an individual's thoughts and knowledge and can be classified as ontological, epistemological and methodological (Grant & Giddings, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). An interpretive paradigm consists of a relativist ontology, a subjective epistemology, and a hermeneutical methodology. A relativist ontology indicates that there is more than one reality and that reality is changeable. A subjective epistemology states that findings are generated together by researchers and participants, and a hermeneutical methodology proposes that social constructions are elicited by interactions among researchers and participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, 2013; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Given these discussions, this study recognises that there is more than one PR perspective other than that of the hotel industry in Taiwan. In addition the findings and social construction in this study are generated by the researcher and participants, and the interactions between the two.

An interpretivist paradigm places emphasis on the understanding of phenomena by exploring the meaning of actions and behaviours (Myers, 2009). Interpretive researchers are concerned with what forms or influences human behaviours and they believe that the reality and knowledge will be different or changed under various contexts (Grant & Giddings, 2003). Interpretive research focuses on how the context influences the meanings of the phenomenon under investigation (Myers, 2009). In other words, interpretive researchers attempt to understand a phenomenon through meanings that people assign to it. This research focuses on obtaining the opinions and the experiences of the recruitment managers for PR personnel in the Taiwanese hotels. As a result, an interpretivist paradigm was selected for this study as it provided an opportunity for the researcher to obtain subjective opinions and personal experiences from the participants (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

Qualitative research will enable an interpretivist approach to be selected and allow a deep investigation of themes, opinions and subjective matter gathered from individuals (Rossman & Marshall, 2011; Silverman, 2001). A qualitative research method was selected, as this study concentrates on investigating what factors influence the recruitment decisions when hiring PR personnel. Qualitative

research employs open questions to facilitate in-depth and detailed study of the topic under investigation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Additionally, qualitative research enables the researcher to be involved in the field under investigation and understand the world through the point of view of the participants (Patton, 2002). A qualitative research approach will allow the researcher to have face-to-face contact with the hotels' managers and obtain richer data from their personal opinions and experiences.

3.3.1 Ontology

Paradigm ontology refers to the form and nature of reality (Grant & Giddings, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Guba and Lincoln (1994) assume that the ontology of interpretivism is relative realism where the reality is constructed mentally by the individuals and the meaningful interpretation of language, consciousness and events; knowledge is also constructed through people's mind and experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Myers, 2009). In addition, interpretive researchers believe that there are multiple realities existing in this social world and these can be captured by various mental constructions embedded in different social, cultural, and experimental contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This study constructs a perspective of PR in Taiwanese hotels based on the mental, social and cultural construction offered by the participants.

3.3.2 Epistemology

Paradigm epistemology is the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the reality; more specifically, how researchers obtain knowledge (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) explain that "research is an interactive process shaped by his or her personal history, biography, gender, social classes, race and ethnicity, and by those of the people in the setting." (p. 6). For interpretive researchers, knowledge can only be obtained through being involved with the subject under investigation, which is the unique characteristic of interpretive epistemology (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; Farquhar, 2012; Grant & Giddings, 2003). In other words, a research result can only be created from interactions among the researcher and the participants. Interpretive researchers interact with and relate to, the participants to understand the deep meaning and explanation they assign to individuals' actions and behaviours. Researchers will then analyse the information which they obtain from the participants with their

own thoughts and knowledge, and be able to translate the 'meaning' beyond the information (Grant & Giddings, 2003). The findings presented in this study are co-created through the interactive interpretation from the researcher and the participants.

3.3.3   Paradigm Methodology

Paradigm methodology refers to the process of discovering knowledge (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The methodology for interpretivism is dialectical; the interaction among researchers and participants is required for knowledge construction of the subject under investigation (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In the context of this study, the researcher is able to interact with the participants from a language and cultural perspective to ensure suitable knowledge construction of the topic area under investigation.

3.4   Research Strategy

Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 25) indicate that "A research design describes a flexible set of guidelines that connect theoretical paradigms first to strategies of inquiry and second to methods for collecting empirical materials". This emphasises the importance of selecting an appropriate and suitable research strategy. Research strategies consist of different skills, assumptions and practices which researchers employ and allow them to move from paradigm to the empirical world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The selection of a suitable research strategy determines how a study should be proceeded and how the theory will be established (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Some common strategies used for qualitative research include ethnography, grounded theory, action research, and case study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Myers, 2009).

Case study was chosen as the research strategy for this study, as it represents a specific tradition within in the qualitative research paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Rossman & Marshall, 2011). Case study also attempts to achieve an understanding and generate a theoretical statement for an observed phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Zach, 2006). Yin (2003) defines a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (p. 13). Myers (2009) further stated that: "Case study research in business uses evidence from one or more organisations where an attempt is made to study the

subject matter in context." (p. 76); both indicate that case study as a research strategy enables researchers to investigate current events which are in progress within specific time and places.

Case study research seeks to answer certain types of questions - 'what', 'why', 'where', 'who', and 'how'- in relation to a phenomenon under investigation (Yin, 2003). Case study is preferred when the research seeks to specifically answer 'how' and 'why' questions, nevertheless it also suits when the 'what' questions being asked, which allows researchers to see beneath the surface under different contexts (Yin, 2003; Zach, 2006). Case study strategy is also suited when the researcher is interested in a specific contemporary phenomenon and wishes to understand it completely in its context (Dooley, 2002; Farquhar, 2012). This strategy also allows the researcher to spend time on site and have personal contact in obtaining deep descriptions from the participants involved (Stake, 2005). Case study enables the researcher to look in depth at a phenomenon of personal interest and develop particular understanding from it. Case study also provides the opportunity to contribute more knowledge to understanding from previous research (Dooley, 2002; Farquhar, 2012).

This study aims to investigate a current and real-life phenomenon (recruitment of female PR personnel in Taiwanese hotels), and the research questions consist of 'why' and 'what' questions; case study is deemed to be an appropriate research strategy. Using a qualitative case study strategy will allow an opportunity for the researcher to explore the phenomenon from 'the inside' and obtain a deeper understanding from the perspective of the participants involved in certain cases within its social context (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

3.4.1   Sample Selections

Purposive sampling (also known as judgemental sampling) was adopted in this study (Marshall, 1996; Neuman, 2006). Purposive sampling is suitable for exploratory research and enables researchers to identify specific types of cases for in-depth investigation; furthermore to help push the theory boundaries (Neuman, 2006). Researchers who use purposive sampling will select the sample with specific purposes in mind and with subjective information. This allows the research to develop a thicker description of the gathered data (Neuman, 2006;

Zach, 2006). Accordingly, the sample selected for this study are the recruitment managers responsible for hiring PR personnel in international four-star or five-star tourist hotels in Taiwan. It is due to that these hotels are required to have in-house business units which make additional profits (e.g. restaurants, and bakeries), resulting in these hotels being more likely to hire PR personnel to promote their business (*Act for the Development of Tourism*, 2011; Council of Labor Affairs, 2006a; Tsai, 2005).

Access to the sample was gained through the researcher's personal network in the hotel industry in Taipei, Taiwan. Initially, invitation letters were sent via E-mail to briefly outline the study objective. All the recruitment managers contacted expressed an initial willingness to participate in this study, although one withdrew due to work commitments before interviews started. The participants were then contacted via telephone to arrange interview schedules. For those who agreed to participate in the study, a Research Consent Form and the Information Sheet were sent prior to each interview via E-mail. A Participant Information Sheet was provided to all participants prior to the interview (See Appendix 3). The Information Sheet was designed to provide a brief introduction of the research content and purpose to the participants. It explained that the participation was voluntary and the information gathered from the participants would be used in the study to assists the researcher to complete a Master's Degree. In addition, the research supervisor's contact details were included in the Information Sheet provided to the participants to answer any problems or concern for this study. All participants were informed that participation in the research was voluntary. Ultimately, all the participants were selected based on the availability at the period of data collection. This study was conducted with a total of eight participants.

An outline of the participant sample for this study is presented in table 1. The sample has a female majority (6 out of 8) and a similar age range with all the participants under 49. All of the participants were qualified and are employed in management positions.

Table 1: Participants Pseudonym and Demographic Information

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Position	Recruitment experience (years)	Qualification
Ally	F	30-39	Senior manager	6	Business management
Jeff	M	40-49	Chief of project manager	9	Hotel management
Jenny	F	40-49	Assistant director	9	Information management
Beatrice	F	30-39	Director	5	Marketing & Communications
Sarah	F	30-39	Director	8	Film
Simon	M	30-39	Manager	4	Mass communications
Leah	F	40-49	Director	15	Foreign language and literature
Carrie	F	30-39	Manager	3	Communication management

3.5 Data Collection method: semi-structured interviews

The method of data collection used in this study was semi-structured interviews, which is a common source of case study data collection (Creswell, 2013). Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to explore subjective opinions and experiences from participants and seek some in-depth understanding of specific phenomena (Creswell, 2013; Myers, 2009; Yin, 2003). The use of semi-structured interviews offered an opportunity to conduct a less formal and conversational-style interview (Myers, 2009; Yin, 2003). The incorporation of informality in the interview process allowed the participants to feel relaxed and therefore offer more opinions and a richer source of data. It was felt the employment of semi-structured, conversation-style interviews was better suited to the exploration of the factors which influence recruitment decisions when hiring PR personnel.

The semi-structured interviews used some indicative questions which provided flexibility for the researcher to gain deeper insights from participants. By using a list of indicative questions relating to the theoretical framework as identified by Dozier et al. (1995, 2002), the interviews sought to capture the participants'

perspectives towards the topic under investigation and probe for more in-depth responses (Brotherton, 2008; Bryman & Bell, 2007; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

The indicative questions (please refer to Appendix 1) used in this study explored the demographic aspects of the interviewees and three identified theoretical aspects of PR; core knowledge, shared expectations, and the participative culture (Dozier et al., 2002; Dozier et al., 1995). The use of semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to offer follow-up questions to any answers that required elaboration based on the participants' initial responses (Brotherton, 2008; Yin, 2003).

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

Prior to data collection a review and refinement of the indicative questions was required. A copy of the interview questions was sent to the supervisors and an independent Human Resources expert. After this feedback, the initial interview took place and a period of reflection was taken to review and refine the indicative questions further and adjust the interview recording process.

This process helped the researcher to refine the interview technique and focus upon the topic of investigation. It was found during the first interview that, when the researcher was checking the question list and taking notes during the interview process, the participant seemed to be slightly distracted and attempted to see what notes were being taken or even stopped talking. Hence, in the following interviews, the researcher attempted to maintain eye contact with the participants at all times and also slow down the movements of notes taking to ensure the participants are comfortable and the nature of conversational interviews being maintained. The interview review process also indicated that the digital recording device needed to be placed nearer to the participants to ensure higher recording quality.

The interviews were set at the convenience of all the participants beforehand and conducted by the researcher in Taipei, Taiwan. Each interview was between 30-50 minutes in duration. Only one participant chose to conduct the interview outside the hotel, all the other participants chose to be interviewed on the hotel premises.

All the interviews were audio recorded, with the full consent of each participant, and notes were taken at the same time.

3.7   Data Analysis

The main tool selected for data investigation was thematic analysis. It was decided that this was the most suitable data analysis method to acquire the understanding of the phenomenon under investigation in this case (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Thematic analysis is a common method used in interpretative research for identifying and analysing themes from qualitative data (Boyatzis, 1998). This method enables the researcher to see the themes salient within texts and has the potential to reveal the meaning behind the participants' responses in the semi-structured interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The most critical part of thematic analysis is to identify the 'themes' which arise from participants' responses conveying similar meanings (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Through seeking for the repetition of key words and phrases in the interviews, researchers can discover similarities or patterns or issues. Researchers then can establish codes according to the similarities and patterns. These codes identified from the data allow the integration of higher level themes through the coding process. Researchers also need to avoid creating new concepts for each observed instance and this study was aware of this limitation and avoided the creation of new themes. The themes in this research represent the factors that influence recruitment decisions and allow the explanation of why, potentially, more women are being employed for PR personnel in Taiwanese hotels.

3.8   Limitations

The researcher has identified some limitations affecting this study; generalisation and research bias. As the case study strategy adopted in this research concentrates on investigating small number of participants in a particular setting, some findings cannot be generalised to other contexts (Zach, 2006). This limitation means the results of this research conducted in Taiwan, may not be generalised to other industries or other countries. However, this study may be able to replicated as findings differ from case to case, and scientific facts are usually based on multiple sets of experiments (Yin, 2003). In addition, case study researchers often have some basic understanding of the phenomenon under investigation beforehand and will choose the particular case which interests them. This may result in the

production of research bias (Yin, 2009). In the context of this study the researcher has worked as a PR personnel in Taiwanese hotels, and therefore, has prior perceptions toward the study. However, every opportunity has been taken to reduce and negate the influence of researcher bias in this study.

3.9   Ethical Considerations

As the data were gathered from human participants, there may be some potential risks for this research. Hence, the ethical approval was gained from Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) beforehand. Although all the information obtained in this research is not controversial, there may be still some potential ethical risks in related to the interviews as indicated in the Ethical Approval form. To minimise any potential risks, the researcher ensured that the participants did not experience any discomforts and embarrassment. In addition, the participation in the interviews was voluntary and the participant had control over what they divulged. Furthermore, as the Consent Form (See Appendix 2) and the Information Sheet (See Appendix 3) were sent and signed prior to the interview, confidentiality was not breached. The name of each participant was codified by a pseudonym and they cannot be identified in the final document.

3.10 The Consent Form and Confidentiality

The consent was provided by all participants in the study. Initially, the consent was provided by telephone and E-mails; once the verbal consent was gained, a soft copy of the Consent Form was sent to the participants via E-mails. Participant confidentiality has been upheld throughout the research. This has been achieved by assigning each participant with a pseudonym to protect them from being possibly identified in any reports. In addition, all the research data will be stored in a secure place with limited access.

Chapter 4 **Findings**

4.1   Introduction

The findings of the semi-structured interviews are presented in this chapter. The data are presented according to the coding themes that emerged from the participants' responses. The findings were presented to answer two research questions which are shown in Table 2.

The quotations extracted from interview transcripts presented in this chapter use pseudonyms in order to protect the participants from being identified. The quotations were written in italic to indicate the dialogues of the participants. The participants for these interviews included PR senior manager, chief of project manager, assistant director of PR & marketing department, public relations director, Marcom (Marketing and communications) director, and PR manager. The quotations chosen from these participants are representative of many of the participants' opinions.

As the data were assembled, some similarities in the interview began to emerge, entailing a search for themes. The notes taken during the interview were also revisited to ensure that all the themes were refined and the coding was consistent.

Table 2: Research questions and coding themes

Research questions	Coding themes

1. Why are more women than men employed as PR personnel in the Taiwanese hotel?	1. Gender perception
	  1) Societal perception
	  2) Feminine characteristics and charm
	  3) Ease of communications
	  4) High attention to details
	2. Aesthetic labour

2. What factors influence the recruitment decisions when hiring PR personnel?	1. Qualifications
	2. Hard skills
	  1) Writing skills
	  2) Analytical skills
	  3) Industry knowledge
	3. Soft skills
	  1) Interpersonal skills
	  2) Aesthetic labour
	    – Appearance
	    – Confidence and charm
	    – Matching the hotel's image

4.2 Qualifications

In Taiwanese hotels, it is generally accepted that all employees working within the marketing and PR departments will have a basic qualification as stated below:

> *Leah: Of course qualification is important; PR personnel need to have certain educational level or educational backgrounds.*

When the participants were asked to express their opinions on how important it is for PR personnel to have a relevant qualification, the following interview responses indicated that although applicants with a relevant qualification will make employers interested in them, it is not a primary consideration for the recruitment managers when hiring PR people. It is generally believed that a relevant qualification will be a favourable but not a necessary requirement.

> *Ally: I think a relevant qualification is not a must-have but a plus.*

What was seen as more important is the capability of being a PR person. It was acknowledged by the respondents that being a PR practitioner requires enthusiasm for the job as well as talents for being PR personnel. As indicated by the responses,

it seems that some people have an innate capacity to be PR people while some people do not.

> *Jeff: As long as you are willing to learn and have passion for this job, the qualification is just a plus, not a necessary requirement.*

> *Sarah: We don't specifically look for people who graduate from marketing, a business major or if they have studied public relations.*

> *Simon: I don't really care if their qualification is relevant or not. You can say PR is a professional job, but sometimes it's just about whether you can do it or not; are you talented to be a PR personnel or not.*

However, it was evident that a number of respondents would prefer applicants to have a relevant qualification, including public relations, communications, foreign languages and literature, and marketing. The respondents considered these qualifications could be beneficial and provide or enhance the required capability for PR job duties. What was revealed by the interviewees was that writing skills are important for PR personnel and as indicated by the following responses; it may be enhanced through these educational backgrounds. The recruitment managers will intend to hire someone who has these relevant qualifications.

> *Beatrice: I would prefer to hire people who have the relevant qualification, such as public relations, communications, foreign language and literature, or marketing. Because when you are drafting a news release, a language or literature relevant degree may be useful for your writing. The qualification won't be a necessary requirement, but we do prefer people who have it.*

> *Jenny: I think qualification is useful, because you'll need writing skills. One of the PR people I hired before, she has the relevant qualification which gave her great writing skills. I realised that writing skills could be learnt from education, so a relevant qualification is helpful.*

> *Leah: Normally for Marcom departments, we will look for people who probably major in foreign language, mass communications, public relations or even hotel management.*

The interview transcripts revealed two perspectives towards the importance of a relevant qualification for PR personnel. While some participants indicated that it is not necessary for PR personnel to have a relevant qualification, other participants explained that a relevant qualification which is rich in language or PR/communication related could assist to develop the required capabilities which make employers more interested in the applicant.

4.3 Hard skills

Writing skills, analytical skills, and industry knowledge were identified when the participants were asked to answer a question with regard to what knowledge PR personnel need to have. These aspects were coded as hard skills; hard skills usually refer to technical skills and knowledge different from various job disciplines (Grugulis & Vincent, 2009).

4.3.1 Writing skills

Writing skills were stated as an important requirement. PR applicants would need to demonstrate their writing skills on the spot during the interview. It was acknowledged that it is important for PR personnel to have basic writing skills; otherwise it will be difficult to train.

> *Simon: Writing skills is something we need. I will test their writing skills by asking them to draft a press release.*

> *Ally: I will check their basic skills; like writing skills. I will ask them [PR applicants] to bring their previous work or make them draft press releases during the interview.*

4.3.2 Analytical skills

It was reported that PR personnel need to have the analysis ability.

> *Simon: The ability of logical analysis is something we need.*

It was further explained by Jenny stating that the analysis ability of setting pricing for the products is necessary as PR personnel in Taiwanese hotels need to be involved in the decision-making for the entire product launching process.

> *Jenny: PR personnel need to have the ability to analyse the market including setting selling prices.*

4.3.3 Industry knowledge

As stated by Jenny, PR personnel are responsible for selling products (e.g. seasonal products promotions and festival gift boxes) and being aware of the market trends. To do it, PR people need to have knowledge that could not only help them set the right price and product positioning but also provide correct information to the media representatives.

> *Jenny: I think PR personnel should be involved in the decision-making process; PR personnel should assist the hotel to sell the product based on their experiences and the senses to the market, and through the interaction with the media to get to know what the trends and the public's preferences are. In addition, the relationship rely more on your reliability, your professional knowledge. What you provide to the media must be convincing and interesting.*

Although some hard skills were identified by the interviewees, what was emphasised as more important for PR personnel is soft skills, presented in the next section.

4.4 Soft skills

The respondents indicated that another important area for PR personnel involved two other perspectives in addition to hard skills; interpersonal skills and aesthetics. These two aspects were coded as soft skills or those skills which usually refer to personal characteristics and attributes; such as; self-presentation, communication, problem-solving, and team-working (Grugulis & Vincent, 2009; Nickson & Warhurst, 2007).

4.4.1 Interpersonal skills

In contrast to the hard skills, the importance of interpersonal skills was acknowledged by all participants. Responses given in relation to interpersonal skills were mostly related to communications. The participants indicated that in Taiwanese hotels PR personnel are required to interact with different groups of people, both internal and external, including chefs, colleagues, media representatives, and customers. Media representatives and chefs were identified as two major groups of people who PR personnel have to communicate with frequently. Some perspectives related to interpersonal skills were reported; be

approachable, ability to communicate among diverse groups of people, accuracy of communication, and teamwork.

4.4.1.1 Being approachable

To conduct diverse social interaction, a number of respondents indicated the basic requirement is that PR people need to make people want to interact with you. This is indicated by the following quotes,

> *Simon: I'll prefer applicants, who like to talk to people, interact with others and know what to say and what not to say.*

> *Sarah: I think personality is one of the major issues that we are looking for. You need to be a people person to know how to deal with people, how to communicate.*

What was further explained is that it will be easier for PR personnel to build the relationship with media representatives, which is one of the major groups of people PR personnel handle in their daily job duties.

> *Ally: You need to be easy to chat with, make people want to talk with you, if not, how are you going to deal with the media representatives?*

> *Jeff: Like waiters in the restaurant serve customers, PR serves the press. So PR needs to be easy going and approachable; so that they will be able to build good relationships with the press.*

4.4.1.2 Ability to communicate among diverse groups of people

A number of participants further elaborated the importance of the ability to communicate with diverse groups of people, including media representatives, chefs, customers, and heads of other departments. PR personnel in Taiwanese hotels are the bridging channel between the organisation and its stakeholders; they are required to be capable of communicating with various groups of people.

> *Simon: Because PR is a communication channel between the company and the public; so you need to have good communication skills to interact with others.*

PR personnel need to employ different approaches to different groups of people, for example,

> *Jenny: PR personnel have to be willing to go into the kitchen to communicate with chefs. For some people, kitchens may not be a fancy place. However, kitchens are the comfort zones for chefs, and they may be more willing to discuss things with you in the kitchen. You will get more information by going into the kitchen rather than sitting in the office.*

> *Beatrice: You have to do crisis management and deal with customer complaints. When you are doing crisis management and dealing with customers, you need to use a softer and smooth way to calm the situation.*

4.4.1.3 Accuracy of communication

The ability to communicate accurately and effectively including oral and written communication was further addressed by the participants. The accuracy of messages was especially highlighted to avoid communication misunderstandings. To avoid misunderstandings at the workplace and successfully carry out the role of communication channel between different parties, such as media representatives and chefs, PR personnel are required to receive accurate requests from the media and deliver the messages to chefs when arranging media interviews, photographing, or shooting. On the other hand, PR people also need to communicate with the media according to the chef's ideas and opinions for the interview. PR people need to be able to satisfy both parties and ensure the best performance.

> *Carrie: You will make a lot of mistakes and misunderstanding if you don't know how to communicate.*

> *Jeff: Effective communication skill is one of the required criteria, because PR needs to communicate with the press effectively and deliver correct messages to them, both verbal and written. Also you [PR personnel] need to be a good listener, receive the correct message from, like from chefs, and has a clear idea of what they want.*

> *Simon: I will see if they can communicate effectively and logically. PR should be careful about what they say or what they write. They should try to communicate and talk more appropriately, saying the right words and deliver the right message.*

4.4.1.4 Teamwork

One participant specifically pointed out the importance of teamwork in relation to interpersonal skills, which was seen as a major recruitment criterion:

> *Jeff: Teamwork is something I highly value. I won't hire you if you are self-centred; even you are a really good candidate. You need to be willing to work with other PR members as a team.*

4.4.2 Aesthetic labour

Aesthetic labour refers to the idea that in the service industry the organisation will attempt to recruit people whose personal images match the organisation's image (Warhurst & Nickson, 2007). When the respondents were asked about what personal attributes PR personnel need to have, three perspectives in relation to aesthetics were revealed: appearance, confidence and charm. It was also important that PR personnel match the hotel's image.

4.4.2.1 Appearance

All the participants indicated that appearance is an important selection requirement from PR personnel. PR personnel need to be presentable and likeable. It is also important for PR personnel to pay attention to personal grooming. However, the participants all stressed that that they did not require beautiful looking people from PR personnel. It was evident that the recruitment managers wanted to avoid stating that 'looking beautiful' was a selection requirement, as indicated by

> *Ally: You need to look comfortable. I am not saying that you need to have good look, but at least look groomed and wear proper clothes when you come to the interview.*

> *Jeff: Appearance is an important thing for this job, not saying that you have to be good-looking, but have to be tidy and make people feel comfortable.*

> *Jenny: Need to make people feel comfortable. Need to like grooming.*

> *Sarah: Of course we will look for people who have this kind of like…positive appearance that will be the first thing we are looking for; one of the interview considerations. I am not saying that you need to look pretty. You need to make yourself look clean and then confident.*

Leah: Is the appearance important? Yes, it is. But it doesn't mean that you have to be very pretty like a model.

Carrie: For appearance, at least you need to make people want to get close to you and look clean and tidy.

4.4.2.2   Confidence and charm

Apart from appearance, confidence and personal charm were further addressed. The interviewee responses explained that equipping with confidence is important for being a PR professional in Taiwanese hotels.

Sarah: The way they present themselves is important. For example, if they don't feel comfortable about themselves and then you are not the PR person. You need to be comfortable about yourself.

The attitude and image PR personnel show need to be self-confident and could be displayed in various ways, for example,

Beatrice: We are not really looking for people who are good-looking, we will see if this applicant show good manners, do they show confidence during the interview.

Leah: When we are doing the interview, first thing we see is the appearance, is it presentable? What we mean presentable is that what charisma you show.

4.4.2.3   Matching the hotel's image

The interview responses further revealed that there is need for the personal image of PR personnel to match the hotel's image. As explained by Leah, PR people are the hotel's spokesperson; it is understandable that their image must match the hotel's desired image.

Leah: I believe that the hotel would like our PR personnel to present a professional and confident image, and to present yourself as well, because as I said, PR personnel is the spokesperson of the hotel. Every word you say and every news release you draft, you need to consider what kind of images you present to the public. So your personal image will need to match organisational image. So you will need to understand the culture of the hotel and what the hotel's expectations and goals are. We will see from the first impression to see if this candidate can fit in our hotel culture when interviewing.

> *Jeff: I think PR just needs to groom themselves, be tidy, and then you would be able to represent the organisation.*

> *Simon: The applicant's personal image may need to match organisational image.*

> *Sarah: We are people person, we need to contact with other people, and also we represent our brand and our company. Sometimes what we say and what we believe is also represents the company.*

It is evident that soft skills are highly desirable compared to hard skills. The participants expressed the high demand from PR personnel when it comes to soft skills. Different perspectives related to interpersonal skills were reported. In addition, chefs and media representatives were specified as the major groups of people who are involved in most of PR personnel's daily communication activities. The responses also showed that in Taiwanese hotels, it is expected that PR personnel's personal images can match the hotel's image. At the same time, PR personnel are also required to have a well-dressed look. The interesting finding in relation to aesthetics is that although there is no other statement saying that whether women or men are better at aesthetics, it was highlighted by Jeff that women are better at aesthetic labour.

> *Jeff: Women are better at presenting themselves.*

4.5   Gender perception

Gender perception emerged as a significant factor which results in more women being employed as PR personnel in Taiwanese hotels. The participants revealed four perspectives in relation to gender perception, including societal perception, feminine characteristics and charm, ease of communication, and high attention to details when asked why they think there are more women employed in PR roles in Taiwanese hotels.

4.5.1   Societal perception of a PR job

The interviewees expressed their opinions on the reasons that may result in the majority of the personnel being female. It was assumed that the society may see women are more suited to the PR job. Therefore, more women come to apply this job, as indicated by

> *Ally: It's around 80% of the applicants are women. I think this may be due to the stereotype that people would think women are more suitable for this job.*

> *Jeff: Most of the applicants are women. I think it's maybe because of the societal perception. When I first started working as PR person; all my colleagues are women.*

> *Simon: Male applicants are much less than female applicants.*

The stereotype may also reduce men's interest for PR job as revealed by Sarah. Men may be reluctant or even lose their interest in devoting themselves to a PR job. However, the phenomenon may be slightly changing. A trend of more men joining PR role was noticed by Leah, yet the majority are still women due to this societal perception toward PR profession.

> *Sarah: I am not saying that guys can't do things like that, it's just currently we don't have many male applicants; and there are not so many males interested in this job.*

> *Leah: Most of the candidates are female ladies. When I recruit people for this job functions, I'll say about 80% of the candidates are female ladies, probable less than 20% are male. I think in the past, when people thinking about marketing communication, they'll have kind of bias and thinking that marketing communications belongs female's job. It's more a women's job. But right now, we have more male employees joining us. But the majority is still female.*

4.5.2 Feminine characteristics and charm

Feminine characteristics and charm were identified, as they might contribute to women being more suitable for the job. One participant indicated that women seem to have the inborn advantage that allows them to be able to better communicate with both men and women, for example,

> *Leah: When you draft news releases, you need to involve more time on research, asking people; sometimes you have to beg people to feed you information; and for female ladies, I think it's easier to get what you want. You can use your female charm to get the information on what you want. For male colleagues, sometimes it's really hard for them to lower down yourself a little bit to ask chefs to spend some time with you.*

It seems that female charm makes women communicate with men more easily. As the interview responses indicated that the relationship building between female PR personnel and male colleagues is easier.

> *Jeff: The biggest challenge for the internal daily basis will be communicating with chefs, and most of them are male. Although personality still matters, it's not only about the gender. However, women still have this softer characteristic. I have had male applicants before, but I still think very little male applicants can reach these criteria, like communication or something.*

> *Sarah: Inside the hotel, most of our chefs and most of major team leaders are male department heads. It will be easier for girls or PR to do marketing or incorporate with them or to do PR with them. Maybe I think for the hotel industry it's better for female to become Marcom, I guess.*

Interestingly, it seems that female charm may not only be effective toward men. The interview responses revealed that women can also work their unique charisma on women. It is revealed that women seem to have the charm to better communicate and interact with both men and women.

> *Beatrice: I think no matter for men or for women; women would make people feel more approachable and easy to get along with.*

> *Carrie: Will chefs and restaurant managers like you? I think the most difficult part will be "chefs". You need to use some techniques to interact and talk to chefs. I think this job, I mean PR in the hotel industry, is suitable for women. Because most of the media representatives are females, so it's easier for women to start a conversation and communicate with them. This is kind of inborn advantage.*

> *Jeff: I also think that male media representatives prefer female PR personnel.*

Although it was generally agreed by most of the participants that women are better at applying female charm to achieve desired results, one male participant raised an opposite opinion saying that men can do the same by using different method, as indicated by

> *Simon: Generally women are seen as soft and that's their advantages. However, men could do the same through different ways, for example, negotiation.*

4.5.3 Ease of communications

The participants acknowledged that women have different communication approaches compared to men based on their recruitment experiences, which enable women to achieve the desired results more easily.

> *Jenny: Women are softer than men; women can communicate with chefs using a softer tone and manner. I think this job requires various ways to deal with lots of things, and I found women are better at it.*

> *Simon: Girls have this advantage that they are seen "softer" than men. So when they start communicating with others, people won't feel kind of pressure and offended, which makes communications easier.*

Some participants gave some examples of women's different physical, vocal, and conversational approaches,

> *Jenny: Also men sometimes communicate straight forward and sometimes different wording may cause misunderstandings among departments.*

> *Beatrice: Generally, women are better at listening and are capable of solving problems with a softer way. I think that men and women have different ways to interact with people. The tone, gestures, and even the topic women use for starting a conversation is different. From my experience, more women, around 70%, are better at it. That's why we haven't hired any men so far.*

Sarah further elaborated that PR personnel are responsible for bridging the gap between different groups of people, various communication approaches are required, at which women are seen as better.

> *Sarah: I'm just saying for our job because we are bridging in between employees but also companies and also to the media, sometimes it's easier for female colleagues to do those communication types of job. In terms of communication skills, I think women are better at it, because girls can do many different kinds of communication.*

4.5.4 High attention to detail

High attention to details was identified as one of the advantages, which women have brought to PR roles. As reported, attention to details is required from PR people due to detailed activities are involved in the job duties, for example drafting press releases. The participants acknowledged that women have better attention to detail than men. It was also revealed that attention to detail is a women's inborn capacity and they cannot be trained to have it.

> *Jenny: Moreover, men are not as detailed as women.*

> *Beatrice: PR is kind of job that requires carefulness and attention to details; and sometimes men are less careful and detailed.*

> *Leah: I think PR people need to pay a lot of attentions on the tiny little things. I think female ladies have the advantages, dedicated and detailed-oriented. For the job functions of marketing communications of PR work, you need to involve a lot of time on detailed follow-ups, that's why females play more important role on the PR job in the hotel industry in Taiwan.*

> *Carrie: I think women are more suitable for this job, because this job will require you to pay attention on details and little things. You cannot be trained for being detailed.*

4.6 Conclusion

The findings revealed a number of factors influencing recruitment decisions which result in more women than men employed as PR personnel in Taiwanese hotels.

Qualifications, hard skills, soft skills are the factors that were mentioned by the respondents that will influence the recruitment decisions. Among these factors, soft skills were emphasised by the participants as interacting and communicating with diverse groups of people is the major job duty for PR personnel. A number of perspectives in relation to interpersonal skills were covered as well as some aspects related to aesthetics. It was also evident that aesthetics may also be a minor reason, causing more female PR practitioners in Taiwanese hotels.

Gender perception emerged as a significant factor for more women being employed as PR personnel in Taiwanese hotels. Holding a relevant qualification

may influence more women being employed, yet it seems that stereotyping is the main reason which results in more female PR professional in Taiwanese hotels. This was recognised by the interviewees when sharing their opinions that women are more detailed, having different communication styles and it is easier to build relationship with both men and women. The participants considered that it is the women's nature which makes them more careful and detailed while men will be focusing more on big picture and less detailed on execution. As PR personnel needs to pay attention to small and various details, the participants thought that women could perform better at this job.

Chapter 5 Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This study, through qualitative case study research, has sought to unravel the phenomenon of women appearing to dominate PR positions in Taiwanese hotels. This chapter presents answers to the two research questions; why are more women than men employed for PR personnel in Taiwanese hotels? What factors influence the recruitment decisions when hiring PR personnel?

This chapter begins with a brief discussion of PR's position in the Taiwanese hotel environment. Overall, the findings of this study correlate with the literature review presented in Chapter Two. The findings provide an explanation why more women are being employed for PR roles in Taiwanese hotels and the factors influence recruitment decisions.

The theoretical framework provided a structure for the researcher to categorise and analyse the gathered data. A case study research design was employed to meet the objectives of this study. The participants were willing to participate in the research and had provided their experiences and opinions because the research topic is relevant to the current phenomenon in Taiwan and the acquaintance between the researcher and the participants.

5.2 The uniqueness of PR personnel in Taiwanese hotels

Hotels in Taiwan are required by governmental regulations to have in-house business units, such as restaurants and bakeries. Therefore, hotels usually have in-house PR/marketing departments to be responsible for all relevant activities to promote food and beverage services. The findings further elaborated the uniqueness of PR personnel in Taiwanese hotels. PR personnel are seen as a leading role for the hotel's activities, as indicated by the respondents. PR personnel have to plan, coordinate, and execute the annual events for hotels. To do that, PR personnel need to discuss with chefs about the seasonal menu, special events, and promotion plans. Communicating with chefs becomes one of the most important daily bases for PR personnel working in Taiwanese hotels. It was emphasised by the respondents that PR personnel need to establish and maintain a good relationships with chefs. For example, when drafting press releases for new events, it is necessary for PR personnel to obtain information from chefs (e.g. tips

for making the signature dish) regarding the cuisine from chefs. PR personnel have to be able to make chefs interact with them and share information with them willingly. On the other hand, PR personnel need to frequently interact with media representatives to not only build a positive relationship but also deliver the messages of hotels' events when required to maximise the media coverage. The findings indicated that to communicate with these diverse groups of people, interpersonal skills are necessary. The detailed discussions are presented in the following sections.

5.3 Discussion

5.3.1 Research question one: Why are more women than men employed for PR personnel in Taiwanese hotels?

5.3.1.1 Stereotypes

The findings support the research conducted by Albert, Escot and Fernández-Cornejo (2011) saying that PR is seen as a women's job. The respondents indicate that there are more women employed as PR practitioners in Taiwanese hotels as PR is generally perceived as a women's job due to the continuance of stereotypes; and therefore makes men less interested in applying as PR personnel.

Furthermore, the findings also reveal that in Taiwanese hotels feminine characteristics and traits will make PR personnel accomplish job duties more easily. Some participants specifically pointed out that it is easier for women to communicate with chefs, other departments' heads and media representatives by employing female charm, which is consistent with literature in this area (Creedon, 1991; Grunig et al., 2001). Interestingly, the respondents elaborated some feminine traits beneficial for PR job, such as being soft, which has not been discussed in the current literature. The participants acknowledge that female PR personnel in Taiwanese hotels will be more likely to lower themselves (e.g. soft tone or different wording) or employ 'sweet talking' techniques to obtain the information from others, mostly chefs, which also have not been discovered previously.

On the other hand, one participant's statement is consistent with Cejka and Eagly (1999), and Glick (1991), claiming that PR may be seen as an occupation that requires more feminine traits due to the fact that PR has been a women-dominated

occupation. More interviewees consider that women can apply 'sweet talking' techniques to achieve the desired result while men cannot apply the same approach. However, one participant acknowledges that men could achieve the same performance by adopting different method, such as negotiation, instead of using the feminine charm.

Some evidence is provided by the interview data that women have better performance in adopting an indirect and softer method to cope with various situations and communicate with diverse groups of people, which correlates with Grunig et al. (2001), and Vinnicombe and Singh (2002).

An interesting finding is that the interview responses illustrated women appear to have a higher attention to detail than men. Apart from communication styles and feminine charm, women are also different from men on attention to details. Although there is no specific research relating to women paying more attention to detail than men, Jackson et al. (2005) reveal that employers in the service industry may attempt to recruit people who have both the basic skills and further traits or personalities. In this study, attention to detail was acknowledged as an important trait. However, this may be somehow influenced by the stereotypes. It is noted that one of the participants said that women are more detailed-oriented than men and also make fewer mistakes, yet the participant had not employed any male PR personnel.

5.3.1.2   Qualifications

The findings show that some qualifications are preferable which may result in more women being employed for PR personnel in Taiwanese hotels. According to the Taiwanese government statistic (Council of Labor Affairs, 2006), more women than men major in these preferred degrees. Hence, these qualifications may appeal to the recruitment manager when determining whether to interview the candidate or not. The recruitment managers may be more likely to select people who have a relevant degree to conduct interviews with and then further increase the chances for women being employed as PR personnel in Taiwanese hotels.

5.3.2 Research question two: What factors influence the recruitment decisions when hiring PR personnel?

The findings correlate to the MCE (Dozier et al., 2002; Dozier et al., 1995) which demonstrates the requirement for achieving excellence in PR. Interpersonal skills (shared expectations) and aesthetic labour (participative culture) are mostly emphasised and valued by the respondents while qualifications (core knowledge) is stated as a unnecessary but preferable requirement.

5.3.2.1 Interpersonal skills

The findings reveal that interpersonal skills are a necessary selection requirement for recruiting PR people. The findings confirm that interpersonal skills are necessary for PR personnel to conduct communication with internal and external stakeholders (Botan & Taylor, 2004; Cameron et al., 2008; Kent & Taylor, 2002). Teamwork was specifically highlighted by one participant, which is consistent with Raybould and Wilkins (2005) stating that in the service industry teamwork is an important aspect of interpersonal skills.

5.3.2.2 Aesthetic labour

The findings of this study indicate that the recruitment managers do look for PR personnel who have a 'right look', which supports a body of research on aesthetic labour (Nickson & Warhurst, 2007; Nickson, Warhurst, & Dutton, 2005; Warhurst & Nickson, 2007, 2009). Initially, the participants revealed that being tidy and making people feel comfortable was a basic requirement for PR personnel. The participants further claim that PR personnel need to have a pleasant appearance.

It is also evident that apart from a pleasant look, personal image is also important. PR practitioners' personal image needs to match the hotel's image, which is consistent with Nickson et al., (2005), Pattinger (2005), and Warhurst and Nickson (2009). Furthermore, the findings also reveal that the hotel will expect PR personnel to understand the organisation's culture, expectations, and goals in order to better represent the hotel, as PR personnel are the spokesman of the hotel. The finding reflects Lopez (2010), who stated that a branded style can be created through aesthetic labour to deliver the organisation's image and spirit within service interaction details.

5.3.2.3 Other influencing factors

Qualification is reported as a factor that may increase the possibility for PR personnel to be employed by some participants. The findings correlates to the research (Rawel, 2003; Theaker & Yaxley, 2013) saying that qualifications are taken account when hiring PR personnel. The recent empirical research conducted by Shepherd (as cited in Theaker & Yaxley, 2013) indicating that despite many PR personnel considering public relations is a 'learning on the job' occupation, they are being employed because they have a relevant qualification. The relevant qualification may provide useful knowledge for PR personnel when conducting PR activities (Latchaw, Allen, & Ogden, 2009; Rawel, 2003).

The participants further provide their opinions by stating that writing skills, analytical skill, and industry knowledge are important for PR practice. Consistent with Cameron et al., (2008), and Theaker and Yaxley (2013), writing skills are valued by the participants as it is difficult to train a staff member if he/she does not have any basic writing skills. Analytical skills and industry knowledge are also revealed by the participants stating that PR personnel need to have to ability to analyse the market and setting product prices as they need to be involved in the decision-making for the entire product launching process. This correlates with Dozier et al., (1995) who posit that PR should be involved in the communication management decision-making process with the organisation's management level.

5.4 Conclusion

This study was conducted based on previous research in the public relations and hospitality fields, and sought to unravel the phenomenon of women dominating the PR position in Taiwanese hotels and further aimed to explore the factors influencing the recruitment decisions when hiring PR personnel in Taiwanese hotels. To meet the objectives of the research, a qualitative methodology design was used to obtain deep understanding; and the semi-structured interview was adopted to identify the rationale behind the phenomenon. The study has successfully identified the influencing factors including soft skills, qualifications, and hard skills. Adding to this, the study revealed the reasons for more women being employed for PR roles, including stereotypes, and a relevant qualification.

This study indicated that stereotypes are the main factor that results in more women being employed as PR personnel. It initially identified that there are more female applicants, which directly causes more women being employed. The participants assumed that this may be due to the societal stereotypes, which foster people's perception to see PR as a woman's job. Adding to this, women are also believed to be better at employing feminine charm to interact with chefs and media representatives, which makes it easier for women to obtain what they need and complete job duties. The preference for a relevant qualification could also contribute to women's dominating position in Taiwanese hotels as more women are major in the preferred qualifications.

Interpersonal skills are acknowledged by all the participants as an important factor influencing recruitment decisions. Specifically the findings revealed that PR personnel need to be approachable, effective and accurate in communication and able to work in a team. Aesthetic labour is another influencing reason when hiring PR personnel. It was implicitly indicated that people who appear to not have the 'correct' image the organisation is looking for were less likely to be hired. In addition, PR personnel's personal images have to match the hotel's image. When it comes to qualifications, some participants do have preferred qualifications while other report that a relevant qualification is only an additional background reference, not a necessary selection requirement. Writing skills, analytical skills, and industry knowledge are also illustrated as hard skills, which can be beneficial for PR personnel to equip with.

5.5 Research limitations

The case study research design allowed the researcher to obtain deep understanding of a specific phenomenon. It is noteworthy that the findings of this study were constructed by the participants' opinions and experiences. The responses from the participants reflected the background and context of where and what they believe, which makes the result naturally subjective and biased. This study was conducted in Taipei, Taiwan, and the result may not be generalised to other areas or other industries. Another limitation of this study is that all the interviews were conducted only with the recruitment managers. Although recruitment managers are responsible for determining the selection of PR personnel, it may also be beneficial to gather the information and viewpoints from the PR applicants. Hence, the readers of this study should be aware of that the conclusion of this investigation should not be generalised to other contexts; and the findings are subjective in nature and cannot be interpreted beyond this research.

5.6 Recommendations for future research

A key contribution of this study is that it outlined what abilities and traits women have and how they are beneficial to PR job functions. From an academic perspective, this study provided the connection between the PR field and the hospitality terrain. It may also add a body of knowledge to the literature related to Taiwan. More importantly, this study provides a clearer idea of what skills and abilities are important and necessary for being a good PR professional in Taiwanese hotels. Furthermore, this study may go beyond the societal perception that PR is simply women's work. It could offer a new perspective for both men and women to see women's position in the PR industry and in the hotel industry. Further duplicated or similar research could be considered to be conducted in other countries to expand knowledge of both the hospitality and the PR industry.

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Appendix 1: Interview indicative question list

Research questions

1. Why are more women than men employed as PR personnel in Taiwanese hotels?
2. What factors influence recruitment decisions when hiring PR personnel?

Interview questions

<u>Background and demographic questions</u>
1. Can you briefly describe your role and responsibilities at work?
2. Can you briefly tell me about your background and experiences in the hotel industry?
    a) What is your current position? How long have you been in the current position?
    b) How many employees are there in the PR department?
    c) How much experience do you have in employee recruitment?
3. What qualification/s do you have?
4. Could you please tell me which age bracket best describes you?
    ☐ Under 30   ☐ 30-39   ☐ 40-49   ☐ 50-59   ☐ 60 years and over

<u>Knowledge</u>
1. Why does your hotel have a PR department?
    a) What is the purpose of the PR department in your hotel?
2. What type of applicants do you have when recruiting PR personnel?
    a) More male or more female? Why do you think there are more male or female applicants?
3. To successfully carry out the PR role what, types of knowledge do PR employees need?
    a) How important are qualifications?
    b) Do you require employees to have a qualification?

<div style="padding-left: 3em;">i.   If not how do they obtain the necessary knowledge?</div>

<div style="padding-left: 2em;">b)   What qualifications are you looking for when recruiting PR?</div>

Shared expectations

Apart from knowledge:

1. What personal attributes do you think a PR personnel need to have?
    a) For example – Personality, character, appearance, image
2. What image do you expect PR personnel to present for your organisation?
    a) How does this match the image of the hotel?
3. What other skills do you think PR employees should have?
    a) For example – Communication, social ability
4. In your opinion are there any types of people who are better at these skills?
    a) For example – Personality, Gender, Age
5. Why do you think there are generally more women than men employed in PR roles?
6. What advantages or disadvantages do women bring to PR roles?
7. What advantages or disadvantages do men bring?

Appendix 2: Consent Form

Consent Form

AUT UNIVERSITY
TE WĀNANGA ARONUI O TAMAKI MAKAU RAU

Project title: PR personnel in Taiwanese hotels: preferences, policies, and hiring decisions: A case study in Taipei.

Project Supervisor: Warren Goodsir

Researcher: Weiyu Cheng

○   I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 08 August 2012

○   I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

○   I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.

○   I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.

○   If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.

○   I agree to take part in this research.

○   I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes○   No○

Participant's signature: ....…………………………………………………..

Participant's name: ....…………………………………………………………

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

…………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………..

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 25 September 2012; AUTEC Reference number 12/219

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Participant Information Sheet

AUT
UNIVERSITY
TE WĀNANGA ARONUI O TAMAKI MAKAU RAU

Date Information Sheet Produced:

08/08/12

Project Title

PR personnel in Taiwanese hotels: preferences, policies, and hiring decisions: A case study in Taipei.

An Invitation

Dear xxx,

I am Weiyu Cheng, a Masters student of Auckland University of Technology, majoring in International Hospitality Management. I would like to invite you to participate in research focusing on the factors influencing hiring decisions for public relations personnel in Taipei's hotels. As a manager, your opinions and experiences in the hotel industry are very important to this research.

What is the purpose of this research?

The aim of this study is to explore what factors influence the selection of public relations personnel for Taiwanese hotels. While there has been research in both the Public Relations (PR) field and the hospitality industry, the factors that influence management decisions when hiring PR personnel remain unexplored.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You are the recruitment managers for PR personnel of the four-star and five-star hotels in Taipei, and I think you may have some important perspectives that will benefit this research.

What will happen in this research?

Your participation will involve a 45 minute interview where you will be asked your opinion concerning the selections and hiring of public relations personnel. The interview will be scheduled at a time of your convenience. The interview will be recorded and a copy of the transcript will be sent to you to for your feedback prior to use within the study.

What are the discomforts and risks?

You should not experience any discomfort, embarrassment or humiliation during the interview. In addition, your name will not be mentioned in the written documentation so that you will not be able to be identified from the results of this study. You can refuse any questions you do not wish to answer. Moreover, you can also stop the interview at any time and withdraw from the research project at any stage.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

The places for conducting interviews can be chosen for your convenience (e.g a public place or your office). In addition, it will be ensured that the names of all participants will not be disclosed so that you will not be identified.

What are the benefits?

The findings may offer some insight for both management and women working in the hospitality industry and those who are also interested in hospitality selection criteria and employee recruitments. It will also provide an understanding of this phenomenon within Taiwan's hotel industry and provide insights for the general hospitality and PR industries. In addition, the completion of the research will assist me to obtain a Master's Degree in International Hospitality Management.

How will my privacy be protected?

Your name or any information that may lead to your identification will not be mentioned in the written documentation. In addition, only the researcher and two university research supervisors will have access to your records.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

The interview will be around 45 minutes in duration.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

I would be grateful if you would consider expressing your interest in participating in my research within seven days. If you have any further questions, please contact me via email (aigner79@gmail.com).

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you agree to participate in this study, I will ask you to fill in the Consent Form when we meet for the interview.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

A summary of the research results will be sent to you if requested.

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

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Warren Goodsir (see contact details below)

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEC, Dr Rosemary Godbold, *rosemary.godbold@aut.ac.nz* , 0064 9 921 9999 ext 6902.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Researcher Contact Details:

Weiyu Cheng

Ph in NZ: 0064 21-552-349 /   Ph in Taiwan: 00886 953-231-986

Email address: aigner79@gmail.com

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Primary supervisor: Warren Goodsir

Ph: 0064 9 921-9999 ext. 8374

Email address: warren.goodsir@aut.ac.nz