The Role of Culture in Service Quality: A Cross-National Study in

Britain and Trinidad & Tobago

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ABSTRACT

The University of Manchester
Sean B. Chung
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
The Role of Culture in Service Quality: A Cross-National Study in Britain and Trinidad & Tobago

The primary aim of this thesis was to explore the role culture plays in service delivery, more specifically on consumers’ perceptions of service quality and its potential impact on complaint behaviour. A key premise of the thesis was that prominent models of service quality are conceptualized largely in western contexts without considering conceptual meaning in various contexts or nuances of meaning. Furthermore, there may indeed be unique aspects of culture in each context that affect how service quality is perceived but are not yet identified in the extant literature. With this in mind, a qualitative approach was employed in order to gain an in-depth understanding of consumers’ perceptions.

The thesis is comprised of three related papers. Study 1 was conducted with a student sample of Trinidad and Tobago nationals currently enrolled at a large university in the North West region of Britain. This study served as a pilot for the larger cross-national study. A holistic and multi-dimensional hierarchical framework labelled Conceptualization of Service Quality in Cultural Context (CSQCC) was developed based on the interview data and thematic analyses. The CSQCC included two key cultural triggers labelled Culture of Closeness and Culture of Servitude which have an overarching influence on all factors in the model. Different from traditional service quality models, in addition to the unique incorporation of culture, the CSQCC also encompasses human resources and operational variables – Employee Work Ethic/Attitudes, Organizational Responsibility and Customer Responsibility.

In Study 2 British and Trinidad & Tobago nationals currently residing in their country of birth were interviewed. Data analyses and findings demonstrated that the general structure of the CSQCC identified in Study 1 could be upheld also for the British sample, although the importance of different factors in the CSQCC framework appears to vary for Britain and T&T. In addition, data analysis revealed two cultural triggers for British nationals (British Reserve and Culture of Cordiality). For Trinbagonian nationals, Festive Culture and Culture of Entitlement were identified as cultural triggers.

Data for Study 3 on cross-national comparison of consumer complaint behaviours were collected at the same time as Study 2. A Framework of Culture and Consumer Complaint Behaviour (FCCCB) included (1) four key behavioural processes with emotions playing a central role; and (2) five post-interaction behavioural outcomes. The unique cultural triggers identified in Study 1 and 2 were also found to influence these behavioural processes which in turn impact behavioural outcomes. To the best of the researcher’s knowledge an integrative model such as the FCCCB has not been previously proposed.

There is no such thing as “culture-free” behaviour; culture and human behaviour are deeply intertwined. Multinationals and global firms need to be environmentally sensitive, identify the cultural triggers in potential markets, and assess their likely impact on service quality delivery.
Declaration

I, Sean B. Chung, declare that no portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.
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Dedication

The decision to commence my PhD was one that was not taken lightly, made with careful thought, more so, due to the implications it would have on my family life and those most dear to me. It was certainly a long and difficult road for my family who has been here in Manchester, riding the undulating waves, some highs and many lows. I would like to thank my wife — Michelle, and two children — Aidan and Elyssa, for sticking it out with me through thick and thin, each in their own way having sacrificed a whole lot over the last few years. Personally, I have grown stronger in many ways and hope that in the long term as a family we can look back positively despite the multitude of challenges and obstacles, to see that this period of time would have only enriched our lives.

This thesis would also not be possible without the consistent and dedicated support of my supervisor, Jikyeong, who always provided timely and well-guided advice on many an occasion. I am wholeheartedly thankful for the gentle guidance and the valuable knowledge passed-on in the most subtle ways; patiently effective which would no doubt serve me well in my ongoing career as an academic, researcher, and enabling supervisor. I look forward to our continued relationship and collaboration well into the future. Also, a special thank you extended to Charles and Emma for their important suggestions and feedback at my annual reviews.

I would also like to thank a few others, who shall remain unnamed but who have in their own way, directly or indirectly positively impact my life and that of my family during this testing but fulfilling journey. Above all, I would like to thank God, for always opening doors, the many times they appeared to be closed shut, placing individuals in our lives with precise timing to provide vital support when most needed.

I dedicate this thesis unreservedly, with all my love and gratitude to Michelle, Aidan and Elyssa, the end of one journey has come, may we look forward to new beginnings and a rewarding journey ahead.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Role of Services in a Global Context

The last 30 years has seen the service sector grow increasingly in importance, so much that it has done so at a much faster rate than merchandise trade and currently accounts for approximately two-thirds of world output (Gresser, 2012; Malhotra et al., 2005) and occupies the position as the world’s single largest source of employment (WTO, 2014). The strength of developed countries has long been attributed to the enormous contribution of services to their GDP, particularly for the USA and most of Western Europe’s developed economies. Furthermore, it has been observed that developing countries have been increasingly exporting services (Saez and Grover, 2010), which has led to unparalleled economic growth and development for many and improved their standards of living (Ghani et al., 2011). This is in great part due to technological advancements in communication which have had a significant impact on the ways firm do business (Cattaneo et al., 2010; Malhotra et al., 2005). These advancements have also had a major impact on consumer behaviour as increased access to information have made consumers far more globally aware with ready information at their “finger tips,” leading to heightened discernment in their assessments of products/services (Malik, 2012). The customers have also become more demanding because of the complex and hyper-competitive global business environment in which firms are competing for the same customers who themselves are becoming increasingly global and more sophisticated with an unrelenting demand for near perfect products and services.
In today’s complex and competitive global marketplace firms must continually strive for sustainable competitive advantage in their efforts to gain, retain and increase business and improve overall profitability. It is becoming a progressively difficult task for firms to distinguish their offerings as most product innovations are becoming increasingly commoditised, easily copied, or simply incremental improvements on existing products, while differentiation based on product quality or price parameters are sustainable only in the short term. Consequently, service differentiation and service led-growth has become the primary focus of many businesses (Reinartz and Ulaga, 2008) in order to increase chances of long term success. Similarly, the provision of high quality service is increasingly being identified as a key competitive advantage, more so for service firms (Dagger and Sweeney, 2007; Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons, 2006), as it brings with it a range of benefits such as favourable customer satisfaction ratings, positive word-of-mouth, customer referrals, customer retention, decreased consumer complaining behaviour and improved financial performance (Angur et al., 1999; Dagger and Sweeney, 2007; Thompson et al., 1985; Yavas and Benkenstein, 2007).

Alongside brand image, quality of service has become an important route to differentiation in the market (Grönroos, 2001; Zeithaml et al., 1988), and it has been recognised that creating meaningful customer experiences (Prakash and Mohanty, 2012) should be an essential part of any firm’s marketing arsenal. According to Buzzell and Gale (1987, 7) “In the long run, the most important single factor affecting a business unit’s performance is the quality of its products and services, relative to those of competitors.” Nevertheless, in order for firms to successfully leverage service quality as a viable differentiation strategy it is imperative they identify the antecedents of service
quality from the customer’s perspective. As emphasized by Berry (1986, 48) “Giving customers what they want is marketing’s oldest and most important idea.” This is particularly relevant since it has been observed that often a key cause of poorly perceived service and service failure is the incongruity between organizational strategic intent and what customers actually require or expect of the firm (Goldstein et al., 2002; Johnston and Clark, 2005; Parasuraman et al., 1985). Customer centricity and the establishment of an appropriate service concept and strategy cannot be achieved without a clear understanding of the customer’s viewpoint. Thus, the approach adopted in this study is to obtain in depth understanding of service quality and failure from the customers’ perspective.

1.2. Theoretical Focus: The Role of Culture in Services

When firms operate beyond home country borders, their understanding of customers’ needs and wants must be thoroughly investigated. In particular, understanding the motives and preferences which guide decision making is essential. The error of adopting an ethnocentric view without prior knowledge of the target group must be avoided (De Ruyter et al., 1998) since the customers’ viewpoint or perceptions is central. Rightly, Edvardsson and Olsson (1996, 145) critically lament, "The main task of service development is to create the conditions for the right customer outcome. Customers have different values and grounds for assessment; they perceive one and the same service in different ways. What the customer does not perceive does not exist – is not a customer outcome."

Indeed, several authors have identified that service quality evaluations vary among people from different cultures (Donthu and Yoo, 1998; Furrer et al., 2000; Imrie
et al., 2002; Mattila, 1999; Raajpoot, 2004). This view is also argued by Hofstede (2001) who suggests that one’s cultural background does influence behaviour. Since culture provides the framework for social interactions and rules within a society (Triandis, 1989), consumers’ expectations and perceptions during the service encounters may in fact vary from culture to culture, or one country to the next. In fact, increasing frequency with which firms actively participate in the global business arena in multiple countries and market settings logically places a greater importance on understanding culture’s influence on service delivery in different country contexts.

Early work by Malhotra et al. (1994) hypothesized that there are likely to be differences between developed and developing countries with regard to cultural and environmental factors. In a later empirical work, Malhothra (2005) concluded that marketers must be aware that there are differences in these contexts with regard to service quality perceptions and evaluations. Despite this and other research emphasizing the potential importance of culture, it is observed that major service quality models in the extant literature (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Dabholkar et al., 1995; Grönroos, 1984; Parasuraman et al., 1988; Philip and Hazlett, 1997; Teas, 1993) do not explicitly account for culture and other wider environmental influences in their conceptualisations. More significantly, the author argues that these prominent models are conceptualised largely in western contexts without regard, for example, of issues of conceptual meaning in context and the view that each context is unique. No real attention is paid as to the attendant meanings in other cultures and/or countries. These instruments are consistently adopted elsewhere, by academics and practitioners in other contexts to conduct quantitative studies without due consideration of their appropriateness.
Schembri and Sandberg (2011) maintained that notwithstanding the valuable insights dominant models of service quality have provided, research has largely ignored what service quality means to consumers and how context may influence this meaning. The suitability of service quality models/measures have been called into question as they tend not to perform comparably in other cultures (Smith and Reynolds, 2001), particularly the relevance of western scales (Carrillat et al., 2007). As such there have been calls to develop culture specific measures of service quality (Carrillat et al., 2007; Raajpoot, 2004; Winsted, 1997). Firms must appreciate that each service context may be unique and thus be fully cognisant of the differences between the context of empirical scale development and context for intended use. In addition, Leung et al. (2005) advocate that a broader perspective is also needed in international business research, that is, in conjunction with the effects of culture, an understanding of the influence of socio-economic and political factors is also important. In fact, in this research study a dynamic view of culture has been adopted, one in which the cultural context is broadly defined to include broader ecological and socio-political influences which as a collective shapes consumers’ behaviours (Berry et al., 1992).

Beyond perceptions of service quality, culture has also been found to have different influences on consumer complaint behaviour, both in terms of types of complaints and consumers’ behavioural intentions following a service failure (Liu and McClure, 2001). For example, Anglos were found to be more confrontational than Confucian Asian cultures (Ashkanasy et al., 2002), and these difference are believed to influence their behaviours. Naturally, managing the complaint handling process during and after a service failure is just as important as managing initial contact as either
outcomes should influence overall service quality perceptions and consumers’ intention to patronize a firm in the future. A strategic focus on complaint handling and the recovery process may be more beneficial than attracting new customers and lead to cost savings (Shoham et al., 2012), due to the higher attended costs to attract new customers into the firm (Goodman, 2006). Despite these benefits and burgeoning transnational business activity, there is still very limited research examining how complaint behaviour differs across nations (Yuksel et al., 2006).

1.3. Research Aims and Expected Contributions

The overall aim of this thesis was to explore the role the culture construct plays in service quality delivery, more specifically on consumers’ perceptions of service quality and its potential impact on complaint behaviour when service failure is experienced. In addition, there was a cross-national, cross-cultural focus to examine two contrasting country contexts—the United Kingdom (a developed country) and Trinidad & Tobago (a developing country)—to explore the role of culture with a view of its potential implications for future model building. This was accomplished based on work completed in three-phases. The first phase of research was to examine culture’s influence on a single group of country nationals in terms of consumer service quality perceptions and the service quality construct. The second phase of research was developed based on knowledge and experience gained in the first phase and extended to a cross-national study examination of nationals’ perceptions of the service quality construct in two distinct country contexts, to further explore the potential influence of culture. Finally, the third phase of the study involved an examination of the consumer
complaint and service recovery behavior of the same sample of country nationals utilised in phase two. In all three phases of the study, the researcher’s focus was on the implications for model building, service quality (phase 1 and phase 2) and consumer complaint behavior (phase 3).

A qualitative research method was employed in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the consumers’ perceptions of service quality in the two country contexts, prioritising the consumer’s voice (Giorgi, 1983; Thompson et al., 1989). Such an approach is essential for model building, as enhancement of a firm’s service concepts and ideas cannot be developed without the consumers’ input in the process, adopting a truly customer oriented approach (Grönroos, 1982). Furthermore, Laurent (2000) has strongly emphasised the importance of adopting qualitative methods in marketing modelling so that researchers can identify salient variables and relationships to incorporate in such models.

Notably, it is observed that research on service quality has by and large assumed a positivist’s philosophy (Schembri and Sandberg, 2011), typically constrained by the boundaries of existing literature as such this study in part addresses this gap by adopting an interpretivist philosophy and qualitative method (Creswell, 2013; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Another expected contribution was that the findings of the study would serve to minimise the persistent gap between the quality of service a firm delivers (operations perspective) and how the customer sees the service (the customer’s perspective), as doing so is essential (Johnston and Clark, 2005). Since such a gap leads to poor service quality evaluations, service failure and ultimately dissatisfaction and/or consumer complaints (Parasuraman et al., 1985; Zeithaml, 2009).
Another key aspect of the overall study was to garner a deeper appreciation of not only consumer service quality perceptions, but additionally a parallel understanding of precise complaint behaviour of nationals in the two country contexts and the potential for future conceptualizations and understanding of the consumer complaint behaviour and culture constructs. This approach was more likely to uncover unique-emic variables or universal-etic variables in the contexts under study (Berry, 1989; Maheswaran and Shavitt, 2000) and advance the extant literature.

The overall study sought to bridge the aforementioned shortcomings or gaps by understanding the impact culture has on individuals' notion, as to what constitutes good quality service, as well as the potentiality of culture’s influence in the event of service failures, at least in Britain and Trinidad & Tobago (T&T) country contexts. Any culture-level concepts were to be derived firstly, from parallel individual-level analyses (Smith, 2011), that is, independent of each other, then efforts made to ascertain the extent of cross-cultural congruence and implications for perceptions of service quality and model building.

The title and general aims for each paper are presented in the following sections. In addition, the nature and extent of the candidate’s own contribution and the contribution of the co-author are described. Finally, the overall expected contributions of the PhD thesis are presented.
1.3.1. Paper 1. Conceptualization of Service Quality in Cultural Context: A Qualitative Approach

**Authorship:** Sean Chung and Jikyeong Kang

**Target Journal:** *Journal of Services Management*

**Summary:** The overall aim of paper 1 was to examine the role that culture plays in influencing consumer perceptions of Trinidad & Tobago (T&T) nationals towards service quality, taking a “fresh” perspective without a priori assumptions and to explore the implications for service quality model building. More specifically, the aim was to: (1) provide a context-rich picture of the way consumers perceive the phenomenon of service quality in the T&T country context; (2) understand what criteria T&T nationals use to assess service quality; (3) explore the potential role of culture in service evaluations; and (4) offer implications for a future conceptual model of service quality and its measurement in varied contexts.

Paper 1 focuses on the first phase of research, the aim of which was to examine culture’s influence on a single group of country nationals in terms of consumer service quality perceptions and the service quality construct. A key premise of this phase was driven in part by personal experience that it appeared fellow Trinbagonian nationals possibly use different criteria when evaluating service quality as well as to uncover why service quality was generally so poor relative to personal experiences in other countries the researcher has travelled to and lived in for reasonable periods of time. Furthermore, informal discussion with fellow nationals also revealed that there was a high level of tolerance and/or acceptance of substandard levels of service. Comments such as “poor
service is acceptable in our culture” indicating high tolerance levels of the citizenry or “our culture is laid back” in order to justify poor service delivery were common.

It was therefore imperative that to attain or garner a more latent understanding of these ‘well-reasoned’ comments by Trinidad & Tobago nationals the process should be facilitated by a less restricted or flexible view of what culture is and its likely impact, the real answers only to be unearthed or discovered through thorough research.

1.3.2. Paper 2. Cultural Triggers: Understanding Service Quality in International Contexts

Authorship: Sean Chung and Jikyeong Kang

Target Journal: European Journal of Marketing

Summary: The overall aim of paper 2 was to thoroughly investigate the role culture plays in influencing consumer perceptions towards service quality in cross-national contexts in Britain (developed country) and T&T (developing country). Based on the findings in paper 1, a sample of nationals from Britain and T&T, who currently reside in their home country were interviewed in order to substantiate the model Conceptualization of Service Quality in Cultural Context (CSQCC) developed in paper 1. Thus, the objectives of the paper 1 were broadened to take into consideration the cross-national focus. Specifically, the research objectives of paper 2 were: (1) provide a context-rich picture of the way consumers perceive the phenomenon of service quality both in Britain and T&T country contexts; (2) understand what criteria British nationals and T&T nationals use to assess service quality; (3) explore the potential role of culture in service evaluations in each context; and (4) offer implications for a future conceptual
model of service quality and its measurement which can be of value in other similar country contexts.

Paper 2 was developed from work in the second phase of the research and based on new data sets collected from nationals of Britain and T&T. The design utilized in phase one served as a basis of knowledge and experience which allowed phase two data to be collected and analysed with improved ease. Phase two data allowed the research to make cross-national comparisons to establish whether nationals’ perceptions of the service quality construct in two distinct country contexts where indeed influenced by the culture construct. A key premise in this phase was that specific aspects of culture may come into play, possibly different in each country context and may take precedent or have greater influence, a process similar to that referred to as “value trumping” (Osland et al., 2000) which may ultimately directly or indirectly influence consumer behavior and service quality perceptions.

In order to make valid cross-cultural comparisons between British and T&T subjects, built into the research design was specific sample criteria to ensure participants had similar backgrounds and experiences (Yeganeh et al., 2004). This eliminated or reduced outside influences and contamination from other cultural entities”(Douglas and Craig, 1997) and allowed for better interpretation of findings. Specifically, nationals of each country had to be natural-born citizens currently living in their home country, tertiary educated, middle class, did not live abroad over the last 3 years, and must be 21 and over.
1.3.3. Paper 3. Understanding British and Trinbagonians’ Complaint Behaviours: A Comparative Study of Service Failure

**Authorship:** Sean Chung and Jikyeong Kang

**Target Journal:** *Journal of Marketing Management*

**Summary:** The overall aim of this study was to build on existing consumer complaint behaviour literature by examining and providing extended cross-national insights into the complaint behaviour of nationals in Britain (developed country) and T&T (developing country) contexts. More specifically, the aim was to garner a comprehensive understanding of the consumer complaint behaviour process in the different contexts with regard to service failure, initial customer reaction or general temperament, willingness to complain or not complain, channels utilised, and relevant patronage intentions. The intention was to uncover factors that drive their reactions and determine whether there are emic (context specific) or etic (universal) drivers of complaint behaviour.

Following on from work on paper 2, phase three of the research utilized the same data set and involved questions and analyses which focused on nationals’ experiences of service failure noting behavioural processes and outcomes and explored how cultural factors possibly impact consumers behavior in that regard. Furthermore, the work in phase 3 built on previous findings from both paper 1 and paper in terms of culture’s influence on consumer behavior and examined whether newly identified aspects of culture do in fact also influence consumer complaint behavior in the two country contexts. In addition, it is a natural assumption that such factors if salient in service quality perceptions are likely to have some type of influence on consumer complaint...
behavior, this fact coupled with calls for research on cross-national consumer complaint behavior because of the limited extant literature created an impetus for the work on paper 3 (Schoefer, 2010; Yuksel et al., 2006).

1.3.4. Contribution of the PhD Candidate

The PhD candidate’s interest in services and service quality was initially conceived during his undergraduate programme as an international student and also during the period of his overseas internships. A central question at the time was: “Why are there such vast differences in service quality delivery in different parts of the world?” Furthermore, the candidate’s observation that his fellow T&T nationals were much more tolerant of poor service quality as compared to Americans was one of the factors that increased his interest in the subject area. This interest in service quality was formally extended in his Masters dissertation work. Ideas for his PhD thesis were refined and further developed based on a comprehensive review of the literature and also through discussions with his supervisor who has lived in four different continents and has shared similar experiences.

All three papers included in this thesis were based on the work of the PhD candidate who took primary responsibility for developing the research design, data collection and conducting the data analyses. Write-up of the thesis and the three papers was completed by the PhD candidate with effective, expert and timely support by the thesis supervisor (and papers co-author) at each stage of the thesis culminating in successful completion.
1.3.5. Overall Expected Contribution of the PhD Thesis

Understanding culture’s influence on consumers’ perception of service quality is of theoretical and practical importance. The main focus of the thesis was to understand the role of culture in service delivery both in a developed country and developing country contexts, namely, in Britain and Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) respectively, by exploring consumers’ perceptions of service quality and its potential impact on complaint behaviour in the event of service failures.

Furthermore, the cross-national study involving both a developed country and a developing country also contributes to the extant literature on service quality and services marketing in general, especially because the literature in developing country contexts are relatively sparse. Despite claims that there is a growing convergence of consumption patterns globally, such claims tend to remain superficial due to strong influences of American and Western European popular culture on beliefs, norms and ideas about how individuals, groups, and institutions should behave (Leung et al., 2005). Thus, this thesis also attempts to explore whether consumer perceptions of quality are converging due to larger global forces or whether there are indeed enduring cultural factors in play that distinguish or influence perceptions in context.

Another potential contribution is that the findings of the study would serve to minimise the persistent gap between the quality of service a firm delivers (operations perspective) and how the customer sees the service (the customer’s perspective) (Johnston and Clark, 2005). Since such a gap leads to poor service quality evaluations, service failure, and ultimately dissatisfaction and/or consumer complaints (Parasuraman et al., 1985; Zeithaml, 2009). This would be particularly useful to practitioners when
developing service and related operational strategies to more effectively and efficiently provide high quality service and bring greater profitability to their firms. Since cultural influences are hypothesized to potentially widen this gap, it is believed that the study’s findings would provide a deeper appreciation of culture’s influence in each context as well as valuable information for firms’ in augmenting international marketing strategies as they interact and engage in business in varied contexts.

Adoption and implementations of culture-specific service culture initiatives more in line with customer needs and wants by adopting the customers’ perspective is natural and sensible. The current study would add to services marketing knowledge by filling a gap by expanding our understanding of, for example, how and why consumers associate certain elements with high quality service or poor quality service in the two country contexts under examination.

To market services effectively to consumers all over the globe in many markets in which multinationals operate, service providers must have an intimate understanding of their consumers, their motives, and drivers of their behaviour. Thus, in this thesis, culture is hypothesized as a key driver of behaviours, as culture and behaviour are inextricably intertwined. According to Miller (1999, 90) “… psychological development… is patterned critically by the social, economic, political, and cultural concerns of particular historical points in time… cultures and selves define and build upon each other in an ongoing cycle of mutual constitution.”
1.4. An Interpretivist Philosophy and Qualitative Methods

In order to gain a sound understanding of the conceptualisation of service quality in the two country contexts, and given the exploratory nature of the study and the potential for yet unidentified culture specific factors that influence consumer perceptions, the use of a qualitative research method was deemed suitable.

First and foremost, the qualitative method employed in this study was driven by the researcher’s ontological and epistemological stances. Ontological questions are related to the nature of reality or worldview of the researcher, and in turn influences his/her epistemological position—the theory of knowledge—that is, how researchers in the social sciences interpret and understand human action or behavior (Sandberg, 2005). A more detailed discussion on the researcher’s ontological and epistemological viewpoint and its influence in the study is provided in Chapter 5—Section 5.5, although a brief discussion ensues below.

There exist two broad and contrasting research philosophies: positivism and interpretivism. Researchers who adopt a positivist philosophy regard reality as being “out there” and independent of the researcher which can be discovered utilizing conventional scientific methodologies (Bryman, 2012). Positivist researchers remain detached from what they research, knowledge is assumed to be a given and thus the researcher must use objective means, that is, quantitative methods when studying phenomena (Lincoln and Guba, 2005). On the other hand, researchers who adopt an interpretivist philosophy regard reality as “socially constructed,” thus there are multiple realities, and assume meaning is created by the individual or a collective (Bryman, 2012). Interpretivists treat people as research participants with whom they can interact,
not as objects as in the positivist tradition, and utilize qualitative methods to investigate, interpret and describe the social realities of the phenomena being studied (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

Consistent with an interpretivist philosophy, a central focus of the thesis was on the consumer’s voice (Giorgi, 1983; Thompson et al., 1989), the purpose of the inquiry was to understand the phenomenon of service quality and how it may be socially constructed. It was observed during a review of the extant literature that research on service quality has by and large assumed a positivistic philosophy (Schembri and Sandberg, 2011), typically constrained by the boundaries of existing literature. It has been argued that through the use of an interpretivist philosophy in service quality research, researchers can garner a closer appreciation of the customer’s experience of service quality and enhance understanding on the contextual and dynamic nature of service (Edvardsson and Mattsson, 1993; Schembri and Sandberg, 2002; Thompson, 1997). Thus, this thesis in part also addressed this gap by adopting an interpretivist philosophy.

As briefly discussed earlier there is a relationship between a researcher’s ontological and epistemological leanings and the adoption of either a quantitative or qualitative research method. It is argued that it is impossible to engage in knowledge creation without tacit assumptions about what is reality, what knowledge is and how it is constructed (Carter and Little, 2007). In this study a qualitative research method was employed which allowed closer contact and interaction between research participants and researcher and provided the opportunity for deeper insight to add richness and depth to the data gathered.
Indeed, Mason (2006, 22) states that “Qualitative research aims to understand and communicate its subjects’ experiences, interpretations and meanings, and consequently qualitative data and argument can be highly compelling, with a distinctive ‘real life’ immediacy and resonance.” The utilisation of qualitative data collection tools such as observation studies, focus groups and in-depth interviews afford a depth of understanding that is not possible when employing borrowed scales from past research (Gilmore and McMullan, 2009). Furthermore, this approach is beneficial since it could lead to the enhancement of organizations service strategies which cannot be effectively developed without the consumers input (Grönroos, 1982).

The main instrument utilised in this thesis was semi-structured interviews, because it allows researchers to get into the interviewees’ or participants mind and garner deep insight into their perspectives (Patton, 1990). Too much focus by researchers on scale development and its use can be extremely limiting and short-sighted for the services marketing field and future measurement, the richness of in-depth methods can provide valuable insight and guidance for practitioners (Gilmore and McMullan, 2009). The nature of the culture construct also lends itself best to utilising qualitative methods since there are concerns with the ability of individuals to consciously and explicitly articulate one’s cultural belief’s or values on self-report instruments such as Hofstede and Schwartz (Markus and Kitayama, 2010) as well as the typical issues of conceptual equivalence and instrument bias (Smith and Reynolds, 2001). The approach taken in this study can overcome these problems by eliciting informants’ feelings in specific situations – service encounters – and draw understanding from how they regulate self in these situations would provide
understanding through their patterns of behaviour, which may be implicit and possibly unconscious.

Consistent with the qualitative method employed is the personal perspective of the candidate that reality is subjective, and all knowledge is socially constructed in context. Hence, the focus of this study was to examine the culturally constructed worlds of consumers in Britain and T&T. According to Sandberg (2005, 45) reality is “always coloured by our specific historical, cultural, ideological, gender-based, and linguistic understanding of reality.” The emphasis of interpretive paradigms is the pursuit of “understanding of the meaning of human actions and experiencing, and on generating accounts from the viewpoints of those involved” (Fossey et al., 2002, 719/720).

According to Markus and Kityama (2010), the self or individual at the centre of a socio-culturally patterned world is tacitly or overtly at work and influences all aspects of individuals’ behaviours such as perception, cognition, emotion, motivation, relationships and group processes. Thus of particular relevance in this study is improved comprehension of the processes through which the individuals’ culturally constructed worlds influence their perceptions of service quality delivery.

1.5. The Cross-National and Cross-Cultural Contexts of the Study

One of the most important considerations in cross-cultural research is the selection of the countries and cultures from which the samples are drawn (Samiee and Jeong, 1994). Any decision on the details of sample composition should be preceded by the selection of appropriate locations for the study since the said locations may hold specific features that may influence sample design (Ritchie et al., 2003). In the service literature,
often the rationale for country selection is not specified and clearly thought through, as such inconsistent findings can possibly be due to strong variations in selection of country and within-country or culture samples (Zhang et al., 2008). The possibility of alternative explanations of differences across cultures is a matter of importance for cross-cultural consumer behaviour researchers, and brings the matter of comparability of results to the fore with respect to any type of selection criteria. In order to prevent or limit competing explanations researchers should select cultures and environments that are as closely comparable as possible (Brislin and Baumgardner, 1971; Samiee and Jeong, 1994). Gallagher and Savage (2012) even recommend selecting countries from the same cultural area since “differences potentially unrelated to the research are minimized” (p.1035). This is one approach that may facilitate easier identification and analysis of cultural differences and relationships.

Cross-cultural research on consumer behaviour should normally consist of three or more countries in order to facilitate effective cross-country analysis. However, studies consisting of three or more countries are often not feasible due to limited resources (Yeganeh et al., 2004), as the lone researcher or small teams are often constrained by financial and personal resources (Hantrais, 1999). In addition, Sekaran (1983) advised that well-designed 2- nation studies should not be discouraged as findings can be systematically integrated with subsequent studies, and at the same time build on the limited cross-cultural research literature that exists relative to domestic research. Furthermore, even research among different nationalities within a single country should be welcomed, as exploration and discovery should not be stifled, since any differences
traced may very well offer stronger evidence of the impact of cultural traits (Sekaran, 1983).

The countries of interest in this study are Britain a developed country and leading Western power, and the other is Trinidad & Tobago (T&T) a small-island developing state, both countries have long had democratically representative governments. Ideally, the study should span other countries and by extension other cultures to improve reliably of results, however, time and financial resources were strong mitigating circumstances for conducting only a two-country study. T&T as a developing nation is one of the wealthiest and most developed in the Caribbean region, and has the highest per capita GDP in Latin America and the Caribbean of USD$20,400 (CIA, 2013a), while Britain is the second largest economy in Europe after Germany, and a leading trading power and financial center with a per capita GDP of USD$37,500 (CIA, 2013b). Both Britain and T&T have relatively large middle classes. As far back over 20 years ago T&T was considered an “upper middle-income” developing country (IBRD, 1989) with a well-educated populace with a literacy rate of 98.8% (CIA, 2013a), 43.5% completed secondary school and 14.6% tertiary education (Central Statistical Office, 2011). In Britain more than seven out of 10 people consider themselves to be middle class (Doughty, 2011), there has been an observed upward trend of Britain’s growing middle class (BBC, 2006), that is also well-educated with a literacy rate of 99% (CIA, 2013b), 37% secondary school attainment and 26% tertiary education (UNESCO, 2003).

Historically, both countries selected for this study have some commonalities and degree of closeness despite being geographically far apart. As a country Trinidad and Tobago shares an Anglo heritage and has much in common with Britain, as a former
British colony from 1797 to 1962 and existing member of the British Commonwealth, the major language in T&T is English, while its education and governmental models mirrors that of the British system (Watts, 1990). These potentially confounding environmental characteristics are likely to reduce competing explanations and reflect true differences psychologically or culturally unique to the populations of interest for the phenomenon under study (Salciuviene et al., 2005; Samiee and Jeong, 1994; Sekaran, 1983; Yeganeh et al., 2004). For example, Punnett, Singh and Williams (1994) suggested that strong Anglophone influences and similarities may result in findings that are attributed to core cultural values rather than country differences or to population variation. In choosing, Britain and T&T as the countries of interest for comparative analysis it is hoped that findings may be attributed to cultural rather than non-cultural variables and any spurious associations minimized. This comparative, cross-national research approach is a deliberate attempt by the researcher to contrast, build, and analyze the concepts of service quality and culture in the two country contexts.

In cross-national studies involving the study of culture, country is viewed as an appropriate unit of analysis (Douglas and Craig, 2009) and often explicitly or implicitly is used to reflect culture and thus parallels cultural boundaries with political entities (Clark, 1990; Hantrais, 1999; Sivakumar and Nakata, 2001; Yeganeh et al., 2004). This approach typically allows researchers to make inferences on culture’s impact based on such observed differences as value orientations, sociocultural norms, cognitive processes, or other phenomena (Clark, 1990; Sivakumar and Nakata, 2001) with country acting as the geographic unit or domain to define the boundaries of analysis (Georgas and Berry, 1995).
Drawing on the assumption of equating culture with country it is essential that researchers recognize that culture and subcultures exist within a context. Even though culture plays a significant role in influencing consumers’ attitudes and behaviour, “culture’s influence does not occur in a vacuum” (Douglas and Craig, 2009, 132). According to Hantrais (1999, 94), “context itself serves as an important explanatory variable and an enabling tool.” The role of context is particularly salient in comparative studies as both macro and micro-environmental factors can introduce a confounding effect(s) and influence consumer behaviour both directly and indirectly. Context in itself shapes culture as well as is shaped by it (culture), the relationship between culture and context is mutually constitutive. Disentangling one from the other is indeed problematic since culture is viewed as an integral element of culture while cultural phenomena are interpreted in relation to a context (Douglas and Craig, 2009). Coupled with the fact that culture is a complex and fuzzy concept and the potentiality of the diverse range of contexts in which cultural influences are examined (Craig and Douglas, 2006), emphasizes the need to adopt a more a more broader view of culture in this study.

It is suggested that the influence of the cultural context at both the macro or country level, as well at micro or levels of culture (subcultures) needs to be recognized and assimilated into future research designs (Douglas and Craig, 2009; Yeganeh et al., 2004). Indeed, in this dissertation, a dynamic view of culture has been adopted, one in which the cultural context is broadly defined to include broader ecological and socio-political influences which as a collective shapes consumers’ behaviours (Berry et al., 1992; Georgas and Berry, 1995). The very complexity assumed in a comparative, cross-national study of this nature, and consideration of the omnipresent theoretical concept of
culture reinforces the need for a more encompassing and dynamic cultural perspective and naturally lends itself to the qualitative research method employed in the dissertation.

1.6. Why an Alternative Thesis?

Prior to commencing his PhD programme, the candidate was a full-time lecturer for over six years at teaching-focused institutions in Trinidad and Tobago. Although he has had good teaching experience as well as administrative responsibilities as a subject head for marketing, he feels research/publication is the area he needs to strengthen. He feels his PhD journey has enhanced his research skills and helped him establish an academic research agenda for future career at research-focused universities. Furthermore, he feels an opportunity to submit his PhD thesis in an alternative format would allow a greater synergy between thesis writing and his interest in research journal publication.
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CHAPTER 2.

Conceptualization of Service Quality in Cultural Context:

A Qualitative Approach

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Abstract

Purpose – The study’s aim was to examine the role cultures plays in consumers’ perceptions of service quality and develop an integrated model of service quality and culture.

Design/methodology/approach – An exploratory qualitative research orientation was adopted, utilizing semi-structured interviews. This approach allowed the authors to explore the phenomenon of service quality from the consumers’ viewpoint without a priori assumptions.

Findings – Data analyses led to the emergence of a multi-dimensional hierarchical framework called the Conceptualization of Service Quality in Cultural Context (CSQCC). Within this framework a Culture of Closeness and Culture of Servitude had an overarching presence; in addition, aspects of human resources and operational variables emerged as key elements within the CSQCC.

Limitations – A key limitation is that the CSQCC is a conceptual model and thus requires operationalization and testing. The integration of marketing, human resources and operational interfaces would make operationalization and measurement more complex.

Practical implications – There is no such thing as “culture-free” behavior; culture and human behavior are deeply intertwined, and thus multinationals and global firms need to be environmentally sensitive, identify the cultural triggers in potential markets, and assess their likely impact on service quality delivery. The CSQCC in its current state and when operationalized would be a useful tool in this regard.
Keywords: Services Marketing, Perceived Service Quality, Culture, Service Quality Model, Qualitative

Article Classification: Research paper
2.1. Introduction

The services sector has contributed significantly to some of the world’s largest economies, and for many developing economies it has played an even more important role (Ghani et al., 2011). According to Gresser (2012) the sector accounts for 70% of world output and employs a similar share of workers, and of the world’s 3.2 billion workforce, approximately 60% of men and 70% of women work in services. In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, a healthy recovery and the future of the global economy are intricately tied to service-led growth (Ostrom et al., 2010).

Due to the consistent growth in the services sector, there has been an increased focus on service quality standards and prolific research over the last several decades. It has long been acknowledged that high quality service often translates into better business performance, higher profits, cost saving, and greater market share for service firms (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Thompson et al., 1985) and helps firms to retain and attract new customers (Zeithami, 2000).

Research interest in integrating service quality and culture is also growing and has examined cultures influence on areas such as consumers’ service quality expectations (Donthu and Yoo, 1998), the nature of demand for personalized service and physical environment needs (Mattila, 1999), consumers’ importance weightings of service quality dimensions (Furrer et al., 2000; Guesalaga and Pitta, 2014; Raajpoot, 2004) and service classifications across cultures (Cunningham et al., 2006). One of the earliest papers highlighting the potential impact of environmental factors (such as affluence, education, value of time, individualism/collectivism, hierarchy of needs etc.) on service quality argued that there are likely to be differences between developed and
developing countries on various service quality dimensions (Malhotra et al., 1994) indicative of wider economic and socio-cultural influences.

Despite the potential differences raised by Malhotra et al. (1994), however, it is notable that the most recognizable service quality model, SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1985) and other prominent work on the subject (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Dabholkar et al., 2000; Gronroos, 2011) do not directly account for cultural or other environmental influences in their conceptualizations. Rather, in most previous work considering the role of culture in services (Donthu and Yoo, 1998; Furrer et al., 2000; Imrie et al., 2002; Kueh and Voon, 2007; Laroche et al., 2004), culture tends to be examined separately as an element outside of the utilized or adapted service quality model.

Furthermore, traditionally, service quality research has predominantly and implicitly assumed a positivistic philosophy (Schembri and Sandberg, 2002). Martinez and Martinez (2010) suggest that even the developmental phase of conventional service quality models appears paradoxical, typically constrained by the boundaries of existing literature. In light of this, we utilized an interpretivist philosophy focusing on prioritizing the consumer’s voice by taking a “first-person perspective” (Giorgi, 1983; Thompson et al., 1989), soliciting the customer’s perspective is a more efficient way of understanding what they value, as unimportant characteristics are discarded (Edvardsson et al., 2005). Our aim was to attain a deeper understanding of the service context which is typically absent in previous service quality studies (Gilmore and McMullan, 2009) and go beyond “sophisticated stereotyping” toward “cultural sense-making in context” (Osland et al., 2000).
2.2. Literature Review

2.2.1. Service Quality

There exists extensive literature covering the subject of service quality for a vast range of services such as retailing, financial services, tourism and hospitality, information technology, and even public services (Collier and Bienstock, 2006; Ladhari et al., 2010; Rhee and Rha, 2009; Yu et al., 2006). However, despite this proliferation of works, there are still many unresolved issues surrounding definition, measurement, dimensionality, and others (Gilmore and McMullan, 2009; Ladhari, 2008; Robinson, 1999; Seth et al., 2005).

Two of the earliest models of service quality, the Nordic Model (Grönroos, 1984) and SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1988) postulates that customers evaluate a service by comparing their perceptions of the service received with their expectations, and if the provider exceeds or meets these expectations, customers will perceive the quality of service positively. Though it is argued that performance only may be sufficient for consumers when arriving at their overall evaluations (Cronin and Taylor, 1992). The Nordic Model’s conceptualization of service quality is grounded in two service quality dimensions: technical quality and functional quality (Grönroos, 1984). The latter refers to the process outcome or consumer perceptions of interactions during service delivery while the former refers to the service outcome or what the customer actually receives from the transaction. Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry’s (1988) SERVQUAL, the most commonly utilized service quality instrument emphasizes the process element of service which consists of a five-dimensional structure (RATER); reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy and responsiveness. From a practitioner’s viewpoint, SERVQUAL’s strength
lies in its excellent diagnostic ability (Carrillat et al., 2007). Building on these earlier work Rust and Oliver (1994) put forth that service quality perceptions are derived from consumers’ overall evaluations of employee interaction (functional quality, Grönroos, 1984), the service environment (Bitner, 1992) and the outcome (technical quality, Grönroos, 1984), while Dabkholkar, Thorpe and Rentz (1995) extended this to a hierarchical structure with overarching dimensions and sub-dimensions.

More recently, seminal work on service-dominant logic (S-D) (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Vargo and Lusch, 2008) have emphasized the strong focus on service as the fundamental basis of exchange for businesses inclusive of traditional goods/manufacturing organizations,’ all businesses are service providers and should adopt a service-centered logic or orientation. Central to S-D logic is the focus on the co-creation of value; the firm, its customers and other stakeholders as co-creators and assumes a process orientation as opposed to output orientation (goods-dominant logic). S-D logic underscores that all meaning is experiential and must be understood in the contexts of its resources and networks—“value-in-context” (Lusch et al., 2007).

Edvardsson et al. (2011) have expanded on this view to suggest that social forces are essential to understanding co-creation of value since such exchanges are embedded in social systems. These social systems are of particular relevance to this study, as some service quality researchers endorse our assessment that popular conceptualizations of service quality do not adequately capture the full range of dimensions used by consumers to evaluate the quality of service in cultures very different from the USA (Imrie et al., 2002; Kueh and Voon, 2007). As such, questions may arise as to the reliability and validity of service quality measures in a cross-cultural environment.
There appears to be very little attempt made to reflect the fact that, for example, responsiveness in one cultural context may have a very different meaning in another cultural context. “Contexts frame markets as interactions that we can ‘see’ and ‘understand’… the ability to place parameters on exchange occurs because of context” (Chandler and Vargo, 2011, 38-39).

Popular measurements SERVQUAL and SERVPERF have been consistently used by academics and practitioners in many cultures for the purpose of conducting primarily quantitative studies without in-depth due consideration of their appropriateness (Hsieh and Tsai, 2009; Kueh and Voon, 2007; Yu et al., 2006). The contexts in which businesses operate and service encounters take place are quite varied and can influence the service outcomes or service quality experiences of customers (Donthu and Yoo, 1998; Furrer et al., 2000; Guesalaga and Pitta, 2014; Malhotra et al., 1994; Mattila, 1999; Raajpoot, 2004). In this study, we attempt to address this gap in the service quality literature.

2.2.2. Influence of Culture on the Evaluation of Service Quality

The construct of culture is very complex, and its complexity is evident in many definitions and operationalizations. Geertz (1973) asserts that culture is the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their actions. McCracken (1986) argues that it is the lens through which individuals view phenomena or a blueprint of human activity. Ferrao (1990) suggests culture is a coherent, integrated system for which a change in one part of the system (culture) is likely to lead to changes in other parts of the system (culture). Other definitions
highlight the importance of context. For example, Triandis (1989) states that culture is the subjective perception of the human part of the environment, and, Hofstede (1991) views culture as a set of mental programs that control an individual’s responses in a given context. In this study a more dynamic, although focused perspective is espoused, in that, culture is viewed as an evolving adaptation by individuals to their cultural context and broader ecological and socio-political influences that shapes their behavior (Berry et al., 1992). Such a view is consistent with consumer culture theory (CCT) which emphasizes that institutional and social structures influence consumption behavior, as we—individuals—act out our social roles and positions within these structures and contexts which are historically grounded (Arnovold and Thompson, 2005).

Culture is a multi-layered, hierarchical construct (Erez and Gati, 2004; Hofstede, 1991; Leung et al., 2005; Schein, 2006). One perspective is at the top there is the supranational global culture which transitions downwards to national, organizational, group, and eventually goes down to the level of the individual (Erez and Gati, 2004; Leung et al., 2005). It is purported that there is a reciprocal relationship between these different layers of culture facilitated by the top-down processes of socialization and the bottom-up processes of aggregation and shared values.

Culture has increasingly received a lot of attention in international marketing research (Nakata, 2003) and has been earmarked as an essential variable to be integrated into theory and research on various aspects of human behavior (Matsumoto and Yoo, 2006). Indeed, most academics and practitioners agree that culture shapes consumer behavior (Hsieh and Tsai, 2009; Kanousi, 2005; Kueh and Voon, 2007; Laroche et al., 2004; Leisen and Vance, 2001), although they may vary in their opinions of the extent
to which it does and in what ways. Nevertheless, since culture provides the framework for social interactions, social rules, and expectations, it is more than likely to have a strong influence on consumer perceptions of service delivery within and between cultures.

Although research on culture and service quality has been growing, most published work has been predominantly empirical in nature placed in Western contexts utilizing instruments developed in the said contexts (Furrer et al., 2000; Ladhari et al., 2011). Even empirical studies in non-Western contexts tend to draw on the pre-existing service quality instruments; although in some instances researchers made minor adaptations to suit their particular context (Donthu and Yoo, 1998; Imrie et al., 2002; Kueh and Voon, 2007; Tsikriktsis, 2002). It is even suggested that distinct results in one context versus another could be due to scale modification rather than real differences between cultural contexts under investigation (Carrillat et al., 2007).

Thus, the overall purpose of this study was to examine the role that culture plays in influencing consumer perceptions towards service quality, taking a “fresh” perspective without a priori assumptions and to develop an integrated model of service quality and culture. More specifically, we attempted to: (1) provide a context-rich picture of the way consumers perceive the phenomenon of service quality; (2) understand what criteria consumers use to assess service quality; (3) explore the potential role of culture in service evaluations; and (4) offer implications for a future conceptual model of service quality and its measurement in varied contexts.
2.3. Research Methods

2.3.1. Context of the Study

The country selected for the study is Trinidad and Tobago (T&T). As a nation it is one of the wealthiest and most developed in the Caribbean region with a per capita GDP of USD$20,053 (International Monetary Fund, 2011) and a relatively large middle class as the principal grouping (Central Statistical Office, 2011). Moreover, significantly, the services sector is the country’s largest and accounts for over 60% of GDP and around 80% of total employment (Cadiz, 2010).

T&T, similar to other Caribbean societies, are inescapably heterogeneous; as Trouillot (1992) puts it, “The region – and indeed particular territories within it – has long been multiracial, stratified and, some would say, multicultural” (p.21). We reason that the richness and diversity of these and other cultural contexts may unearth new considerations that influence behavior, yet to be identified in the services literature, and more specifically important variables that may influence the provision of and perceptions of service quality.

We argue that certain cultural values and norms come into play in different country contexts and may place a greater importance on alternative values or norms of expectations, similar to the concept referred to as “value trumping” (Osland et al., 2000), and thus ultimately directly or indirectly influence consumer behavior and service quality perceptions.
2.3.2. Research Approach

Consistent with the interpretivist philosophy adopted in the study, a qualitative method and specifically semi-structured interviews were utilized for data collection. This particular qualitative method is flexible and adaptive (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Smith, 1975) and allowed the authors to proceed with an open mind to explore T&T nationals’ attitudes and perceptions of service quality in a country where there is little or no related published academic work.

2.3.3. Sampling

A convenience sample of Trinidad and Tobago nationals currently enrolled at university in the North West region of Britain. In the context of this study, T&T nationals also referred to as Trinbagonians or Trinis, are nationals that are indigenous to the country and spent their formative years there. Semi-structured interviews were audio recorded and approximately 60 minutes in length, see interview protocol Table 1. Sampling adequacy appeared to have been achieved early on in the data collection process, evident from the replication and saturation of categories with each subsequent interview (Bryman, 2012). As such after the 15th interview the decision was made to cease data collection. A cross-national study to determine the appropriate number of interviews for thematic discovery which consisted of 60 interview informants (30 semi-structured interviews per country), revealed that in both country contexts actual data saturation was achieved after the 12th interview (Guest et al., 2006), this study provides empirical support for the sample size employed in our research.
Traditionally, there has been a concern with the use of student samples in business research, particularly, undergraduate samples, based on differences such as life-stage and experience (Bello et al., 2009; Wintre et al., 2001). Nevertheless, there appears to be decreased reluctance with respect to informants at higher levels of study since they typically have garnered sufficient work and other life experiences (Bello et al., 2009). It is notable that only one third of informants consisted of undergraduate students.

In addition, despite our small sample size, we sought to achieve sample representativeness within the student population as backgrounds were diverse in various factors; participants varied in age, travel experience, total time spent abroad, different degree levels of study as well as work experience, and time spent in Britain (see Table 2). Since our study was more concerned about experiences in the consumption of service and service quality perceptions, and less so on any relevant knowledge on managerial competence etc., our interviewees, in a sense, do have sufficient maturity and life experience to elaborate on such situational experiences in the country context under study both individually and as observers of others behaviors during their lifetime. Furthermore, it is worth re-emphasizing that the study is primarily exploratory in nature.

Related to country context and the central role of culture in this study, another issue that may be worthy of some caution is that the sample of T&T nationals currently resided in Britain and thus there is a possibility of the potential influence of British host-country culture and the process of acculturation. Nevertheless, beyond the positive
pragmatics of economic and time savings since the authors are based in Britain, there are other factors that may come to bear that either minimize and/or neutralize such potential effects or may even enhance usability of such a sample. First, one’s home-country culture tends to be deeply rooted in our subconscious such that exposure to a second or foreign culture may not affect behavior at least in short and medium term.

According to McCracken (1986) individuals develop meaning in a “culturally constituted world” shaped by the beliefs and assumptions within his/her culture. Such meaning or individual cultural identity, the bulk of which typically comes to being in one’s adolescent years and creates a stable sense of self (Gibbs, 1997) guides one’s consumption or behavioral disposition. Berry (2006) observed that during the process of acculturation there is substantial evidence of cultural maintenance, that is, upkeep of one’s heritage or cultural identity. Furthermore, during such a process as with students moving to a new country to study, cultural identity becomes more salient (Sussman, 2000). This is coherent with social identity theory and the tendency to recognize similarity to compatriots or dissimilarity with out-groups or other cultural groups (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). Thus, we believe during reflection on their service experiences T&T nationals’ recall may be enhanced, and similarities or differences are also more easily emphasized.

**INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE**
2.4. Data Analysis and Findings

2.4.1. Data Analysis Process: Thematic Analysis

The analytic process was entirely data driven employing inductive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) and took a bottom-up approach where generated themes were strongly linked to our primary data. We did not use preconceived categories but instead allowed categories to emerge and their labels to flow from the data (Kondracki et al., 2002). An iterative process was used noting similarities and differences, first within and then across the transcripts (Miles and Huberman, 1984; Spiggle, 1994), repeatedly until higher-order headings emerged (Miles and Huberman, 1984; Strauss and Corbin, 1997). For example, the data revealed sub-themes around firms’ hiring practices, staff training, staff reward and remuneration, and complaint and workflow systems, which all fall under the purview of the firm, and consequently a higher-order theme or code was labeled Organizational Responsibility. During the analytic process, concerted efforts were made to go beyond description to focus on interpretation and understanding of the significance of the patterns and their broader meanings (Patton, 1990).

Boyatzis (1998) suggests a five-step process to conduct inductive thematic analysis which was utilized to identify the service factors and throughout the rest of the paper to identify other influential themes and concepts. The five steps are: (1) Reduce the raw information; (2) Identify themes within subsamples; (3) Compare themes across subsamples; (4) Create a Code(s); and (5) Determine reliability of the Code (via team coding). Table 3 highlights the first four steps in this process, showing specific examples of interviewee responses utilized to generate themes directly related to the
study objectives or research phenomena which aided framing and the creation of the higher-order themes or codes (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2006).

**INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE**

In order to facilitate data management, NVIVO software was utilized. Furthermore, to enhance reliability, after the third transcript a second coder unrelated to the study repeated the coding and analysis procedure, and any disagreements were resolved. Ongoing analysis of subsequent interview data led to the emergence of a comprehensive, multi-dimensional hierarchical framework, which we labeled *Conceptualization of Service Quality in Cultural Context (CSQCC)*, depicted in Figure 1.

**INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE**

2.4.2. *Independent Factors: Cultural Triggers*

One of the main concepts of our new conceptualized *CSQCC* framework is the overarching influence of culture and more specifically, what we refer to as *cultural triggers*, these triggers appear to affect all dimensions in the *CSQCC* and consumer overall perceptions of service quality. We define *cultural triggers* as a phenomenon, activity, or institution with which most citizens of a country identify, consciously or unconsciously, and provide frames of reference of what is valued, what is normal, and what is reflective of a larger cultural pattern.
Our conception of *cultural triggers* focuses not on broad, deep-seated value systems of the society (Hofstede, 1991; Schwartz, 1992), but, more so on cultural norms, one’s conception of self and collective identity, and the immediate environment—which we emphasize have a more direct and influential effect on an individual’s expectations, perceptions and behavioral disposition. It has been observed that domain-specific knowledge structures such as norms, schemas, and implicit theories are more likely to influence behavior than broad value orientations (Briley, 2009; Briley and Wyer Jr, 2002). We do not dismiss the potential influence of value orientations; though we argue norms of the society do bear much stronger influence on actual consumer choice and perceptions than do abstract or idealized values. Such societal pressures or normative influence driven by need for group membership sets and enforce fundamental standards of conduct that dictate individual behavior (Hoyer et al., 2013; Solomon, 2006) through the process of compliance or identification which strongly motivates individual action (Burnkrant and Cousineau, 1975). Although individuals are free to go against cultural norms, most do not (Ferraro, 1990).

Furthermore, we put forth that *cultural triggers* are shaped by socio-cultural, historic and institutional forces which may create a social system that is unique to a country, context, or group of people which acts as a lens or filter through which information is processed and dictates consumer behavior. One’s sense of self is shaped in a socially constructed world which provides meaning and understanding through a collective or cultural identity. Since service encounters are first and foremost social encounters, *cultural triggers* would influence consumer’s and employees’ behavior during these moments-of-truth.
Meta-norms or community enforcing norms often endow an assortment of specific and often strict implementation rules that restrict behavior (McGraw and Tetlock, 2005), typically these develop gradually and informally in order to facilitate effective group interaction (Feldman, 1984). Individuals socialized in the collective thus utilize common frames of reference to legitimize their identity which provides boundaries for all social interaction (Berger and Luckmann, 1991). Hence, in discussing the role of cultural triggers we adopt a socio-cognitive perspective and dynamic view of culture to explain its impact on consumers’ perceptions of service quality, our proposed concept is related to social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981) and the broader socio-historic perspective of consumer culture theory (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). It is suggested that conceptualizing culture as a pattern of cultural identities within individuals is useful and may be more appropriate than using values to understand behavior (Chao and Moon, 2005) and expectedly some identities may dominate others (Roccas and Brewer, 2002).

One of the key cultural triggers identified from our interview data revealed that a Culture of Closeness at the societal level strongly influences service delivery and consumers’ perceptions of service quality. We define Culture of Closeness as the structure of personal relations in the society and the degree of psychological closeness individuals feels towards others. It appears that depending on the degree of emphasis a society places on personal relations, high or low, can very well influence individual behavior. It is argued the nature of personal relations in a society or nation is often reproduced in economic relationships (Getz and Volkema, 2001; Reddy, 1993; Tanzi, 1994) and by extension service transactions. For example, the lack of closeness in parent-child relationship, where children have to move out as soon as they reach
adulthood can transcend into the workplace, such impersonal relations demonstrative of cultural norms assuming an “arm’s length” approach manifests itself in economic exchanges as impersonal bureaucracy (Reddy, 1993). On the other hand, expectations of more personalized relations among people in a society can potentially create an atmosphere for corruption (Tanzi, 1994). As individuals begin to bend rules or provide special treatment expected by in-group members (family, friends), some form of compensation is then needed for transacting with out-group members with similar culturally derived expectations and thus the atmosphere for bribery and/or corruption are increased (Getz and Volkema, 2001; Reddy, 1993). This is typically based on moral and practical grounds both on the side of the employee—“everyone is doing it,” and the customer facilitates it—that’s “the only way the system works.”

The strong need for personal relations was evident based on interviewee viewpoints as well as noted implications of corruption and/or poor accountability that exists. These issues are reflected in Ana’s comments of her typical service experience if something goes wrong:

You do not really get any redress or don't know the process or couldn’t be bothered. It is part of how we are cultured...it is a Trini thing... simply as customers we know nothing is going to be done about our problem. In T&T we have this attitude that only if you know somebody your problem would be sorted out... the firm will brush it aside.

(Ana)

Ana’s comments and those of other interviewees regularly confirmed that firms are not held accountable, and as customers they feel powerless. But, their comments also suggest this is just a normal way of doing business and not only in instances where you encounter problems. For example, Crystal pointedly talks about society and business:
All this corrupt, underhandedness that exists in our society, people like to blame the government but it is not only the government guilty. Just the way of having to do everyday things, Trinis always want to know who they have to talk to or give money to whenever they doing business... we can never just do things the correct way, it is almost like you have to know someone to "buy" past the system. It does trickle down to all parts of the society.

(Crystal)

We argue that this is driven by a need for a level of personalization in service desired by Trinis that does not come without an additional cost and has less to do with system inefficiencies, though these exist, and more with facilitating cultural expectations for highly personalized service. Interviewees strongly emphasized that relational factors such as friendliness, attentiveness and genuineness of employees were far more important and appreciated than other aspects of service such as efficiency and timeliness, and even the service outcome. Such a view was consistent regardless of the type of service discussed by interviewees. These fundamental attitudes that exist in T&T about social relationships and structures appear to influence delivery expectations, outcomes and perceptions. And thus could be a catalyst for norms of corruption and lack of good governance, and poor accountability which are indeed prevalent.

Another significant cultural trigger identified in our study related to service is a Culture of Servitude that is prevalent in business and service transactions in T&T and clearly appears to contradict the very nature of nationals in their personal daily lives. Interviewees unanimously identified the laid-back nature of Trinbagonians as a unique aspect of their culture. Expressions such as warm, friendly, engaging, easy-going, casual, informal, island mentality, and a “lackadaisical” attitude were fondly used to describe selves and fellow nationals. We refer to this laid-back nature as the “Private-self,” reflective of behavior in non-commercial situations as Cathy and Liz share:
When you enter T&T you feel warmth. There is general warmth that you can feel, and it is not a formal society like here [in Britain]; I think there is a sense of reception or welcome... even from the airport people are a little more casual and a lot more friendlier and approachable.

(Cathy)

They are extremely friendly; they don’t take anything seriously, and everything is a lime, a party... It is generally a very laid-back culture ... they do not get stressed out about stuff like how it is here, in Britain they are conservative and very uptight, Trinbagonians are very free and light-hearted [laugh].

(Liz)

It is interestingly noted although that the same laid-back culture does not positively manifest itself in service or business settings. On the contrary, it is perceived to have a negative influence in commercial settings. Liz said, “The laid-back attitude is good and bad at the same time; Trinis need to know there is a time for everything, when you need to be serious and when to party” and Jenny also sighed, “The lackadaisicalness! ...

Nobody wants to make even a little bit of an effort, for improvement.” Cathy observed, “There is a sort of lackadaisicalness ... especially in the area of service where you would prefer things to be more prompt ... if I could change the mind-sets of people but yet keep the casualness within the society” whilst Amy expressed a time-related perspective and commented, “Doing things in a timely fashion. I think I would change a sort of lackadaisical view of time we possess.”

As well, there was a general sense by most that the service personality or attitude of employees is in conflict with whom they are as people and a society, culturally in their personal lives. Jenny encapsulates this aptly, and her view is strongly supported by Danny:

I don’t think poor service have anything to do with whether we are a developing country or not. I think it have to do with the personalities, the people dealing with you... generally unhelpful... I mean giving someone good service you have to be attuned to what they want and I feel people aren’t in T&T, it is almost like
they do not want to be there... Don’t care attitudes! ...(When questioned on the apparent conflict with her earlier comments on closeness and cohesiveness of Trinis)...That kind of closeness in interaction we have as a people is an innate characteristic we have, we are generally very friendly people but I think in terms of service it does not translate, that is one of the problems in our country... We are accustomed to poor service, don’t care attitudes, you get it everywhere in business.

(Jenny)

We desire a degree of personalization, and in an informal sense outside of business you would get that, that is a key distinction... Outside of business on a personal level Trinis are fantastic, remember your name, they are always ready to socialize and lime [party]. But, there is something about the work-personal divide that transforms pleasant Trinis into beast [laugh]!

(Danny)

Jenny’s and Danny’s view was shared by many of the other interviewees: our analyses suggest that T&T nationals have both a private/public self or persona. We define “Private-self”—a friendly and engaging identity in personal settings, and a “Public-self”—a negative identity of apathy and unhelpfulness in commercial settings where service delivery is viewed as servitude. It appears this laid-back attitude is perceived to impede the quality of service delivered by employees/firms in T&T, and Trinbagonians switch their persona/identities depending on context. An examination of the country’s history and cultural heritage provided a salient explanation for this, specifically, T&T’s carnival tradition born out of the country’s colonial past, slavery (Discover Team, 2013) and associated power inequalities.

Carnival evolved out of the social conditions of subordination and created an identity of “otherness” in defiance to existing norms of hierarchy, constrained by the boundaries of a servant-master relationship (Langman, 2003). DaMatta (1991) suggests that Carnival is a symbolic dissent and expression of joy against injustice but does not subjugate the structure of inequality. In a sense, carnival as a celebration represents the
blurring of boundaries and roles from happy and open, then back to serfdom and reality. Carnival is play, the antithesis of normal world of work (Langman, 2003, 228), it is a “concept of cultural and individual history… the encoding of genetic cultural and artistic legacies embodied in dance, music and fantasy… a festive world of community” (Riggio, 2004, 20). The establishment of one’s identity through the enactment of social roles that may be historically derived is a central premise of consumer culture theory (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Belk, 2013). In a sense, service or work was seen or still viewed as a form of punishment; the work place and its typicality of established rules, regulations and authority possibly leads to stoic defiance by T&T employees in the form of poor work ethic and service delivery.

In T&T “carnival is not just a two-day event for the average Trinidadian: it is an all-year round statement of identity” (Mason, 1998, 7), “in other countries carnival is a diversion from the troubles of life; in Trinidad it sometimes seems as if life is a diversion from carnival” (Mason, 1998, 16). It appears a carnival spirit embodies the people of T&T, so much so that it is reflected positively in the “Private-self”—Culture of Closeness, and on the flip-side, negatively in the “Public-self”—Culture of Servitude. Based on their review of the extant literature Zhang, Beatty and Walsh (2008) hypothesized culture as potentially influencing each stage of the service experience inclusive of service expectations, evaluations of service and reactions to service. Our empirically derived CSQCC framework indeed illustrates cultural triggers—Culture of Closeness and Culture of Servitude—overarching influence which would be discussed at the different levels of our CSQCC framework.
2.4.3. Mediating Factors: Employee Work Ethic, Organizational and Customer Responsibility

Three mediating factors that have not been previously identified in traditional service quality modelling are identified to be central to the Conceptualization of Service Quality in Cultural Context (CSQCC): (1) Organizational Responsibility, (2) Employee Work Ethic/Attitude, and (3) Customer Responsibility, (see Figure 1). Our view is that all three are directly influenced by the Culture of Closeness and the Culture of Servitude; these overarching cultural triggers directly or indirectly affect Employee Work Ethic/Attitude, Organizational Responsibility, and Customer Responsibility. Of these, Employee Work Ethic/Attitude appears to have play an influential role on traditional service dimensions which is consistent with the service-profit chain (Heskett and Schlesinger, 1994) and internal service quality literature (Bowen and Johnston, 1999; Dickson et al., 2008; Pugh, 2001). Value is created by satisfied, loyal, and productive employees (Heskett and Schlesinger, 1994) without which it is difficult to visualize the delivery of quality service to external consumers (Seth et al., 2005). This highlights the centrality of the employee, as part-time marketer (Gummesson, 2007) and thus the work ethic or attitude of the employee is likely to influence the eventual quality of service perceived by consumers (see Figure 1).

Employee Work Ethic/Attitude was consistently revealed as a crucial variable by interviewees in their evaluations of services. Ample references were made to the “don’t care” attitude and lack of professionalism as well as rude and unfriendly disposition of firm employees, and their central role and influence on consumers’ perceptions of service quality and overall evaluations about the firm. Chris suggests there is a lack of
identity or attachment to the firm on the part of employees, Kassandra agrees but intimates that the firm is partly responsible for this in terms of treatment of staff, policies and need for training:

*I tend to feel in T&T they do not make a connection to the job they have if they are in the service sector, which is worrying! I don’t think Trinis have ever properly understood that you need to buy into “I belong to this company, this is my identity.” In T&T we have a greater sense of pride about the schools we attended, our religion, the mas’ bands we play in… But we don’t have any pride in the company we work for or the quality of work we do.*

*(Chris)*

*In T&T employees do not see themselves as part of the organization…whether I am good or not to the customer, I am getting the same minimum wage…that the quality of service they give counts…at the end of the day employers need to let employees know their importance to the organization… it starts with management to re-culture staff.*

*(Kassandra)*

Indeed, Homburg, Wieseke and Hoyer (2009) emphasized that employee identification with the firm provides strong influence on customer-company identification which leads to more positive customer and firm-level outcomes; thus highlighting the importance of the social identification construct and understanding its role in service quality evaluations.

Comments made by Karen and Barry exemplify a pervasive viewpoint by interviewees, for example:

*Trinis at work are very lazy, laid-back and inefficient, the poor way in which they treat customers, on average I mean, sometimes you may get a good employee who is conscientious but that person is in the minority… We don’t value customers in T&T; I can feel the difference even more even now that I am in Britain… Our culture in terms of how we value work is poor, we are disinterested, not willing to put in the effort to get the job done and provide good service to the customer.*

*(Karen)*
In terms of my experiences when employees deliver service [in T&T] their attitudes are not right at all... I think primarily [service quality] comes down to attitudes and how employees make you feel... welcomed and appreciated.

(Barry)

Notably, this poor work attitude also reiterated by other interviewees is in contrast to the strong positive statements regarding the laid-back and friendly disposition of nationals; albeit in non-commercial settings. Previous research particularly, on emotional contagion confirms that such negativity in displayed emotion such as being disinterested or not caring, alters customer moods and influences their attitude towards the organization (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2006; Pugh, 2001). For example, Gruber (2011) underlined the importance of authenticity of employee displays in demonstrating caring that is valued by customers. Furthermore, Lin and Lin (2011) stated employees’ inner emotions can influence employees’ affective delivery which in turn impacts customer emotions and service outcome. The prevention of negative emotions is of particular importance since it was found that once experienced by consumers it was extremely difficult to prevent negative word-of-mouth (Schoefer and Diamantopoulos, 2008).

The theme *Organizational Responsibility* in the context of this study refers to a firm’s actions that impact service levels positively or negatively by shaping and influencing the behaviors of employees and customers before, during and after the service encounter. *Organizational Responsibility* was found to be associated with five sub-dimensions in our study: (1) Hiring Practices, (2) Staff Training, (3) Staff Reward and Remuneration, (4) Complaint Systems, and (5) Workflow Systems. For example, Debbie highlighted the importance of remuneration: “[employees] get very poor salaries so sometimes you understand ... If you’re not well remunerated you’re not going to give good service,” while Chris opined that “I think in the low-entry retail
positions in [T&T] you have lack of commitment, which then affects the delivery of the service. I think it links to poor pay strategies ... has a spin-off in terms of their employees’ sour behavior.” Anna emphasized the attitudes towards training and hiring practices: “Training has an impact ... but I just think ... the training ... it is not a conscious part in anyone’s mind ‘we are opening a company; let’s invest in customer service before we open the door.’ They just hire people; especially service providers, they hire people ... and unleash them to the public without training.” And Debbie argued about the futility of complaining and the absence of or poor complaint systems: “If the complaint is escalated I don’t think anything would be done ... there is no sort of complaints mechanism.” In addition, Mark pointed to a bad service experience and the role of the firm’s workflow systems: “It just takes the entire day; the whole process is just archaic, but I think it is not exactly [the employees’] fault.” These identified sub-dimensions can be considered essential elements of the service climate (He et al., 2010), whereby tending to the needs of what Berry (1986) calls the “critical second audience,” or internal customers/employees is required to meet the need of external customers.

Since organizational commitment and job satisfaction are essential to internal quality and the adoption of a customer orientation and have a positive influence on customers’ perception of interaction quality (Gazzoli et al., 2013), and overall service quality perceptions. Such an inside-out perspective is an important prerequisite to the delivery of excellent external service quality (Dickson et al., 2008). The establishment of a service climate where employees have a positive outlook on organizational policies, practices and procedures that incentivizes and rewards good customer service is essential (He et al., 2010; Schneider et al., 1998).
The theme Customer Responsibility identified in this study focuses on the consumer’s role in the service transaction and how consumer action or inaction, complaining or non-complaining, and general behavior at the “moment-of-truth” can impact service or perceived service quality. Service-dominant logic which advocates the centrality of the customer as co-creator during the service exchange (Vargo and Lusch, 2004) to be understood within the sphere of contact, value-in-context (Lusch et al., 2007) supports our inclusion of Customer Responsibility as an element of our CSQCC framework as intimated by interviewees. For example, the impact of low-complaint behavior on firm strategy can be a disincentive to improve service levels and lead to sustained poor service standards. William poignantly spoke of the critical role of T&T consumers and their potential influence on service delivery in the long term:

Consumers who choose not to complain at the end of the day have real power not to choose to use a particular service provider who has not met their needs which in the long run will have a significant impact on the business’s viability in the future. More Trinis need to realize this, not only the impact on the boycotted firm but for all businesses in general that as consumers we will not accept poor service.

(William)

Equally, consumers are direct sources of information that can provide pertinent feedback to firms for focused service improvements, and/or their positive or complimentary attitudes can lead to employee motivation and satisfaction. Customer performance is critical for productivity and quality, not only as a co-producer of value, employee-customer relationship, but, through customer-customer interaction (Gummesson, 2007). For example, it has been identified that the customer plays five key roles in collaborative value creation: bargain-hunting independent, comprehensive help seeker, engaged problem solver, technology-savvy networker, and self-reliant
customizer (Moeller et al., 2013). These roles independently or collectively contribute to collaborative value creation and the eventual service outcome and perception of value from the customer’s perspective. Such an understanding of the role of the customer would allow firms to detect and avoid conflict with consumers (Ostrom et al., 2010) and thus influence mood states of consumers (Fliess et al., 2014) and enhance quality perceptions.

2.4.4. Service Factors

Qualitative data analysis revealed three primary service factors that collectively determine consumers’ perceptions of service quality: (1) Service Process/Delivery, (2) Service Outcome, and (3) Service Setting. Each of these service factors consist of various sub-dimensions and a total of ten were identified (Figure 1). This aspect or level of our CSQCC framework reflects key conceptualizations of traditional service quality models which consist of a few key service factors or primary dimensions (Brady and Cronin, 2002; Dabholkar et al., 1995; Grönroos, 1984; Rust and Oliver, 1994). The most similar is that conceptualized by Brady and Cronin (2002) illustrating a hierarchical approach; Service Process/Delivery (interaction quality, Brady and Cronin, 2002), Service Outcome (outcome quality, Brady and Cronin, 2002) and, Service Setting (physical environment quality, Brady and Cronin, 2002). However, the constituent components or sub-dimensions of the three service factors vary in some respects with models in extant literature. Table 3 details our inductive thematic analysis approach which illustrates the generated sub-dimensions and primary service factors (codes).
Service Process/Delivery refers to the point of contact or interface between employee—customer. This primary service factor is represented by three dimensions: (1a) Service reception relates to the attitudes of service personnel whether they are courteous, receptive, warm, genuine and approachable; (2a) Service efficiency relates to the delivery of the service in a well-organized, consistent, knowledgeable and competent manner by employees; and (3a) Service time relates to the elapsed time period during which the desired service is received in a timely manner consistent with the expectations of the customer.

Service reception as a sub-dimension is supported by the work of Bitner, Booms and Tetreault (1990) that established that the employee—customer interface focuses on the demeanor, actions and skills of employees during points of contact. Furthermore, Gummesson (1991) suggests that the nature of this interaction at points of contact should involve empathy, compassion, emotions, involvement, sense of humor, tacit knowledge and intuition—all aspects of what he refers to as the love factor dimension and emphasize is possibly the pivotal contributor to service quality. For the majority of those interviewed this was indeed the case.

Service efficiency as defined in our study encapsulates the service quality determinants of reliability and competence identified in seminal work on service quality (Parasuraman et al., 1985). Our analyses revealed that Trinis had a stronger preference for Service reception over efficiency when evaluating service quality. This is in part supported by Malhotra et al. (2005) who suggested that consumers in developing countries have a greater affinity for “high touch” services and personal interaction while consumers in developed countries had a preference for “high tech” relations and by
extension Service efficiency. It is also noted that interviewees who have resided abroad for a longer period of time relative to other interviewees’ with shorter stays still share similar views on personal relations as central. The Service time factor also reflects the responsiveness determinant (Parasuraman et al., 1985). Although while interviewees discussed its relevance ideally, culturally it appears they were a bit relaxed on timeliness and willing to overlook failure in this regard if Service reception was strong.

The Service Setting represents the overall business context or atmosphere in which the interface between customer and employee takes place. Based on our qualitative data it is comprised of four dimensions: (1c) Facilities & equipment; (2c) Aesthetics & atmosphere inclusive of visual (e.g., functionality, aesthetics) and nonvisual cues (e.g., music, scent); (3c) Staff appearance; and (4c) Peripheral social surroundings relates to the interfaces between customer-other customers, customer-other employees, employee-employee, and the impact of individual characteristics on their behaviors and the service setting.

The role of setting or physical environment and its potential influence on the mind of the consumer has been advocated in early service literature (Kotler, 1973; Shostack, 1977) and viewed as an important resource category inextricably intertwined with other interactive marketing resources such as the employee and the customer (Grönroos, 1982). Kotler (1973, 50) referred to environment collectively as “atmospherics”—the conscious designing of space to create certain effects on buyers. However, work on “servicescapes” by Bitner (1992) has been the most influential. Design factors—physical facilities, layout or architecture, and ambient conditions—nonvisual aspects such as temperature, scent, and music were found to be integral in the
formation of consumers’ service quality perceptions (Bitner, 1992). An important part of this environment is also the appearance of staff (Parasuraman et al., 1985).

Finally, within this physical environment is the social context which we refer to as the Peripheral social surroundings. This is the social context which involves the people and their behaviors which may have bearing on the perceptions of individual consumers based on interviewee feedback. We identified three additional interactive relationships within the Peripheral social surroundings that influences individuals’ behavioral disposition or perceptions beyond the main customer-employee (frontline) relationship: (1) customer-other customers (Grove and Fisk, 1997; Gummesson, 2007; Mc Grath and Ottes, 1995; Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2007), (2) other customer-employees (Huang, 2008; Oliver and Swan, 1989), and (3) employee-employees (Lin and Lin, 2011; Totterdell et al., 1998) interactions. While the area of Peripheral social surroundings requires further investigation in this country context and others, it appears at least based on individuals interviewed for this study, that Service Setting has much less influence on their perceptions of service quality relative to the Service Process/Delivery and the Service Outcome. Malhothra et al. (2005) found partial support for the hypothesis that non-core aspects of services such as tangibles would be less important to consumers in developing countries.

The Service Outcome as another primary determining service factor of overall perceived service quality also consists of three dimensions: (1c) Service fulfillment relates to the completion/achievement of service as desired or promised relative to prior expectations; (2c) Tangible quality refers to the quality of the tangible element of the service (if it exists in the service situation); and (3c) Perceived value refers to the
relationship between the price/cost of the service and the intangible/tangible worth of the service in the eyes of the consumer. *Service fulfilment* is similar to the concept of technical quality which is what the consumer receives as a result of interaction with the firm (Grönroos, 1984), an added component in our conceptualization based on interviewee data is the consumer’s evaluation of the outcome based on prior expectations before receiving the service (Bolton and Drew, 1991; Parasuraman et al., 1985; Teas, 1993). This is supported by Hamer (2006) who found that consumers’ expectations are indeed positive predictors of perceived service quality and even more influential than previously thought. Gummesson (1991) suggests that the core service is the promise to the customer, thus managing customers’ expectations is an important element of managing quality. We introduce in our *CSQCC* the sub-dimension of *Tangible quality* in reference to those aspects of the service that may involve the receipt of a product or other tangible outcome as it appeared, for example, product quality, from our interviewees viewpoint does in fact influence their overall perceptions of service quality. Traditionally, product quality has not been included in service quality modelling, but we argue possibly due to T&T’s country context, issues such as return policies, guarantees/warranties may be more problematic than in developed contexts and thus product quality may be a salient attribute in Trinbagonians’ perceptions of overall service quality. For example, Liz shared this view:

*As consumers when you purchase something you want to get value for money, sometimes you don't get what you pay for. It might be very substandard and you try to return it and there is no recourse at all. So for me good service by a firm has to be all-round, which includes the product quality, as well as the service you receive from the employee.*

*(Liz)*
Our conceptualization of *Perceived value* is coherent with definitions in the literature, the most common that by Zeithaml (1988, 14) “Perceived value is the consumer’s overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given.” However, it is noted that expressions of value can differ between individuals and service settings, is subjective and can be a function of—value is low price, price-quality relationship, and cost-benefit analysis—among other factors. Value is not only a function of cost but depends on the way the service is perceived to be delivered relative to expectations (Heskett and Schlesinger, 1994) or the customer’s frame of reference.

2.5. Discussion, Conclusions and Directions for Future Research

Our proposed framework, the *Conceptualization of Service Quality in Cultural Context (CSQCC)*, provides a context-rich, comprehensive picture of the way T&T consumers perceive service quality and illustrates that a range of variables collectively contribute to consumers’ perception of service quality, see Figure 1.

The underlying basis of the *CSQCC* is that firms must first identify and understand what are the key *cultural triggers* in a given society/host country they wish to conduct business in and assess the extent to which contextual cultural variable(s) influence behavior and the quality of service delivery. Beginning with a qualitative examination, awareness, and sensitivity towards the cultural context is encouraged and should lead to a better understanding of how consumers perceive service quality (Morales and Ladhari, 2011). We contend that *cultural triggers* may vary from context to context, where some aspects of culture may be more influential than others and
impact customer expectations, service outcomes and consumer perceptions of service quality. For example, concern for saving face and belief in fate exerted strong influence on consumer tolerance across Asian cultures (Chan et al., 2009), while belief in karma was found to be a major cultural influence in India impacting consumer expectations (Kopalle et al., 2010). Furthermore, the cultural triggers identified in this study while suggested that they are unique may very well be relevant and salient in other countries that have similar cultural norms of expectations and cultural identities. Cultural triggers as an aspect of culture can be deemed as being present on a continuum with different country cultures closer too or farther from polar extremes. Further research needs to explore the concept of cultural triggers and their relevance to consumer behavior and specifically consumers’ service quality perceptions in different country contexts.

The Culture of Closeness as argued earlier on has ramifications for service quality provision and ultimately consumer’s service quality perceptions. T&T consumers culturally expect a certain level of personalization and social closeness in service interactions. We also emphasized the symbiotic relationship between society, the organization and the individual as culture in various forms are filtered to lower levels through socialization and upwards through aggregation and shared values (Erez and Gati, 2004) as such Culture of Closeness is pervasive and evident in transactions and interactions at all levels of the country. For example, corruption and poor accountability at the national and political strata (Ali, 2012; Lord, 2011; Ramdass, 2012) filters down to the wider society through socialization and become acceptable social norms and behaviors, referred to as “norms of governance” (Licht et al., 2007). Getz and Volkema (2001) concur that individuals often practice the same destructive behaviors within their
domain of control regardless of status within the “hierarchy of power.” These societal norms of corruption, poor governance, and accountability are likely to influence employee/work ethic and attitudes and related service quality performance and perceptions. The precise nature and implications of these relationships needs to be explored further. However, as a start firm’s need to ensure that there are established systems and procedures and an air of accountability within their organization, and at the same time ensure that there is a level of flexibility for employees to deliver a level of personalized service and quality of care to the customer.

The proposed CSQCC underscores the importance of an expanded view of the service quality construct, seen not only through a marketing lens but also going beyond traditional service quality models that operate at lower levels of abstraction, uniquely encompassing culture and other non-marketing dimensions such as human resource practices and employee behavior. This type of interdisciplinary approach is beneficial and should lead to new insights, theories, and solutions related to complex service challenges and opportunities (Ostrom et al., 2010).

The Culture of Servitude emphasized the general attitude or approach to work of Trinbagonians nationals and clearly has an influential impact on service performance and the perceptions of service quality from the customer’s viewpoint. As it has been thoroughly stressed by interviewees the attitude or disposition of employees was central to their determination of whether they received excellent, good or substandard service. This is exacerbated by the fact that there is a sense that T&T frontline staff often are not well-educated or motivated, poorly remunerated, and frequently view their jobs as transitory, further compounded in that contractual arrangements between the employer-
employee typically are skewed in the employer’s favor. This could lead to mistrust, manifest into poor employee attitudes/work ethic, and according to Bettencourt et al. (2001) lead to poor service delivery.

In fact, Rousseau (2004) asserts that balanced psychological contracts between employer-employee are essential, as this implies there is a shared risk, and both parties are more likely to fulfil their respective obligations to each other. Also, our findings suggest that the assumption of good or poor treatment of staff by the organization from the consumers’ perspective also influences their perceptions of service quality. Thus domestic and international firms doing business in T&T would find it fruitful to ensure that balanced psychological contracts exist between employers-employees since this is essential for building a positive employee work ethic that elevates a firm’s service quality standards relative to other firms, and enhances overall perceptions of service quality.

Related to our Culture of Servitude was the interesting finding of the contrasting Private-self and Public-self of T&T nationals. This requires further exploration not only in this country context but in others that might be culturally similar to Trinidad and Tobago such as other Caribbean countries, Latin and South America, and some Mediterranean or African countries. The “self” is a dynamic factor that allows us to receive and appraise different situations and environments in dissimilar ways and thus leads to differences in social behavior (Triandis, 1989), as construals of the self can be astoundingly different due to cultural differences (Markus and Kitayama, 1991).

It is apparent that T&T nationals readily switch roles, and we purport that their behavior is induced in different operational contexts. This is consistent with the dynamic
view of culture (Berry et al., 1992) and consumer culture theory’s socio-historic perspective (Arnould and Thompson, 2005) and the acknowledged influence of events within context on consumer behavior. As proposed in our study the Private-self is associated with personal, non-commercial interactions, and is generally laid-back, culturally genuinely friendly, and warm, qualities conducive to superior service delivery; and the Public-self associated with workplace, commercial interactions, and generally reflects a culture of apathy, qualities non-conducive with quality service. The challenge for firms operating in T&T and other countries with possibly similar role switching behavior is to identify how to tap into the positive side – of the laid-back culture – to enhance the quality of service in commercial settings. This may require not necessarily extrinsic focused policies for employee reward but intrinsically focused policies such as emphasis on the development of a family-oriented business culture, and one that that similarly engages the firms’ customer base to instill positive behaviors consistent with the Culture of Closeness desired by individuals in non-commercial settings.

Our CSQCC and findings reinforces that firms need to demonstrate Organizational Responsibility and commitment to providing excellent service quality through proactive human resource practices and operational approaches, not only via rewards and remuneration and investment in staff training, for example, but by establishing effective complaint and workflow systems. These practices and heightened expectations of firms can positively influence employee self-expectations and their overall performance (Wang et al., 2003). We advocate that proactive action by firms on issues such as meritocratic employment practices, investment in staff training, fair
reward and remuneration incentives, and well-established workflow and complaint systems, will motivate and retain the best staff to deliver high-quality service.

On the other hand, from the consumer’s perspective, for example, firms with easily visible complaint systems are perceived as caring by consumers (Luria et al., 2009) while there is the opportunity to provide redress and get valuable feedback from customers and possibly prevent the loss of lifetime value from those who defect silently (Chebat et al., 2005). Consumers through active participation in the complaint channel fulfil an important role by engaging the firm in needed service enhancements. Consumers’ willingness to complain can force firms to be accountable to engage in service recovery and improve service quality standards, a practice evidently lacking in T&T. The consumer as co-creator of value (Vargo and Lusch, 2004) extends to the service recovery process and future service interactions and thus firms should implement recovery systems to benefit from this learning and effectively engage the consumer. Furthermore, this would not only benefit consumers, but, society as a whole by raising service standards and fostering consumerism.

Finally, our CSQCC emphasizes that the service quality construct is indeed multidimensional and hierarchical in nature (Brady and Cronin Jr., 2001; Dabholkar et al., 1995), by including overarching cultural and operational influences. We identified three primary service factors (i.e., Service Process/Delivery, Service Setting, and Service Outcome) as direct determinants of service quality perceptions and also specified their ten sub-dimensions. Even though there may be precedents for some of these dimensions in the service marketing literature (Brady and Cronin Jr., 2001; Dabholkar et al., 1995; Grönroos, 1984; Parasuraman et al., 1988; Rust and Oliver, 1994), our identification and
inclusion of other critical elements such as cultural triggers and centrality of the employee to service quality modelling and concomitant influence on the established service factors and perceptions of service quality is important. Even though appropriate measures need to be developed before practical contribution of the conceptualization is realized, we believe this is a significant step forward in the services marketing literature.

From a theoretical standpoint, our Conceptualization of Service Quality in Cultural Context (CSQCC) highlights the importance of including cultural influences in services research and service quality management. First, specific cultural triggers need to be identified within countries of interest, and further investigation should be conducted to determine their degree of influence on societal and individual behavior with respect to service quality. The integration of “culture” and our conception of cultural triggers within a service quality model and the CSQCC is a key contribution of this study, as hitherto culture has not been directly incorporated into any existing or major service quality models (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Dabholkar et al., 2000; Grönroos, 1984; Kiousis et al., 2007; Parasuraman et al., 1985). Since this study is exploratory additional research is needed that may identify other potentially salient cultural triggers in context.

Additional research is needed to examine the switching of roles evident in the behavior of T&T nationals as they move from commercial and non-commercial settings, from Public-self and Private-self, respectively. Some useful questions would be: how can the Private-self be activated in a service or commercial setting, and why and how do individuals navigate between the roles? This may have implications regarding how we can move beyond surface and deep acting (Grandey, 2003), that is, “faking it” in
business settings towards “authentic” service delivery. For example, research has shown that the authenticity of front line employees is a key attribute desired by customers in instances of service failure (Gruber, 2011). The *Culture of Closeness* and the very laid-back, fun-loving nature of T&T nationals if properly “bottled”; could be a good tonic for positive improvements in service delivery and lead to higher perceptions of service quality, as a panacea for the *Culture of Servitude* in work settings in T&T. It is purported if employees strongly identify with their organizational roles it is possible to assimilate personal and service role identities (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993). This perspective suggests that role-switching from *Public-self* to *Private-self* can possibly be within the control of the firm if appropriate strategies are employed.

Our *CSQCC* emphasizes that firms, particularly multinational and global, must be cognizant of how an unconscious reference to their own cultural values or self-reference criterion (Malhotra et al., 1996) may influence their perception of a potential market, and incorporate this into strategic marketing planning related to their service quality delivery processes. More specifically, the role of *cultural triggers* in particular contexts and potentially its overarching influence on service quality expectations and delivery is important. As emphasized earlier *cultural triggers* provide frames of reference of what is valued and what is normal within a country context, these triggers are shaped by cultural norms of expectation and identities that individuals in a society often adhere to. For example, these norms can be relational, economic or historic and are typically reflective of a broader cultural system or “symbolic universe” in which a collective identity is legitimized (Berger and Luckmann, 1991) and therefore relevant as
belongingness is a fundamental interpersonal motive that drives human behavior (Baumeister and Leary, 1995).

Finally, another contribution of this study and the CSQCC is that it brings together the marketing, human resources, operational interfaces and proposes a much-needed cross-functional approach with interactive effects and linkages (Kwortnik and Thompson, 2009) to enrich service quality management. For example, the central role of the employee, and in particular their work ethic/attitude, and the organization’s responsibility in terms of human resources and operational practices in shaping consumers’ overall service quality perceptions is a unique aspect of the CSQCC; though their inclusion should seem logical, they are notably absent or not prominent in traditional models of service quality. Grönroos (1990) has long asserted that traditional borderlines between marketing and organizational behavior, both as business functions and academic disciplines need to be relinquished principally as businesses assume a relationship approach to marketing in service contexts and in order for them to successfully establish and maintain service cultures.

There are some limitations to our study. First, the CSQCC is a conceptual model and requires operationalization and empirical work. Second, comparable qualitative work should be undertaken in other country contexts that are both culturally similar and dissimilar to T&T to assess our model’s structure. Third, the sample was drawn from T&T nationals currently based in Britain, who may be qualitatively different from other T&T nationals who are probably less travelled or have not lived for a short or extended period of time in a foreign country. Nevertheless, all interviewees in this study have spent most of their lives and formative years in T&T and are not long-term residents of
Britain. Fourth, data were drawn from individuals and subsequent assertions made at both individual and societal/national levels. It can be argued that individual data should not be aggregated to reflect group-level norms – an individualistic fallacy. Nevertheless, recently there has been some support for individuals providing group-referenced ratings as well as self-reported ratings (Fischer, 2006). Fifth, the interaction of the marketing, human resources and operational interfaces of the *Conceptualization of Service Quality in Cultural Context (CSQCC)* indeed makes the model and potential measurement somewhat complex. However, inherent in its complexity should come rich and informative outcomes that would effectively engage managerial practice and decision-making. Lastly, it should be reiterated that the focus of this study was entirely exploratory in nature, the intention being to garner some initial insight into the role culture plays in service quality by utilizing a qualitative method, and provide a foundation for more expansive future research in the area.
2.6. References


Central Statistical Office. (2011) Trinidad and Tobago 2011 population and housing census. Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development, Trinidad and Tobago.


measurement issues through a longitudinal study". *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 76 No. 2, pp. 139-173.


Table 1: Interview protocol: meta-questions for semi-structured interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 1: Introduction</th>
<th>Purpose of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consent form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General interview guidelines/flow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Socio-demographic/other personal details: age, gender, religion, attained educational status, work experience, marital status, time in host country</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 2: Thoughts on home culture</th>
<th>Its uniqueness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proud aspects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aspects would change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enduring aspects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T&amp;T culture and Caribbean</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Cultural advice for visitors</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 3: Thoughts on service home country</th>
<th>Essentials for good quality service: must-haves/pet-peeves</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experience(s) of good service quality: narrative, personal feelings &amp; reactions, outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experience(s) of bad service quality: narrative, personal feelings &amp; reactions, outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public versus private sector service experiences</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>International service experiences relative to home country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Service advice for visitors</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 4: End of Interview</th>
<th>Respondent given opportunity to ask questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Debriefed and additional insights discussed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thanked respondent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Interviewee Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonyms</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Student enrolment</th>
<th>Travel Experience</th>
<th>Total Extended time abroad</th>
<th>Time in Britain</th>
<th>Work Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>6 ms</td>
<td>6 ms</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ana</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Extensive</td>
<td>10 yrs.</td>
<td>10 yrs.</td>
<td>Extensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barry</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>2 yrs.</td>
<td>2 yrs.</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathy</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>5 yrs.</td>
<td>5 yrs.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>6 ms</td>
<td>6 ms</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crystal</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>10 ms</td>
<td>10 ms</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danny</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>3 wks.</td>
<td>3 wks.</td>
<td>Extensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debbie</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Extensive</td>
<td>10 yrs.</td>
<td>10 yrs.</td>
<td>Extensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gail</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>10 yrs.</td>
<td>6 ms</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>5 yrs.</td>
<td>5 yrs.</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>9 ms</td>
<td>9 ms</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kassandra</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>8 yrs.</td>
<td>2 wks.</td>
<td>Extensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>6 ms</td>
<td>6 ms</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>2 yrs.</td>
<td>2 yrs.</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>18 ms</td>
<td>8 ms</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note.

Travel experience
Limited: 3 or less countries (or primarily regional travel)
Moderate: 4 – 10 countries
Extensive: More than 10 countries

Work experience:
Limited: 3 or less years
Moderate: 3 – 8 years
Extensive: More than 8 years
Table 3: Inductive Thematic Analysis – The Primary Service Factors for Evaluating Perceived Service Quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample of Interviewee Comments</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
<th>Cross-Sample Comparison of Subthemes</th>
<th>Key Themes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chris: “Employees being rude and sometimes indifferent, probably not overtly rude but indifferent that to me is a serious turn off, it repels customers”</td>
<td>Rude staff; Indifferent encounter</td>
<td>Unfriendly</td>
<td>Friendliness of Service Personnel</td>
<td>SPD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz: &quot;They have very good service there, the employees are very friendly.&quot;</td>
<td>Friendly encounter</td>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>Friendliness of Service Personnel</td>
<td>SPD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William: &quot;Having good customer relations means… it is done in a timely manner&quot;</td>
<td>Timely manner</td>
<td>Timely</td>
<td>Waiting Time</td>
<td>SPD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gail: &quot;If it is taking too long it is not good service… the long lines upsets me&quot;</td>
<td>Slow service; Long lines</td>
<td>Untimely</td>
<td>Waiting Time</td>
<td>SPD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathy: &quot;The bureaucracy and red tape… you would want something more efficient than that&quot;</td>
<td>Unproductive</td>
<td>Inefficient</td>
<td>Service Efficiency</td>
<td>SPD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen: &quot;They get the job done properly and I don’t have to call them back a week later&quot;</td>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>Efficient</td>
<td>Service Efficiency</td>
<td>SPD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy: &quot;If there could be a happy mixture of efficiency… with friendliness&quot;</td>
<td>Efficiency; Friendliness</td>
<td>Efficient;</td>
<td>Service Efficiency</td>
<td>SPD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris: &quot;Time efficiency in the sense that the transaction is done in an expedient manner&quot;</td>
<td>Time efficiency; Expedient</td>
<td>Efficient, Waiting time</td>
<td>Service Efficiency</td>
<td>SPD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ana: &quot;One time I go there (into the business) and the staff physically fighting</td>
<td>Negative staff behaviour</td>
<td>Employee-behaviour</td>
<td>Peripheral Social Surroundings</td>
<td>SS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and the other customer left and I did not"

<p>| Mark: &quot;When you go into some businesses you would see the employees just standing around in the back doing nothing they definitely need to do something about that&quot; | Staff group interaction | Employee-employee interaction | Peripheral Social Surroundings | SS |
| Karen: &quot;All the customers just there ‘steupsing’ and complaining among themselves” | Complaining; Customer interactions | Customer-customer interactions | Peripheral Social Surroundings | SS |
| Karen: &quot;When you walk in someone is always there to help you, employees are all around willing to assist making sure you are ok... it is the whole business setting, very professional” | Positive atmosphere | Ambience | Business Atmosphere | SS |
| Amy: &quot;The setting of the area was inappropriate as there were other people there and it was not a private and enclosed place so other people can see and hear” | Improper layout | Physical facilities | Business Atmosphere | SS |
| Ana: &quot;There were cockroaches running all over the floor, it was filthy, that's poor! We then asked for the manager… she dismissed our concern and said that is normal&quot; | Filthy business; Multiple staff interaction; Negativity | Cleanliness; Customer-other employee interaction; Negative business atmosphere | Business Atmosphere | SS |
| Mark: &quot;I walked into company X and there was one employee sitting on the side eating and complaining loudly… then the other did not even acknowledge me” | Multiple staff moods; Negativity | Negative business atmosphere; Customer-other employee interaction | Business Atmosphere; Peripheral Social Surroundings | SS |
| Cathy: &quot;What you advertise and what the service ought to be is not what I actually | Expectations; Negative | Service Fulfilment | SO |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Poor performance</th>
<th>Positive outcome</th>
<th>Service Fulfilment</th>
<th>Service Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ana: &quot;They do what they indicated they were going to do and they did it well so it left me feeling happy, feeling satisfied&quot;</td>
<td>Do as promised; Satisfied</td>
<td>Positive outcome</td>
<td>Service Fulfilment</td>
<td>SO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris: &quot;I think the product quality should match the advertising and live up to how good the service is&quot;</td>
<td>Product versus service</td>
<td>Product quality</td>
<td>Tangible Quality</td>
<td>SO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz: &quot;Good service is all-round and has to do with the product quality as well as the service you get&quot;</td>
<td>Product quality; Service outcome</td>
<td>Product quality; Service outcome</td>
<td>Tangible Quality</td>
<td>Service Outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris: &quot;Notice I did not say cost… I put a greater focus on quality than on cost or just trying to get a cheap product&quot;</td>
<td>Quality versus cost; Cheap vs. value for money</td>
<td>Quality focused; Value</td>
<td>Perceived Value</td>
<td>SO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz: &quot;Good service is when as consumers you purchase something you get value for your money… sometimes you don’t get the quality you pay for&quot;</td>
<td>Value for money; Poor product quality</td>
<td>Value</td>
<td>Perceived Value</td>
<td>SO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ana: “Bad service is high price and low value, when you pay for something and you feel you are paying over the top… you ask for something and you don’t get that”</td>
<td>Low value; Disappointed</td>
<td>Value; Negative outcome</td>
<td>Perceived Value</td>
<td>SO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note.

SPD: Service Process/Delivery
SS: Service Setting
SO: Service Outcome
Figure 1: Conceptualization of Service Quality in Cultural Context (CSQCC)
CHAPTER 3.

Cultural Triggers: Understanding Service Quality in International Contexts

European Journal of Marketing

Authors:

Sean B. Chung and Jikyeong Kang

Manchester Business School
Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study was to identify and investigate, how and in what ways culture influences service quality evaluations and service delivery in both a developed and developing country.

Design/methodology/approach – A representative sample was drawn from nationals of both countries based on a range of homogenous characteristics. The study adopted a qualitative method, semi-structured interviews either in-person and via electronic media, specifically Skype.

Findings – Culture has an over-arching influence on all variables in our multi-dimensional, hierarchical, service quality framework, Conceptualization of Service Quality in Cultural Context (CSQCC), derived from inductive thematic analyses. Unique ‘cultural triggers’ were found to exert strong influence on service quality perceptions. Aside from culture, ‘employee work ethic/attitude’ emerged as a key variable in the CSQCC.

Research Limitations – The research design/approach utilized in this study should be replicated in multiple country contexts to ascertain the dependability and transferability of the framework. Furthermore, as a new and complex conceptual model CSQCC still needs to undergo rigorous operationalization and testing.

Practical Implications – People as ‘culture bearers’ often perceive the same service in different ways and arrive at different service quality judgements. Since culture provides the communication medium for these social interactions, sensitivity to the impact of culture should be of considerable importance to management.
Originality/value – ‘Cultural triggers’ are central to understanding service quality provision in different country contexts, as well as, it influences employees’ work ethic/attitudes and ultimately service delivery.

Keywords: Service Quality Model, Qualitative, Cross-Cultural, Services, Interviews, Culture, Britain, Trinidad & Tobago

Article Classification: Research paper
3.1. Introduction

The services sector has grown significantly in the past two decades and has been the key driver of growth in many of the world’s largest economies, at a rate far superior to merchandise trade. This has reduced the cost of doing business, enhanced transaction speeds, improved quality, and led to the provision of a broad range of services across country borders (Cattaneo et al., 2010). Indeed, the services sector has been the largest employer of over 60% of the world’s global workforce in most developed economies (Gresser, 2012). Furthermore, it is earmarked as the sector that is likely to be the quickest route out of poverty for many developing economies (Ghani et al., 2010), not only through economic growth and development, but also owing to the increased competition that often leads to lower prices, higher quality for customers, and an improved standard of living. A superior service culture that delivers high-quality service is a key differentiator that often translates into better business performance, higher profits, cost saving, and greater market share for service firms (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Thompson et al., 1985). It also helps firms to retain customers, attract new ones, and develop a favorable reputation. In fact, creating and maintaining a service culture should be among the top priorities of firms (Ostrom et al., 2010).

The predominance of services over goods is also taking place on the theoretical front. For example, a service-dominant (S-D) logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004), contends that the focus is and should be on intangible resources - the “distinguishing” characteristic of services, the co-creation of value between producer and user, and the perpetual nature of relationships among the marketing actors (Lusch et al., 2007; Vargo and Lusch, 2004). It suggests that all marketing should be viewed from a service
orientation and while customer-centric in nature, to compete through service there must be a synergistic relationship between providers and customers and other stakeholders as co-creators, culminating in optimal value for all parties.

Early research in the area of service quality highlights the potential influence of economic and socio-cultural differences and service quality (Malhotra et al., 1994). However, while there has been a growing interest in integrating research on service quality and culture (Donthu and Yoo, 1998; Furrer et al., 2000; Mattila, 1999; Raajpoot, 2004; Sharma et al., 2009), major service quality models do not explicitly include culture or economic influences directly in the model, despite some exceptional work on service quality and model building (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Dabholkar et al., 2000; Grönroos, 1990; Parasuraman et al., 1988). Unfortunately, although there have been numerous studies that have considered the impact culture has on service-oriented businesses (Donthu and Yoo, 1998; Furrer et al., 2000; Imrie et al., 2002), culture and its influence has been considered as a peripheral variable, external to the established or adapted service quality models utilized in extant literature. A notable exception is a proposal by Zhang, Beatty and Walsh (2008).

Thus, the aim of this study was to thoroughly investigate the role culture plays in influencing consumer perceptions towards service quality. Our study is set in two country contexts, Britain and Trinidad and Tobago, developing and developed countries, respectively. We argue that there is a strong need for research which pays attention to the meanings individuals assign to the nature of services and service encounters as they develop their expectations of and responses to particular patterns of service provision, especially in developing countries which are less researched.
As such we utilized a qualitative methods orientation in order to prioritize the consumer’s voice and take a first-person perspective (Giorgi, 1983; Thompson et al., 1989) to garner an in-depth understanding of the service context, which is typically absent in most quantitative studies utilizing scales (Gilmore and McMullan, 2009). As was aptly suggested “Qualitative and subjective interpretation is necessary to add the spark of life to marketing data” (Gummesson, 2005, 309). Furthermore, it is highlighted that to date there is too much emphasis on scale “navel gazing” and focus on quantitative work in service marketing which can potentially limit discovery (Gilmore and McMullan, 2009). We take into consideration the complex cultural contexts within which meanings and behaviors are developed and reinforced and as such deem utilizing qualitative methods in this research as beneficial.

Our argument for a qualitative methods orientation and the integration of cultural considerations in service research is also reinforced by consumer culture theory (CCT), which purports that behavior is shaped by broader historical forces (e.g., culture narratives, myths, and ideologies) that are grounded in particular socio-economic circumstances and marketplace systems (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). Thus, in our study we endeavored to provide a context-rich picture of the way consumers perceive the phenomenon of service quality, understand what criteria they use to assess it, and critically explore culture’s role which is either context-specific or universal, for future models of service quality.
3.2. Theoretical Background

3.2.1. The Service Quality Construct

The most recognizable service quality model SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1988) is based on the disconfirmation paradigm borrowed from customer satisfaction literature (Oliver, 1980). This paradigm posits that customers’ evaluations are a function of the difference between their perceptions of the service performance and their expectations, and if expectations are exceeded or met, evaluations are positive. Parasuraman et al. (1988) argue that service quality is equal to performance minus expectations. On the other hand, with the SERVPERF model Cronin and Taylor (1992) argue that perception of performance by itself is all that is required to assess the quality of service. It is suggested that retrospectively questioning respondents about their preservice expectations, after the service encounter as with SERVQUAL can be misleading, as stated expectations are likely to be influenced by the actual performance (Palmer, 2011).

To date the debate still continues with no clear consensus as to which paradigm is more feasible, and central to the debate is whether the predictive power or the diagnostic value of the instrument is more important or useful to managers. Cronin and Taylor’s SERVPERF model places emphasis on the predictive power of the instrument and its ability to provide an accurate overall service quality score demonstrating performance (Cronin and Taylor, 1992), whereas Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry’s SERVQUAL model stresses that managers are more interested in the diagnostic ability of the instrument, the identification of service shortfalls (Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988). Despite the paradigmatic debate, there appears to be a consensus in the services
marketing literature that the construct of quality is user-based and should be devised from the buyer's assessment of quality or perceived quality. Thus, one of the most commonly used definitions of perceived service quality is the consumers' judgment about an entity’s overall excellence or superiority (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

Another hotly debated subject is the dimensionality of the service quality construct which is concerned with what dimensions consumers consider to make an overall service quality evaluation. Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) proposed a five-dimensional index referred to as RATER (Reliability, Assurance, Tangibility, Empathy, and Responsiveness) which features prominently in the debate. They assert that service firms should focus on these five dimensions in their efforts to project a high-quality image. Since Parasuraman et al.'s original research, however, there has been a proliferation of work examining the usefulness of SERVQUAL across various types of service firms and industries. Some academics have questioned the appropriateness of the five dimensions suggesting that both the resultant dimensions and their relative importance may vary in different service contexts or by service type, and whether its conceptualization is based on confirmation or the disconfirmation paradigm, as well as scale stability over time (Buttle, 1996; Carman, 1990; Cronin and Taylor, 1992). A further criticism of Parasuraman et al.’s conceptualization of service quality is that it might not adequately capture the full range of dimensions used by consumers in evaluating the quality of the service in cultures that are very different from that of the USA (Imrie et al., 2002; Kueh and Voon, 2007). Consequently, questions may arise as to the reliability and validity of service quality measures such as SERVQUAL in a cross-cultural environment.
An understanding of the environment or context(s) in which the service encounter or exchange occurs is critical if firms wish to differentiate and compete with service. This is consistent with and is a key aspect of the S-D logic paradigm (Vargo and Lusch, 2004) which not only advocates the centrality of the customer as co-creator in the service exchange, but, also postulates that customers should be understood in the context of their own networks—“value-in-context”—not as “isolated entities” (Lusch et al., 2007). According to Chandler and Vargo (2011, 38) “Contexts frame markets as interactions or exchanges that we can see and understand.” A premise of this study is that we view “context” from the perspective of the “cultural context” and its potential differential influences on the individual and the entirety of the environment in which service encounters transpire and the meaning systems that lead to specific individual behaviors of actors, specifically, those of consumers. Indeed, Edvardsson, Tronvoll and Gruber (2011) postulate that service exchange and the co-creation of value are embedded in social systems which customers, employees and other actors draw upon, and thus as an extension to S-D logic’s value-in-context mantra they suggest that value-in-social-context is a more suitable perspective.

Another key premise of this article related to context argued by other academics (Imrie et al., 2002; Kueh and Voon, 2007) is that service quality models are primarily conceptualized in Western contexts, particularly the USA. Moreover, they do not necessarily perform comparably in other cultures (Smith and Reynolds, 2001) and may not effectively identify all the potential factors that consumers may utilize to evaluate service quality. Difference may be significant if cultures and other key environmental variables are vastly dissimilar (Malhotra et al., 1994). Our work attempts to respond to a
call for culture-specific measures of service quality (Winsted, 1997), by examining contrasting country contexts to garner any insight necessary for building a service quality model that goes beyond the typical North America-based studies.

3.2.2. Effect of Culture

One of the earliest definitions of culture is identified by Tylor (1881): “the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (cited in Craig and Douglas, 2006). Interpretivists’ perspective asserts that culture is the fabric of meaning by which human beings interpret their experience and guide their action (Geertz, 1973), or the lens through which individuals view phenomena, which McCracken (1986) names a “blueprint of human activity.”

A frequently used definition associated with the human mind defines culture as a set of mental programs that control an individual's responses in a given context (Hofstede, 1984). Another asserts that culture is a subjective perception of the human part of the environment (Triandis, 1989). The subjective parts of culture include the categories of social stimuli, associations, beliefs, attitudes, norms and values, and roles that individuals share. It is purported that culture is the way in which a group of people solves problems, and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1994) suggest that it comes in layers, like an onion, and to understand it you have to unpeel it layer by layer. Specifically, they note that culture consists of three layers: the outer layer, middle layer, and the core (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1994). The outer layer or explicit culture is the observable reality of the language, food, buildings, houses, markets,
fashions and art, all of which reflect deeper layers of culture; the middle layer refers to the norms and values of an individual group; and the core refers to our assumptions about existence, and solutions to problems that disappear from our awareness and become part of our system of absolute assumptions (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1994).

An even more dynamic view of culture is that it is constantly changing, and individuals adapt to the cultural context and broader ecological and socio-political influences which in turn shapes their behavior (Berry et al., 1992). It is argued that the institutional priorities of a country or society are shaped by three interrelated but distinct “pillars of institution”: regulative (rule-setting, monitoring, and sanctioning), normative (norms and roles—prescriptive expectations), and cultural-cognitive (taken-for-granted beliefs, shared conceptions, and social action) elements which collectively bring stability and meaning to social life (Scott 2001, 2003). In turn, positive or negative reinforcement of these institutional mechanisms interact at the societal and individual level to influence behavior (Schwartz 1994). This view is supported by Steenkamp and Geyskens (2006) who found that context-specific, country-level institutional constructs (such as rule-of-law, national identity, and individualism) moderate individual perceptions of value. We therefore postulate that a dynamic culture assumes a more realistic view as to the potential influences on consumers’ overall perceptions of service quality.

Notwithstanding the range of definitions presented above, the common thread or view held by most definitions of culture is that it is a set of beliefs, attitudes, values, and consequent behaviors common to one group of people which are in turn, different, at
least in various important respects, from those belonging to another group of people. Those shared meanings that are unique to each cultural group ultimately influence the psychological functioning and emotional experiences of in-group members (Basabe et al., 2002) and establish norms of what is desirable and undesirable emotional behavior (Soto et al., 2005).

The construct of culture as a very complex concept is also viewed as multi-level and hierarchical in nature, the very top being the supranational global culture which transitions downwards to the national level, organizational, group, and then finally to the level of the individual (Erez and Gati, 2004; Leung et al., 2005). A symbiotic relationship exists between the different levels of culture either filtered downwards through the process of socialization and/or upwards from the individual through aggregation and shared values. It is also widely understood that culture plays an integral role in shaping consumer behavior (Hsieh and Tsai, 2009; Kueh and Voon, 2007; Laroche et al., 2004; Leisen and Vance, 2001; Usunier, 2005). However, there exists much less agreement as to precisely in what ways and the degree to which it actually does impact behavior.

Malhotra and Peterson (2001) refer to culture’s importance in international marketing and suggest that researchers need first to isolate and examine the self-reference criterion prior to defining the research focus/problem in international markets. However, although research on service quality and culture have received increased attention over the years, it is observed that such research is primarily empirical, Western based, and developed in and influenced by specifics of developed contexts (Furrer et al., 2000; Ladhari et al., 2010). Unfortunately, and more critically, even empirical studies in
non-Western contexts tend to draw heavily on these Western-built service quality models/instruments, albeit some with minor adaptations (Donthu and Yoo, 1998; Imrie et al., 2002; Kueh and Voon, 2007) without consideration of potential differences in cultural influence from context to context.

Culture’s influence on service delivery needs to also be considered from the view that inherently the employee-customer interface requires communication, and thus cultural factors may yield greater influence on consumers’ service evaluations than that of tangible goods (Mattila, 1999). As there are limited published studies using qualitative methods that examines service quality and culture (Laroche et al., 2004), this study would go some way in bridging this gap. Hence our study sought to thoroughly investigate the role culture plays in influencing consumer perceptions towards service quality in cross-national contexts, the United Kingdom and Trinidad and Tobago, developed and developing countries, respectively. The research objectives were: (1) provide a context-rich picture of the way consumers perceive the phenomenon of service quality both in Britain and Trinidad & Tobago (T&T) country contexts; (2) understand what criteria British nationals and T&T nationals use to assess service quality; (3) explore the potential role of culture in service evaluations; and (4) offer implications for a future conceptual model of service quality and its measurement which can be of value in other country contexts.
3.3. Research Design

3.3.1. Country Selection

Sample selection is a crucial consideration in cross-cultural research (Samiee and Jeong, 1994), and in order to limit competing explanations researchers should select cultures and environments that are as closely comparable as possible (Brislin and Baumgardner, 1971; Samiee and Jeong, 1994). This may facilitate easier identification and analysis of cultural differences and relationships. Britain and Trinidad and Tobago (T&T), a developed country and a developing country, respectively, are the countries of interest in this study. Although a sample of three or more countries is ideal, we took the view that well-designed two-nation studies should not be discouraged as findings can be systematically integrated with subsequent studies (Sekaran, 1983).

Historically, Britain and T&T have some commonalities and a degree of closeness despite being geographically far apart. T&T shares an Anglo heritage and has much in common with Britain; as a former British colony from 1797 to 1962 and existing member of the British Commonwealth, the major language in T&T is English, and its education and governmental models mirror that of the British system (Watts, 1990). These potentially confounding environmental factors are therefore unlikely to be the cause of any observed differences that may be identified in the study. The commonalities should also reduce spurious explanations, and findings in this study may thus reflect true differences that are culturally unique to the populations for the phenomenon under study (Salciuviene et al., 2005; Samiee and Jeong, 1994; Sekaran, 1983; Yeganeh et al., 2004). For example, Punnett, Singh, and Williams (1994) support a specific view that data sets with highly similar Anglo influences are likely to result in
findings that can be attributed to differences in core cultural values rather than country differences. Thus, our rationale is that some similarities between the two chosen country contexts may facilitate our qualitative method in unearthing new variables that influence consumer perceptions of service quality not yet identified in the services literature.

3.3.2. Country Highlights: Britain

Britain is a developed country, one of the leading Western powers and an original member of the Group of Six (G6), founded in 1975, a group of the wealthiest nations in the world which has since expanded to the G8 (Lesage, 2007). As the second largest economy in Europe after Germany, Britain is a leading trading power and financial center with a per capita GDP of USD$37,300 (CIA, 2013b). Similar to T&T, Britain has a relatively large middle class population (Central Statistical Office, 2011), with approximately 7 out of 10 people considering themselves to be middle class (Doughty, 2011). Furthermore, in Britain there has been an observed upward trend of growth in its growing middle class (BBC, 2006), who are also well educated with a literacy rate of 99% (CIA, 2013b), 37% secondary school attainment, and 26% tertiary education (UNESCO, 2003). As a result Britain has long been a destination for people migrating from other nations, particularly those from its former colonies, such as Afro-Caribbeans, Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, Indians, and migrants from Northwestern and Eastern Africa in significant numbers, and more recently even larger numbers from its Eastern European neighbors. Notably, however, while Britain is considered a culturally diverse multi-ethnic nation, there is still a white majority of some 87%, and 59% of its population belong to the Christian faith (CIA, 2013b). Nevertheless, despite continuous
migration and the melding of cultures, it appears that norms for appropriate behavior articulated by the elite and the middle class are still an important normative force (Advameg, 2013).

3.3.3. Country Highlights: Trinidad and Tobago (T&T)

The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is one of the most industrialized nations and most developed countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, and its residents enjoy a high standard of living, in great part due to its large reserves of oil and gas, and as a result its GDP per capita income is well above the average of its regional neighbors (BBC, 2014; Economy Watch, 2010) at USD$20,300 (CIA, 2013a). The discovery of oil in 1907 transformed T&T’s patterns of economic development and further differentiated it from other English-speaking islands in the Caribbean forever. During the world oil boom in the 1970s from which the nation benefited tremendously, Trinbagonians were nicknamed the “Arabs of the Caribbean” and are known for their “carnival consumption” (Meditz and Hanratty, 1987), an identity somewhat maintained to this day, at least in the eyes of neighboring countries. The culture of T&T is defined by the ethnic and religious diversity of the country, with an English-speaking population of 1.3 million (CIA, 2013a) whose roots can be traced back to Africa, India, China, the Middle East, Europe and the Mediterranean. Historical occupations of the Spanish and British, and settlement by French Catholics, for significant periods in its history have no doubt influenced the nation’s culture. Consequently, the multicultural nature of the country due to its complex makeup would have created cultural aspects that may be unique to its population and different from its former colonial powers.
3.3.4. Cross-National Data Collection and Sampling

We used semi-structured interview as the method of data collection. British nationals were interviewed face-to-face, T&T nationals via video-conferencing. Video-conferencing facilitates free-flowing conversation and is most similar to face-to-face communication; it is therefore suited to semi-structured or unstructured styles (Salmons, 2011). A total of 30 semi-structured interviews were conducted, 15 each of Britain and T&T nationals, and each interview lasted approximately one hour. During the first phase of data collection with British interviewees, data saturation was achieved when the sample size approached 15, as at this point no new or relevant information emerged from ongoing data collection (Bryman, 2012). As such it was deemed suitable that the sample size for Phase II data collection with T&T nationals could approximate that of the first phase. Nevertheless, in phase two actual data saturation with the T&T sample was achieved as we progressed towards the 15th interviewee.

Although sample representativeness is necessary in cross-cultural research to enhance cross-cultural comparability, this is often unfeasible and far from practical (Green and White, 1976; Yeganeh et al., 2004). Reasonable representativeness can be achieved by carefully selecting subjects to maximize within-sample homogeneity (Adler, 1983; Sekaran, 1983). In order to make valid cross-cultural comparisons between British and T&T subjects, we ensured that the two sample groups had similar backgrounds and experiences (Yeganeh et al., 2004). This sampling strategy allowed better interpretation of findings by removing unwanted sample differences that may confound analysis and interpretation. As shown in Table 1, the researchers’ attempted to
maintain consistency, that is, within - and across-sample homogeneity of participants on several key characteristics, as such this coupled with the fact that data saturation was achieved at approximately the same point for both phase one (Britain) and phase two (T&T), we can be confident that our overall data set was fit for purpose.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Key informants fitting the sample characteristics were the first interviewees, who then assisted the researcher in identifying additional interviewees (Draucker et al., 2007). This allowed data to be collected in a relatively short period of time (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Key informants also helped to establish credibility for the study and hence it is believed that the procedure encouraged honesty and commitment from those recruited (Salmons, 2011).

Interviewees were debriefed upon completion of interviews thus providing additional insight into their thoughts. Furthermore, transcripts were sent to them via email for introspection and feedback, and approximately one third of the total sample were contacted via telephone approximately one week later to see if they felt the transcripts were an accurate record of the interview conducted. Verbatim transcriptions, that is, exact word-for-word dictation of interviewees’ spoken words, commenced after the first interview and were systematically reviewed prior to each subsequent interview, to determine suitability of interview schedule content and any need for more-focused probing before augmenting data collection.
3.4. Data Analysis and Findings

3.4.1. Thematic Analysis and Informed Grounded Theory

Each interviewee was given a pseudonym, and transcripts were entered into NVIVO to aid data management. We followed an inductive thematic analysis process, also referred to as applied thematic analysis, which allows researchers to examine themes from textual data and the stories and experiences voiced by study participants as accurately and comprehensively as possible (Guest et al., 2011). We allowed categories and their labels to flow from the data (Kondracki et al., 2002), and through repetition and constantly comparing incidents, eventually higher-order headings emerged (Miles and Huberman, 1984; Spiggle, 1994; Strauss and Corbin, 1994). Based on an informed grounded theory approach, the data analytic process was mostly data driven, but, to a much lesser extent it was also informed by existing literature and theoretical frameworks (Thornberg, 2012). This approach departs from the original grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) which ignores existing literature, but rather acknowledges that theorizing and reviewing academic literature is a natural process prior to conducting any study. As Thornberg (2012, 245) emphasizes, “Empirical observation could never be totally free from theoretical influence because seeing is already a theory-laden undertaking.” Such consideration of literature is useful once it does not limit discovery and creativity (Strauss and Corbin, 1997), and the researcher retains theoretical sensitivity and a sense of playfulness in analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Nevertheless, our predominantly inductive approach to analysis ensures our data is likely to be suitably grounded in the real world and representative of the studied phenomena (Gummesson, 2005).
In order to improve reliability in data analysis a second coder repeated the coding and analysis using several transcripts. This process of inter-coder agreement is deemed essential in qualitative research (Bernard and Ryan, 2009; Huberman and Miles, 2002). More specifically, a subjective assessment approach was utilized where the coders sat down and reviewed the double-coded text, section by section, and any discrepancies were resolved and master coding was revised where necessary (Guest et al., 2011).

An emic approach (Berry, 1989) or intra-country analysis was initially used with sets of themes generated for each country context. Phase I of data collection involved British nationals, and independent analysis and coding were conducted prior to Phase II data collection. The same process was replicated for Phase II with T&T nationals, and separate codes were generated. After refining the codes for each data set independently, we embarked on a comparative analysis or inter-country contextual analysis to identify potential similarities and differences in the data sets. Guest et al. (2011, 162) state “At the most basic level, an analyst simply examines the differential expression of themes across groups and notes which themes/concepts are similar across groups and which are different.” This approach is welcomed since “more is needed to enrich our current understanding of variations, as well as commonalities of consumers’ experiences across cultures” (Zhang et al., 2008, 222).

From our analyses of each data set emerged a comprehensive framework that was multi-dimensional and hierarchical in nature. The two qualitatively generated conceptual frameworks for the two samples were similar in structure. It appears there are universal aspects that consumers utilize in their evaluations of service quality, at
least in Britain and T&T. Similarities withstanding, however, we note that importance weightings for the universal aspects may very well differ. Most noteworthy is the fact that the three service quality factors often discussed in some earlier service quality models—service process/delivery, service setting, and the service outcome—were clearly identified in both data sets.

More importantly, the key findings were an all-encompassing influence of culture and the presence of three mediating factors not previously identified as central in previous service quality models. Firstly, culture has an over-arching influence on all elements deemed necessary by consumers in their service quality perceptions, which is a view in part supported by Zhang, Beatty, and Walsh (2008) who stated that culture potentially impacts on each stage of the service experience. The identified key aspects of each culture, namely the main drivers of the consumers’ overall service quality evaluations as depicted in our proposed Conceptualization of Service Quality in Cultural Context (CSQCC) frameworks, are referred to as cultural triggers in this study. Secondly, we identified three mediating, non-marketing factors which are conventionally not within the purview and control of marketers, as affecting the consumers’ evaluation of service quality.

3.4.2. The Construct: Cultural Triggers

We define cultural triggers as a phenomenon, activity, or institution with which most citizens of a country identify, consciously or unconsciously, and provide frames of reference of what is valued, what is normal, and what is reflective of a larger cultural pattern. However, it refers much less to values, and more so to the norms of the
society—normative factors that appear to have a much stronger influence on individual and group behavior than abstract or idealized values held by the society or individuals. While values and norms are related, we adopt the view that norms as unwritten codes of conduct imposed from the outside (as opposed to values—an internal mindset and set of beliefs) have a far stronger direct influence on attitudes and individual behavior while values provide indirect guidance only.

In addition, while we refer primarily to relational norms, these can also be economic or historic, or other norms reflective of a broader, more encompassing cultural system, or “symbolic universe” (Berger and Luckmann, 1991). Normative influence through social pressure by other people can act as a powerful stimulus by enforcing standards of conduct on how people should behave (Hoyer et al., 2013; Solomon, 2006), and can be viewed as stored procedures in consumers’ memory on how to behave or act in particular circumstances. These norms arise quickly, though often without verbal communication or direct thought by members of the society or group, and effects groups functioning, violation of which can lead to sanctions (Hawkins et al., 1995).

Furthermore, these norms do not only influence the individual based on personal behavior, but the individual may also become distressed when norms are violated by others (Johar, 2005).

It is emphasized by Briley and Wyer (2002) that group membership initiates a mind-set where individuals feel a sense of responsibility to the group, and the individuals thus engage in decisions that avoids the erosion of group cohesiveness. These conformity pressures serve as frames of reference which specify the ideal actions that one should follow; nevertheless, we acknowledge compliance is never perfect.
(Evans et al., 2006; Solomon, 2006). Cultural triggers help maintain the referential integrity and social balance individuals or consumers strive for by modifying one’s behavior, derived consciously or unconsciously, in order to maintain social balance or avoid sanctions. In a sense, individuals enact some form of self-presentation or impression management in terms of the normative expectations of others rather than some deep-seated value system.

We tend to judge others’ behaviors based on our own cultural norms and hence when there is dissonance or unexpected behavior this may result in negative perceptions of the receiver and the overall perceptions of service quality. Archer (1986) describes such a disruption in thinking or behavior flow as “culture bumps” when he examined intercultural communication and specifically the impact of language in the communication process. These disruptions are as a result of the discrepancy between one’s expectations of what normal situational behavior should be and is drawn from our socialization within a particular culture. Thus when an event or disruption occur cultural triggers become salient and effect mediated action. We argue such “culture bumps” are equally relevant in understanding intra-cultural situations since we are all cultural beings though influenced by a meta-culture, there are the influence of other sub-cultural factors particularly in multicultural societies. Yet still, we are individuals and may even choose to deviate from prevailing norms of expectation, as and when we choose.

The cultural triggers, may also be entirely unique to a country, context, or group of people, and influences the ways in which we as individuals filter and process most information and in turn shape choices made. Triggers influence the degree of importance given to specific variables in predicting psychological behaviors within
context, culture being one of the most important contexts (Triandis, 1996). Our notion of cultural triggers also extends beyond cultural norms to consider — self and the collective identity — shaped within a social system or nation and its influence on consumption choice and behaviors of consumers. According to McGraw and Tetlock (2005, 4) “Social life is a delicate dance. Human beings are continually implicitly or explicitly negotiating the meanings of transactions and the nature of the social identities they would like to establish in the eyes of others.” From this perspective, we can advance that all human experience is socially constructed, and since service encounters are “social encounters,” cultural triggers would influence consumers’ and employees’ behavior during the service exchange as they negotiate their identities relative to others. “Culture and identity are never entirely separable: it is a defining trait of the concept of a culture… among the constituent elements of cultural identity, shared tastes and inclinations are more bodily and emotional in orientation, while shared beliefs and values are mental and rational” (Joseph, 2013, 40). As proposed by Berger and Luckman (1991) identity is legitimized by placing it within the context of a symbolic universe which delimits social reality by determining the boundaries of social interaction and what is relevant. In so doing, it provides a “memory” of the past for individuals socialized in the collective, as well as, a common frame of reference for future individual action. Since “the logic of choice often may be that of role-constrained obligation” (McGraw and Tetlock, 2005, 2).

These cultural triggers in part bounded by one’s identity are primary catalysts that drive perceptions within the environment, the way individuals perceive and act, and cuts across other variables such as religion, age, ethnic background, and other sub-
cultural influences. Identities are powerful and their importance irrefutable as it brings to bear an individual’s membership and/or non-membership to a collective and facilitates self-definition which ultimately guides the behaviors and cognitions of the individual (Balmer, 2008). In fact, research has shown that when firms actively bring to the attention of consumers their cultural identity, increased awareness of their membership based on group norms influences their decisions (Briley and Wyer Jr, 2002). Therefore, in defining cultural triggers we assume a socio-cognitive approach in explaining behavior, in essence, as in social identity theory. A central premise of social identity theory is that an individual’s sense of self is strongly associated with what groups they belong to or identify with, and the high probability that most if not all individuals seek a positive self-concept—group categorization being the key explanatory mechanism (Tajfel, 1981).

It is suggested that identity are “based on mutual images and stereotypes and on emotion linked to the outer layers of the onion, but not to values” (Spencer-Oatey, 2012, 20). A distinction we wish to acknowledge with respect to what cultural triggers are and are not is that they are not values but are related to cultural norms, self and collective identities and, even if in some way stereotypical per Spencer-Oatey’s suggestion, they are by no means weak or less influential. On the contrary, as we discussed in part above and would demonstrate via our empirical data, cultural triggers undoubtedly do have an overarching influence on consumer behavior, and may become even more robust and germane when there is a conflict between personal values and societal values.
3.4.3. Conceptualization of Service Quality in Cultural Context (CSQCC): Britain

Two influential cultural triggers were identified for our CSQCC Britain framework (Figure 1). First, a long-held cultural trait referred to as the British Reserve was identified as having a strong influence on the level of emotional expressiveness of British nationals and in turn influences British consumers’ evaluation of service quality. Second, also related to emotional expressiveness is the British societal norm of cordiality in interpersonal interactions which we refer to as the Culture of Cordiality. Notably both cultural triggers are related to one’s emotions; emotional significance being an integral part of one’s identity (Joseph, 2013) and of particular relevance, since emotions does influence consumer evaluations (Bagozzi et al., 1999).

Emotions are culturally determined: how they are experienced, the reactions they provoke in individuals, and the manner in which they are perceived by society. The emotional culture to which one belongs influences both customer and employee during the service encounters and thus influences the evaluation of service quality (Liljander and Strandvik, 1997). This viewpoint is also supported by Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) who suggest, for example, that one’s display of feelings can have a strong impact on the quality of service transactions. More recently, it was highlighted that salespersons’ interpersonal sensitivity and awareness of behavioral cues of customers such as of the face and body do in fact influence service perceptions (Puccinelli et al., 2013). Furthermore, it was found that gauging emotions from facial expressions were even more complex and difficult in intercultural service encounters (Tombs et al., 2014). Since “the same set of circumstances can provoke quite different emotional reactions (or even no emotional reactions) across different individuals” (Schoefer and Ennew, 2005,
263) and presumably across country contexts. Thus, understanding *British Reserve* and the *British Culture of Cordiality* and its potential influences in service quality provision would be extremely beneficial for firms.

**INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE**

When asked to describe British culture, an exceptionally common response among British interviewees was the qualities related to what we term as *British Reserve* in our study. Indeed, the interviewees actually used the term *British Reserve* frequently. For example, both Carol and Heather suggested the following:

*I think Britain lately has become very multicultural that is what I really like about Britain. But if we are specific about British and English culture I suppose the Brits we are known for our British reserve even though I think that is less so nowadays...It's the personality, the character of the Brit as other nationalities perceive the Brit to be a very reserved nation. In a way it is what we portray in our behavior, we are known for cueing and appearing almost standoffish, not warm and friendly although that view is changing slightly now.*

(Carol)

*I think there is certain stoicism, hardiness in our culture. The reluctance sometimes to not perhaps highlight niggles, concerns, or query things on occasions...The stoicism that I was talking about, the stiff upper lip as people call it. People just getting on with things, you would hear people talking about after the war, British people could get up and get on and that’s a positive.*

(Heather)

Collette highlights and encapsulates the strong cultural tone of *British Reserve* and how it can potentially influence all facets of the service encounter:

*It is a very polite culture but a standoffish culture; there is a lot of history ingrained in our culture. Class divisions are also ingrained in our culture and potentially we think about what class you belong to more than other cultures...When you meet a British person, they would not give you too much personal details or would not give too much away about themselves when you first meet them that is what I mean by standoffish. Other people might consider*
that to be cold, and polite in the sense they would not be rude to you in your face. So for example, the Chinese can be quite rude, but Brits are cold but in a standoffish way.... I think the "British reserve" can be interpreted as being cold and abrupt, it’s this impersonal politeness and it comes across in the way we deal with people in service.

(Collette)

This brings to the fore the need to examine how people from different cultures express emotions, and of course this is particularly important in the services context because the very nature of services, the interaction between the buyer and seller, the customer and employee during service encounters or moments of truth that require communication can be interpreted and expressed in such different ways. Zhang, Beatty, and Walsh (2008) argue that since every service delivery process involves communication, it would be beneficial to employ frameworks that focus on communication differences between cultures.

Evident in communication episodes are expressed emotions which in essence are mediated by one’s cultural background (Hall and Hall, 1989; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1994). Hall and Hall’s (1989) theory of high- and low-context culture can help us understand the powerful effect culture has on the communication styles of individuals from different cultures. Britain, USA and much of Western Europe are said to be low-context cultures, while the countries in the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and South America are said to be high-context cultures (Hall and Hall, 1987, 1990).

Differences in low- versus high-context cultures may influence your view towards levels of commitment to relationships (relationship-focused or task-focused), attitudes towards time, and levels of expressiveness, which in turn would influence one’s expectations and perceptions of service quality.
The “stiff upper lip” or *British Reserve* describes the traditional portrayal of detachment and self-control by British nationals when faced with difficult situations. These traditions/customs rooted in the past are aspects of one’s heritage which are salient since it shapes or represents one’s collective identity and provides a sense of certainty to nationals in a world of uncertainty (Balmer et al., 2011) and thus through these shared understandings the society are likely to function more effectively.

Interviewees discussed how open displays of emotion in Britain, whether positive or negative, are rare, and how the focus tends to be on the task at hand and a need for privacy rather than on interpersonal relationships and communication. For example, Leanne described her experience of being served at a restaurant:

> When I go out I want the place to be clean, I want the employee to be clean and well presented...they need to be respectful, well-spoken and knowledgeable and friendly but not my friend... don’t want to be asked personal questions by the employee and I do not want to know their personal details either. A quick "Hi, how are you? I am fine." That’s sufficient, I do not want employees prying, but smiling is fine...An employee does not need to ask you any personal questions, they do not need to tell you anything about themselves, and they should manage a conversation very well without delving into personal areas. It could be about what you are buying, what you are eating, something that is relevant to your service. My relationship with you is about the wine, the restaurant, so let's keep it that way!

*(Leanne)*

This is consistent with Hall’s conceptualization of low-context cultures such as Britain which tend to be more task-centered and procedure-oriented, in contrast to T&T which appears to be a high-context culture where consumers desire a relational approach to service delivery.

Similar to Hall’s high-context and low-context conceptualizations, Trompennaars and Hampden-Turner’s (1994) conception of affective versus neutral cultures addresses
how cultures express emotions. For example, affective cultures are emotionally engaging and so they express emotions naturally, relying on intuition and feelings, even in business situations. On the other hand, neutral cultures withhold emotion or lack emotional tone, and emotion does not influence their objectivity and reason in business situations (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1994). Emotions in communication or lack thereof thus translates into the service context with the eventual assessment or perceptions of service quality depending on the level of emotional engagement desired or expected by the individuals requesting the service, and the communication style of the service employee delivering the service. Notably, British Reserve also explains the apparent unwillingness of many British people to complain when poor service is received. Darrell’s account highlights how British Reserve translates into the service delivery and its influence on complaint behavior:

In the English tradition, English character, Brit character there is a sense of reticence. A friend of mine who has lived in Portugal for many years both he and his wife are British, their children are Portuguese, he says, "we British are a shy race". I think he is right. There is almost a barrier between you and me that you are intruding into my space, I am intruding into your space, and you have two Brits there interacting in service and you often find both of them are uncomfortable with that personal interaction. I can’t help but feel that is why service in Britain is bit impersonal, the shyness...We are shy people but it depends. Increasingly when we talk about English people, English now is multicultural; some of our brothers and sisters are now much less reticent than traditional English people. The younger English people that are ethnically English are more accustomed to complaining. I think it is starting to change, the older generation are shy and don’t like to make a fuss whereas the young English people are more willing to complain.

(Darrell)

The cordiality of British nationals or, more specifically, their degree of politeness in social situations and service interaction is understood to be rooted in Victorian middle-class virtues. The moral ethos and sense of responsibility people owed
to each other and the idealized notion of Englishness or Britishness or model of proper
behavior that existed in the past fostered a sense of equality, justice, fair play and
democracy in society (Morley and Robins, 2001). These middle-class virtues were
carved out in an attempt to define a society based on merit rather than aristocratic
privilege or one’s birth, and appear to be very much a part of present-day British society
and etiquette. For example, Darrell argues, “I don’t think this is about stereotypes…
there seems to be a kind of fair play and if you like a type of natural order that gives the
underdog a chance.” Furthermore, Victor, the oldest of the British interviewees
emphasized that based on his travel, work, and leisure experiences, “In England, we
have a culture of being grateful, in simple ways, just please and thank you which seems
to be sadly lacking in some other cultures.” While Carol offered this piece of advice for
the unsuspecting customer:

*If something goes wrong in the service, thread carefully, be polite, going in
gong-ho and making demands [on the employee] does not tend to work in
Britain, use the nicely softly approach… It often pays to be nice. For example, if
you had something to complain about, don’t run in angry, it doesn’t work in
Britain. Thread carefully, have a polite approach!…. It is also important the
employee is being very polite and fair with me, and listened to my needs and
delivered on the mark.*

*(Carol)*

Nevertheless, based on further comments by these and other British interviewees
it appears that a distinction is made between different levels of courtesy during service
encounters such as being polite, being friendly, or being genuine. Collette, for example,
distinguishes between politeness and being friendly, and her viewpoint was also
reinforced and shared by Ryan:

*I think there is a difference between doing it politely and meaning to do it
politely. You can tell when people are acting rather than meaning to serve, you*
can tell when someone is taking real pleasure and pride in serving... [service in Britain] is acting when at best. It is quite easy to tell when service is not genuine... it all comes down to the warmth and the friendliness and I don’t think you really get that unless employees are genuinely wanting to serve... part of having good service is not only efficiency but also being served by someone who is friendly and warm.

(Collette)

Politeness is not necessarily a good thing, they would never scream or shout at you but they would not show any emotion either, they would say scripted sentences in a polite way. For example, if I had a problem and there was not anything they can do, they would not explain why, they would not shout at me either and they would not be overly rude, but they would continue saying oh my hands are tied or there is nothing much we can do at the moment or they would call me sir but you can see there is nothing genuine behind it... Well most people I know would have walked out at that point when they said “there is nothing they can do”, it is taken at face value because being British, you have to be subtly polite when you are annoyed and take things as being truthful.

(Ryan)

It appears that British Reserve, the societal norm and its preference for modesty, understatement and restraining one’s emotions may also play a part. According to Ashforth and Humphrey (1993, 91) “Societal norms provide general, overarching rules regarding how and what emotions should be expressed during service encounters. Societal norms are typically manifested through the expectations of customers.” Both encoders and decoders of messages typically follow “cultural rules” which reduces noise in expression if they are from the same culture (Tsang and Prendergast, 2009). Steve’s thoughts collectively capture how the cultural concepts, British Reserve and the Culture of Cordiality, may have strongly influenced service delivery in Britain:

Get ready for a whole host of crazy bureaucratic, legalistic ways of thinking and everything being managed and cold and technocratic, as opposed to authoritarian. Get ready for everything to be organized and sterile and uniform... There is no real or genuine relationship between you and the employee it is all instrumental getting back to what I was saying earlier, this country has instrumentalized everything. Not just the way in which we use
machines in industry, but human relations are massively instrumentalized means to an end where there is no sense of knowing people or being interested or needing to know people... It’s like reading a script; you are literally talking to actors who are reading off a script, hiding behind a script, like they are invisible the actual person.

(Steve)

We postulate that the Culture of Cordiality experienced during service encounters to which we alluded earlier consists of three different levels: (1) Politeness and Good Manners, (2) Friendliness, and (3) Genuineness. First, Politeness and Good Manners relates to a basic level of courtesy or respect provided to customers, a salutation or acknowledgment, such as Sir, Madam, saying thank you, and being genteel or civilized but with limited emotional involvement. Second, Friendliness relates to the illustration of warmth, camaraderie, friendship, and kindness, and service with a smile that requires a higher degree of emotional involvement on the part of service personnel. Third, Genuineness relates to a sense of truthfulness, honesty, and caring demonstrated by employees such as caring about the customer or having the customer’s interest at heart.

3.4.4. Conceptualization of Service Quality in Cultural Context (CSQCC): T&T

In our CSQCC T&T framework four key cultural triggers were identified as illustrated in Figure 2. First, the very powerful and influential Festive Culture manifested primarily from the country’s premier national festival—Carnival. Second, a Culture of Closeness which we defined as the structure of personal relations in the society and the degree of psychological closeness individuals feels towards others. Third, is a Culture of Servitude which emphasizes the general attitude of apathy towards work by Trinbagonians. And fourth, a Culture of Entitlement demonstrated by nationals of the
country being heavily influenced by its very lucrative oil and gas industry and world-rated energy sector.

**INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE**

T&T’s Carnival and the general festive nature of society influence the attitudes and behavior of the people and service quality delivery. According to Mason (1998, 15), “Carnival itself is not simply a two-day event in the annual calendar for Trinbagonians; it is more an all-year-round statement of identity.” He expounds further: “It is Trinidad’s special mix of peoples and backgrounds which helps give Carnival and the country their extraordinary spirit and identity.” This view was repeatedly reinforced by the interviewees:

*Culture in my understanding is the way we do things... We like to fete [party], have fun, we are a festive people, we like to visit each other and always be in the company of other people. We all share in this festive mood, it is a reflection of who we are as a people, and it defines us!*

*(Damien)*

*When I think about our culture all I think about is carnival...The fact that we want to include culture into every aspect of what we do, yes carnival is a time for jumping, waving and having fun, unfortunately we do not know when the fete is over it is time to go back to work so that affects our productivity levels. We don’t know when to stop, you know you have a holiday on Monday and you don’t want to go back to work the rest of the week, that kind of thing we have to know when the partying stop and it is time to get down to work.*

*(Alison)*

Alison alludes to how this *Festive Culture* influences our work ethic as a nation and in great part affects our daily working lives, her views are further emphasized by Nick and Joanna:
One of the things very unique about our culture is carnival and its influence, as a people we are easy-going and laid-back and sadly that filters into the business context and the way we work.

(Nick)

The laidbackness does spill over into work. Many employees you get the impression they just counting the hours to leave, work is not about providing service or adding value but work is about a pay check. In many ways that fun loving nature about us it spills over in terms of like carnival, carnival time productivity is at an all-time low and people would call in sick because they went to parties the week before and generally the country shuts down the week before carnival...All levels of business, even professionals in the bank, even professionals in the insurance industry right down to people working in the pizza parlors.

(Joanna)

Carnival is a big part of our life, our society, life is a bit like a big party and you see it present in our daily life even outside of the carnival season, it happens long before and long after. We take every opportunity to celebrate which is nice in one way. But, on the other side it is responsible for a kind of lackadaisical attitude in our people, a product of the carnival mentality rather than the other way around, that affects our approach to work.... we are very sociable people, we are very friendly in a social context but for some reason when it comes to doing a job it is as if a different side of us comes out... When it comes to service, Trinbagonian employees have a bit of an attitude... as if it is a chore to come and serve you. ”

(Edward)

Edward’s comments, also raises a unique finding related to two different selves of Trinbagonians which we labeled as the Private-self and the Public-self. The flip side of the friendly, outgoing, warm, Private-self in a social setting is the “don’t care,” unwilling attitude of the Public-self in a commercial setting. For example, Sally and Natasha talks about the nature of this Public-self:

It is difficult to understand how a culture that is so friendly, open and could relate to people have such poor customer service. It is people's attitude towards work, and to work hard for things in T&T, they are very laid-back... even though they are friendly and jolly culturally when it comes to work and the business environment they do not know how to channel it appropriately.

(Sally)
When you go into firms and you standing there as a customer and you see the employees chatting and you waiting to be served and then when they come to serve you... that attitude is common in Trinidad how they deal with you and that can flare up. You already watching them carrying on while you waiting. There is this whole laissez-faire, don’t care about the customer attitude, employees chatting on personal business and you standing begging to be served.

(Natasha)

Clearly, Festive Culture and its “freeness” extend into work settings but in a negative way. A sort of Carnival mentality exists to renew bonds of solidarity and the collective identity of a society and its inhabitants, through emotional gratifications, such as attachments to others, recognition, and a sense of empowerment (Langman, 2003). Our conception of Festive Culture as a cultural trigger is consistent with the experiential and socio-cultural perspective of consumption advocated by consumer culture theory (CCT) that highlights the role of symbolism and ritual practices in structuring personal and communal consumer identities through socio-historic influences (Arnould and Thompson, 2005).

Carnival emerged in feudal Europe as an expression of peasant folk culture, mimicking and mocking the official feasts and spectacles of the elites; it was an occasion of inversions, sanctioned deviance and reversals of norms, for pleasurable release by peasants (Langman, 2003). Such was the birth of Carnival in T&T, mimicking masquerade balls of French Catholic planters, and after the emancipation of slaves in 1838, masking or Canboulay became a symbol of freedom and defiance from the British colonial government (Discover Team, 2013). The rituals of Canboulay later merged with stick-fighting, chanting and drumming to become a jamette—an underclass masquerade or carnival which became a symbol of Trinbagonians’ national identity (Discover Team, 2013). The defiance towards authority is still evident in the attitudes of
T&T nationals’ *Public-self* and in service delivery, as shown in Joseph’s and Joanna’s remarks:

> We are not, by and large, a service-oriented society. Many of our people seem to have the view that service is equated to servitude. It is almost a matter of honor to not deliver excellent service.

*(Joseph)*

> For a lot of people in T&T, our attitude to service is almost like being subservient. Service is not satisfying a customer’s need or want; it is not about adding value. Here in T&T service is almost like being somebody’s maid or slave!

*(Joanna)*

Nevertheless, it is noted that the upside of this *Festive culture* is the friendliness, the engaging, easy-going warmth, and the no-worries island mentality of the people. Should it be properly harnessed, this aspect of culture could significantly elevate service delivery and service quality in T&T towards service excellence—a wow factor.

It is notable that despite the unwelcomed attributes currently related to the *Public-self* of many T&T employees, these very employees turned customers do clamor for enhanced interpersonal communications and relationships when receiving service.

For example, Nick emphasizes:

> I would say excellent service is when someone is attentive to my needs as an individual. They went above and beyond the call of duty, use their initiative; they did something they did not really have to do. On a personal level everybody knows when they are treated specially...When employees extend kindness that is outside a job description that really stands out and impresses me the most! When they genuinely care and express concern for you as a person that is excellent service.

*(Nick)*

The above comments highlight the *Culture of Closeness* that is evident in Trinbagonian culture which extends to the service encounter, at least as a need on the part of its nationals as customers. This *cultural trigger* was also identified in the preliminary phase
of the dissertation and covered in paper 1. The *Culture of Closeness* is in part related to
*Festive Culture* because they both influence the nature of how people interact with
others. The carnival spirit or *Festive Culture* embodies the fun and friendly nature, but
the *Culture of Closeness* extends to attentiveness, caring about people and
relationships—emotional interdependence. Alex suggests the following about evaluating
excellence in service:

> It is being attentive to your needs, understanding what the customer is asking for
and would like, and at times solving or seeing the problem before even the
customer does and bringing you knowledge and expertise to bear... at a
restaurant one waitress in particular... after 3 or 4 days going there she walked
up and without us saying anything to her, she called out our orders and
remembered everything... personalization and attention, solving the problem so
to speak before it even occurs.

 *(Alex)*

The *Culture of Closeness* goes beyond the need for simply being friendly but also the
expectation that there is a degree of trust and natural concern for others in the interaction,
as encapsulated by both Damien and Edward:

> You have to start with the people at the front counter, they could be the
differentiator. You pay more for the product or service if the service is right. If
you feel appreciated, people are genuine and you can discern honesty and they a
recommendation, and you realize they have your interest at heart.

 *(Damien)*

> I personally look for friendliness, if I go into a firm and cannot get friendly and
genuine service. Those are two different points from the point of being friendly
and the point of being genuine. For example, when I am overseas and experience
cultures, in the USA particularly on the east coast you get good service but
because they have to give it, however, when I go to Vancouver, Canada the
service was a bit genuine.

 *(Edward)*

Again, these comments also, illustrate the distinction between aspects of *Festive Culture*
and *Culture of Closeness*, one reflects an outward connection or focus, and the other an
inward connection or focus in interaction, respectively. Notably, the *Culture of Closeness* can have negative consequences particularly with respect to accountability on the part of the employee and expectations of the customer where employees are often expected to break rules/procedures to accommodate a sense of personalization and friendship with others, where relationships tends to come first. This is illustrated by Joseph:

*If you are dealing with an agency and trying to get a particular type of service...there would be an expectation that service would often be poor... so you call and see if you can get someone to circumvent for you instead of you having to go through the process... it is just you trying to get the best outcome for yourself, to get access to service.*

(Joseph)

An interesting *cultural trigger* impacting service delivery in T&T and also identified in paper 1 was a *Culture of Servitude* identified as being salient in the T&T country context—relates to the sense of apathy on the part of T&T employees, a don’t care attitude. Alex emphasizes the pervasiveness of this *Culture of Servitude*:

*The problem in this country is service seems to be associated with servitude in the sense that in the work environment people feel inferior when serving, it is almost as though you can see in their body language and interaction with you that they resent doing what they doing so that is bad service... I think we as a nation, as a people, we have come to associate service with servitude, we just frown upon certain things and it affects how those things are done by all.*

(Alex)

The *Culture of Servitude* appears to be very prevalent in the T&T workplace, this is supported by earlier comments made by Joanna but she elaborated further based on her experience as a former senior banking executive who travelled extensively throughout the Caribbean. She discussed Tobago, one part of the twin island republic of Trinidad & Tobago, but better known as a tourist destination of pristine quality. She
states:

*Tobago is a good case study as it has all the attributes of all other Caribbean islands—the sand, the sea, the reefs, the flora and fauna, the cuisine—and yet tourism cannot get off the ground. I think it is because of the lack of our service and hospitality training, and attitudes, because you can train us how much you want but if you don’t embrace it and understand it. We just don’t have the service attitude!*  

(Joanna)

It is was evident from the broad range of feedback by many T&T interviewees the general unwillingness on the part of T&T employees to serve, and of the central role of employee attitudes in their evaluation of service. Winston, for example, discusses a typical experience at a restaurant:

*There is a greater need for the service provider; the person who is actually providing the service to recognize that your customer is right... technically the customer is right and you got to meet those needs. For example, I went to a restaurant and complained about the service... the waiter I watch the reaction in their face, the unwillingness to accept that as the customer I am telling him you have got to take action. It is almost a disservice.*  

(Winston)

A secondary examination of the country’s history and cultural heritage provided a salient explanation, the genesis of the country’s carnival tradition which was born out of its colonial past and association with slavery and power inequalities (Discover Team, 2013). According to Langman (2003) festivals such as carnival evolved from social subordination and led to the formation of identities of “otherness” by slaves in defiance of inequalities of a servant-master relationship. T&T as a nation before its independence in 1962 had a long colonial history of switching between Spanish, French and British rule at different points in time (Brereton, 1989). It appears that this history has led to a sense of seeing work as submitting to authority and...
established rules, and thus in the workplace there is some sort of defiance by employees to authority which leads to what can be seen as a poor work ethic and leads to poor service quality.

Our analyses of the T&T data also revealed that there is a strong sense of entitlement felt by Trinbagonians—an attitude that they deserve to receive things easily whether from government, business, institutions etc.—in that, the country’s wealth has to be shared. We refer to this as *Culture of Entitlement* and it appears to be strongly related to the economic culture of the country, or more specifically, its wealth as a small rich developing country due to oil revenues which influence the society’s generally poor service orientation. According to Joanna and Winston there is a definitive influence:

*We just don’t have the service attitude!... I think for us it is our economic structure, the oil and gas, the energy sector has made us almost lazy and it has grown this sense of entitlement and dependency. By and large we have never had to give good service because the oil and gas is more profitable...looking at St. Lucia, Jamaica, Bahamas...for example, they have no other means of economic support; they have no other industry but to survive on tourism so because of that very situation they have to be service oriented. The problem with us in Trinidad is that the oil and gas brings in so much more money and remember the term economic rent, you do very little to oil and gas and you get a windfall whereas for tourism and many other service other service industries it is an issue.*

(Joanna)

*Unfortunately in Trinidad we do not exhibit that level of professionalism, and it is like “take it or leave it” that type of service is provided. In other Caribbean countries in the hospitality industry you would find they are very warm, friendly and provide that level of good customer service were you feel to reward people...In T&T there is a take it or leave it type of attitude...It is an inheritance of (sigh), we really do not care which goes back to the legacy of being a production type economy where we really never cared for that tourist dollar... as I said [because] of oil and gas industry we really did not depend on that extra income coming in from tourism so you did not have to learn to serve somebody.*

(Winston)
Porter in an interview articulated that “Economic culture is very heavily derived from the incentives and reality that people face… culture reflects context” (Snowdon and Stonehouse, 2006, 172). Similarly, it is argued that the level of economic development of a country does in fact influence the cultural values of its citizens (Budeva and Mullen, 2014; Punnett et al., 1994).

In a sense, there appears to be interplay between rewards in a society and the culture, such that in the case of T&T, the economic wealth of the country, its relatively high GDP per capita, a large middle class, the ability of a large section of its population to travel internationally, the historic Carnival consumption and, overall, the country’s ease of acquiring wealth have afforded Trinbagonians a good lifestyle that probably came too easily for a lot of citizens. The effect and influence of acquiring wealth from industries that are not highly labor intensive, therefore, can be telling in the case of T&T with respect to attitudes towards service delivery. According to Porter:

What people believe about what it takes to be prosperous has much to do with how they behave, and beliefs become reflected in attitudes and values… the role of cultural attributes, then, is difficult to decouple from the influence of the overall business environment and a society’s institutions (2000, 23).

Nationals’ consumption behaviors appears to be grounded in the historic and socioeconomic context of T&T’s marketplace (Arnould and Thompson, 2005) and has persisted through time as the country’s economic circumstances maintained an upward trajectory through time.
3.4.5. The CSQCC and Key Mediating Factors

Our CSQCC frameworks identified the three mediating factors in both data sets as shown in Figures 1 and 2: (1) Customer Responsibility, (2) Employee Work Ethic/Attitude, and (3) Organizational Responsibility. These factors represent a meaningful expansion beyond the marketing-oriented focus of existing service quality models, highlighting the need to integrate, for example, the human resources and operational disciplines into service quality modeling. We argue that it appears that all three are directly influenced by the culture and the key cultural triggers identified in each country context.

These overarching cultural factors directly or indirectly affect Customer Responsibility, Employee Work Ethic/Attitude, and Organizational Responsibility which in turn influences the three traditional service quality dimensions that have been identified in previous service marketing literature (Brady and Cronin Jr., 2001; Seth et al., 2005; Zhang et al., 2008). These then directly influence consumers’ perception of service quality. For example, when questioned about the poor service culture, Collette emphasizes:

"It comes back to the culture of the country... I used to work for Singapore Airlines [in Singapore] which has a great culture of service, and also has the culture of the countries around from which they employ and the way they are expected to behave."

(Collette)

This comment and others earlier in the paper highlight the potential influence of culture on behavior related to Employee Work Ethic/Attitudes, Organizational Responsibility and Customer Responsibility. In essence, the culture and the nature of current day society impacts the work ethic of individuals, how employees behave and thus the likely
perception consumers will have. Heather portrays the link between these mediating variables and the service we receive when she speaks of her home country, while Jack’s comment illustrates a link between *Employee Work Ethic/Attitudes,* and *Organizational Responsibility* and their impact on service quality:

*The culture of the country is that everyone is too busy, even as an individual or consumer you haven’t the time to complain or confront the problem; it is easier to just accept poor service. It will stay that way until everyone ups their game and cares a little bit more about the job they are doing. For example, even a job like planting trees and shrubs for the council, you see the young lad today just getting on with his job and do not care, he is not the old man that did it for 40 years that loved his job and who was valued by his team and employers. The young lad is ten a penny and he would be replaced tomorrow, it shows in his work.*

*(Heather)*

*[In company X] the employees are stakeholders within the business, they all really care about the results, and they seem interested. Basically, it is a partnership, all employees get a profit share even people on the shop floor, so they are motivated to deliver exceptional service at all levels in the business, whereas, normally the employee dealing directly with the customer would not get that sort of perk.*

*(Jack)*

More specifically, Heather’s comments highlight the relevance not only of the young man and his approach to his job (work ethic) but also potentially the motivation or lack of motivation he may have in the way he may be viewed by the company he works for. For example, He, Li and Lai (2010) emphasized the role of the organization in creating a service climate that is conducive to employee productivity and creates impetus for good service delivery. Furthermore, Heather’s comments indicate the role of customer attitude or *Customer Responsibility* in perpetuating or encouraging the poor level of service received, consistent with the co-creation of value and the role of the customer service exchange advocated by service-dominant logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Similarly,
Jack’s comments highlights the importance that organizational induced factors or the responsibility the organization may have on the work ethic of employees, service process and outcome in terms of service delivery throughout the organization and on the front line. Issues in the workplace that facilitate or inhibit task performance, organizational practices around reward, remuneration and staff development and training are crucial and may motivate or demotivate employees work approach (Schneider and Bowen, 1993) and impact interaction with the final consumer.

In this study we define *Employee Work Ethic/Attitudes* as the basic belief held by employees on the moral virtues of hard work and diligence and its influence on their attitudes and approach to their job. Allan emphasizes the central role of the employee and attitudes in the quality of service received and possibly work ethic; however, in a sense the high turnover noted may also be related to the firm’s remuneration policies or factors within the control of the firm, as argued by Alex.

*It comes down to employees and I know the challenges organizations face with employees. There is no guarantee that I will go there next week or next month and it would be the same employees. Most likely the employees would change especially at that level; the turnover is so high that you would hardly see employees in those jobs for any length of time. It is more based on employees’ attitudes than policies and procedures and guidelines set up by these establishments.*

*(Allan)*

*It comes back to money, remuneration and horrible systems because you can put an excellent person in horrible systems and generally over time that person would be defeated by the system. It is similar to, you put a spectacular person in politics and they indicated they want to change this and that and they get in and they find a system that is corrupt or broken.*

*(Alex)*

We refer to *Organizational Responsibility* as a firm’s actions that impact service levels positively or negatively by shaping and influencing the behaviors of employees
and customers before, during, and after the service encounter. Issues related to hiring practices, staff training, reward and remuneration, presence of complaint mechanisms, and efficient workflow systems were identified. *Organizational Responsibility* reflects the firm’s organizational culture; itself influenced by wider national or societal and individual norms through the processes of socialization and aggregation, respectively (Erez and Gati, 2004; Leung et al., 2005).

*Customer Responsibility* focuses on the consumers’ behavior during and/or after the service encounter, complaining or non-complaining, and their general behavior at the moment-of-truth which can impact service or perceived service quality; as culture shapes consumer behavior (Hofstede, 1984; Kueh and Voon, 2007). Rhian suggests that we should all look beyond the employee and the organization and examine our roles as consumers’ in encouraging or discouraging particular levels of service quality.

> It is everybody’s responsibility... we are aware who gives good service, who doesn’t give good service, so it is all of our responsibility to ensure we demand from service providers the type of service we want.

*(Rhian)*

More insight into the three mediating variables in our CSQCC framework are clearly illustrated in Table 2 with specific examples of interviewee responses utilized to aid framing and the creation of the higher-order themes or codes (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2006).

**INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE**
3.4.6. The CSQCC and Key Service Factors

Beyond the unique aspects of our CSQCC framework already discussed, the CSQCC consists of three primary service factors, namely, the Service Process/Delivery, Service Setting, and Service Outcome which are all consistent with various aspects of service quality modelling in the extant literature (Dabholkar et al., 1995; Grönroos, 1982, 1984; Parasuraman et al., 1988; Rust and Oliver, 1994) albeit slight differences exist. These factors, as part of our hierarchical CSQCC framework were deemed as important by interviewees when arriving at their overall evaluations of perceived service quality. For some insight into these key service factors and the thematic approach utilized to identify them (Table 3).

The overarching themes or service factors are labelled as integrative themes (Saldaña, 2012). In this aspect of our CSQCC framework, the service factors or integrative themes (Table 3) reflect Rust and Oliver’s (1994) interpretation of customers’ overall service quality perceptions consisting of three dimensions which they designated as customer-employee interaction (functional quality, Grönroos, 1984), the service environment (Bitner, 1992), and the outcome (technical quality, Grönroos, 1984). In addition, there are others whose work supports these at least in part but we herein present the foundational work which brought these key dimensions to the fore. As indicated there are some differences, but these relate more to the sub-dimensions of the three service factor constructs. An illustration of the key service factors and sub-
dimensions of the CSQCC framework can be found in Figure 3, as well as thematically represented in Table 3.

**INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE**

Due to space limitations and the current focus of this paper on cultural triggers we do not elaborate in too much more detail on the CSQCC framework’s key service factors and its sub-dimensions, which are also partially covered in extant literature. Only to emphasize that based on earlier discussion these service factors and sub-dimensions are influenced by cultural triggers and the mediating factors (customer responsibility, employee work ethic/attitude, and organizational responsibility), which in turn, directly or indirectly influence the behavioral disposition and overall service quality perceptions held by customers:

*Good service for me is when the employee goes above and beyond what I expect, so when I go into a business with certain expectations and they deliver that and more. I expect the service to be quick... Employees must be dressed properly, the way they talk you should not be addressed in a rude way, instead be polite and courteous, and have a good understanding of their job role. Finally, they must do all those things efficiently in the time I wanted it.*

*(Collette)*

*When I think about quality service I think about organizations that have gone out of their way to enhance my service experience... I appreciate smiling faces... when they have time to explain what should be expected... employees are happy you are there, they remember your name, it is a good feeling that you get and it makes you feel to go back again.*

*(Alison)*

*Well you have to start with the people at the front counter they could be the differentiator. You may pay more for the product or service, if the service is right. If you feel appreciated, people are genuine and you can discern the honesty and you realize they have your interest at heart.*

*(Damien)*
For me elements of good service fundamentally reside in the person that is representing that organization and have a complete understanding of that organization and its function and its objectives... a very well thought out plan of how to provide a satisfactory experience for your customers and it would be from the layout, their communications such as fliers, posters any sort of communication, to cleanliness of parking lot... the surroundings are clean, it is everything that attracts you to the organization, as well as staff accommodate you and make you feel valued during the service experience.

(Rhian)

The preceding interviewee comments provide some insight into what they perceive to be good service and/or describes their service experiences and its influence on their overall service quality perceptions, in various ways the comments reflect many of the service factors and their role in shaping service quality perceptions.

Finally, the hierarchical nature of the CSQCC framework also reflects the model proposed by Dabholkar, Thorpe and Rentz (1995) of service quality perceptions due to its multilevel and multidimensional nature (see Figures 1 & 2). However, as discussed earlier on, the distinguishing aspect of our CSQCC framework is the overarching role of culture and cultural triggers, and the key mediating factors—customer responsibility, employee work ethic/attitude, and organizational responsibility—on our identified service factors and ultimately consumers’ overall service quality perceptions.

3.5. Discussion and Directions for Future Research

The main aims of the study were achieved utilizing a cross-national, qualitative method which enabled us to develop a deeper understanding as to how culture affects consumers’ overall perceptions of service quality and the criteria they utilize to assess the phenomenon. This research extended beyond a single nation with interviewees from
a developing country and a developed country. In addition, the researchers were either a national or citizen of the two countries from which the samples were drawn, and thus well-placed to draw meaningful insight based on the requisite substantive knowledge and understanding of his/her respective culture and/or country contexts under examination (Craig and Douglas, 2005).

Service quality researchers have traditionally adopted an objectivistic paradigm and positivistic philosophy to the study of service quality, and in so doing, inadvertently predefine or narrowly establish how consumers view service quality (Schembri and Sandberg, 2002). Thus a key contribution of the study was the utilization of an interpretivist philosophy and by extension qualitative methods. The commitment in this study was to see the phenomena of service quality through the eyes of the participants. We argue that an interpretivist’s philosophy facilitated not only deeper understanding but also more effective interpretation of the findings uncovered from semi-structured interviews. Goulding (1999) suggests that an interpretivist philosophy brings us closer to the consumers’ perspective in their own culturally-constructed world.

The most interesting and significant finding of our study is not only the observed overarching influence of culture on all aspects of service delivery that influence consumers’ service quality perceptions, but also the identification of key cultural triggers that may be unique to a society and country. As we defined earlier, a cultural trigger is a phenomenon, activity, or institution with which most citizens of a country identify, consciously or unconsciously, and provides frames of reference of what is valued, what is normal, and what is reflective of a larger cultural pattern. It is also important to reiterate that our study adopted a dynamic view of culture whereby the
construct of culture is seen as being in constant flux and individuals adapt to the cultural context and broader ecological and socio-political factors (Berry et al., 1992). For example, in Asian societies belief in fate and concern for saving face are central tendencies that influence behavior, as they have a much stronger impact on Asian levels of tolerance relative to Western consumers (Chan et al., 2009). Similarly, belief in karma was identified as a key cultural factor that strongly influences the expectations of Indian nationals (Kopalle et al., 2010).

We posit that the cultural triggers identified in our Conceptualization of Service Quality in Cultural Context (CSQCC) frameworks may be unique to country nationals who spent particularly their formative years in their country of birth. We argue that there are distinctive overarching triggers or cultural phenomena that ultimately shape consumer behavior of nationals in that country context, and prominently influence consumers’ evaluations of service quality. The CSQCC frameworks highlights the need for firms wishing to do business beyond home country borders to first qualitatively identify these key cultural triggers in a host country and to critically evaluate their nature and influence on society and individuals, both for consumers and service employees, in that country context.

A key cultural trigger identified in our CSQCC Britain framework is the pervasive cultural norm called British Reserve. This norm is largely associated with limited emotional expressiveness and is linked with service delivery attributes described as scripted, passionless, cold, technocratic, and sterile. Nevertheless, it was positively linked to attributes such as equitable, a sense of fairness and a mechanism for efficiency,
which are clearly positive attributes that go some way in improving satisfaction and consumers’ overall perceptions of service quality.

However, our two data sets consistently revealed the need for employees’ “Friendliness” in the service encountered, although there is a difference as to whether this is a “must-have” or “nice-to-have,” with the former being the general disposition of the T&T data set, and the latter with the British data set. Some interviewees expressed that in instances of service failure, “Friendliness” does go some way in soothing disappointment and improving overall service quality perceptions. This is supported by Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) who emphasized that displayed feelings do in fact have a strong impact on the quality of service transactions, attractiveness of the interpersonal climate and the experience of emotion itself. A useful approach to classifying cultures based on how they express emotions is Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s (1994) bipolar dimensions of affective versus neutral cultures in their *Seven Cultures of Capitalism* framework. Accordingly, T&T can be broadly classified as an affective culture and Britain a neutral culture. Based on our findings, future research should investigate the influence of affective- and neutral-focused behaviors on consumer evaluations of service providers in instances of service quality failure. Although research on affect or emotions has grown significantly, there has been limited focus on or recognition in service quality models or relevant empirical work (Liljander and Strandvik, 1997). Furthermore, whereas traditional service quality models have typically assumed a cognitive approach (Parasuraman et al., 1985), our findings highlight the need to recognize that service quality evaluation has not only a cognitive element but an emotional element that is of relevance in service quality delivery and recovery. In partial
support of this and our finding of cultures’ influence, Schoefer (2010) did find that cognitive-affective relationships were subject to statistically significant cultural moderation.

The second key cultural trigger identified in our CSQCC Britain framework is the Culture of Cordiality. With regard to service delivery, our findings suggest that there are differences in expectations between interviewees of Britain and T&T, and the level of cordiality they desire or emotional expressiveness. It is thus likely that their perceptions of service quality would differ on this basis even in similar service scenarios. For example, for a British customer, level one (“Politeness”) may be absolutely essential while the other two levels (“Friendliness” and “Genuineness”) may be desirable but not essential, whereas in the case of a T&T customer, levels two (“Friendliness”) and three (“Genuineness”) may be not only preferred but also necessary in order to create a perception of high-quality service. It is, however, noted that differences in emotions are significantly larger in cross-national studies than in intranational studies (Van Hemert et al., 2007), and displayed emotions do alter customers’ moods (Pugh, 2001) and shape customers’ attitudes on the quality of service relationships (Moliner et al., 2007). As such, future research which explores, for example, affective versus neutral cultures based on manipulated levels of cordiality and resultant service quality evaluations may be beneficial to marketers in their service design and implementation strategies.

It should be noted, however, that the British sample was primarily white and middle class. Thus, preliminary views from this study that level one of Culture of Cordiality, that is, “Politeness” alone may be sufficient for British nationals to attribute the service to be of high quality may be misleading, particularly in an increasingly
multi-ethnic Britain. Hence there should be an added impetus for research in this area. Indeed, marketers may need to consider developing services marketing strategies to cater for customers with different cordiality expectations. Support for this focus can be drawn from previous studies indicating that the strength (i.e., absent, minimal, or maximal) of a service employee’s smile (Barger and Grandey, 2006) or the perceived authenticity of affective displays (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993) does influence encounter satisfaction. In fact, research on authenticity or genuineness is under-researched and requires further development (Winsted, 2000).

The CSQCC T&T framework emphasizes that Festive Culture portrayed through Carnival deeply affects Trinbagonians’ attitudes and beliefs of how one should live life and what they value and perceive as normal. This in turn influences what aspects of the service they deem as most important and their attitudes as to what is good-quality service. On the other hand, when roles are switched from consumer to service deliverers, Festive Culture influences T&T nationals’ attitudes towards actual service delivery. For example, Joanna suggests that there are small pockets of good service quality in Trinidad: “… at fêtes [parties] … because it is our very nature; it is in keeping with our fun-loving nature; it is almost in keeping with our genetic breeding, DNA. It is natural.”

Our study highlights that central to understanding the Trinbagonian psyche is to understand the island’s premier festival—Carnival. This is aptly explained by Mason (1998, 16) who asserts, “In other countries Carnival is a diversion from the troubles of life; in Trinidad it sometimes seems as if life is a diversion from Carnival.” In a sense, Carnival is a symbolic representation of T&T and its people, a unifying force. The use of metaphors to understand salient attributes of a people is not new. For example,
Gannon (2004) used metaphors of the bullfight to identify Spain or Kimchi for Korea, to classify and better understand those and other cultures around the world.

*Festive Culture* could be considered as an aspect of T&T’s material culture. Craig and Douglas (2006, 327) state that material culture “incorporates the rituals, artefacts, institutions and symbols of a society that bind it together and establish rules and norms for behaving towards others within society, either in general or on specific occasions.” However, because material culture is not extensively researched in marketing, a fruitful avenue for future research may be to investigate whether nationals in countries such as T&T who work in hedonistic service environments would naturally provide higher-quality service, relative to compatriots working in the same country but in utilitarian service environments. Such research may be of particular relevance to a country such as Brazil, also well known for their annual carnival festivities, or even in country contexts where a festive culture is not prominent. In fact, based on their review of work on hedonistic and utilitarian service contexts, Jang and Wang (2006) suggested that such contexts have different impacts on consumers’ quality evaluations. As such we argue that service context should be studied from the employees’ perspective as well.

The cultural trigger of *Culture of Closeness* identified in the CSQCC T&T framework illustrates the importance or need for psychological closeness between T&T customers and service providers during the service encounter. Indeed, there are implications for service providers in terms of providing high levels of quality service and increasing the level of personalization which appeared to be more important even more so than efficiency and timeliness as regarded by Trinbagonian nationals. Further research in this area particularly, with respect to in-groups and out-groups and the
implications for issues such as accountability should be fruitful. In addition, on the basis of reflection on cross-national findings in the study, it appears that the *Culture of Closeness* in T&T context could be contrasted with a potential polar opposite and third *cultural trigger* in the British context which we propose be called a *Culture of Neutrality*.

To be begin with the emotional (T&T) and non-emotional (British) approach to business life and the implications for service quality in different contexts, this should be explored further. Since Britain participants in various instances relayed a need to maintain emotional distance/space or limited familiarity between self and employee.

The third *cultural trigger* identified in the *CSQCC T&T* framework was the *Culture of Servitude*. This was related primarily to the apathy of employees towards work in business/service context which we linked to the colonial history of the T&T context and particularly the passage of slavery. In part, there appears to be some synergy between this and *Festive Culture*—the fun, easy-going, warm, “freeness” of nationals in private situations but on the other hand leads to the negative consequences in the workplace. Future research on the synergy and contradictions between *Festive Culture* and *Culture of Closeness* should be explored as there are many countries around the world that share similar histories to T&T, as well potentially findings can lead to provisions for “bottling” the positive aspects of these *cultural triggers* to facilitate high quality service.

Finally, the fourth *cultural trigger* identified the *CSQCC T&T* framework was *Culture of Entitlement*. Our data gathered from Trinbagonian interviewees highlight that due to the country’s collectively vibrant and successful energy sector, as a society and individuals, they lack a service orientation compared to their Caribbean neighbors,
despite their common history. Alison underscores this fact by saying, “Most Caribbean island economies are based mainly on tourism so there is a concerted effort on service.” Nick emphatically states, “T&T has never been a service-oriented economy…it is because of our oil richness.” As Porter (2000, 23) argues, “it is difficult to separate culturally derived behaviors from that which has been enhanced or encouraged by the economic system, as such economic culture may be learned directly or indirectly from the economy.” The assumption of a dynamic view of culture acknowledges the broader influence of economics and other factors in shaping individual behavior. Jones (1995) suggests that culture is a process, not an end state, and that both culture and economics are intertwined. Jones refers to this as “cultural reciprocity.”

Beyond the overarching role of culture in the CSQCC framework, another central aspect of the CSQCC was the key role of the employee, more specifically, the Work Ethic/Attitudes of employees and their influence on consumers’ overall service quality evaluations. Of particular relevance is Porter’s (2000) assertion that there is a relationship between a nation’s work ethic and the economy, implying that the overall system of incentives in the economy does influence societal work ethic. As such we propose that future service quality research may explore overall economic incentives provided across countries. Furthermore, its potential influence on societal work ethic may be examined with respect to overall service quality levels in different country contexts.
3.6. Main Conclusions and Managerial Implications

The main contributions of our study include the illustration of the overarching influence of culture on consumers’ perceived service quality evaluation and the identification of the unique cultural triggers in Britain and in T&T that affect service quality evaluation and service delivery. Our model, Conceptualization of Service Quality in Cultural Context (CSQCC), encompasses culture, or to be more precise, specific cultural triggers as key explanatory variables in a multi-dimensional, hierarchical service quality framework. It is noteworthy that to date there has been no major service quality model that has explicitly incorporated culture (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Dabholkar et al., 1995; Grönroos, 1984; Parasuraman et al., 1988). As such this article may serve as a catalyst for an increased focus on the constructs of service quality and culture, collectively, for which a better understanding of their relationships is likely to lead to sustained business success.

The findings in this study and our CSQCC frameworks suggest that from a managerial viewpoint, firms who have serious intentions of conducting business transnationally and want to do so successfully employing service quality as a key competitive advantage must be cognizant of the role culture plays in consumers’ service quality evaluations. In particular, dedicated research efforts must be made to identify potential cultural triggers that may distinguish the behaviors of nationals from one country from those of other countries in which it operates, both from the perspective of an employer managing its human capital, and from a provider of services to the final consumer. As global competition increases, understanding the cultural impacts of services becomes more critical for service firms (Riddle, 1992). By developing a greater
appreciation of how consumer perceptions of service quality differ across countries and cultures, firms can better customize their services to meet the needs of specific country markets and develop an effective marketing strategy with greater efficiency.

As with any research there are some limitations to our work. A key limitation of this study is that one must be careful in generalizing the findings to other country contexts beyond that of United Kingdom and Trinidad and Tobago, and should note that the findings are specific to only these two countries. Efforts should thus be made to replicate in multiple country contexts to ascertain the dependability and transferability of the framework. Similarly, the samples of nationals drawn were based on a very narrow range of characteristics. Although we are confident that this approach was beneficial, particularly given the exploratory nature of this cross-national study and the sample homogeneity achieved across the two country samples whilst limiting spurious explanations beyond true differences, future research should utilize a much broader range of nationals who may be more representative of the societies of the countries under investigation.
3.7. References


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### Table 1: Demographic Characteristics and Profiles of Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee (age, marital status)</th>
<th>Natural-born citizen and has been living in home country for a minimum of the last 3 years</th>
<th>Highest degree qualification; Profession</th>
<th>Lived abroad or studied abroad (country, period of time)</th>
<th>Short-term international travel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carlos (44, M)</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>UG Energy adviser</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Extensive, Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol (40, M)</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>UG Trip coordinator</td>
<td>LA (Spain, 1 yr.)</td>
<td>Extensive, Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collette (30, S)</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>UG Student service rep</td>
<td>LA (Singapore, Indonesia, 5 yrs.)</td>
<td>Extensive, Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darrell (59, D)</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>PhD Consultant</td>
<td>LA (USA, Netherlands, 2 yrs.)</td>
<td>Extensive, Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather (34, M)</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>MA Business administration</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Extensive, Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack (42, M)</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>UG Commercial manager</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Moderate, Work &amp; Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jay (63, M)</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>MSc Lecturer</td>
<td>LA (Canary islands, 3 yrs.)</td>
<td>Extensive, Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leanne (41, M)</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>UG Real estate manager</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Limited, Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan (24, S)</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>UG Full-time student</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Extensive, Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samantha (40, D)</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>UG TV program coordinator</td>
<td>LA (USA, 6 months)</td>
<td>Moderate, Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stefan (44, M)</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>UG Contracts administrator</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Limited, Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve (33, S)</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>MS Aid volunteer</td>
<td>LA (Several countries, 3 yrs.)</td>
<td>Extensive, Work &amp; Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamara (21, S)</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>UG Administrative clerk</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Moderate, Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas (37, M)</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>UG Accountant</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Extensive, Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victor (66, M)</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>UG Retired</td>
<td>LA (USA, Germany, 3 yrs.)</td>
<td>Extensive, Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex (33, S)</td>
<td>T&amp;T</td>
<td>UG Graphic designer</td>
<td>SA (Barbados, 2 yrs.)</td>
<td>Limited, Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alison (45, M)</td>
<td>T&amp;T</td>
<td>UG Library technician</td>
<td>SA (Wales, 2 weeks)</td>
<td>Moderate, Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allan (24, S)</td>
<td>T&amp;T</td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Limited, Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age, Sex</td>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damien (39, S)</td>
<td>T&amp;T</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>SA (USA, 2 weeks)</td>
<td>Limited, Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward (30, S)</td>
<td>T&amp;T</td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Moderate, Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasmin (36, M)</td>
<td>T&amp;T</td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Limited, Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanna (38, S)</td>
<td>T&amp;T</td>
<td>MBA &amp; MSc</td>
<td>LA, SA (Britain, 5 yrs.)</td>
<td>Extensive, Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph (52, M)</td>
<td>T&amp;T</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>LA (Britain, USA, 8 yrs.)</td>
<td>Extensive, Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadia (53, M)</td>
<td>T&amp;T</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>LA (Canada, Britain, 4 yrs); SA (USA, 3 yrs)</td>
<td>Moderate, Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natasha (61, D)</td>
<td>T&amp;T</td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>LA (USA, 1 yr.)</td>
<td>Moderate, Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick (42, S)</td>
<td>T&amp;T</td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>LA (Britain, 1 yr.)</td>
<td>Extensive, Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhian (25, S)</td>
<td>T&amp;T</td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Extensive, Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally (26, M)</td>
<td>T&amp;T</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Limited, Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon (33, M)</td>
<td>T&amp;T</td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>SA (Colombia, 3 yrs.)</td>
<td>Moderate, Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winston (56, M)</td>
<td>T&amp;T</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>LA (USA, 3 yrs); SA (Canada, 3 yrs)</td>
<td>Extensive, Work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.**

Column 1: Marital Status (M – Married; S – Single; D – Divorced)

Column 2: For the purposes of this study a country national was defined as an individual who both holds legal status as a citizen, and was born in the same country (i.e., natural-born citizen).

Column 3: Degree (UG – Bachelors; MA – Master of Arts; MSc – Master of Science; MBA – Master of Business Administration; PhD – Doctorate)

Column 4: (LA – Lived Abroad; SA – Studied Abroad)

Column 5: Limited – short-term travel to three or less countries; Moderate – short-term travel to 4 to 10 countries; Extensive – short-term travel to over 10 countries or more. They were also probed as to whether travels were mainly for leisure or for work.
Table 2: *CSQCC* Mediating Factors Derived from Inductive Thematic Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mediating Service Factors</th>
<th>Sample Interviewee Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Winston</td>
<td>“Part of it has to do with the style of management, it stems from the top. If you have very strong dynamic leadership, to motivate and enhance employees you would see high productivity.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward</td>
<td>“The salary has to come into play especially at the customer service level in terms of front line service providers they may not be actually getting enough to feel valued.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alison</td>
<td>“They are overworked, undertrained, and not being paid proper wages that is a big part of the problem!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>“It is bad archaic systems, the people just resent being at work.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhian</td>
<td>“If it out of hand I ask to speak to a manager immediately but in most instances there is a tendency to be not so educated either so it really make no sense.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>“They actually design a lot of their processes and infrastructure around trying to improve the quality of service to the customer.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stefan</td>
<td>“I was head of customer care and employees don’t care because they have no vested interest… their interest is they come in at 9am and do whatever shift and go home.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasmin</td>
<td>“My pet peeve is the attitudes of people serving to you, employees being piggish or hoggish.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winston</td>
<td>“I would like to see improvements in our productivity, our approach to work… the work ethic not at all there, it’s a poor ethic.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick</td>
<td>“Quite frankly often you go to offices and I am like a bother to the employee and that should never be.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan</td>
<td>“You get a lot of rude staff who are unhappy; they don’t try too hard to suppress their emotions.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>“The attitude the customer rep gives you… I think it have to do with training.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darrell</td>
<td>“In some cases I think complaining is the thing to do because if you are dissatisfied and do not complain that is taken as compliance and it is assumed you are satisfied with the service.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhian</td>
<td>“They not aware that they are empowered as consumers to stop purchasing… if several people do, it starts affecting business.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winston</td>
<td>“As customers we are not direct and that needs to change, to tell the service providers, look you not up to scratch. I have seen it in North America when people complain and right away they respond.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collette</td>
<td>“English people are known for not really complaining which is why services may be in the state that it is in.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbatim Interviewees’ Datum</td>
<td>Descriptive Codes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasmin: A good experience for me would be the employee is friendly, are of my time and not unduly delaying me… address my concerns.</td>
<td>Service reception, service time, service efficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhian: I don’t like when people do not understand the process or where to direct me, even if they don’t know they should never let me feel they do not.</td>
<td>Service efficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanna: The attitude of the service provider meaning friendly, not necessarily friendly but respectful and understanding, knowledgeable which is a big thing for me, and the time frame.</td>
<td>Service reception, service efficiency, service time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damien: Well you have to start with the people at the front counter, they could be the differentiator, in fact you may pay …if the service is right, and you feel appreciated.</td>
<td>Service reception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alison: The seating was comfortable, the environment was soothing, there was nice music, they even had a fountain, and there was a television in the room… I would go back.</td>
<td>Facilities and equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick: Sometimes you see employees chit-chatting in the office… you waiting at a counter to be served and they chatting on their personal agendas.</td>
<td>Peripheral social interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlos: When you purchasing something, the person serving you must be…tidy and clean. The product, the place should also be tidy and clean.</td>
<td>Staff appearance, facilities and equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadia: The standard of the place must be clean, safe…staff must keep the place presentable, they should be concerned how the place looks through the eyes of the consumer.</td>
<td>Facilities and equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack: If the firm delivers what they promise… I am generally very happy… you want the product to be what they say it is, whether it’s a banking service, or an item in a shop or food in a restaurant.</td>
<td>Service fulfilment, tangible elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allan: It is about managing your expectations. If certain places I know I going to get bad service or wait long, I will only go there if I willing to go through that.</td>
<td>Perceived value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas: I think good service is when you feel you got what it is you initially set out to achieve, whether it is a service or a product. I believe we do get confused though because we sometimes say it is good service but in theory that should just be the standard service.</td>
<td>Service fulfilment, tangible elements, perceived value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally: I am taking out money to tip and he said “no, no, I don’t want any money from you, this is my job!” Then he opened the car door for me…and said “have a wonderful day.” That is customer service! It took me a minute to wind down!</td>
<td>Service fulfilment, perceived value</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1: Conceptualization of Service Quality in Cultural Context (CSQCC) Britain
Figure 2: Conceptualization of Service Quality in Cultural Context (CSQCC) T&T
Figure 3: CSQCC Framework Key Service Factors and Sub-Dimensions

- **Service Process/Delivery**
  - Service Reception
  - Service Efficiency
  - Service Time

- **Service Setting**
  - Facilities & Equipment
  - Aesthetics & Ambience
  - Staff Appearance
  - Peripheral Social Surroundings

- **Service Outcome**
  - Service Fulfilment
  - Tangible Quality
  - Perceived Value
CHAPTER 4.

Understanding British and Trinbagonians’ Complaint Behaviors:
A Comparative Study of Service Failure

Journal of Marketing Management

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Abstract

Service failures are an inescapable consequence of service provision due to the centrality of the human element in most service encounters. An understanding of the role of culture on consumers’ perceptions and service failure behaviors are essential for customer retention and increasing customer lifetime value for firms. The study extended cross-national insight into complaint behaviors of nationals in a developed and developing country context. Based on empirical, qualitative data a Framework of Culture and Consumer Complaint Behavior (FCCCB) is proposed inclusive of consumers’ behavioral processes and post-interaction behavioral outcomes. There are four key processes—cognitive, motivational, environmental and emotive—with emotions playing a central role. Culture and specifically cultural triggers unique in each context have overarching influence on these behavioral processes which in turn impact behavioral outcomes. The FCCCB is a comprehensive consumer complaint behavior model which reinforces the need for firms to adopt a human behavioral approach when creating complaint management and service recovery policies.

Keywords: Service failure, culture, cross-national, behavioral processes, complaint channels
4.1. Introduction

The service economy has assumed a position of dominance over the goods sector over the last few decades and has brought to the fore a robust emphasis on research on service quality and ‘defect-free’ service, driven by the need to appease the concerns of practitioners faced with the ever changing increasing demands of their customers and the need to effectively compete in a very crowded marketplace. Globalization, trade liberalization, improvements in technology, and education has made information more readily available to consumers who are more discerning and judgmental when evaluating service than ever. This trend has not only forced firms to be more customer-centric, but also necessitated the adoption of a service quality focus and the establishment of a formidable service culture as key management priorities. Furthermore, it is imperative that a positive service climate is established and the relevant service-oriented values articulated throughout the firm to employees, particularly, to front line staff who must be well-trained and rewarded (Bowen and Schneider, 2014; Harris and Ogbonna, 2009).

Inevitably, however, the complexity of services relative to goods and particularly its product intangibility and ‘the people factor’ (Berry, 1986) mean that service failure is often an inescapable consequence of service provision and can happen at any time (DeWitt and Brady, 2003; Hess et al., 2003; Leung et al., 2005), with or without the firm’s knowledge. When consumers experience a service failure they may choose to make a complaint or terminate the service (Hirschman, 1970; Singh, 1988) or remain silent (Chebat et al., 2005). Fifty-percent or more of customers who experience a problem often do not complain (Goodman, 2006), these non-complaints represent a lost opportunity for firms as they miss out on the lifetime value of the customer who
switches by failing to meaningfully address the dilemma for future customer interactions (Chebat et al., 2005). Such lost opportunities to engage in service recovery can have added unfavorable consequences such as negative work-of-mouth, boycotting, and even sabotage (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2011; Soscia, 2007).

Understanding customer complaint (non-complaint) behavior and the factors that drive such behaviors are especially essential to marketers who value long-term relationships (Bell and Luddington, 2006), to facilitate customer retention; encourage positive word-of-mouth recommendations; and in turn increase profitability. Globalization further increases the complexity of interactions and make the world a much smaller place as often individuals of different cultures interact temporarily or more permanently, through travel (business or leisure) and migration (Cleveland and Laroche, 2007) as well as, technology-based interactions via internet. Management and especially front-line employees need to develop a cultural repertoire by understanding the nature of consumers and how their cultural backgrounds may influence the way they perceive service, before, during and after instances of service failure. Particularly, as culture and behavior are intimately intertwined, there is no such thing as ‘culture-free’ behavior (Berry, 1989). Even firms with solely domestic aspirations can benefit from this understanding as local consumers can consist of individuals of different nationalities and cultures (Reimann et al., 2008).

The main aim of this study is to build on existing consumer complaint behavior literature by examining and providing cross-national insights into the complaint behavior of nationals in a developed and developing country context, respectively, the Britain and Trinidad & Tobago (T&T). There is value in such cross-national research as
it can facilitate service companies to better serve customers whose needs and expectations may diverge fashioned by different cultural backgrounds and values (Huff and Smith, 2008; Wong, 2004). Since such cross-national research remains relatively underexplored in the area of consumer complaint behavior (Schoefer, 2010; Yuksel et al., 2006). It was hoped our study would contribute to extant literature and provide meaningful insight for domestic and/or globally active firms engaged or wishing to do so in the country contexts under study or other similar markets.

4.2. Background of the Study

4.2.1. Culture and Individual Behavior

Culture as a construct has always been especially difficult to define. Nevertheless, although how, when, and to what degree is often open to debate its influence on individuals’ behaviors is indisputable. It is also not unreasonable to argue that culture is a core determinant of consumers’ attitudes, behaviors, and lifestyles (Cleveland and Laroche, 2007). Furthermore, culture is a concept of ‘sharedness’ or a ‘collective’ phenomenon that is learned by one group and distinguishes it from other groups. It is the shared way of life of a group, and it comprises of their motives, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretations of significant events that result from common experiences (Berry et al., 1992). ‘Culture is to society what memory is to the person’ (Triandis, 1989, 511); the ‘collective programming of the mind’ of a distinct group (Hofstede, 2001), and a shared meaning system (Fischer, 2009) that reminds us of how to effectively deal with social situations, in which we assess self and social behavior underpinned by past experiences (Triandis, 1989). According to Basabe et al. (2002) our core cultural values are embedded in cultural scripts and knowledge through norms and
practices which in turn shapes the psychological reality of individuals. It ‘serves as a source of lay theories about the world and shapes how people attend, think, and react, crafting their life views and philosophies’ (Kastanakis and Voyer, 2014, 426).

Furthermore, we are reminded that ‘interpretations of behavior of members of the collective is often difficult even when there are tangibly visible aspects of culture such as artefacts and symbols as ‘their cultural meaning … lies precisely and only in the way these practices are interpreted by the insiders’ (Hofstede, 1991, 8).

Defining and understanding culture’s role in consumer behavior is also complex due to its connectedness with other macro-environmental factors. For example, it is argued that culture is distinct relative to other macro-level influences such as political, economic, legal, religious, and technological factors (Sekaran, 1983). However, Soares, Farhanfmehr and Shosham (2007, 278) stress that ‘isolating purely cultural factors from other macro-environment influences might be unfeasible, as no clear-cut boundaries exist among these interrelated influences.’ The main cause of this is that such macro-factors shape patterns of socialization and ultimately cultural norms (Sekaran, 1983). Others also agree on the central role of context and environment (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; 2007; Berry et al., 1992; Leung et al., 2005; Lusch et al., 2007) on consumer behavior. Indeed, Berry et al. (1992) advocate a dynamic view of culture with their eco-cultural framework that links ecological and socio-political contexts to culture as independent variables that influences consumers’ behaviors. These macro-factors are viewed as parts of the complex whole that is culture (Ferraro, 1990). Furthermore, consumer culture theory (CCT) suggests that culture is ‘constituted, sustained, transformed, and shaped by broader historical forces (such as cultural narratives, myths,
and ideologies) and grounded in specific socioeconomic circumstances and marketplace systems’ (Arnould and Thompson, 2005, 869).

Through the top-down processes of socialization, the socio-cultural context in which a firm is embedded can directly or indirectly influence actors — employees and managers — at all levels of the firm (Komin, 1990), because societal or normative influences driven by individuals’ need for belongingness (Baumeister and Leary, 1995) enforce relevant values, belief systems, and standards of social conduct that are equally relevant in the workplace and thus often dictate employee behavior. Such socio-cultural influences are often so strong that they permeate organizations regularly at the expense of distinct organizational cultures management may desire to uphold. This can have serious implications for the quality of service delivered and, in instances of service failure, can negatively affect service recovery. For example, research has emphasized the role of national culture in regulating the very nature of organizational culture and employee behavior (Tsui et al., 2007; Yeh, 1995). Since service encounters are first and foremost social encounters (McCallum and Harrison, 1985) our understanding of cultures’ influence in service encounters is of critical importance.

4.2.2. Customer Complaint Behavior and Culture

A commonly used definition of customer complaint behavior utilized in the literature is by Singh (1988, 94) which states it is ‘a set of multiple (behavioral and non-behavioral) responses, some or all of which are triggered by perceived dissatisfaction with a purchase episode.’ When such episodes occur firms must engage in service recovery. Depending on how the situation is handled by the provider, there is an
opportunity to turn frustrated or angry customers into loyal advocates, even more fervently, than if the service was delivered appropriately in the first instance, what is referred to as the service recovery paradox (Wong, 2004). How the recovery actions of the firm is interpreted or received by the customer and their complaint behavior in great part is influenced by cultural norms that affect individuals’ values, self-concepts, and perceptions of others (Liu and McClure, 2001). Furthermore, contextualized factors may determine whether customers choose to stay or exit (Yuksel et al., 2006) and thus retention of customers may be misleading to firms, highlighting the need to get deeper understanding of behaviors and context providing support for the qualitative research orientation of our study.

Numerous research studies demonstrate an empirical link between complaint behavior and culture. For example, Hofstede’s individualist/collectivist paradigm has been utilized to demonstrate differences across cultures in terms of voicing behavior such as the tendency to do so or not, or one’s preference for either private or public voicing choices (Liu and McClure, 2001; Swanson et al., 2011). A further example is the salience of ‘face’ in China, traditionally considered collectivist the Chinese were found to be averse to public complaining during service failure to avoid the risk of ‘losing face’ (Heung and Lam, 2003; Ngai et al., 2007). While Zourrig et al. (2009) found that cultural factors, value orientations such as idiocentrism (individualism) and allocentrism (collectivism) mediates destructive behavior during service encounters, such as the adoption of confrontational (revenge/fight) or non-confrontational (flight) dispositions. Furthermore, cultures differential effects also extends beyond voicing to include perceptions related to justice perceptions and different forms of compensation,
financial and/or non-financial (Hui and Au, 2001; Mattila and Patterson, 2004; Wong, 2004) as well as loyalty intentions of consumers (Ekiz and Au, 2010).

It is worth noting that many of the studies on service failure and recovery utilizes Hofstede’s framework in whole or part, and/or situated in primarily North American (or Western) or Asian settings (Ekiz and Au, 2010; Lee and Sparks, 2007; Liu and McClure, 2001; Mattila and Patterson, 2004; Ngai et al., 2007; Schoefer, 2010; Swanson et al., 2011; Wong, 2004). Although there is no intention to utilize Hofstede’s framework in our study for comparison purposes we note that on the notion of Hofstede’s individualism-collectivism, Britain and T&T are on polar opposites of the scale with scores of 89 and 16, respectively on the continuum (i.e., British as individualist and Trinidad as collectivist). However, while the contributions to service research using Hofstede’s cultural framework are welcomed allowing for significant advances in cross-cultural services research, criticisms of the framework must also be noted (Kirkman et al., 2006; Ratner and Hui, 2003).

One of the choices made in our study was to adopt an emic approach which allowed us to remain open to the identification of aspects of culture that may be distinctive to the countries under investigation or not yet identified in the extant literature. This approach is advocated by Zourrig, Chebat and Toffoli (2009) who suggest there are limitations to the utilization of an etic approach as one runs the risk of overlooking unique cultural variables in other country contexts. Furthermore, research need to be extended beyond Hofstede’s framework to gain additional insight into role of culture on individual behavior (Kastanakis and Voyer, 2014).
In addition, beyond the call for further research on service failures in other cultures, it is emphasized that research on culture’s influence should assume a more dynamic view of culture as adopted in this study and must go beyond abstract value systems (Mattila and Patterson, 2004; Salazar et al., 2013; Sivakumar and Nakata, 2001). Furthermore, research should not only examine service experience through the eyes of the consumer but should not be limited to cognitive assessment (Edvardsson, 2005). According to Wong (2004, 962) ‘a key imperative today is the “reinterpretation” of models and theories from the perspectives of different cultural and social realities.’ For example, Salazar et al. (2013) suggest that employing this perspective provides a better understanding of culture and how psychological processes — cognition, motivation and affect — framed by social and environmental cues and related meaning systems impact individual or group behavior. Such an approach is consistent with the broader view of complaint behavior espoused in our study, that is, as an ‘expression of dissatisfaction, whether subjectively experienced or not, for the purpose of venting emotions or achieving intrapsychic goals, interpersonal goals, or both’ (Kowalski, 1996, 180).

In light of the above, our exploratory and interpretive approach to gain a deeper understanding is supported, and allowed for the potential identification of cultural factors that maybe context specific and not yet identified in the literature. Specifically, the aim was to garner a comprehensive view of the consumer complaint behavior process in the contrasting country contexts with regard to consumer behaviors from the moment of service failure, customer reaction and/or general temperament, willingness to complain, channels utilized, and relevant patronage intentions. Further, our intention
was to uncover emic (context-specific) or etic (universal) drivers of consumer complaint behavior.

4.3. Research Methods

4.3.1. Qualitative Semi-Structured Interviews

A qualitative, semi-structured interview approach provided the authors with a tool for gaining an in-depth and incisive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Due to the explanatory nature of our study and the importance of context, and experience and insight required of the participants this approach was deemed suitable (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; McCracken, 1988; Patton, 1990) and allowed the researchers to delve into the personal and social matters that may influence consumers’ behavior. The focus of this research is not generalizability; but instead our aim was to garner a comprehensive view of the consumer complaint behavior process from the customers’ perspective in two country contexts with regard to the moment of service failure, customer reaction, or general temperament, willingness to complain, channels utilized, and patronage intentions. Furthermore, to compare and contrast Britain and T&T and to raise the need for sensitivity to context which has a strong bearing on how people think and act. We believe the use of qualitative methods is more appropriate than the more commonly used quantitative methods for study in the subject area. While quantitative research methods can be useful, it can have a limiting effect on understanding of phenomena due to preconceptions or boundaries of thought held by the researchers. On the other hand, qualitative techniques are effective in facilitating cross-contextualization and allows for understanding of the situational contours and contexts of social processes.
The data collection tool of choice was semi-structured interviews and involved the use of an interview guide for consistency and ease of flow during the interview process. All interviews were recorded with the consent of interviewees and allowed for the complete focus of the researcher to allow additional probing or enable researcher insights elucidated during interview process. Interviews were transcribed verbatim with attributions of interviewee emphasis noted. Interviews or conversations are viewed as ‘discovery-oriented’ (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) and allowed the researchers to integrate what may sometimes have appeared to be discrepant views of participants into a collective that illuminated larger social phenomena (Rosenwald, 1988) in context and rationale for behaviors in response to service failure. During the interview, participants were asked a range of questions on service, however, specifically relevant to this paper were questions surrounding their negative service experiences or instances of failure.

Although we did not focus on a specific industry because of the exploratory nature of our study, we note that in general respondents covered one of or a combination of experiences related to recent banking, retail and supermarket shopping experiences, fast food and dining experiences, or encounters with utility companies.

4.3.2. Sample Characteristics and Selection

The cross-national sample consisted of 30 respondents, 15 nationals each from Britain and T&T. We stopped our field work when data saturation (Bryman, 2012; Strauss and Corbin, 1994) was achieved. In both cases, the British and T&T samples approached data saturation at or before the fifteenth interview. For recruitment of interviewees, purposive snowball sampling was employed (Patton, 1990), as the aim was to ensure not only within-country sample homogeneity, but, also across-country
sample homogeneity. This tactic facilitated comparisons and led to the illumination of differences between individuals and settings (Maxwell, 1992).

Since the phenomena of service failure in each context are commonly experienced by a wide range of members of the population, it is proposed that a relatively small sample is more than adequate (Guest et al., 2006). For example, Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) suggest that a sample size of approximately twelve participants from each context of interest would be sufficient for cross-cultural comparison, particularly if the domain of knowledge is widely disseminated and there is relative homogeneity among the actors being investigated. Sample homogeneity and the sharing of critical similarities related to the research question by participants is particularly important in interview research (McCracken, 1988). Furthermore, sample composition is an important methodological issue in cross-cultural research (Engelen and Brettel, 2011).

One way of making valid cross-cultural comparisons is to select informants or subjects from different cultures and ensure they have similar backgrounds and experiences (Yeganeh et al., 2004). Achieving sampling equivalencies by holding variables such as age, social class, sex, class, urban-rural residence, education, and nationality constant across samples is imperative for cross-cultural work to facilitate comparisons with improved certainty (Green and White, 1976; Malhotra et al., 1996). This matched sampling reduces potential competing explanations such as individual characteristics and therefore differences attributed to cultural factors with an improved degree of certainty. It is argued if samples are properly selected valid comparison
between two cultures is possible and reasonable representativeness achieved (Adler, 1983; Samiee and Jeong, 1994).

With respect to the two country contexts we note that there are some key commonalities between the countries and degree of closeness despite being geographically being far part. As a country T&T shares an Anglo heritage and has much in common with Britain. As a former British colony from 1797 to 1962 and existing member of the British Commonwealth, the major language in T&T is English, while its education and governmental models mirrors that of the British system (Watts, 1990). These potentially confounding environmental characteristics are likely to reduce competing explanations and reflect true differences psychologically or culturally unique to the populations of interest for the phenomenon under study (Karanasios, 2008; Samiee and Jeong, 1994; Sekaran, 1983; Yeganeh et al., 2004). Furthermore, it is emphasized that samples should not only be comparable, but they must also be representative (Sin et al., 1999), in part the sample characteristics reflected the strong educational systems and growing middle class in both countries accomplishes this (BBC, 2006; CIA, 2013a; b; IBRD, 1989). Through a thoughtful sample and country selection process we attempted to ensure that our cross-cultural findings if relevant can be more strongly attributed to cultural rather than non-cultural factors and any spurious associations minimized.

4.3.3. Thematic Data Analytic Strategies

Thematic analysis as a qualitative technique allowed us to get meaningful insights into the lived experiences of consumers (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) through recall of episodes of service failure or bad service experiences. It is a theoretically
flexible approach used to identify themes or patterns of behavior within our interview data (Braun and Clarke, 2006), where during the process of analysis we developed a coding scheme to classify consumers’ qualitative descriptions of the negative service episodes. According to Saldana (2012, 13) ‘a theme is an outcome of coding, categorization, and analytic reflection.’ Themes were generated from an iterative process and examination of the textual data using the constant comparative method, which is a rigorous and systematic process of classifying, comparing, grouping and refining until, major themes emerge (Miles and Huberman, 1984; Spiggle, 1994; Strauss and Corbin, 1994). Themes were identified primarily through repeated ideas, indigenous terms, metaphors and analogies, transitions or shifts in topic, participant expression, linguistic connectors, and theoretical issues reflected by the data (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). While the analytic process employed was largely data driven and inductively derived (Tesch, 1990), our analysis was partly informed by existing literature as one cannot ignore prior knowledge and exist ‘tabula rasa’ or with a blank mind since empirical observation and seeing is naturally a theory-laden undertaking (Thornberg, 2012). Nevertheless, it was important that as researchers we remained open to the discovery of new theory without carelessly rejecting pre-existing theoretical concepts and frameworks. Furthermore, we utilized the NVIVO software package to make the data management process better organized (Miles and Huberman, 1984; Sinkovics et al., 2008), and also to gain visual clarity allowing higher levels of analysis.

An integral part of the analysis strategies employed were participant and peer verification to increase credibility or validity of conclusions drawn in the study. Generally, respondent validation or member checks was conducted post-interview
(Lincoln and Guba, 1985), immediately after original interviews all participants were debriefed, and in some instances, during subsequent interviews, interviewees were asked to verify interpretations based on data from earlier interviews. In addition, small samples of interviewees from each context were again contacted post-analysis to comment on our research findings, interpretations, and conclusions in order to provide further validation or enhance the credibility of the research. Credibility is established when participants are able to recognize that their perspective has been reflected in the study (Clissett, 2008).

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) member checks are the most crucial technique for establishing credibility in qualitative research. Furthermore, Denzin (1978) introduced the idea of investigator triangulation to control for subjective bias of the researcher or initial coder of data. A scholar, unrelated to the research and briefed on the objectives of the study was provided with a small sample of verbatim transcripts to develop a second set of codes. When the scholar independently completed the coding process, scholar and researcher met to examine the consistency between the two sets of codes. There was a high level of intercoder agreement of approximately 90% on the generated codes and where there were discrepancies these were negotiated and a collective decision made on said codes. This process also referred to as peer auditing enriched our interpretations, ideas and explanations, and increased overall insight, thereby improving the dependability or reliability of our research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).
4.4. Findings: Framework of Culture and Consumer Complaint Behavior

4.4.1. Background

Our research was conducted in two stages: Study 1 and Study 2. For Study 1, data was collected in Britain, and its nationals were the participants of interests, selected based on the characteristics outlined in Table 1. After an initial data analysis of Study 1 was complete Study 2 data was collected of T&T nationals using similar selection criteria. Each sample was individually analyzed before cross-cultural comparisons were made because such an approach is endorsed by Smith (2011) who recommended that culture-level concepts should first be derived from parallel individual-level analyses and only when valid concepts are identified within each context can they be effectively utilized to interpret differences in culture-level phenomena.

Table 1: Specific Sample Characteristics for Study 1 and Study 2

1. Tertiary educated
2. Middle class
3. Reside in urban/suburban area
4. 21-60 years old and over
5. Natural-born citizen currently living in home country
6. Did not live or study in a foreign country over the last 3 years

4.4.2. The Model: FCCCB

4.4.2.1. Culture’s Impact in FCCCB

A key premise of our study is that culture plays a central role in influencing consumers’ behaviors during service delivery, failure, and recovery activities. Additionally, this extended to determining in what ways culture influences the processes
and outcomes and what these cultural elements maybe—an in-depth examination or perspective. Our interview data revealed there are four key behavioral processes which guide consumers’ behavioral dispositions or complaint intentions in the event of a service failure—typically due to shortcomings in one or a combination of the service process, service setting and service outcome (Dabholkar et al., 1995; Grönroos, 1984; Parasuraman et al., 1988; Rust and Oliver, 1994).

The identified processes were cognitive, motivational, environmental, and last but not least, emotive, all of which influence consumer’s behavioral disposition to varying degrees and generally supported by the extant literature (Bagozzi et al., 1999; Chebat and Slusarczyk, 2005; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Kastanakis and Voyer, 2014; Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Oliver, 1980; Stephens and Gwinner, 1998; Tronvoll, 2011), although not collectively represented in consumer complaint behavior models. Likewise, related to consumers’ behavioral dispositions, our data also revealed that cognitive, motivational, environmental and emotions influence consumer complaint intentions and chosen channels, in part discussed in extant literature (Day and Landon, 1977; Hirschman, 1970; Singh, 1988).

This study in part adopts the view future consumer complaint behavior models should assume a service-dominant logic perspective and the assumption customers complaining behavior is embedded in a context which interacts with and influences behavior (Tronvoll, 2012). Drawn from our data we proposed a model, the Framework of Culture and Consumer Complaint Behavior (FCCCB), depicted in Figure 1. We introduce the notion that culture, contextually influences customers’ responses to service failure and may even be the cause of the failure.
Furthermore, in our study it is postulated in line with S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; 2008) that the complaint process is a behavioral process which involves both in-service influences (i.e., co-creation of value in context) through the engagement between employee and customer affecting the outcome as well as the post-interaction process, of which the latter is the purview of traditional customer complaint modelling (Tronvoll, 2012). From this dynamic and collective viewpoint the role of culture would be salient. Indeed, it is hypothesized that socio-cultural factors should influence customer complaint behavior (Tronvoll, 2012; Zhang et al., 2008) during service failure experiences.
As discussed earlier, culture is a complex multi-layered and hierarchical construct (Erez and Gati, 2004; Schein, 2006), the lens through which individuals experience and extract meaning in a socially constructed world, and by extension guides all human action (Mc Cracken, 1986). We however, adopt the position of Chung and Kang (2014) and their conception of *cultural triggers* as influential elements or components of the complex whole that is culture, which guides consumers’ expectations, perceptions and behavioral dispositions. They defined *cultural triggers* as a phenomenon, activity, or institution with which most citizens of a country identify, consciously or unconsciously, providing frames of reference of what is valued, what is normal, and what is reflective of a larger cultural pattern (Chung and Kang, 2014). *Cultural triggers* refer more to the influence of cultural norms and one’s conception of self and belongingness to a collective identity, effecting behavior than broad, deep-seated value systems of the society (Chung and Kang, 2014).

It is argued that domain-specific knowledge structures such as within a society and a nation (i.e., norms, schemas, goals, motives and implicit theories) are more likely to dictate individual behavior than abstract value-systems (Briley, 2009; Briley and Wyer Jr, 2002). Even though we acknowledge the role that value orientations play in shaping behavior, we suggest that these orientations represent ideal behaviors and do not necessarily reflect actual behaviors of individuals. While consumers do demonstrate individual freedom, normative influences and social pressures to conform (McGraw and Tetlock, 2005) or the motivation to be part of a collective identity does influence behaviors and cognitions of individuals would be more salient (Balmer, 2008) as depicted in social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981).
Briley (2009) suggests that cultural effects are much stronger when reactions are immediate and weakest when people have an extended period to deliberate. As such since service recovery experiences tend to be often immediate and are typically process-oriented, consumers are more prone to be reflexive; they are likely to depend more frequently on cultural knowledge such as norms, rather than individual knowledge. Cultural norms or abiding by them in a sense helps to reduces uncertainty so that through shared understandings, both tacit and explicit, society can function effectively. Finally, consistent with consumer culture theory (Arnould and Thompson, 2005), we further postulate that consumers’ consumer complaint behavior is likely to be also shaped not only by socio-cultural factors, but historic and institutional forces which may create a social system that is unique to a country, context, or group of people which acts as a lens or filter through which information is processed and dictates consumer behavior.

4.4.2.2. Behavioral Processes in FCCCB

The four behavioral processes initially identified in Figure 1 and drawn from our empirical data and generated through thematic analyses are each composed of various key themes and descriptive sub-themes as illustrated in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee Verbatim Quotes</th>
<th>Descriptive Sub-themes</th>
<th>Key Themes</th>
<th>Behavioral Processes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dean: Honestly our reaction to bad service is indifference because bad service has become typical service to us so as a generalization most times we as customers allow it to happen; we are a very complaint society.</td>
<td>Prior expectations, low expectations</td>
<td>Probability of success</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Alistair: If you are dealing with... large government agencies there would be an expectation that service would be poor and therefore people fall into the habit of trying to circumvent the system to their advantage.

Luana: Nowadays I think people feel they have the right to complain... There is the whole influence of the USA and the compensation culture which seems to have a big influence now on British culture though in the past this was never the case.

Sterling: I eventually called a radio station to complain, there's a programme called ‘Good service, bad service.’ The company turns around and threaten me with lawyer talk and I just leave it like that and count my losses.

Davis: A classic example, just the other day I had to purchase something from a local firm and the attitude I got in terms of the service, I said well I not going back and I went online and purchase the same thing from an international agent and I good much better service at a lower cost.

Kelley: It depends if it is a service I can do without like whimsical shopping I would probably leave but if it is something I have to get done I would complain.

Sherwin: I think once you have choice you would not revisit the business or use the service. For example, tradesmen, it is difficult to get them to come around. He said he was going to do some work and does not turn up; you take time off and have to do the same thing next day and hope they come around. If you had choice you would not be using these people.

Dennis: If I find something wrong with an organization I try not to go back, but for example... I work with the depressing assumption that they all are probably as bad as each other and so I feel trapped.

Ronald: I think they would revisit unless it is absolutely appalling. Banking for instance, I have never changed banks all these years but I have had lots of discussion with my bank about problems and perhaps I should have changed.

Cassandra: You can be there standing for ages... and no one will say can I help you, but, you get 75% off... so in that case I would accept the poor service. When you go there you don't always expect to get what you want... when it comes to it, is not all about service, it is a balance.

Salina: The culture of the country is that everyone is too busy, even as an individual or consumer you haven't the time to complain or confront the problem; it is easier to just accept
poor service.

Jackson: I react differently to most people... I have worked in service... so I react... would argue and make a fuss and even if there is nothing they can do I would make a fuss to let them know they can't continue doing that. If it (hardware) is not up to standard but someone deals with it very well, they would almost recover the situation but if they do not, it makes you even angrier and completely puts you off.

Hazel: We say nothing, I think we are not good at complaining... we just get embarrassed by it, we are not good at bartering, and we are not used to it. I have some friends (foreign) who are a lot fresher and would complain, I look down in absolute horror, I hate that!

Stanley: I was in the cue to pay for something and had about 5 minutes to catch the train but the employee was talking to her friend... I just thought I would leave her to it... and fume internally. I didn't complain!

Consumers cognitive behavioral processes when they experience service failure primarily involves consideration of the probability of success—an evaluation based on prior experiences and outcomes as well as an expectancy of control or sense of powerlessness whether his/her behavior can/cannot influence their desired outcome (Andreasen and Manning, 1990; Bunker and Ball, 2009; Seeman, 1959; Stephens and Gwinner, 1998). For example, in the case of T&T nationals it was clear that generally they were desensitized and accustomed to service failure, which has been shaped by multiple experiences which in turn influences their service recovery expectations (cognitive), emotions and complaint intentions. Dean (T&T) succinctly expresses the view of the collective, at least of T&T nationals interviewed:

I think who we are as a nation, as a people we have come to associate service with servitude, we just frown upon certain things and it affects how those things are done by all... For me at least in this country, I have become accustomed to the bad service; you have come to expect it. It does not really bother me... right
or wrong you have come to expect so it is not shocking, not surprising, you take it for granted that this is it! In other words it is not even bad service anymore; it is this is the service level that exists!

(Dean, T&T)

We found that motivation as a behavioral process in service failure involves a cost-benefit analysis and subsequent evaluation (Hirschman, 1970; Huang et al., 1996; Kowalski, 1996) influenced by either economic factors (such as compensation), the importance of the transaction or degree of involvement, switching costs, value-price, and even convenience or time pressures of consumers; these indirectly influence complaint intentions. In this way motivation involves goal-related activities and thus linked to emotions (Izard, 2010). Jordan’s (Britain) description of a service failure experience pertinently emphasizes the link between various motivation factors and his emotive state:

The worse aspects of the service were that it was initially impenetrable, ‘press 1,’ ‘press 2,’ that made it very impersonal. Then you wait forever to get through to someone. You get cut off and cannot get back to the same representative. It was just a nightmare and what made it worse was that the rep was not listening or trying to understand the problem, guessing or as if following a script. Because they did not listen further mistakes were made. It ended up costing us a lot of money because the phones were down. Emotionally I was absolutely fed up and extremely angry and frustrated because it stop me from doing my job. The contract will be up soon and I [our company] will be leaving but I have secured compensation for the mistakes.

(Jordan, Britain)

The influence of environmental behavioral processes and factors surrounding the key theme market conditions involved mainly two sub-themes: (1) the availability of business alternatives or firm’s supplying the goods or services needed; and (2) the legal climate in terms of consumer redress and support from government institutions if and when consumers wish to complain in instances of service recovery failure or no redress.
Market conditions and the presence or absence of supporting structures influence complaint intentions, according to Schooler (1996), and social-structural market dynamics itself is shaped by culture. Jackson of Britain contrasts his experience abroad with that of his home country regarding the environment (market conditions), his recovery expectations, and eventual complaint intentions:

*There have been times I bought something abroad and try to return it and they deny I bought it there because probably the regulation is not there or it is not tightly controlled. They don’t care and you are not from that country so you can’t argue... However, at home you can go to British consumer rights and file a complaint so firms have to take you seriously.*

(Jackson, Britain)

Our findings suggest that British interviewees feel that the basis of the firm-consumer relationship is skewed in favor of consumers, while the inverse is true in the T&T context, and as such feelings of powerlessness were context specific. T&T interviewees noted the lack of proactivity on the part of firms with respect to service recovery. This is possibly because of the high level of tolerance by T&T nationals related to their lack-back culture emphasized by Trinbagonian interviewees, whose perspective was there is frequently no sustained effort to seek redress if a service provider fails. This was in great part due to power inequalities and possibly the lack of appropriate support if formal/legal channels are engaged. Naomi (T&T) elaborates on this cultural conundrum:

*Our laid-backness, we are so accepting and so tolerant that it is bordering on complacency. We accept things and take things as that is how it is, how history dealt us, we do not agitate or even advocate for better... it can also creep into being complacent and non-progressive.... Porter (Michael) talks about the whole issue of productivity, political and social, and impact of microeconomic policy, how that impacts people behaviors, beliefs and value systems. I think to a great extent the oil and gas has shaped our values and behaviors, how easily we get things.*
Naomi’s comments reflect the views of many T&T interviewees who emphasized the high tolerance levels of T&T nationals towards poor service, unwillingness to complain, and attitudes towards work. Based on our analyses we attribute these comments to a sense of privilege felt by nationals due to the nation’s very lucrative oil and gas industry and world-rated energy sector and its trickle down effects, for example, personal wealth or the many social resources provided by government coupled with the laid back culture reinforces a carefree attitude.

We submit that the emotive behavioral process identified in our FCCCB (Figure 1) is a key variable in our model, because it is strongly connected to social norms and identity formation or maintenance. Indeed, emotions is important to understanding consumers’ service recovery evaluative judgments and should be included in relevant models (Schoefer, 2008), and is reflected in the nature and intensity of the individuals’ appraisal and response to the service failure (Schoefer and Ennew, 2005).

Culture-as-a-meaning system facilitates norms for emotions such as display rules which helps to thwart social chaos and maintain social order (Matsumoto et al., 2008). Averill (1982) has emphasized that individuals of similar cultural backgrounds and experiences tend to have generally similar emotions in similar situations. Tronvoll (2011) emphasizes that there is a significant relationship between negative emotions and consumer complaint behavior, while Nyer (1997) suggests that emotions influence post consumption behaviors such as attitudes towards complaining, perceived probability of complaint success or product importance. Significantly, it is argued that ‘service encounters may ‘boil down’ to emotions’ (Chebat and Slusarczyk, 2005, 671) due to its
impact on disconfirmation and expectancy, and their evaluations whether in instances of successful service delivery or failure.

Furthermore, we argue that culture, and cultural triggers as posited by Chung and Kang (2014) connect and influence all four behavioral processes — cognitive, motivational, environmental, and emotive — presented in the FCCCB. For example, prior empirical work emphasizes the role of emotions in mediating between consumers cognitive evaluations of service performance and complaint behavior (Oliver and Westbrook, 1993; Oliver, 1993) such a link is automatic and unconscious (Izard, 2010) and may even be iterative.

One of the more interesting findings in our study is the stark contrast between the levels of emotional expressiveness between nationals of Britain and T&T. In the case of the British, with remarkable frequency interviewees spoke of being too embarrassed to complain or wishing to avoid confrontation. For example, Sherwin (Britain) alludes to complaining and the embarrassment not only in business settings but extends it to other social settings. In addition, Andrew (Britain) talks about the service encounter and the nature of relations and emotions of British people:

*This is a very strong British thing... it’s seen as a bit difficult, a bit awkward... My wife [non-British] is quite happy to complain if it is simply not up to standard, and I could see if I am having a meal at my father’s, you can actually see him wanting to hide away, you could see him getting tense, ‘Oh my God she is complaining! ‘I don’t know where it comes from but it’s just something in our mentality’*

(Sherwin, Britain)

*In the English tradition, Brit character there is a sense of reticence... there is almost a barrier between you and me that you are intruding my space, I am intruding your space and you have two Brits interacting in service and you often find both of them are uncomfortable with that personal interaction. I can’t help but feel that is why service in Britain is bit impersonal.*
We attribute British people’s limited emotional expressiveness and self-control demonstrated in instances of service failure primarily to the traditional British sense of ‘reserve’ or reticence, the historical notion of ‘Englishness’ or Britishness,’ and related values of neutrality and diplomacy. It appears that the enculturation process advocates that complaining is ‘un-British’ and individuals should tolerate their environment (Grougiou and Pettigrew, 2009). In that sense, as reflected in our Britain data, it appears emotional suppression is strongly emphasized. According to Joseph (2013) emotional expression is a fundamental part of one’s collective identity, and cultural factors were the most important predictors of the frequency and social desirability of negative emotions (Basabe et al., 2002). It is generally observed from our data that there is indeed a huge contrast in terms of the level of directness or lack thereof between nationals of the two countries. Dennis (Britain) highlights the general viewpoint garnered from the British interviewees:

*There is something peculiar to the British... for a foreigner it is often difficult potentially to at least know when we are complaining or being critical, in so far we say something in a way which seems polite, but what we are saying, what we mean might be a form of complaint... compared to other countries we are probably much less direct in our complaining... I think it is more a question of style. The British will complain when really angry in a direct and even aggressive way, but often our way of complaining, like much of our culture is conducted in a relatively indirect style.*

*(Dennis, Britain)*

On the other hand, T&T nationals or Trinbagonians (Trinis) demonstrated a much more visible, higher level of emotional expressiveness relative to the British, which can be explained by Trinbagonians easy-going, a ‘no worries’ mentality, and laid-
back attitude, an identity with which those interviewed identified with, and explained that generally when problems are encountered often there is a tendency to be highly expressive, sometimes bordering on explosive or scandalous.

Trinbagonians interviewees emphasized that many fellow nationals have ranting episodes but these are usually very short bursts which are generally not accompanied by any sustained or meaningful attempt to achieve a successful service outcome, and are harmless to the service provider—we referred to this as Hot Air Complaining. Trinbagonians appear to feel less constrained in complaining as cultural norms are more tolerant of vocal complaining, even if not seeking a resolution.

Generally, Trinis make a lot of noise but they do not really try to change things. You have those who just accept it and move on and then the ones who make a big noise but just make noise aimlessly… They just stand up shout and carry on, but then not going to sit down and write a letter or take it a step further with the provider.

(Kelley, T&T)

There would usually be some sort of aggressive response initially… there will tend to be two reactions… argue and that would be the sort of immediate reaction and at the back end we tend to have a disposition to explore alternative solutions to getting service, i.e., circumventing the system… in T&T it is more a coping mechanism or strategy where you try to find an alternative solution if the existing process is not going to work for you. It is actually exploring a different delivery approach.

(Alistair, T&T)

Both Kelley and Alistair raise in some sense the issue of influences inclusive of and beyond emotions that Trinbagonians complaint intentions are also culturally conditioned by cognitive, motivational, and environmental factors. Daunt and Harris (2012) suggest that both physical and social servicescapes does influence customer disaffection and even their misbehavior. However, of relevance to this study we suggest that social servicescapes or the socially constructed world, in which the service
encounter takes place influenced by culture, provide both service provider and customer with cultural scripts that inevitably influence approaches to service delivery and/or service failure between the actors.

T&T interviewees voiced issues such as low expectations for problem resolution due to extensive past negative experiences, feelings of powerlessness with respect to limited institutional support from government agencies (e.g., Bureau of Standards, Ministry of Legal Affairs) or a legal climate that favors the ‘well-off,’ whether real or perceived. In T&T there is a sense of a lack of accountability or trust in systems, and therefore more trust in personal networks and relationships than in institutional relationships, as poignantly suggested we ‘circumvent the system.’ Trust is central to ongoing relationship success and customer retention as it reduces the probability of relationship termination (Álvarez et al., 2010), and clearly needs to be enhanced by firms conducting business in T&T and be a key competitive advantage. In contrast, Britain interviewees appear to project a far higher level of trust in firms, institutions and laws to support them when conflict or problems arise.

We argue that examining culture’s influence on consumers’ responses to service from the perspective of cultural triggers is beneficial and may indeed be better influencers and predictors of British and Trinbagonians complaint behaviors processes, respectively, than attributions based on value-oriented factors such individualism and collectivism. For example, it is suggested that consumers from collectivist cultures are less inclined to complain, while those from individualist cultures are very open to complaining (Liu et al., 2001; Stephan et al., 1996), expressive in their emotions (Sun et al., 2004) and thus likely more confrontational. Although the Hofstede’s rating of
Britain and T&T on the individualism and collectivism scale (Hofstede, 2014), Britain (individualists) and T&T (collectivists) are at polar extremes, their behaviors reported in our study are actually opposite to what is predicted by collectivism-individualism. And thus reinforces our view that cultural triggers may be better predictors of consumer behavior than abstract value-orientations that are too general or are simply idealized notions of behavior distinct from actual behavior.

For example, Brett (2000, 103) emphasizes that ‘East-West distinctions at the cultural level of values grossly oversimplify more fine-grained cultural differences in negotiation norms.’ This point is particularly relevant since instances of service failure instigate a form of negotiation between firm and customer for a suitable resolution. Furthermore, it is argued that abstract value-orientations only accrue explanatory power when they are augmented by social factors (Ratner and Hui, 2003). Thus, norms and context specific identity formation factors would be more salient to identify and predict behavior.

Overall, it seems that British nationals are much better than T&T nationals when it comes to emotion regulation which Matsumoto (2006, 421) refers to as ‘the ability to manage and modify one’s emotional reactions to achieve goal-directed outcomes.’ In light of this we acknowledge that British interviewees mentioned the issue of internal frustrations during service failure something not expressed by any T&T interviewees, since it appears T&T cultural norms provide less restraint or social consequences with respect to the display of negative emotions, seen as normal in some sense. As Ferrao (1990, 83) suggested ‘though some facial expressions may be universal, specific cultural norms may influence how, when, and why they are used.’
Our findings reflect that the British have a more utilitarian focus, that is, emphasis on convenience and outcome (distributive justice), while Trinbagonians placed greater emphasis on communication and the interaction process (interactional justice). For example, we found that the perceived authenticity of the employees’ displayed emotions (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2006) as well as a much more personalized approach from employees which included a genuine apology for the problem was most important to Trinbagonians. These factors were important in influencing Trinbagonians perceptions of the service recovery process, because a failed outcome with interactional justice may be sufficient appeasement for Trinbagonians. So that apologies which compensate for emotional costs experienced by the customer (Tax and Brown, 1998) and is considered a form of interactional justice (Smith et al., 1999) are extremely important. This is reflective of Trinbagonians generally friendly and engaging identity in private, social settings.

Alternatively, there were suggestions by our British interviewees all that is generally required are basic manners and politeness of service personnel with genuineness or not of little consequence, and outcome fulfilment most important and possibly sufficient for service recovery success. This is reflective of the British people’s traditional reticence which appears to still be an undeniable British quality—as models of restraint, understatement, and outward cordiality, and thus their general reluctance to make complaints and receipt of poor service with weary stoicism.

As such during service recovery practitioner focus on emotional support may be most appropriate for Trinbagonian consumers and instrumental support for British consumers (Menon and Dubé, 2007), regardless of service type. It may be misleading to
assume customers that expect interpersonal relationships with the service provider would be more demanding and difficult to please, to the contrary, emotional attachment may provide a buffer for the firm in instances of service failure. Whereas, consumers with a utilitarian or functional focus can be more difficult to manage as such relationships tend to be superficial and leads to a lower tolerance to poor service performance (Bowden et al., 2014).

The stark difference between emotional expressiveness and differences in recovery focus possibly needed between Britain and T&T in our study is not unsurprising as Walbott and Scherer (1988) found that the biggest differentiator between countries is often ‘emotional experience.’ Due to cultural conditioning, prescribed scripts and roles provides rules for managing feelings (Hochschild, 1979; Rafaeli and Sutton, 1987). This can create challenges for firms as well as customers since interpretation of emotions is regulated by cultural norms which implicitly influence the expression or recognition of emotions (Elfenbein and Ambady, 2003). Tombs (2014) recently confirmed that indeed, during intercultural encounters facial recognition of emotion is difficult.

4.4.2.3. Behavioral Outcomes in FCCCB

Depicted in Figure 1 are the range of behavioral outcomes validated by consumers of our Britain and T&T sample, namely: (1) Change future behavior, reflecting intentions not to buy the item or patronize the seller in the future (Rogers et al., 1992); (2) Private complaining, warning family and friends about the product or seller (Day and Landon, 1977; Singh, 1988); (3) Voice complaints, complaining to the service provider (Hirschman, 1970; Singh, 1988); (4) Third-party complaining,
complaining to external customer groups or take legal action (Day and Landon, 1977; Singh, 1988), in-house customers, and public arena; and (5) Do nothing, internalizing or ignoring dissatisfaction (Rogers et al., 1992). While all of the five behavioral outcomes are referred to in the extant literature, we have further refined two of the five outcomes, specifically, voice complaints and third-party complaining (Table 3).

Table 3: Behavioral Outcomes and Refined Sub-Categories or Complaint Channels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavioral outcomes</th>
<th>Sub-categories</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change Future Behavior</td>
<td>Intentions not to buy the items or patronize the seller in the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private complaining</td>
<td>Warning family and friends about the product or seller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice complaints</td>
<td>Front-Line Employee directed-voicing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Management directed-voicing (Complaints directed to supervisory or upper levels of management)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transient directed-voicing or Hot-air complaining (Complaining to firm with little effort or substance, temporary with no follow-through)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Written-form directed-voicing (Complaints directed to firm such as an email, letter or comment form)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third-party complaining</td>
<td>External third-party complaining (Complaints about firm to bodies outside firm such as consumer affairs, bureau of standards, a lawyer or in public arena such as radio show, social media)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internal third-party complaining (Complaining to fellow customers inside business)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do nothing</td>
<td>Internalize or ignore dissatisfaction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of the preferred complaint channels for both our British and T&T interviewees, private voicing appeared to be the most common complaint outcome.
employed by consumers in the event of service failure (Richins, 1983), though it is acknowledged that this form may be utilized in combination with other strategies. It is suggested that private voicing and negative word-of-mouth are coping strategies utilized by consumers to reduce cognitive dissonance and justify switching (Wangenheim and Bayón, 2004) and may even occur if the firm engaged in service recovery but it was not seamless and up to the desired standard. Furthermore, many expressed the intention to also change future behavior and remain silent (sleepers), although silence was particularly more acute in the case of British nationals. In such an instance, firms lose the lifetime value of that customer and the opportunity for feedback of the dissatisfying event in order to rectify for future service encounters (Chebat et al., 2005).

While it was generally observed that both British and T&T nationals utilized the range of voice complaints strategies illustrated in Table 3, there were strong and contrasting differences between country nationals as to the favored approaches with British nationals preferring written-form directed-voicing and Trinbagonians preferring transient direct-voicing (or Hot-air voicing). Furthermore, British people’s behaviors appear to be influenced by cultural norms and social identity expectations of what is appropriate British behavior, and Trinbagonians influenced by the cultural norms of openness and free expression whether positive or negative.

The British reservation about confrontation and embarrassment avoidance influences its indirect complaint channel choice and the preferred mode written-form directed-voicing. Trinbagonians on the other hand, appear to be highly reactive and openly display emotions and engage in transient direct-voicing (or Hot-air voicing); while this may prove to be harmless based on high tolerance levels of Trinbagonians,
service providers must receive this frustrated outburst as a willingness on the part of Trinbagonians consumers to engage in a constructive dialogue and service recovery. Since the British do not usually engage in verbal outbursts and may be internally frustrated without visible signs, this may be troublesome for marketers as they may not be able to easily detect when British people are upset. Firms must be vigilant in such situations (Baker et al., 2013). This is particularly important since frustration can often be hidden but is the best predictor of behavior (Tronvoll, 2011).

According to Schoefer and Diamantopoulos (2009, 293) ‘Failure to consider customers’ emotional experience(s) might severely limit our understanding of customers’ service recovery evaluations and may explain less of the variance in the key relational outcome variables of service recovery.’ Furthermore, it was recently highlighted that salespersons’ interpersonal sensitivity and awareness of customer behavioral cues such as of the face and body does in fact influence service perceptions (Puccinelli et al., 2013). In light of this and potential intercultural differences through increased international travel and growing migrant populations it would be useful for firms to provide staff with the necessary training and skill set to pick up on cues that may be verbal or non-verbal and empower employees to deliver customized recovery strategies. Investment in employee training is undeniably beneficial, as employees are central to achieving competitive differentiation in service (Kelemen and Papasolomou, 2007).

In our study we recognized the need to expand existing conceptions of third-party complaining and nuances in each context in Britain and T&T. In Britain, it appears that nationals have sufficient confidence in the system, government and relevant laws to
provide protection if service failure occurs and the firm does not effectively engage in
service recovery to customers’ satisfaction. However, in the case of T&T its nationals
tend to engage in external third-party voicing because often they feel powerless and at
the mercy of providers and thus seek to shame the firm publicly and/or seek redress, for
example by pleading on radio programs or increasing usage of social media such as
Twitter and Facebook to force firms into proper service recovery. Notably, although
social media use is likely increasing in both country contexts, the ‘smallness’ of T&T
and its society’s emphasis on strong close personal relations can have more devastating
effects with deeper penetration into the society’s consciousness.

4.5. Conclusions, Future Research and Study Limitations

A key contribution of our study is that though culture is widely acknowledged to
influence consumer behavior, the study’s empirical work demonstrated cultures
influence on consumer complaint behavior from the instance of service failure, to the
behavioral process that influence complaint intentions and the eventual behavioral
outcomes or channels choices consumers made. In doing so, we proposed, the
Framework of Culture and Consumer Complaint Behavior (FCCCB) which provided a
comprehensive view of customers’ responses to service failure. Our work in part is
supported by earlier calls for such a focus, for example, Zhang, Beatty and Walsh
(2008) who hypothesized of culture’s potential influence on each stage of the service
experience, inclusive of service expectations, evaluations of service, and reactions to
service. Furthermore, we heeded the call to move culture research on consumers’
perceptions beyond the dominant Hofstede framework, develop new theory and cross-cultural research (Huff and Smith, 2008; Kastanakis and Voyer, 2014).

The FCCCB integrated both behavioral processes and outcomes of responses to service failure generated based on empirical work. One exception of previous work including both behavioral processes and outcomes in a single model, to the best of the authors’ knowledge is work by Tronvoll (2012), although two key differences was our study’s focus on culture and our FCCCB was based on empirical data we collected. Furthermore, the FCCCB does not only emphasize culture’s central role but also identifies the collective importance of four behavioral processes only disparately or in part illustrated in previous consumer complaint modelling and thus a contribution is that our work improves understanding on the dynamic nature of the service recovery process. Our study illustrated the influence of culture, and cultural triggers, on these processes—cognitive, motivational, environmental, and emotive—and their influence in turn on consumers’ complaint intentions.

In our FCCCB the emotive variable assumed a central role in explaining culture’s influence and we argue pertinent since emotions and attitudes broadly influence individual behavior. The role of culture and emotions and other related factors emphasize the need for services and service recovery to assume a human behavioral approach where socio-cultural factors and experiences must be taken into account when creating complaint management systems and service recovery policies (Krishna and Dangayach, 2011; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2011).

Since our examination extended into two national contexts that were deemed sufficiently different to allow for rich and meaningful data on cross-cultural differences
between the two countries, Britain and the twin sister island of Trinidad & Tobago (T&T), our work has also heeded the call for more cross-national, cross-cultural work on customer complaining behavior (Grougiou and Pettigrew, 2009; Yuksel et al., 2006; Zhang et al., 2008) and extended literature on the subject.

It is imperative that firms are soundly cognizant of their customers, particularly, the dominant cultural norms, and individuals’ conceptions of self and their collective identity which have been shaped within a social system or the nation. This study provides evidence that an understanding of cultural norms are most useful for comparing between cultures and should constitute the best ‘first guess’ about a culture (Ferraro, 1990) for developing context specific service delivery and recovery strategies and its potential influences. McGraw and Tetlock (2005) argue that choice can be explained by social-relational frameworks since often community enforcing norms (meta-norms) often provide rules that guide behavior. By understanding the factors that guide consumers’ behavior firms would be better placed to develop effective customer complaint and recovery strategies that would encourage consumers who perceive service failure or experience some degree of dissatisfaction to aptly make their discontent known. Since it is argued that despite the globalization of markets and reported convergence, in essence, such convergence is largely superficial and unlikely to have any meaningful influence on core beliefs and norms that influence the behaviors of individuals and groups or functioning of key institutions or social agencies in a society (Leung et al., 2005).

Notably, there are some limitations to our study. First, although our study was primarily based on the customer’s viewpoint, since service is an interactive process and
actually co-created, future research could utilize a dyadic or parallel examination of
service failure and recovery and the nature of the interactive relationship using
qualitative methodologies such as observations or analyses of video-recorded data to
acquire a deeper understanding of the process and relationships. Nevertheless, findings
in this study should provide a useful perspective moving forward since it is noteworthy
that interview data gathered would be informed viewpoints from individuals some of
whom where service providers themselves with extensive work experience.

Second, our research assumed that service failure experiences shared by the
interviewees were between nationals, and did not consider that in some instances, for
example, migrant workers could have been party to the recalled transactions and
influence service experiences in unique ways. Future research in this regard should
clearly distinguish whether the service exchanges were intracultural or intercultural.
This is relevant, for example, since both Britain and T&T have very cosmopolitan
populations and at least Britain has a large migrant population.

Third, our cross-cultural comparisons only extended to two countries of interest,
whereas cross-cultural studies including three or more countries would be more
beneficial. However, it is suggested that two-country studies can still be very useful and
be added to future studies to enrich understanding in the field (Sekaran, 1983).

Fourth, due the qualitative nature of our study we do not advocate its
generalizability to other context though we hope that the proposed framework can be
extended to other cases and create an impetus for further analytic research work on
cross-cultural consumer complaint behavior.
A fifth limitation was the lack of specific focus on a particular industry. As such further research with a specific focus on particular service types can improve managerial usefulness and provide further insights.

Finally, we acknowledge that the samples drawn for both Study 1 and 2 may not be representative of the populations of interest, based on a narrow range of characteristics. Nevertheless, because our priority was to enhance cross-cultural comparability it was deemed essential that sample participants had similar demographic characteristics and as close as possible life experiences to limit spurious explanations from our analyses. Future research should thus explore a wider cross-population from the countries under examination.
4.6. References


CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1. Culture and Service Quality Research

This thesis entitled “The Role of Culture in Service Quality: A Cross-National Study in Britain and Trinidad and Tobago (T&T)” set out to explore the potential relationship between two omnipresent constructs in the marketing literature, namely, culture and service quality. More specifically, the aim was to examine culture’s influence on consumers’ perceptions of service quality – delivery and outcome – and consumer complaint behaviour after a service failure, a comprehensive viewpoint beyond a single country context. In order to achieve the objectives of the thesis, a systematic approach was employed to break down the thesis into smaller and more cohesive papers. This approach allowed the candidate to garner a comprehensive yet meaningful understanding of precise ways in which culture manifests itself and to investigate the effect of culture’s overarching influence on service delivery and consumers’ perceptions of service quality. This step-by-step and systematic approach also paid dividends for the candidate by allowing each specific data set and analyses to have a better focus and also allowed reflection for each study before progressing to the subsequent stage of research.

Research in services marketing has been burgeoning over the last few decades in great part due to the demand by marketers to understand the expectations of their consumers’ as business environments shifted significantly from being industrial-based to knowledge-based economies. This necessitated a shift by firms from a goods-dominant logic to a service-dominant logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004) which places greater emphasis on the service exchange, and the relationship customer and firm which
is becoming increasingly important and central to value-creation. This and the inherent complexity of services relative to goods have driven services marketing research and placed the construct of service quality as a fundamental feature of the literature (Grönroos, 1990). Service quality has been viewed as an essential component of firms and marketers toolkit in order to successfully create value and maintain long-term relationships with their customers. In fact, an emphasis on services and service quality has increasingly assumed a crucial role in the wider strategic, tactical and operational practices of many business organizations (Svensson, 2006). On the much larger national level services continues to play a vital role in most economies worldwide with developing economies touted to benefit most from the dynamic and open global trading environment (WTO, 2013).

The cross-national focus of this thesis involving both a developed and developing country, Britain and T&T, respectively, contributes to the growing academic literature on services and service quality. The findings of the three papers enhance our understanding of the wide range of variables related to various service quality constructs and also identified salient similarities and differences that exists between nationals of the two countries and provided rich knowledge for future service quality model building and measurement. In particular, this thesis has contributed to the existing literature on services marketing in developing countries which to date is relatively sparse (Kueh and Voon, 2007) and specifically in the T&T context where there has been very limited academic research on service quality.

As a central focus of this thesis, the cross-national study also brings the construct of culture into a service quality model. Increased knowledge on the role of cultural
factors on consumer perceptions should be of particular importance to firms, as a core business strategy can positively influence service quality management practices and policies in the present and future to maintain and retain customer relationships.

Globalization and businesses’ consumer engagement in a diverse range of countries has placed culture and understanding of cultures’ influences on consumer behaviour in varied contexts a key priority for multinational and global firms. Indeed, there have been calls by a range of service experts for heightened consideration of the differences that may exist in consumers’ expectations and perceptions of service quality in countries around the world (Grove et al., 2003). According to Markus and Kityama (2010), the question of culture’s influence on the individual is not a matter of “if” but, more “how” and “when.” Furthermore, it has been argued that culture is a relatively stable and enduring construct where the core belief systems, values, behavioural norms and patterns of behaviour are generally shared by individuals who are socialized within a specific context (Hofstede, 2001). Furthermore, Schweder (2003) suggested that people are not only socio-culturally shaped by their environments but are also shapers of the said environments and thus any meaningful analysis cannot be complete without the understanding that they are inextricably intertwined. Hence, this thesis adopted a dynamic view of culture with the assumption that broad cultural influences such as ecological, historical, economic and socio-political influences model or change individual behaviour.

Arguably, one of the consequences of globalization and the information age we live in is an emerging cultural homogeneity and the convergence of consumers’ tastes (Levitt, 1983). This so-called endemic cultural homogeneity often referred to as
“McDonaldisation” infers that popular consumer culture of major global powers such as in North America and Western Europe is altering regions, cultures, nations, and societies (Asgary and Walle, 2002). It is, however, argued that such convergence may indeed be only superficial (Leung et al., 2005) as traditionalism and modernity are likely unrelated with convergence on some characteristics and continuing distinctiveness on others (Smith et al., 2006). Indeed, the findings reported in the three papers in this thesis does indicate there are unique cultural factors in each context, in Britain and T&T, that influence British and T&T nationals, in terms of the way they perceive and act, at least with regards to service delivery quality and service failures.

In order to unearth the cultural factors that possibly influence behaviours in the two country contexts, it was necessary to adopt a contextualised, emic approach to this investigation of the service quality construct in each context. This allowed the researcher to gain a deeper appreciation of consumers’ needs, wants and desires, with greater sophistication without a priori influences dictating the course of the research work. In so doing, the researcher garnered an in-depth understanding of what notions of “locals” are of good quality service, for both British and Trinbagonians, respectively. The findings in this thesis could serve as a useful benchmark for both researchers and practitioners who wish to conduct research or operate in country contexts that may be similar to either Britain or T&T.

The interpretivist paradigm and qualitative methods orientation assumed by the candidate provided data that facilitated a context rich, realistic picture of the service quality construct and the role culture plays in shaping behaviour across the two country contexts. Its primary aim was not necessarily generalisability but rather a depth of
awareness and specificity in both Britain and T&T country contexts. Though it may be argued that this approach provides less rigour than in a traditional quantitative study, the qualitative method led to greater realism and relevance (Gummesson, 2006) and improved cross-contextualisation, something absent in quantitative research which has a limiting effect on understanding phenomena by creating boundaries. In fact, Laurent (2000) has made a strident call for more qualitative input when developing marketing models, referred to as “proto-modelling” in order to best identify appropriate variables and relationships to include in models.

Another premise of this thesis was the importance of focusing on the customers’ viewpoint and the adoption of a customer centric orientation to problem solving, as the key to improving organisational service quality and enhancing customer experience is by speaking to customers and getting a clear understanding of their thoughts and opinions and thus achieve understanding of the notion of service quality from their perspective. Since customers typically describe the characteristics that would be important to them in creating value while discarding the ones that do not, the only thing that matters is what the customer perceives transpired or exists. Drawing on the consumers’ perspective and empirical data, one of the major contributions of this thesis is the identification of culture’s influence on consumers’ perceptions of service quality, its overarching influence on all elements of their service quality evaluations.

The research work carried out in this thesis enabled the researcher to proficiently realize the overall research aims/objectives, as well as, the specific aims and objectives set for forth for each individual paper in this alternative thesis. The sections on “Theoretical Contributions of the Dissertation” and “Managerial Implications of the
Research” below clearly demonstrate the accomplishments with respect to the aims and objectives put forth in the study, and its contribution to knowledge and usefulness to practitioner. Furthermore, the section below on “Limitations and Future Research” clearly indicate that despite the identified limitations, the thesis have provided impetus and guidance for the continued development and longevity of work in the researched areas of interest covered in this thesis. The services field is expected to remain dominant as the major contributor to the GDP and employment in most developed economies and for developing economies a vital route out of poverty, and thus interest from the perspective of researchers’ and practitioners is likely to continue to grow. In addition, due to globalization the role of culture and its influence will continue to be pervasive as the prime determinant of consumer attitudes, and thus ongoing interest in cross-national and cross-cultural studies.

5.2. Theoretical Contributions of the Dissertation

The most significant theoretical contribution of this study is the focused examination of the interrelationship between two omnipresent marketing constructs in the business literature—Service Quality and Culture. In services and business in general the emphasis in understanding service quality is of premium interest to academics and practitioners alike. Service quality is a key point of differentiation of critical importance to businesses and potentially one of the few sustainable competitive advantages that is not easily copied by other firms. Furthermore, the global context in which firms operate whether they have international or solely domestic aspirations it is imperative firms improve understanding of culture’s influence on consumer behavior and service quality
perceptions. The role of enhanced communication technology and increased affordability of transportation and mobility of consumers have no doubt played a significant role in globalization and the resultant increased expectations of most consumers all over the world. These forces which have also increased cross-cultural encounters in daily life will continue to increase and thus encourage an ever increasing focus on cross-cultural studies as in this dissertation.

The findings of the study led to the development of the Conceptualization of Service Quality in Cultural Context (CQSCC), a multi-dimensional and hierarchical, comprehensive model reflective of the range of concepts, independent and mediating factors and sub-dimensions that collectively influence consumer perceptions of service quality. More importantly, at least conceptually, it is the first service quality model, to the best of the candidate’s knowledge, which explicitly integrates the culture construct in a service quality model as an overarching variable affecting other variables/constructs related to consumers’ perceptions of service quality. While the CSQCC framework still needs to undergo rigorous operationalisation, indeed, the CSQCC and other findings reported in this thesis can be used to guide future theoretical and empirical work that aims to explore culture’s influence on service quality perceptions during both positive and negative service encounters.

Gronroos (1998) suggested that the perceived service quality model was never intended to be operationalised but instead serve as a theoretical construct to be utilised by academics and practitioners for understanding the nature of the missing product of service firms. In that spirit, the CSQCC framework and related findings can provide useful insight and impetus for more focused cross-cultural service quality research. The
emphasis in this study was not on model testing but on exploration /discovery of culture’s influence on service quality evaluations. Nevertheless, further studies are necessary to validate the proposed CSQCC structure as well as to develop and refine measures to enhance its usefulness to practitioners.

Another significant contribution related to cross-national and cross-cultural studies has been the strong Western bias in theoretical orientations, research design and instrumentation typically utilized in service quality research. Emphasis by the candidate in utilising a qualitative methods orientation in this dissertation was an attempt to avoid the undue influence of existing models of service quality in any modelling, and to draw conclusions based on inductive thematic analyses. Such a practice appears to be atypical because it is commonly observed that even the developmental phase of service quality model building is habitually confined by the boundaries of the extant literature (Martinez and Martinez, 2010). Likewise, it appears that traditional service quality models generally assume a positivistic philosophy (Schembri and Sandberg, 2002). Often the starting point for many service quality models is SERVQUAL or other popular models which tend to be developed in Western contexts. Accordingly, there have been appeals for empirical evidence that provides justification for existing theoretical, multi-level, multidimensional models of service quality (Ladhari, 2008). On that note, the CSQCC is notably distinct from any such existing model(s) of service quality, although the process, outcome, and service setting aspects of the CSQCC are relatively similar to existing models (Dabholkar et al., 1995; Grönroos, 1984; Parasuraman et al., 1988; Rust and Oliver, 1994).
Most importantly, the explicit integration of culture into a service quality model in this thesis stands out, and the notion of cultural triggers, a unique concept which has never been discussed in any other service quality literature. In addition, we heeded the call to move culture research on consumers’ perceptions beyond the dominant Hofstede framework, and develop new theory and cross-cultural research (Huff and Smith, 2008; Kastanakis and Voyer, 2014), by adopting an interpretivist paradigm and qualitative method the unique findings in this study has made a key contribution to the extant literature.

The CSQCC model developed in this study also builds on the extant service quality literature and current theory by introducing key mediating factors, such as employee work ethic/attitude, organizational and customer responsibility as key element that contributes to consumers’ overall service quality evaluations, these have not previously been integrated into existing service quality models. The CSQCC illustrates the broad nature of the service quality construct and consumers’ perceptions and the realisation that management must adopt a thorough, interdisciplinary approach to service quality management that transcends not only customer touch points but looks at marketing, operations, human resources as a collective. Management must adopt an end-to-end approach to measuring (Johnston and Clark, 2005) and enhancing service quality to shape a successful service culture and experiences for consumers. It is, however, important to note that there are inherent tensions between marketing and other functions, for example, while marketing seeks to drive revenues and profitability through increased quality requiring increased expenditure, operation’s focus is to achieve through efficiency and decreased costs.
In this thesis, the concept of *cultural triggers* was defined as a phenomenon, activity, or institution with which most citizens of a country identify, consciously or unconsciously, and provide frames of reference of what is valued, what is normal, and what is reflective of a larger cultural pattern. The candidate identified four *cultural triggers* that relate to T&T nationals—*Culture of Closeness* and *Culture of Servitude* (*initially in paper 1*) and then two additional variables (in paper 2)—*Festive Culture* and *Culture of Entitlement* for a total of four inclusive of the two identified in paper 1. These triggers were empirically determined to have a significant effect on Trinbagonians perceptions of service quality, and on the behavioural processes and outcomes during service failure. Similarly, in paper 2, two key triggers were identified for British nationals: *British Reserve* and *Culture of Cordiality*, as well a potential third is proposed—a *Culture of Neutrality*—as a polar opposite to *Culture of Closeness* identified in the T&T sample.

The identification of the two additional *cultural triggers* in paper 2 for T&T can possibly be attributed to a few factors. First, the limited experience at least initially of the researcher with respect to the analytic techniques utilized for qualitative data sets. A retrospective analysis of the paper 1 data set after the broader study was conducted, indeed revealed the presence of the said triggers newly identified in paper 2. Second, besides developing a more critical eye and enhanced skill set with increased analytic experience, the non-identification by the researcher could be due to differences in the characteristics of the T&T samples selected for paper 1 and paper 2. Paper 1’s informants’ characteristics were somewhat skewed towards a younger age, currently enrolled in university, less-travelled and generally limited work experiences. On the
other hand, paper 2 sample selection was more balanced, informants were more mature, well-travelled and attained a broader range of life experiences which conceivably made it easier for them to discern differences or uniqueness of their home culture and more aptly express such.

All of the cultural triggers as concepts were found to be more strongly associated with cultural norms, and identification of the individual with a collective identity, but less so with abstract values traditionally identified in the culture literature (Hofstede, 2001; Schwartz, 1999). It is posited that domain specific-knowledge developed in the socially constructed worlds of individuals are driven by norms (Briley, 2009) or a sense of belongingness or obligation to a collective identity (Berger and Luckmann, 1991). The CSQCC highlights the importance of cultural triggers and how these triggers may suppress or activate specific consumer behaviours during service exchange and influence outcomes. The cultural triggers identified in this thesis may serve as a catalyst to identify and add other cultural triggers to the services marketing literature that may well be evident in other cultures. The conception of cultural triggers in this thesis also validates the necessity of assuming a dynamic view of culture shaped by, for example, socio-economic, historic, and political factors, or possibly moderate and/or mediate the effects of cultural triggers.

Beyond the central role of cultural triggers in the CSQCC, it is observed through the cross-cultural analyses which were conducted independently that there is a universal structure or framework which can be usefully applied in other country contexts, at least the core elements as illustrated in Figure 1 and Figure 2 (paper 2). Since there appears to be some consistency in structure albeit that the importance weightings of various factors
and sub-dimensions, as well as expectations, needs and desires of nationals do vary from one country context to the next. This view is supported by Karatepe, Yavas and Babakus (2005) who suggest there may potentially be some universal facets of service quality and thus specific measures or models may not have to be developed from scratch from context to context.

Beyond its contribution to the service quality literature another significant contributions of this dissertation is the proposed Framework of Culture and Consumer Complaint Behavior (FCCCB) which provided a comprehensive view of customers’ responses to service failure. There is natural link between service quality and customer complaint behaviour, however, this study also provided empirical data that clearly links consumer complaint behavior and culture. The FCCCB to the best of the author’s knowledge is the only model in the consumer complaint behavior literature that explicitly integrates not only culture, but also, behavioural processes (emotive, cognitive, motivational, and environmental influences) and behavioural outcomes (private complaining, voice complaints, third-party complaining etc.) in a single model based on empirical data. Thus the study goes some way in building the extant literature on consumer complaint behavior by deepening our understanding of the dynamic nature of the service recovery process and providing insight into culture’s influence and cultural triggers on consumer behavioural processes and how these in turn influence consumers’ behavioral intentions or outcomes. The empirical work in paper 3 and indeed other parts of this thesis also highlights the growing importance and recognition of the critical role of emotions in customer complaint behaviour and the need for increased focus of future service research around this theoretical concept.
5.3. Managerial Implications of the Research

From a practical perspective the CSQCC and FCCCB models provide systematic methodologies towards the inclusion of cultural triggers and other similarly newly identified concepts into service quality and consumer complaint behavior models. A qualitative awareness could aid managers in identifying key aspects of service quality and complaint behavior most salient in country context and therefore inform the strengths and weaknesses of existing firm strategy. For example, in terms of service delivery it was broadly identified that service process was far more important to T&T nationals while in contrast service outcome was of the utmost importance to British nationals, regardless of the nature of the service such as utilitarian or hedonistic. Or at a finer level, the degree of personalisation expected of service personnel was far higher and important to T&T nationals generally and far less a concern for British nationals who preferred a greater formality and discretion. In realising differential needs for different cultures in levels of personalization, firms need to achieve the right balance for each context while at the same time being cognisant of maintaining an acceptable level of efficiency and awareness of standardisation versus customisation cost implications.

Marketers must understand role of cultural triggers and related contextual variables and how these may activate or suppress consumer behaviours at it relates to service quality and consumer complaints behaviours in order to develop effective marketing and operational strategies that take into consideration these important influences.

One of the central factors in the CSQCC in both Britain and T&T country contexts was the key mediating role of the employee, and more specifically, employee
work ethic/attitudes on consumers’ perceptions of service quality. This is not surprising since the very nature of services and service encounters are by and large human interactions which normally involves a degree of interaction between provider and customer. The significance of the employee is also supported by the service-profit chain (Heskett and Schlesinger, 1994). In spite of this, employee work ethic/attitudes are not included in existing service quality models, as the employee does not necessarily assume a central role in traditional models. While data for this thesis justifiably focused on the consumers’ perspective, general findings in this research work emphasize the importance of garnering data from the employees’ perspective as well. This would be particularly useful to inform service strategic planning in instances of cross-cultural service quality encounters.

Future cross-cultural research could adopt a dyadic approach inclusive of the consumer and employee viewpoints to enrich insight with regard to intra-cultural and inter-cultural service encounters. As such effective organizational planning for improved service quality and financial performance should simultaneously integrate customer and employee perspectives particularly front-line employees. It must be acknowledged that although many of the participants of this research had moderate or extensive work experiences and in some instances may have been service employees themselves at the subconscious level; thus information gathered for this research study may well have involved employees’ perspective, as opposed to reflecting pure perspective of the self as a consumer.

Another key contribution of this thesis is the proposed Framework of Culture and Consumer Complaint Behaviour (FCCCB) which provided a comprehensive view
of consumer complaint behaviour from the instance of service failure, to the behavioural process that influence complaint intentions, and to the eventual behavioural outcomes or channel choices consumers make. Again, the primary intention was to examine cultures influence on customer complaint behaviour, cross-nationally in Britain and T&T.

Cultural triggers identified in paper 1 and paper 2 were found to impact consumers’ behavioural processes during the customer complaint process, namely cognitive, motivational, environmental, and emotive aspects. However, while these behavioural processes are reflected in the literature (Bagozzi et al., 1999; Chebat and Slusarczyk, 2005; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Kastanakis and Voyer, 2014; Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Oliver, 1980; Stephens and Gwinner, 1998; Tronvoll, 2011), the four processes are not collectively exemplified in existing consumer complaint behaviour models.

The FCCCB extends existing literature by integrating these four complaint process factors into one model, and also introduces culture’s role and cultural triggers as factors influencing consumers’ behavioural processes and in turn their complaint intentions and behavioural outcomes. Furthermore, the FCCCB demonstrates that there are clear cross-national differences and similarities between the British and T&T samples. The model can serve as a useful tool for firms to anticipate potential behaviours of consumers in a given context and gain understanding of the mechanisms and complaint intentions/channels to be utilised by customers both in intra-cultural and inter-cultural service encounters. Accordingly, firms could develop complaint policies and procedures, and recovery systems to encourage customer feedback in the event of
service failure, and improve the chances of long-term customer retention and satisfaction taking into account individual or group cultural orientations.

Qualitative evaluation of the country specific key cultural triggers and exploration of potential impact on the variables identified in the CSQCC and FCCCB can serve as a useful training tool for front-line staff. For example, cultures influence may require greater levels of flexibility on the part of staff and customisation of policy depending on the cultural expectations of consumers for personalisation. Special training would be needed to facilitate such consumer needs, not only in inter-cultural service encounters, but also in intra-cultural encounters, since some country cultures are becoming increasingly diverse and cosmopolitan. Cultural triggers as defined in this thesis are related to norms and collective identities and more likely to influence behaviour than broad value orientations and thus are easier for practitioners to grasp though an understanding of the strength and degree of influence may require qualitative evaluations. Nevertheless, recognition of the presence of salient cultural triggers in a specific country context should aid more effective planning of service delivery from initial and subsequent contacts, towards maintaining relationships in the long term.

A key practical contribution based on the empirical data was the increasingly important role of emotions and the distinct role of culture and cultural triggers in influencing consumers behaviours in terms of their service quality perceptions and complaint behavior—processes and outcomes (behavioural intentions). Traditionally, despite the natural role of emotions in consumer behaviour evaluations and its influence on employee behavior (Bagozzi et al., 1999; Hochschild, 1979; Lin and Lin, 2011), emotion has traditionally received very little attention in the consumer complaint and
service recovery literature (Smith and Bolton, 2002) and in service quality modelling. In this study interview data revealed that emotion is an integral element of every social situation (Scherer and Wallbott, 1994), and central to service encounters, but even more salient in instances of service failure (Tronvoll, 2011).

Understanding consumers’ emotions and how it is influenced by culture and cultural triggers in different country contexts or individual cultural dispositions is essential for firms in order to prevent negative word-of-mouth as a result of poor evaluation of service quality or post service failure. Furthermore, since emotions have been found to be a prime motivator of loyalty (Mattsson et al., 2004), this is an added incentive for improving clear understanding of culture’s influence on, for example, felt and displayed emotions which was found to be markedly different between British and T&T nationals and was attributed to differences shaped by cultural triggers based on thematic analyses. Similarly, cultural influences were found to be the cause of embarrassment British nationals feel during service failure which in turn influences complaint intentions and channel choice.

5.4. Limitations and Future Research

There are some limitations of this thesis that can be addressed in future studies. One such limitation was data drawn in the thesis did not focus on any specific service industry. Initially, at the outset of the study the intention of the researcher was to collect data related to two specific industries nevertheless due to the exploratory nature of the study, time and resource constraints it was thought best to explore service industries in general, conceptions of service and service quality in the country contexts of interest. It
should be noted, however, that in most interviews, interviewees drew examples and recalled service experiences from a range of services commonly utilised such as banks, restaurants, utilities, supermarkets etc.

Future research should examine the proposed CSQCC and FCCCB models in the same and other country contexts, and within specific industries to determine whether the structure and salient variables are still relevant. Despite a general focus on service industries there may be grounds for applicability in a range of service settings. Although as is the case with a central finding of this thesis, cross-culturally there appears to be some degree of a universal structure, as suggested by Winsted (2000) who argued that there are far more similarities than differences found between different service settings regarding service quality perceptions.

Related to the constraints above was the decision made to examine two-country contexts, ideally it would have been useful to consider three or more country contexts to improve cross-cultural analysis. However, studies consisting of three or more countries are often not feasible due to limited resources (Yeganeh et al., 2004), as the lone researcher or small teams are often constrained by financial and personal resources (Hantrais, 1999). In addition, Sekaran (1983) advised that well-designed 2-nation studies should not be discouraged, as findings can be systematically integrated with subsequent studies, and at the same time build on the limited cross-cultural research literature that exists relative to domestic research. Despite such an ideal being desirous at the outset of the thesis research programme, upon completion of the three phases of research reflected in paper 1, 2, and 3, it was decided that the merits of further data collection in a third country could not be justified especially considering the time
constraint. Future cross-cultural research in similar and dissimilar contexts is thus encouraged to validate the proposed models and findings of the three papers presented in this thesis.

Another limitation related to sampling was the overall representativeness of the sample and the utilization of purposive snowball sampling. Despite the inherent shortcomings regarding the non-random nature of purposive snowball sampling, various authors argue the negative effects can be countered by describing samples in detail and including all the characteristics that can potentially influence the results (Cavusgil and Das, 1997; Nasif et al., 1991; Sekaran, 1983). Specifically, for paper 2 and 3 the sample characteristics were narrowly defined by such characteristics as tertiary educated, middle class, resident in urban/suburban area, and it can possibly be argued that sample participants are not necessarily representative of the populations of interest in Britain and T&T contexts. However, the candidate adopted the advice of Salciuviene, Auruskeviciene and Lydeka (2005) and others who recommend that in comparative studies such as cross-national/cross-cultural research, matched sampling is a necessity and requires samples to be as similar as possible, so that only cultural differences remain. The samples should be functionally equivalent, that is, drawn samples from countries must be equivalent in all aspects except nationality (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005), when utilising non-probability samples the next best option available to the researcher is sampling equivalence (Cavusgil and Das, 1997).

The lack of specific focus on the role and impact of technology on service quality perceptions are not necessarily a limitation of this research, although it is an area the candidate in hindsight believes should have been more strongly integrated into the
research. Particularly, since technology has been one of the key drivers of globalisation and has resulted in greater consumer sophistication. According to Kotler (2011, 134) “Companies are increasingly swimming in a highly transparent fishbowl” due to the influences of social media. There was some insight into cross-cultural differences between Britain and T&T samples with respect to technology, at least indirectly. T&T national interviewees demonstrated a greater affinity for higher levels of interpersonal interaction (process-focused) with firm employees regardless of the nature of the service interactions. On the other hand, British interviewees tended to be more outcome-focused and less interested in the nature of personal interactions and open to technology use if it can increase efficiency. Evidently, technology can lead to a degree of personalization that many cultures may not desire.

Indeed, consumers’ interaction with technology in place of interacting with a human provider during service encounters or service recovery (such as self-service, or lodging complaints), whether in whole or in part, should raise concerns about our existing knowledge of the role of technology and our conception of service concepts from a technological viewpoint. Furthermore, consideration of the influence of customer privacy and confidentiality of information (Bitner et al., 2000) can influence behaviour, particularly with respect to issues of trust which from our limited analyses appear to differ cross-nationally. British nationals appear to place greater trust in institutions and respect rules and laws, while T&T nationals place greater trust in individuals. Interestingly, the increasing trend of social media in great part reflects that consumers largely trust other consumers rather than firms and their marketing messages.
Future research should explore the relevance of technology in regard to the CSQCC and FCCCB and service quality perceptions and consumer complaint behaviour. It needs to be established whether the same conceptual factors established in interpersonal service encounters hold for technologically based service environments (Bitner et al., 2000). At least partially, paper 3 explored and discussed the role of technology and cross-national complaint intentions of both British and T&T nationals, specifically, the increasing use of social media (e.g., Facebook, twitter) and public forums such as radio stations as viable complaint channels for consumer voicing of negative service experiences. Clearly, negative word-of-mouth in such forums can have significant implications for practitioners and thus further research on understanding these technology platforms as it relates to service quality delivery and recovery is essential.

Notwithstanding the above limitations, the candidate believes a valuable contribution to the services marketing literature has been made by providing two useful frameworks – CSQCC and FCCCB – both empirically derived, along with a multitude of related findings. According to Whetten (1989), a theoretical contribution must contain the essential components of who, what, when, where, and how. It is the view of this candidate that this research study has moved beyond this to provide rich data through thick descriptions, effectively contextualised, and illustrates the empirical and conceptual linkages between the assortments of variables identified in the proposed models. It is hoped that this research would create an impetus for focused future research in the area of international services marketing exploring cultures influence on service quality delivery cross-culturally and cross-nationally.
5.5. Researcher’s Reflection on Ontological, Epistemological and Methodological Approach

In the management and organizational sciences a fundamental focus of researchers has been producing knowledge about human action and activities in organizations (Sandberg, 2005). Understanding human action depends on the researchers’ view of the world and perspective on knowledge creation and acquisition. Ontology is the starting point of all research, after which there is a natural directional flow to the epistemological and methodological positions adopted (Grix, 2002).

Broadly speaking there are two fundamental overarching research paradigms: objectivism and subjectivism (Saunders et al., 2012). These paradigms relate to assumptions about the social world in which we live, how science should be conducted, and what constitutes legitimate problems, solutions, and criteria of “proof” (Kuhn, 1970). An individual’s ontological position reflects their response to the questions “What is the nature of reality?” And more specifically, “Is reality objective and apart from the researcher” or “Is reality subjective and multiple as seen by participants in a study?”

The adoption of one ontological position over another, impacts the manner in which research is undertaken and the researcher’s epistemological stance. According to Grix (2002, 177) “If ontology is about what we may know, then epistemology is about how we come to know what we know.” Epistemology is concerned with the theory of knowledge and relates to three central questions that focus on the knowledge-gathering process. The questions according to Sandberg (2005, 48) are “First, how can individuals
achieve meaning and thereby knowledge about the reality in which they live? Second, how is this knowledge constituted? Third, under what conditions can the knowledge achieved be claimed as true?” There are two broad epistemological philosophies: positivism and interpretivism which typically reflect the ontological positions of objectivism and subjectivism, respectively. Those who adopt a positivist philosophy emphasize that the nature of reality is based on empirical facts that exists apart from personal ideas or thoughts that are governed by laws of cause and effect, while patterns of social reality are stable and knowledge of them are additive (Neuman, 2009; Saunders et al., 2012). Alternatively, those who adopt an interpretivist-constructivist philosophy emphasize that the nature of reality is constructed, interpreted, and experienced by people in their interactions with each other and with wider social systems (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2009).

The methodological approach employed by researchers’ is typically underpinned by and reflect their ontological and epistemological assumptions since the researcher approaches scholarship with pre-existing belief systems. These “belief systems influence how research questions are asked and answered and takes a narrower approach by concentrating on one’s worldviews about issues within the philosophy of knowledge” (Morgan, 2007, 52). Methodology—the entire process of a study (Creswell, 2013) or design is concerned with the logic of scientific inquiry or reasoning which influences methods used. It is the science and study of methods and the assumptions about the ways in which knowledge is produced (Grix, 2002). Though methodology and method are often used interchangeably, the latter refers merely to the “techniques or procedures used to collate and analyse data” (Blaikie, 2000, 8). The method utilized by researchers
are constrained by and makes visible methodological and epistemic choices (Carter and Little, 2007).

In man’s quest to acquire new knowledge, one of two general approaches to reasoning is typically evident, namely inductive and deductive reasoning. According to Hyde (2000, 83) “Inductive reasoning is a theory building process, starting with observations of specific instances, and seeking to establish generalisations about the phenomenon. Deductive reasoning is a theory testing process which commences with an established theory or generalisation, and seeks to see if the theory applies to specific instances.” Research using deductive reasoning assumes a highly structured, rigid methodology consistent with the objectivism paradigm and positivism philosophy (Neuman, 2009; Saunders et al., 2012). On the other hand, research using inductive reasoning assumes a less rigid, less structured methodology consistent with the subjectivism paradigm and interpretivist philosophy (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Thomas, 2006) where the contexts or setting the event takes place in is of particular importance (Saunders et al., 2012).

There are two key schools of thought in social science research related to the data collection methods, namely—quantitative research and qualitative research—that have roots in 20th century philosophical thinking. Quantitative research methods is typically associated with positivism and is also otherwise referred to as the traditional, the experimental, or the empiricist method (Creswell, 2013). Specifically, the ontological position of quantitative methods is that there is only one truth, an objective reality that exists independent of human perception. While epistemologically, the investigator and investigated are independent identities (Creswell, 2013). It is
emphasized that quantitative enquiry “takes place as through a one way mirror” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994), the goal of which is to measure and analyze causal relationships between variables within a value-free framework (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

On the other hand, qualitative research methods are typically associated with interpretivism, also referred to as the constructivist or naturalistic philosophies (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The ontological position of qualitative methods is that multiple realities or truths exist and these realities are socially constructed and is constantly changing. While epistemologically, the investigator and that being researched are collaboratively linked so that findings are mutually created in context which in turn shapes the inquiry (Creswell, 2013; Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Within the interpretivist philosophy as adopted in this dissertation, “the human world is never a world in itself; it is always an experienced world… the ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying the interpretive research tradition reject the existence of an objective knowable reality beyond the human mind… knowledge is constituted through lived experience of reality (Sandberg, 2005, 43-44). There is “no mind-independent reality” (Smith, 1983, 10) and the researcher’s emphasis is typically on process and meaning. As in this dissertation the key emphasis was to investigate the “meaning” of service quality in context, cross-nationally.

One of the key strengths of employing a qualitative research method in this thesis lie in the deep level of understanding it provided of the “dynamics of social processes, change and social context, and in its ability to answer “‘how’ and ‘why’ questions in these domains” (Mason, 2006, 16). It was even more useful due to the cross-national, cross-cultural nature of the research which allowed the researcher to
explore the situational contours and contexts of social processes in Britain and T&T country contexts. In so doing, the researcher was able to make strategic and theoretically driven comparisons across the contrasting contexts to generate explanations (Mason, 2006). Qualitative research as a method it can be argued has the explanatory edge in a wider sense relative to the emphasis in quantitative research which lie in measurement, causation and prediction.

Another key strength in this study in utilizing a qualitative research method lay in its intimate concern for context and understanding the situatedness of social experience and processes. The cross-national focus of this dissertation and emphasis on identifying salient similarities and differences across country contexts not yet sufficiently explored is well-supported by the use of qualitative methods. It is only by understanding the relationship of the specifics of contexts to processes and practices can we then begin to develop the principles for cross-contextual explanation for the phenomena under consideration (Mason, 2006).

A key consideration in the early stages of the researcher’s dissertation was the potentiality of employing mixed methods for which it is argued there are many benefits. Some potential benefits can be the generation of new knowledge through a synthesis of the findings from employing different methods (Foss and Ellefsen, 2002); hearing different voices and bringing into play multiple constructions of the phenomena (Moran and Butler, 2001) and reflecting the complexity and multi-faceted ontology of a phenomenon (Coyle and Williams, 2000). Also, convergence in the context of quantitative and qualitative findings is often viewed as strengthening the conclusions of the research (Van de Vijver and Chasiotis, 2010). Furthermore, it is suggested that
method triangulation can reveal different dimensions of a phenomenon as well as lead to an enriched understanding of the multi-faceted, complex nature of the social world (Moran-Ellis et al., 2006).

The researcher’s original intention and research plan was to conduct a cross-paradigmatic and mixed method study which is often used in cross-national studies (Van de Vijver and Chasiotis, 2010). Nevertheless, while methodological pluralism has become increasing popular due to potential benefits this had to be tempered by the researchers’ consideration of pragmatic and epistemological implications of meshing different or mixed methods. In the case of this dissertation—time, cost, and scale factors, as well in part, the informed advice of the researcher’s PhD supervisor and annual review panel—were all determining factors that supported the eventual use of an inductive approach and a qualitative research tool or method—semi-structured interviews.

The inherent flexibility in qualitative methods relative to quantitative methods, fitted well with the exploratory nature of the study and its consideration of two complex phenomena in service quality and culture. Based on this researcher’s worldview, qualitative methods and interviewing as a data collection tool were most appropriate. The flexibility of interviews as an instrument of limited structure often facilitates the discovery of more novel information, the context of discovery being a notable key strength of qualitative methods (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Furthermore, in instances such as in this study, where the research topic is novel or work focused on cultural groups that were not well researched with respect to the phenomena
under study, unstructured instruments and researcher open-mindedness aided much information generation to facilitate model building (Van de Vijver and Chasiotis, 2010).
5.6. References


Appendix I  General Interview Protocol

INSTRUCTIONS

- Good morning (afternoon). My name is Sean Chung. Thank you for volunteering to participate in the study. (Briefly discuss position as PhD student and general interest in topic area).
- It is hoped that as a participant, you and fellow nationals would provide some rich insight into the phenomenon under examination.
- The purpose of this interview is to explore your feelings and opinions on service quality and its delivery in your home country. The focus is not on any specific service industry or business but based on your experiences of service as a consumer.
- There are no right or wrong or desirable or undesirable answers. I would like you to feel comfortable with saying what you really think and how you really feel.

TAPE RECORDER INSTRUCTIONS

- If it is okay with you, I will be tape-recording our conversation. The purpose of this is so that I can get all the details but at the same time be able to carry on an attentive conversation with you.
- I assure you that all your comments will remain confidential. I will be compiling a report/paper(s) for my dissertation which will contain participants’ comments without any reference to individuals by their real names.

PREAMBLE/CONSENT FORM INSTRUCTIONS

- Before we get started, please take a few minutes to read this Participant Information Sheet and kindly sign the consent form on completion. (Face-to-face interviewees to be handed Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form). (Online interviewees are sent Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form in advance of interview via email and asked to return signed consent form or email confirming consent prior to interview; all other procedures are similar to face-to-face interviews).
• Take your time to review the forms and should you have any questions feel free to ask. (Collect Ethics Consent Form, turn tape recorders on).

PROCEED WITH INTERVIEW

• (Begin by asking interviewee basic background data such as name, where they grew up etc. as a way of establishing rapport and trust).
• (Then proceed with specific questions on interview schedule).
• (Ensure interviewee is relaxed throughout the interview).

AT END OF INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

• Thank you very much for your participation it is sincerely appreciated.
• I hope that you you’ve enjoyed the interview and reaffirm that there were no expectations of what is considered right or wrong answers. The intention was simply to explore your opinions on the subject.

DEBRIEFING

• (Ensure interviewee has Participant Information Sheet and remind him/her of researcher’s personal contact information therein).
• Would it be okay to contact you should I need to clarify information, ask additional questions and/or solicit feedback on the findings? This would also include sending you a copy of the transcribed interview which would be an opportunity for you to reflect on your comments, ensure that it’s representative of your viewpoints and provide additional information should you wish to do so.

Appendix I
Appendix II  Participant Information Sheet and Ethics Consent Form

Understanding Service Quality Provision in Britain

Participant Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a research study to examine your feelings and opinions on service quality in your home country context; this research serves as partial fulfilment for the researcher’s PhD degree. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Who will conduct the research?

Mr Sean Chung, PhD candidate, Manchester Business School, The University of Manchester, Booth Street West, Manchester M15 6PB.

Title of the Research

Understanding Service Quality Provision in Britain

What is the aim of the research?

To get an understanding of your feelings and opinions on service quality provision in your home country.

Why have I been chosen?

As an informed participant born in one of the country contexts under study.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

You would be interviewed by the researcher, who would ask various questions to get a clear understanding of your viewpoints. The interview would be recorded and transcribed to aid analysis later on.

What happens to the data collected?

Data would be input into computer using data management software to aid insight and analysis.

How is confidentiality maintained?
Confidentially and anonymity will be maintained at all times. A pseudonym (false name) would be used in data input and analysis so candidates cannot be identified by any third party. After completion of research and successful completion of programme of study all recordings would be destroyed (deleted).

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to yourself.

Will I be paid for participating in the research?

Participation in the study is voluntary without financial compensation.

What is the duration of the research?

Duration of the interview would be approximately 30 – 40 minutes. Questions are open ended. There are no right and wrong responses.

Where will the research be conducted?

Interviews would be conducted at a location agreed upon by interviewees’ once it is quiet enough to allow recording.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?

It is possible findings of the research may be subsequently published; however, participant name and personal details together would not be disclosed under any circumstances. Pseudonyms would be used at all times if participant data is used to provide insight for readers.

Criminal Records Check (if applicable)

N/A

Contact for further information

Sean Chung cell contact: 0797 698 6395

What if something goes wrong?

If a participant wants to make a formal complaint about the conduct of the research they should contact the Head of the Research Office, Christie Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL.
Understanding Service Quality Provision in Britain

CONSENT FORM

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below

1. I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above project and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to any treatment/service

3.

4.

I agree to take part in the above project

Name of participant __________________________ Date __________ Signature __________

______________________________ __________________________ __________
Name of person taking consent Date Signature

Appendix II
Appendix III  Interview Schedule (Paper 1)

1. What do you think is unique/ different about Trinidad & Tobago culture?
2. What about T&T culture are you most proud of?
3. If you could change one thing about T&T culture, what would it be?
4. If a group of people just came to T&T from overseas, what advice would you give them in terms of settling down and dealing with service organizations?
5. If you could choose three aspects of T&T culture that you wish would never disappear, what would they be?
6. Do you think there are similarities and differences between T&T culture and that of other Caribbean countries? Have you experienced other Caribbean cultures?
7. What does good service mean to you?
8. What are the top 3 most important things for you when judging that the service you received was good?
9. What makes a service bad?
10. What bothers you the most when you receive bad service?
11. In general, how would you rate the level of service in T&T? Good, bad, fair?
12. Could you tell me about a time when you received good service? What about the experience made the service good?
13. Could you tell me about a time when you received bad service? What about the service was bad/poor?
14. Do you think other Trinbagonians react similarly to you in such situations?
15. Could you tell me a little more about the work ethic of people in Trinidad?
16. What do you think about the general attitude of the employees delivering service in Trinidad?
17. In T&T, do you think there are differences between public and private sector service quality? How and in what ways? Why?
18. How many countries have you been to? Have you lived or stayed for an extended period of time?
19. Based on your travel experiences, which country did you have the best service experiences? What about the service experiences made it the best?

20. Which country did you have the worst service experiences? Why?

21. In general, how would you rate service in T&T when compared to other countries? Better or worse? Why do you think this is the case?

22. Were you born in T&T? How long have you lived in T&T?

Appendix III
Appendix IV  Interview Schedule (Paper 2 & 3)

1. Were you born in Britain (T&T)? Are you currently living in Britain (T&T)?
2. Did you live or study in a foreign country? What about in the last 3 years?
3. Do you have a degree? What are your qualifications?
4. How old are you?
5. In what category would you classify yourself? As working class, middle class, upper class?
6. How would you describe yourself from an ancestral/ethnic or family background?
7. What religion are you?
8. What’s your occupation? Employment status?
9. Are you married or single? How many people live in your household?
10. Do you live in an urban or rural community?
11. What do you think is unique or different about British (T&T) culture?
12. What about British (T&T) culture makes you most proud?
13. If you could change one thing about British (T&T) culture, what would it be?
14. If a group of people just came to Britain (T&T) from overseas, what advice would you give them in terms of settling down and dealing with service organizations?
15. If you could choose three aspects of British (T&T) culture that you wish would never disappear, what would they be?
16. Do you think there are similarities and differences between British (T&T) culture and that of other neighbouring countries?
17. What does good service mean to you?
18. What are the top 3 most important things for you when judging that the service you received was good? Why?
19. What makes a service bad?
20. What bothers you the most when you receive bad service? Any pet peeves?
21. In general, how would you rate the level of service in Britain (T&T)? Good, bad, fair?
22. Could you tell me about a time when you received good service? What about the experience made the service good?

23. Could you tell me about a time when you received bad service? What about the service you received was bad/poor? What did you do? What was your reaction?

24. Do you do that every time you experience bad service?

25. Do you think other nationals react similarly to you in such situations?

26. Do they complain a lot or very little? Why or why not? How? Do people still revisit businesses they are unhappy with? Why?

27. What do you think about the general attitude of the employees delivering service in Britain (T&T)?

28. In Britain (T&T), do you think there are differences between public and private sector service quality? How and in what ways? Why?

29. How many countries have you been to? Have you lived or stayed for an extended period of time?

30. To what extent would you say you are regularly exposed to things foreign, such as do you watch foreign TV programs, interact with friends and relatives from other countries, or are in general interested in and exposed to information about other cultures?

31. Based on your travel experiences, which country did you have the best service experiences? What about the service experiences made it the best?

32. Do you think your travel experiences have influenced your attitudes and behaviours towards service in your home country? If yes, in what ways?

33. Do you adjust your attitudes/expectations when you travel?

34. Which country did you have the worst service experiences? Why?

35. In general, how would you rate service in Britain (T&T) when compared to other countries? Better or worse? Why do you think this is the case?

Appendix IV
Appendix V  Transcribed Sample Interview (Paper 1)

1: SC: What do you think is unique/ different about Trinidad & Tobago culture?
CC: When you enter Trinidad you feel warmth, there is a general warmth that you can feel, and it is not a formal society like here [Britain]. I think there is a sense of reception or welcome. Anybody who just come, even from the airport, going through the airport people are a little more casual and a lot more friendlier and approachable.

2: SC: What about T&T culture are you most proud of?
CC: I think at the root level, people, we are very multicultural, cosmopolitan and I think groups get on together. People get on together, you see people of different races hanging out together so I like that. There is a strong loyalty to an important event, like football or if there is any significant game being played in the country people, you actually feel and sense the oneness of the national at a time like that and everybody is experiencing it. You know everybody is experiencing it and not only that the display is very open, you may be waving to people you don’t even know, you will be popping horns, everybody will be carrying the flag, or their vehicles, very strong camaraderie you feel.

3: SC: If you could change one thing about T&T culture, what would it be?
CC: Right now the crime level, if I could change, just wave a wand …
SC: Would you consider crime part of our culture?
CC: Ah yes, cultural, if I could change one thing cultural, there are things to be changed I am sure, if I could change something about the culture that would be I think … more in Tobago than Trinidad but it is there also in Trinidad but I think it is stronger in Tobago, having gone through the airport in Tobago, there is a sort of more lackadaisicality, a more, too much of a relaxedness, especially in the area of service when you think in service where you would prefer things to be more prompt, I think especially in Tobago if I could change the mindsets of people but yet keep the casualness and so on within the society but when it comes to providing service, pull up your socks.
SC: But why would you separate your feelings about Tobago versus Trinidad?
CC: Because I found I experienced that stronger in Tobago in the airport in particular... particularly in the airport I thought it was a bit too lack, too lack than I find in Trinidad that could be in Trinidad but I would not say it is the dominant thing
SC: What do you mean by lackadasical attitude?
CC: … you receive in certain way, you know there is a promptness and professionalism you want about that service and I don’t find that I found that level of professionalism
SC: And why do you think that is the case?
CC: I think I sense in Tobago you could say and start to analyse why that could pervade beyond just social casualness in Tobago society/ Tobago is very laid back, shops close about 6pm, even in the city, there isn’t the- I will give you an example, if I am driving in Trinidad naturally my foot is on 140[mph], okay I am in Trinidad on the highway, I am struggling not go
past 140, I go to Tobago and without effort I am on the highway and I am on 80[mph] and I am okay with that [not speeding], maybe 100

SC: Are you suggesting Trinidadians are less lackadaisical than Tobagonians?

CC: I think in providing service people are a little more professional, if you want to use that word, little more prompt, I think I get a little more promptness, in direct service in Trinidad, not that you don’t have the occasional, otherwise -

4: SC: If a group of people just came to T&T from overseas, what advice would you give them?

CC: The crime thing I mentioned before, crime has been on an increase for the past decade. The ordinary man is friendly, Trinidadians are generally friendly, we are not a very formal society, and you could stop by their home and can expect a welcome in the average home. If they are of European decent I would let them know immediately if you are European with an accent people would expect that you are a tourist so you will get a sort of tourist attitude coming out towards you not that you don’t have people that look like that but the accent is especially…in certain type of services expect that you would have to pay higher prices, I am not talking about formal services… services that are rendered by single owner, sole proprietor or in the case of a taxi, a private taxi not a private company… I actually experience that…We were coming from the zoo and the taxi driver charges them an exorbitant amount which was ridiculous for me charging them… I argued with him… afterwards when I thought of it a couple years later I realize this is what they (taxi driver) do, you are a tourist we not going to charge you $2-3..because $2-3 for a US person is like 50c is like nothing for them.

SC: Are you suggesting then depending on whom you when receiving service they treat you differently?

CC: There are some services where you pay a different price…if you go to Tobago and you going down Buccoo Reef or some of these exotic place places, there is a different fee but this is not hidden there is a different fee than there are for tourists, if you are non-Trinidadian you pay a different fee, that is the same thing in Jamaica.

SC: Under what conditions they will determine you are non-Trinidadian?

CC: Well one, it is very likely they will determine that by your accent, when you talk can tell…if you are non-Trinidadian or maybe non-West Indian there is a different fee that applies, it is not I don’t think it is robbery especially since it is transparent.

5: SC: If you could choose three aspects of T&T culture that you wish would never disappear, what would they be?

CC: The number one would be the non-formalness about us that make us friendly… not that I don’t like formalness but I like the friendless that creates the sense of warmth. I think we have the unique ability to overcome situations that are otherwise that in other cultures would create doom and gloom over the whole society and I think that is very evident in T&T and there are a number of situations to prove that where the whole country was under curfew and locked down, yet people could get the humour out of it could get a joke out of it, they hate it but yet it does not damper their spirits and I think that is really unique and would not want that to change at all. I think really we are a non-violent nation and you see that non-violence when you look at things like elections, you have a lot of racial [tension] going around the place, but listen no African going to kill an Indian or no Indian going to kill any African, two dominant groups and in all the talk… they might be opposite sides of the fence but after elections they are friends. There is a way I think we deal with conflict that shows we are non-violent, we would oppose something
sanctioned by the government and we might protest, but you would not hear somebody get run over or stampeded upon, you don’t hear about these kinds of violent acts as a nation. I think as a nation we are a non-violent society and I think that stands out greatly. Even so called developed countries where you would so there is far more order when you have little uprisings you have much violence taking place, you don’t find that in Trinidad.

6: SC: Do you think there are similarities and differences between T&T culture and that of other Caribbean countries?

CC: I have been to a few Caribbean nations, I think there is a Caribbean spirit that you would find, I think Barbados is very different from us, yes that common past we have, our common history similarities in our history make us comfortable with each other and feel a sense of oneness even though we know there is a distinction and we feel the difference….there is some rivalry maybe between us and Jamaicans yet there is the similarity that make us get along very easily that you would find differences…if I was going to America, Americans would not welcome me readily and treat me as same as a Jamaican would or Vincentian-

SC: Do you think there are major differences?

CC: There are certainly major differences, for example, Barbados is more formal in their service provision they carry that formality, to them I think they understand it as professionalism, I don’t view professionalism necessarily as formality, I think you can be very casual and yet be professional, so that is one big distinction between Barbados and Trinidad. Jamaicans in the city they can be a little more formal than us, I think they being nice to you being friendly to you doesn’t say I am your friend, I think Jamaicans are more formal than Trinidadians, yes, we [Trinidadians] are friendly but we can easily befriend you and mean it. I think Jamaicans can be friendly to you but do not think for one moment I am [they are] befriendin you.

7: SC: What does good service mean to you? What are the top 3 most important things for you when judging that the service you received was good?

CC: Good service to me represents quality, identifiable by quality like the quality of the service you provide. It involves the promptness by which the service is provided, giving me openness or transparency about the service what you tell me I am paying is really what I am paying what you tell me I am getting is really what I am getting, and time within which you advertise the service, to me that those things are met, so transparency being transparent and true, truthful.

CC: Quality, promptness, truthfulness.

SC: What do you mean by quality?

CC: All of those kind of form quality, I should say promptness, transparency and fair exchange.

8: SC: What makes a service bad?

CC: Well maybe the opposite of those, not prompt with your service it means you do not provide it in the expected time, you do not appear fair in terms of what you advertise and what the service ought to be is not what I actually receive, and even the attitude, yes I think that is a very important part of service, the good and the bad that the attitude with which the service is provided I think is also very important. So those are the three attitudes, promptness and the transparency or honesty.

9: SC: In general, how would you rate the level of service in T&T? Good, bad, fair?
CC: In terms of service providers, like telecom service providers, utility service providers, I think we have attained an international standard because if I can compare my life here in Britain and the experiences I have had I probably run into more negative things here. I think where I have experienced the most negativity in Trinidad is the cable company a few years ago, they would have these breakdowns and you were never compensated… and then because [the problems] were so prevalent they would stop answering their phones or you would be on the line for a very long term, but I think in terms of telecommunications I think there was a sort of readiness to help you because of the competition.

SC: What about all the industries food, retail, banking, restaurants?

CC: Restaurants … I don’t frequent formal restaurant in Trinidad; even though I do go I have never had a problem with formal restaurants. Fast foods which there are many, the branded chain ones and the private local ones, there is an expectation there is a culture that goes with it where it is more casual and it is more you pay now and get it now there isn’t this waiting service attached to it for the casual restaurant so the negativity I would have experienced there might have to be the quality of the food but that is it the culture in Trinidad is if you serving food and the quality is not good, nobody coming you would close down. The food even the casual restaurants in Trinidad ………………

SC: What do you think in terms of attitudes of people delivering in different services?

CC: I said the three qualities I would look for in service would be promptness, fair exchange and of course the attitudes of the providers. I think where we may be weak in is with the attitude. I think with promptness of service whether it is buying in a store just retail or whether it is- well the exception would be in the government service. I think if usually you going to wait that are where promptness would be lacking [in the government service]. But outside of the government service in the private sector I think you are dealt with promptly enough, you hardly have people complaining about wait time. Fair service, generally I would say you get what you pay for in Trinidad, if the quality is not good let me see where that is not good with what. With food I think usually the quality is good. Give me an example?

SC: Well, do you think the banks service is prompt?

CC: There is a particular bank in Trinidad and what I find is whatever branch you go to, you tell yourself you going to have a good wait. In terms of the bank service there are other services they have introduced to reduce wait time just like any other bank internationally you can do online banking but the wait time could be horrible especially in this particular bank.

SC: What about other private organizations like TSTT?

CC: Telecommunications, and so on? For instance, with electricity I find the service to be really good, I usual go to one of the main outlets in the city and in that particular one where there is normally long lines it is quickly handled because there are different lines that deal with different things… Water of all the outlets I never had a problem with waiting. Cable lines can sometimes be long but I don’t go those times, I don’t normally go end of the month when the bill is due, that line can often be long at the end of the month but they have other means of payment…internet and those things I haven’t had a problem with.

SC: So generally, you saying service quality in Trinidad is good?
CC... With TSTT I think you can encounter quite a long cue with the telecom. But then again a lot has to do with when you go. A lot of people choose to pay their bills at the end of the month and if you observe that then you can run into a long line

SC: Could you tell me about a time when you received good service? What about the experience made the service good?

CC: There are small food shops in my town where I go regularly and purchase food... one of them I had the number of one of the employees, often serve me and ask can I have your number know the employee and I asked for their number because usually I will be driving and when I want to get the food maybe I will have to call for her, I will there in 5 minutes and need x, y, z so have it ready. For me that is very convenient.

SC: Some sort of special treatment?

CC: Well not necessarily special treatment, but the fact that it was prompt, it considered my needs, it was not bending their rules but they were accommodating me.

SC: Do other customers have that convenience?

CC: It is not an advertised service. I needed prompt service because of the inconvenience of having to find somewhere to park. I like to call in advance and pre-order and they allowed me to do it. Perhaps I think it is the way we are as Trinidadians, that we will be open to doing something like this for somebody even if we don’t advertise it. If someone else requested it they would have just as well done it. She was not my friend, I think it is just being part of Trinidadian, I am sure she would have done it for others.

SC: Could you tell me about a time when you received bad service? What about the service was bad/poor?

CC: Oh my problem with the cable, I eventually came off the cable, but whenever my father had a problem with the cable he will call his Alsatian [dog]. I found the service you were getting from the cable company a few years ago, I know they made a few changes with technology and so on, but there was a time when there were frequent breakdowns, and I would be the one calling on his behalf. There is a time when you would get a response and they would answer their phones, then because it was so prevalent they would stop answering the phones. Initially they would compensate you but later on stopped.

SC: What did you do in the particular instance with the bad service?

CC: I came off [disconnected cable] totally. There was another instance of bad service, an internet company I was changing my provider and wanted mobile internet, Wi-Fi in your home. I was impressed with the amount they were charging especially if you paid by the year it was very much cheaper than any other company so I wanted to go with them. They came and set up the service and I would have paid for the service and there was no promptness. The time, in which they said they were going to set up the service for me, I would have access, it was way overdue and I was not hearing from them. I was getting very upset because I paid them already for the entire year and I was wondering what I can do about it, and my father told me about a programme on the radio and I should call in these guys and these guys would chase it up for me and I would not have to do anything. I was really glad so I called the radio station [talk show], consumer service. When I called I was live on air and the instant we hung up, the radio station called me back and said the company [cable] called them and apologised and I was able to get back my money in a flash.
SC: You mentioned you called the radio programme, why didn’t you call the provider?

CC: I can’t remember all the details but I did call the company, going to this radio programme would have been like a last resort. I called, there was a lot of back and forth, and I felt as though they were playing with me, eventually I mentioned it to my dad.

SC: You mentioned earlier you left the first cable company, is this typical? Did you switch or not?

CC: No, you can’t switch cable companies, at the time there was one general company in Trinidad. There were three but you realized that all were owned by the same owner. There is competition now.

SC: If there was more than one company, would you action have been different?

CC: Most certainly. With competition you know you have more power. If I am not satisfied with your service that is my general take on things, if I am not satisfied with you why am I sticking around?

SC: So, other competing options are important?

CC: Definitely, let’s say for example, telecommunications in Trinidad, we have two major rivals and you find, but Trinidadians as I say you have to understand the mentality of a Trinidadian. A Trinidadian wants the best all-around so most Trinidadians you find will belong to both companies; they have services from both companies because this one of this advantage and that one have that advantage. But it doesn’t say there is high competition between the two.

SC: You would generally complain every time you receive bad service?

CC: I would.

SC: Do you think other Trinidadians react similarly, do they complain like you do?

CC: I think people do, I am just about tempted to say it might have something to do with education but then another thought came to mind. There are a number of radio programmes to call in and you would find an old lady call in to complain about her water bill or electricity bill that it is not reasonable and she may not be an educated woman but she listen to the radio and the service is there so I think there is a lot of call back systems where service providers can take advantage of that. The first call might have been to the service provider but sometimes the red tape and bureaucracy that might be caught up with dealing with that complaint; you would want something more efficient than that and more fast tracks. These radio programmes because they expose these companies so openly you are likely to get a better response from going to these radio programmes where they exist than sometimes the company, waiting for the company.

SC: Have you observed the negative service experiences of others? What is there typical attitude or response in the situation?

CC: You can get different reactions from Trinidadians. You can get someone who is annoyed; say with a particular retailer they [customers] get annoyed on the spot, depending on the type of retailer he may not get anything for his noise. He might walk away angry but a month or two down the road he might come back right there. So, that is one possible typical reaction. Then there are Trinidadians who would call into one of these radio programmes, there are a number that are very popular, it is a forum that is popular around 7-8 years now. There are those [customers] who go through the proper channels, like me with the telecom, I called them and called until my matter was resolved and I would be very bold and insist you [company] have to
compensate me. It is also typical of some Trinidadians but only a tiny sector would do that. Remember I spoke about that non-violent thing; there is an attitude in Trinidadians where even if at the end of the day they don’t really get what they want, they just go back [to the same provider]. Part of it might be, and it is not always lack of options. Quite often it just a case of, lack of resilience about getting what I want, I think it is more that. Because you see it when we protest against, if government not increasing beyond 5% [public servant salary increase] and the Union saying no we not settling for that, and the government gives it [less] and then we go to work. Or we protest today and make a lot of noise and then we don’t get what we want tomorrow and we go to work. Or the price of something goes up and we complain and say how I am going to survive and live, and then go and buy 10 of the item. So we always contradict in that sense and I think part of it is that embedded a bit of too much casualness and ready to forget. There is a readiness to forget and move on. Forget, forgive, move on but I am not saying don’t forgive, I am saying don’t forget and be more resilient and so things would, so you would get what you rightly deserve.

SC: With respect to complaining would you say Trinbagonians complain more to the provider, family & friends, or third parties? Is there a preferred mode?

CC: Definitely, regardless of which forum they complain, it is guaranteed the person is going to complain in their personal life. Whether we choose the public forum or formal [company] forum, we are definitely going to make noise among our friends and family. There is a particular amount that just complains there and leaves it at that, and don’t take the public or formal forum that exists to complain.

SC: If they complain to the organization and it is not resolved what do you think they typically do?

CC: Depending on how much loyalty, not loyalty addiction they feel towards that particular business they may continue to patronise the business.

10: SC: In T&T, do you think there are differences between public and private sector service quality? How and in what ways? Why?

CC: I have to go more vicariously here, since I haven’t had to seek public service much because maybe I have links in the public sector, like my sister, if there were certain things I need to be done she would have dealt with it so I haven’t had to face the brunt of the long line or whatever. Let me say over the last 8 years or so the government has done a lot to change around or expedite service provision. For instance, something like getting a birth certificate, long ago it would take quite a long time, the government has now provided where you can get it on the spot, things like getting your passport…can get in the same day…there are certain changes that have been made recently. I would say historically what I have known from hearing is a long wait time

11: SC: How many countries have you been to? Have you lived or stayed for an extended period of time?

CC: 10 countries, not many for an extended period, only Britain.

12: SC: Based on your travel experiences, which country did you have the best service experiences? What about the service experiences made it the best?

13: SC: Which country did you have the worst service experiences? Why?
Trinidad. Like renting, there is a company in Manchester, and they are well-established they have a big name, but everybody knows when it comes to getting back your caution money it is a hell of a thing. A similar company in Trinidad with that sort of name and reputation is not likely to jeopardize their name by making it difficult for persons to get back their deposit. You would more likely find the small man who just has one extra house [in Trinidad] who doing that. In Trinidad, I rented a lot during university and soon as I had any problems with a landlord I moved immediately. I have rented quite often [T&T] and there was never one instance where I did not get back my money. There was one time where landlord lingered but after a few calls she eventually gave me back my money.

14: SC: In general, how would you rate service in T&T when compared to other countries? Better or worse? Why do you think this is the case?

CC: In Britain you have a better show, appearance of propriety and properness about service but when it hits the road it is no better. Because I have had problems with the bank several times [in Britain] where I have to make calls and have to insist I would take it to the manager. Whereas in Trinidad I would always insist on speaking with the manager when I am having problems.

SC: Would Trinidadians typically insist to see managers. Or would they deal with the front line staff? Why?

CC: I am not sure, maybe not; I think the average Trinidadian might be a little more intimidated.

CC: I think there is a general intimidation about going to a higher level, whether here in Britain or Trinidad, the average person feels a little more comfortable speaking with frontline employee.

15: SC: Were you born in T&T? How long have you lived in T&T?

CC: Yes, have been in Britain for 5 years [studying].
Appendix VI  Transcribed Sample Interview Britain (Paper 2 & 3)

1: SC: Where were you born? Do you consider yourself to be English or British?

SA: Hamel Smith, London, 14th January 1979. I am a European Brit. Ancestry from Scotland and in terms of the European side I grew up at a time when England and Britain was quite isolated from Europe. Then when I was 18 the borders toppled and you can now move freely and work, on the next day I was on a train on under the tunnel on the way to France and since then I feel like I am closer to my European brothers and sisters. And when I am abroad like Africa or Asia I feel closeness to Northern Europeans probably more so than Brits.

2: SC: What do you think is unique/ different about English (British) culture?

SA: We are staggeringly ignorant in many ways, I am not sure that is unique to Britain. There is a sort of arrogance about Britain and its history, a lack of acknowledgement of the horrific things that took place in colonial periods. Most people don’t have any appreciation for that history something which is not taught in schools. We learn about Nazi Germany, we don’t learn about the slave trade. We learn about 1066 and the battle of Hastings, we don’t learn about scramble for Africa. There is that aspect of our society. I think we have a good sense of humour as well, sort of an island mentality people stick together, when you see Brits abroad they tend to drink a lot and laugh a lot and stick together.

3: SC: What about English (British) culture are you most proud of?

SA: I wouldn’t say I am very proud of our culture. I like aspects of the British sense of humour, the way we use language, there is a bit of ingenuity in terms of the number of schools, for example, that Britain has come up with, I think that is to be commended. If I look at the history of Europe I identify more strongly with French and German culture, probably more than I do British, particularly with the philosophy and writings which come out. I think the British way of thinking, the British response to the enlightenment was largely dominated by trying to create an efficient and effective society, efficient in terms of the ability to exploit people, get them to work as hard as possible. And certainly I think there are certain edges of French and German society the limitations and problems with this have been more carefully thought about so I identify with those movements within those cultures, particularly philosophical movements and I feel influenced by that. In a sense then even though I am British I feel a connection with the continent.

4: SC: If you could change one thing about English (British) culture, what would it be?

SA: It is very difficult for me to think of English culture. I think a lot of the world is now effectively colonised by English culture. Whether that is through a warped Anglo-American and a sort Chinese kind of Englishness, I think from the heart of what England has done from the industrial revolution. If I could change one thing working through these ideas would be, to deemphasize a psoriasis in thinking which is trying to be competitive, trying to win all the time and put to the forefront education in a more critical vein really teach people how to live life and how to think. To get rid of that instrumentality that seems to be very dominant and a massive part of the influence that Britain has had around the world and forces discipline into its citizens. If we can challenge that and work on developing a more cooperative way of living between human beings within this country and beyond. I think the only way to do that is through education. So I would change the education of culture if I could change anything.
5: SC: If a group of people just came to England from overseas, what advice would you give them in terms of

Settling down in the country?

SA: It is the same where ever you go, getting involved in communities. I would not say that is specific to Britain, it is something I do when I go abroad. I mention I went to France when I was 18, the first thing I did was join a tennis club, a volleyball team so I met people through that. It depends where you are in Britain but so many of the places are very international and it would be helpful to find people from your own culture as well. It is always good to have that connection to home. For example when I was in Africa every so often I would want to spend some time with Europeans because even though I love the African people I have been with I just to spend time with my people.

Dealing with service organizations?

SA: Interesting question, I think it would depend on where the person comes from, I think that would have a massive impact. If I take for example a Ugandan coming to Britain, people I know well, they would have to get ready for a whole host of crazy bureaucratic, legalistic ways of thinking and everything being managed and cold and technocratic, as opposed to authoritarian. Get ready for everything to be organised and sterile and uniform.

SC: What do you mean by sterile?

SA: There is a tendency in this country and most of the developed world to try to get standards and to follow procedures. As a consequence of that people sort of fit into whatever role they are performing. Let’s say you go into a retail shop people are acting basically and they are acting to fairly well prescribed standards of how to behave and people just fall into that role so you get to know their character as an individual. Sometimes you get organization who says we allow our employees to be themselves and they are almost forced to be themselves and it still a form of acting. There is also a sense that you have to follow these procedures so there is no life or vivaciousness to the way we do things in terms of retailing or in life generally. If you compare that to the African market, it is really fun, you are haggling, you are talking to people, you are interacting, retailing is about life there, it is not really retailing it is connected to community. Whereas our way of do things is sterile, in the old days you would going into a shop and you knew the person behind the counter because they live just down the road from you, now it’s so depersonalised, people are just filling roles, as a customer you are just filling another role which is you are seen as the customer. You might be made to feel special but of course you are not special to the person who is serving you. There is no real or genuine relationship between you and the employee it is all instrumental getting back to what I was saying earlier, this country has instrumentalized everything. Not just the way in which we use machines in industry, but human relations are massively instrumentalized means to an end where there is no sense of knowing people or being interested or needing to know people. People miss this, they would like to probably have more meaningful relationships but it is cheaper to go to Tesco than it is to go to a shop which is owned by paddy or Mike, so paddy and Mike go out of business.

6: SC: If you could choose three aspects of English culture that you wish would never disappear, what would they be?

SA: I don’t really think we have freedom of speech of democracy, but I think we have a sham democracy but in so far as the way in which decisions they are so influenced by power, the media is one side of that, the people don’t really have a chance to voice their views, unless it is very narrow mainstream points of view. Nevertheless when you compare this country to other countries around the world, our democracy and ability to maintain a certain level of free speech
is better than many. All though I treat them to get I believe freedom of speech and democracy are important. I think universities, I feel they are under threat, they are dying, the university maybe in ruins. Within the academy there maintains academic freedom, so that people can advance or develop their thinking and say things which are not comfortable to status quo and those in power. That is vital because only by having that space can we tackle things like gender inequality, can we tackle things like race prejudices, can we deal with the problem of instrumentalism we discussed. I see academic freedom being corroded. I would like to see a revolution in our way approaching education. What we see is a whittling away of the sort of education we desperately need in this country for a more instrumental attitude towards education, it is all about getting the degree to get the job rather than learning because learning can help you become a better person. I think there is still some freedom to think in the academy but I hope we never lose that.

7: SC: Do you think there are similarities and differences between English culture and its British neighbours?

SA: They are very close culturally, I spent the last year in wales and I can hardly recognise the difference between an Englishman and a Welsh man, their attitudes are more or less the same. I think it is more important whether you come from a village or a town, rather than you come from England or Scotland. I think there is a little more sense of identity in Wales and in Scotland. I don’t think the English know who they are, whereas the Welsh and Scots are prouder, for example, their dancing in Scotland. What is English dancing? What is English food? I don’t think anyone can define it these days, certainly not fish and chips because of all the impact from other countries.

8: SC: What does good service mean to you?

SA: If a person is in a service job, they are there to do as the job says ”serving”, they are there to do what I need done. I am almost like their master in that situation but I would look at that as problematic. For example, when I go into a tea shop like I do here, when I want my tea pot filled up it is not for me to go behind the counter and fill up my pot of tea so when I put my hand up. I think more than anywhere else I know compared to a Starbucks or whatever, the people there was genuinely interesting, interesting nice people and they have the time to talk with you, you get to know them, its personal, I know their names. I think what maybe be recovered in their interactions with me is a sense of interactions between human beings which is lost in Starbucks or other large retailing organizations whereby you find the people are instruments, you are an instrument, you are a tool, you are a dollar sign, you are a pound sign, you may even be a worker. If you going into Tesco’s or Sainsbury’s you get an absolutely awful kind of experience whereby you are transformed into a worker so you can walk into Tesco and see someone being paid minimum wage to put something on a shelf and then you take it off the shelf and you got to carry it all the way, it is quite heavy, you can get a pain in your hand, and then you go ding ding ding, you are made to work, and it is meant to be oh its quick for you but really what they are doing is they are instrumentalising you, they are making you a worker. If you actually get your customers to work for you that are absolutely brilliant, we don’t need to employ people. What a brilliant instrument this person is, they are paying to work for me, it kind of the epitome of communities. You use to go see Mike the butch or Fred baker etc. and you had that sense of community, now you are working for Tesco.

a. What are the top 3 most important things for you when judging that the service you received was good?

SA: It doesn’t really feel like service in so far as, I feel like I am connecting with human beings, in a context whereby it just happens they are doing their job and I am able to treat them with respect as human beings in that context despite them having to do something for me, that is
I don’t know if I have a label for that. I think the de-instrumentalisation of service and reconnection with culture. I am left thinking about our earlier conversation, I struggled talking about English culture, what is English culture? It has become this instrumental relationship whereby, if I compare it to Africa, there is richness to human relations all around you. I think there is shallowness to the human relation and the culture here because it has become all instrumental and technocratic, means-to-end, hollow, masked, people are hiding behind masks the whole time, hiding behind rules which are masks, there clothes are further masks, the colour of the shirt indicating that they are working at these particular places it has nothing to do with who they are as individuals, it has to do with the corporate image. It has to do with recovering culture somehow.

9: SC: What makes a service bad?

   a. What bothers you the most when you receive bad service?

SA: I tend to be a bit sympathetic to the people working. I often think they are doing jobs I would not want to be doing and so if they are not very happy that’s fine they are able to express that because they are being genuine. I don’t think they should be forced to act just because they are earning money. I think really the worse thing, for example, you go to three, a shop, banks etc. and you want to ask a question, and it should not really be a problematic thing to find out from a human being, the people should really know about that if they are working day in and day in that job, and if they are new there should be someone they can refer you to so you can speak to another human being face to face. You have made the effort to go into the shop and you are told no please telephone someone and you end up speaking to someone in India who cannot understand, it does not really does not reassure you. It comes back to the superficialization and instrumentalization of the relationships because they are a cheaper commodity or human resource than someone standing in front of me and the person in front of me our relationship is cut off and restrained to certain rules and regulations and they cannot even answer simple question or process a bill, I have to go online and do it, I can’t even do it then and there with a human being, that does frustrate me mentally.

10: SC: In general, how would you rate the level of service in England? Good, bad, fair?

SA: If I was to think of it in terms of a Likert scale, I would not think I would say anything particularly useful in a sense. What does good mean? What does bad mean? In relation to what, is it efficient? In Britain it is much better in the sense of efficiency compared to Africa. But, for example, do I prefer service in a shop in Africa or Arndale? There is no question I much prefer the market in Africa. You get to eat at the market, people are around you and you get to speak to them, it is friendly, it is fun. Where I use to live in Africa, you knew the people, the employees, I became friends with them, and so in that sense Uganda is better.

SC: Is efficiency important to you or not? What are the things that are important to you? You mentioned genuine communication interaction earlier?

SA: No one likes standing in long lines so there is a sense in which there are positive aspects to the instrumentalization of service. Nevertheless, I think the instrumentalization has maybe raped... Western civilisation or the modern world is raping the world of something that make being human lovely by cutting them out from what we do on a daily basis. It’s like reading a script; you are literally talking to actors who are reading off a script, hiding behind a script, like they are invisible the actual person. Mike doesn’t exist anymore; Mike was killed in the 1930s.

SC: Could you tell me about a time when you received good service? What about the experience made the service good?
SA: I have already talked about the tea place which I like and go into a lot, it is also some really good tea, quite expensive but it is really good tea. So having a good quality product is obviously important, but it was really the human aspect which I really liked. If I think back to my time in Africa, I would very often go to a place on Lake Victoria, they have good fish, I knew the people (employees) they became good friends who ran the place. It is almost like I was going round to a friend’s house so it really wasn’t like service, a chore, it ended up they would get me the fish, it was like going round to a friend’s house the only difference was if I were have dinner for a friend I would not expect to pay for my dinner so I think that was particularly good, it allowed for that richness of human experience and cultural exchange because I was in a different culture, which I really enjoyed. I guess the same thing could happen here, but normally the people who own, I think this is a big problem, the people who actually own most places which are retail outlets in this country, this is a huge and important point, they don’t work with the people who are the customers, often they are shareholders of multinational companies who really don’t give a rat’s ass about the customers. They are only interested in what dividends they get. Or if you go to a slightly smaller organization they will probably have a manager who more or less take charge manage the business and they have more of a distance. Most of the best organizations create that kind of family or homely sort of environment because it maybe an extension of somebody’s home, it’s an extension of their family, maybe family members are working in it or friends are working together doing something and you actually see them and meet them so they generate or develop a type of atmosphere which is indicative of their characters, their personalities, it may be a bit chaotic and that is not a problem, it is not a script being followed precisely.

SC: a. Could you tell me about a time when you received bad service? What about the service was bad/poor?
   − What did you do? What was your reaction?
   − Do you do that every time you experience bad service?

SA: I don’t want to go into the details of the actual context but I was interacting with an employee and the employee was trying to help me and the employer came and started telling off the employee in front of me and it made me feel very uncomfortable because I basically felt the employer was bullying the employee, maybe the employee did something wrong but I don’t see why the employer had to literally shout, a young male it was, and humiliate him. What was I then meant to do as a customer? I thought to myself I could say something to the employer I don’t like you speaking to him like that, that’s rude, impolite and you are not treating him with respect, maybe you made a mistake, maybe there are other ways you can communicate with him, of course, I would then be stepping over an invisible line so I didn’t know what to do, I felt very uncomfortable, I didn’t say anything to the employer but certainly I regret that and afterwards I told the employee I am really sorry the bloke spoke to you like that. Because they put people who have to follow a script to become an instrumental tool for the firm in the front line, who have to follow the script or they get fired and while the people who actually write the scripts or determine how things are going on might be tucked away hidden in an office if they are there at all, sometimes I feel like these people do not even exist, decisions are made by any one person that sort of fallout from the managerial machine for want of a better metaphor.

I have got an interesting example of that, I was at a doctor’s surgery not 15 minutes from here a few years ago and in front of me was this really big black woman she was much bigger than I was and clearly pregnant, quite an imposing figure and she was also clearly in pain. I was looking at her and asked her if there was anything I can do and she said I needed to see a doctor, her face was contorted and uncomfortable and she got to the front of the cue and the woman at reception desk said what’s your address and she gave the address, and she had moved house, and the woman (employee) said I am sorry you are no longer under our remit, you need to go to
another doctor, and she was in pain. She (employee) could take that sort of decision, technically. Very often you have people acting: this person (employee) couldn’t act responsibly to take the decision. I think this person was wrong, but at the end of the day we managed to get a doctor for the person, but that would be an extreme version of what you see day to day.

They are tools, they are instruments, they are human resources, and they are not human beings. These people are de-humanised, there is no point to complaining to them, this is not good enough, I am not happy with this because there is nothing they can do about it, they are not being treated as human beings, they are being treated as parrots, cogs, as tools, as puppets…… ……thus there is no point humiliating these people by saying this is terrible, this is wrongs shouting at them and getting angry because there is nothing they can do. The rules are the rules, it has been set out this way and generally is has been set out this way to control the customer. The customer is controlled by this mechanism because you can’t do things differently because you have to follow the script and this is something I feel quite strongly about often as a customer you are tied into contracts, you are tied into different mechanisms which lock you and imprison you in your relationship with service industries. A good example of that is a gym or swimming pool the over just over there, when I just arrived here I joined there on a contract which I wanted to swim but found it too cold when I got out of the pool, I didn’t enjoy swimming there, so I wanted to cancel my contract and they would not let me, so I still had to pay down that contract even though I was not going. When you become not a human being with genuine problems and concerns, when you become dehumanised, you a treated just as a resource from which they can probably make money and your particular context (situation) are not taken into consideration that is the instrumentalized attitude surfacing again; we are human resources rather than human.

SC: Would you say this is pervasive in England?

SA: Absolutely. Show me an organization that isn’t run like that. I worked in a language school in Germany and we had people that could not afford to complete their contract and my boss would take them to court to get their money that they didn’t have. What an awful service experience that must have been. They came to learn English, and then they could not afford to continue because they have lost their job which must be awful in the first place and then they are taken to court. It is staggering. Don’t feel too smug about being Trini because it is going to become that way in Trinidad as well, the whole world is moving in that direction and that’s what we call progress. I mean not ironically.

SC: With that progress, where does that leave service quality standards in the future?

SA: The consumer is often acculturated to this insipid fakery, complicit in reproducing it and doesn’t care enough to realize that it is actually raping our culture.

SC: Is complicit not complaining, what role does the customer play in bringing this to the attention of firms?

SA: As with my example with the supermarket earlier, we are not being paid for our work – ding, ding, ding – at checkout, and I should stop going to Tesco’s until they start paying me the money I deserve. The workers of the world should unite against this, as Carl Marx’s put it. The customer is becoming the worker, and in a sense I feel that once you get caught into a contract that in a sense you are in fact working for the company whether it is bank you taking a loan, or swimming pool, you trying to get out of the contract you end up working for the swimming pool. I have to do another 2 hours of teaching to pay for my swimming pool, bit of exaggeration. Yes, we are complicit in reproducing a whole lot of power relations and not complaining and not resisting. You have hit on a very important point, customers do not have a collective identity in the same way that workers had in the 1980s in this country, where you had the working class, trade unions movement trying to resist the exploitation of capital. Unions have been largely
trampled on in this country in terms of the worker. I am made a subtle point arguably that we can see customers as workers; we certainly do not have union movements for customers. Customers have a tremendous amount of power because they are needed to make profit; they are not needed for any other reason. ... The customer has a lot of power but I don’t think complaint is the right word, I don’t think there is any point in any customer complaining and humiliating an employee who can’t do anything. If you can get collective action against organizations by consumers then really it would be worthwhile.

SC: Do you think other English people react similarly to you in such situations? Would you say consumers are complaining or non-complaining?

SA: My view is it is useless to complain if you not complaining to the right person. There are a lot of people who do complaining but they just make people feel bad about themselves and there is nothing the person can do. I don’t think complaining is the solution, I think that collective action is (needed). I do think that consumers can do a lot to change things but they are complicit in reproducing the power relations.

SA: I would complain in certain circumstances but I normally think it is useless in this country. And the reason for that is you can try to complain to someone with the power to do something but you are very unlikely to get to speak to that person

SC: Do you revisit businesses you are not happy with and experienced poor service? Do people still revisit businesses they are unhappy with? Why?

SA: For example, there are certain things I have to do, I have to buy food and where I live. When I go to Tesco I don’t go –ding, ding, ding - I am not taking someone’s job to save me 5 minutes, people do need jobs. If I find something wrong with an organization I try not to go back but the problem is for example, Tesco is awful but so is Sainsbury’s or retail Primark, one suspects the conditions of the people working that produces those products .......I don’t have evidence of this but if all I hear is true... I work with the depressing assumption that they all are probably as bad as each other and so I feel trapped, I don’t want to support this but I am complicit as you are and everyone is, you can’t not do this if you want to live in this culture, in this society....

SC: What do you think about the general attitude of the employees delivering service in England?

SA: Most of them are colonised minds, souls who are complicit in their own colonisation of their bodies and their minds. A simple e.g., one of my friends works for Apple and he had a training session with Apple and at the end of the training session, the person in front leading the training said IPad and the whole room went IPad, then IPhone etc. and the people went crazy into buying into this label. This happens particularly with the fashionable brands. So the extent to which people are cynical with the work they do, I don’t get angry with employees for that, I applaud people who say I am not have a very good day and I am not going to pretend and want to smile. That is fine by me.

11: SC: Do you think there are differences between public and private sector service quality here in England? How and in what ways? Why?

SA: No doubt there would be differences, but I think they are run on the same principles of efficiency and effectiveness over human considerations. I think the people attitudes are that the public sector service is bad and all I think they have been trying to do is get more efficient.
12: SC: How many countries have you been to? Have you lived or stayed in any of these countries for an extended period of time?

SA: No idea. Grew up in Britain up until 18 then after I finished school I moved to France. Then I travel around Africa for 6 months, and then I worked in Canada for a while. When I started university I started working for a Scottish NGO and through that summer vacations I travelled went to India, Philippines, 3rd year worked in Sweden, after that worked in Germany for 2 or 3 years. Worked in Rwanda and spent a lot of time in Uganda and Kenya. I also worked in Thailand.

13: SC: Based on your travel experiences, which country did you have the best service experiences? What about the service experiences made it the best?

14: SC: Which country did you have the worst service experiences? Why?

SA: The slowest service in the world is Africa. Authority works very different in Africa because people in lower position could be very servile whereas employees here are like willing slaves but they don’t realize it. People there (Africa) realize they are being subservient when they are in retail… In terms of services in Africa much slower much less efficient and I am afraid people are not treated well in jobs in Africa because of the authority issues they are not really being themselves either. Interesting experience, I was in Thailand, raised my hand and there were a bunch of guys there chest pushed out all tough, like cocks trying to show who is the toughest bunch of lads, called one of the lads walking towards me chest out and as he approached me he started to crouch forward back bent over and almost bowed at me and handed me a menu, and he went from being this tough lad play in one role into another role. The way authority works in that country people are unable to look at you as an equal and so I don’t like that. So I am not saying that Britain’s all bad and the solution is elsewhere. I am not sure there is anywhere better just different. I don’t go to Africa and enjoy Africa better because I get better quality service; I just like the culture better.

15: SC: In general, how would you rate service in England when compared to other countries? Better or worse? Why do you think this is the case?

a. What is most important to you looking at those differences?

SA: If you compare it to somewhere like Sweden, I think the polite way of saying it is that Britain is crap. In terms of efficiency and effectiveness, I would say the same thing in terms of Germany, Britain is staggeringly more expensive than Germany and things just don’t work as well. Sweden is really expensive but then if you think about the private public sector services, the public sector services is astonishingly good because there is so much money going in tax which is why it is expensive and so the quality of life is so much better than here.

SC: Do you think that has an impact on employees? For example you said employees follow a script here (Britain)

SA: The thing is in Sweden it is quite an interesting place to walk the city. You would have pockets of areas with immigrants. I had a joke with one of my friends there, of course you don’t work in a shop, and you are Swedish. There is a sense of institutionalised racism, I don’t mean that the people are racist, what I mean is you would get people from Iran, for example, working in shops so there is real inequality there. In terms of the quality of people live in Sweden, people working in shops would have a better quality of life than the average British person so that would everything. They are not going to be quite as worried whether or not they are going to pay the bill because they are going to get a decent amount of money to survive on whereas in this country you are not going to get enough hours to survive. But if you compare Britain to most
countries things do work fairly well, effectively and efficiently compared to developing countries.

If you look at it in terms of the broader questions from where you started, from the more historical point of view. In the past the nostalgic view is we had better or richer human relations in service with people in our communities but this is being corroded and so in the name of efficiency, and I will call that efficiency into questions and argue that in terms of efficiency Britain is a relatively strong country, but in terms of social relations which you can have with fellow human beings compared to other countries such as Africa, people are friendly and in that sense their culture is richer than ours, in terms of the strength of relations between people.

16: SC: How old are you?
SA: 34

17: SC: What level of education have you attained?
SA: Completing PhD

18: SC: How many years of work experience do you have?
SA: Worked mainly on a voluntary basis from 1998 onwards until 2005 and during that time I work for NGOs.

19: SC: Did you live or study in a foreign country? What about in the last 3 years?
SA: Spent a lot of time abroad since I turned 18. 6 months Bordeaux, 5 months Africa during my gap year, then 4 months working in Canada before starting university. During first summer vacation spent 4 months in India working on a development project and 2 months in Philippines end of 2nd year. 3rd year spent studying in Sweden then moved to Germany for 3 years..... 3 months in Uganda, 6 months in Rwanda before starting my MPhil in Britain.

20: SC: In what category would you classify yourself? As working class, middle class, upper class?
SA: Upper middle class

21: SC: Are you married single? How many people live in your household?
SA: Currently single and live with a flat mate.

22: SC: To what extent would you say you are regularly exposed to things foreign, such as do you watch foreign TV programs, interact with friends and relatives from other countries, or are in general interested in and exposed to information about other cultures?
SA: I watch a bit of French cinema, and German cinema. In terms of reading most of my reading is on continental philosophy and so the histories of French, France and Germany are particularly important so I am constantly reading foreign texts mainly in English. I read East African newspaper and also new vision online as well as British press. In my life as a postgraduate student I have spent a lot of time with foreigners and regularly speak with people in foreign countries.

23: SC: Do you think your travel experiences have influenced your attitudes and behaviours towards service in your home country, Britain? If yes, in what ways has it affected your attitude towards service here in Britain?
SA: Yes definitely. I think in terms of behaviour while I am in Britain there is a limited choice in what I can really consume, most of what you can consume is fairly mass produced in terms of retail, or either its tied in to global brands so the choices are limited and standardized... everyone is consuming on a day-t-to-day basis much the same thing. I don’t think that my
experiences abroad have affected my interests maybe in going to art galleries or theatre which I have not been doing for a while for financial reasons… I am not focused on consumerism like most people in this country; I am more focused on experience than I am in commodity. And I think that is mirrored in my comments which I made to you; I am more concerned with the experience of consuming as opposed to defining the quality of service on the product. To answer an earlier question the other countries that I have lived in, what I have appreciated from that in terms of that experience, the social and personal aspects of the interaction with people in the service industry is more important for me than I think for most people in this country.

24: SC: Do you adjust your attitudes/expectations when you travel?
SA: Of course yes. The best example would be in Rwanda where you cannot expect things to work in the same way they work here in Britain. Things don’t work, you have to be incredibly patient, and you have to almost suffer consumption there if you are trying to get things organized when working. .. if you working in the field and trying to get something like a USB stick was hard work so really needed to alter your attitudes how long it will take… no need to get upset by that. Whereas in Germany the trains are within one minute if when they should arrive and then I came back to Britain and I will get frustrated the first few days until I get used to it again, it has gotten better in recent years. So I think you just accept your environs whether home or abroad and try not to get upset by things that are not perfect.

25: SC: Would you then say your evaluation of the service depends on the context in which you are in?
SA: Context is important in terms of what you can expect and therefore your attitude towards what people are doing. For example, if I were to meet the challenges of purchasing things in Britain that I experienced in Rwanda I would fully justify that people were doing a really bad job in terms of the efficiency and effectiveness of the service whereas one can say the people who I purchased from in Rwanda I formed some kind of partnership with them as I was constantly going back and using the same products again and the service was more personal. So I would not say one was simply better than the other, they were different.

26: SC: You mentioned in the earlier interview that here in Britain there is a stronger focus on efficiency and effectiveness as opposed to human relations, could you elaborate further?
SA: Yes, I think human emotions become used and sometimes marked and other times motivated towards creating a more efficiency, effective or productive service. If you take Apple for example, people’s emotions are directed towards becoming efficient sellers of the product because people are forced to identify with the product through acculturation to the organisation identity and so in other circumstances people’s emotions about being frustrated etc. are expected to be guarded and hidden by the institutional role, for example, in a bank people might be pissed off but they can’t do anything because there is an abstract system to which you are scripted or have to conform. It’s all geared towards efficiency in the end to a greater extent than in so called developing countries.

27: SC: You mentioned only a narrow range of people's views are accepted in society, despite the general view that there is freedom of speech relative to other countries?
SA: Yes, that true. Racism is an interesting example of this. The mainstream view is that it is wrong or bad to be racist and that is often narrowly understood around attitudes towards people of different countries or skin colour or people who are Islamic etc. and so even though
you are free to talk about or say controversial things in this country whereas in other countries there may be some sort of punitive consequence, in essence, we kind of know what to say and what not to say. If you take from the popular media the case of John Terry the popular English footballer who was criticized for calling a fellow footballer, a black footballer, an f….ing black, he clearly should not have said that so he is being labelled a racist. And yet for me there is a sense in which British society, at least the society in which I grew up in was and to some extent still is racist. Everyone has the capacity to articulate or think racist things. If we can think such things even though normatively I know it is wrong then you know you are going to be lampooned by people who hold this mainstream perspective who are not able to sufficiently analyse the way they think to recognise that they hold certain opinions which they suppress and don’t often articulate. Many British people can say what John Terry said it is only because he is a public figure, but privately we are all capable of that. I think that has a broader ramification in so far that British people are not very aware of their history, and say for example the black issue that in very subtle ways are not necessarily saying that black people are less than white people but in subtle ways they are saying it anyway. For example recently there were terrorist attacks in Kenya and there are several examples of terrible things happening in America, so say I am not going to Kenya because it is too dangerous but they still think going to America is fine. Why is that? Nothing has really changed in Kenya, there is still danger there but the ways in which the other is looked at, as a non-European other. In a sense there is a freedom of speech but our ways of thinking are narrowed by perceived or conventional wisdom.

28: SC: What is your opinion about the British work ethic and the delivery of service here in Britain?

SA: I think a lot of the work to be done is emotional work, there is a woman called Hochschild who wrote about the managed heart and she talks about the emotional work in which air hostesses have to do constantly, wearing a smile, kind of like painting it onto them, there is a lot of impression management. There is a lot of emotional work that has to be done in this country in order to present a particular face for the organization that we represent. In other countries such as Uganda in service industries people have to act very subservient. I am not saying that such emotional work does not take place in other countries as well but I think people tend to fall into the role that they are expected to play and are largely unaware of the presentation of self. The work is largely about presenting a particular image to the consumer that might not actually be an expression of the human being in another context. So I think a large part of the work ethic goes into impression management.

29: SC: Quite a few interviewees mentioned that it is a sort of cultural factor that they are embarrassed to complain. Do you have any views on that?

SA: I think there is something peculiar to the British in so far as, for a foreigner it is often difficult potentially at least to know when we are complaining or being critical, in so far we say something in a way which seems polite, but we are saying what we mean which might be a form of complaint. So I think compared to other countries, like my impression of people from Trinidad, we are probably much less direct in our complaining. So being rude is not something British people are comfortable with, and if complaining means being rude and aggressive we might choose another way of doing that.

30: SC: A few people mentioned that we are not a society that negotiates or bargers. What are your views on this?
SA: Well, I actually think I do quite a lot of negotiation and bartering in this country, partly because I am used to doing it in other countries. There are many instances where you are working with people from other countries… I actually think I haggle and barter a lot but my attitudes to that has been influenced by being abroad and in certain circumstances people in this country would look at the market and see what prices there are and do the same. If you look at modern technology such as eBay and gum tree proper might negotiate in that forum where it is not that formalized where there is a fixed price.

31: SC: There is a sense from the interviews there an important value is fairness and equality in society. Do you think that influences service delivery or efforts to provide personal service, or special treatment for example?

SA: I am not sure that is really true. This comes back to discussion on freedom of speech that we don’t see how inequality whether that be racial etc. is very prevalent in our society because it is not politically correct to do so. There are many examples, people tend to accept if you have money you can buy private health insurance well that is ok, if you look at if ethnic minorities go into health service they are treated differently, for example, NHS, they may treat a foreign work differently than someone who is white. The ways in which we are prejudice against other people is not something we readily acknowledge and we are not meant to treat people differently depending on how wealthy they are or what their class background is or what ethnicity they are. But the worker and how he or she is looked at by the British person and the relationship of how people look at the consumer is effected in subtle ways by such things as class, we are a very class built society I think, such things as ethnicity and in the mainstream it is politically correct to say we don’t treat men and women differently, we don’t treat people depending on their race, but in subtle ways we do.

32: SC: What are your feelings on there is a sense of a busy culture where people hardly have time to sit and have a meal while at work or insufficient time even to complain?

SA: The liberal press which places emphasis on the individual, the more right wing liberal press will focus on the individual, will demonise people who need handouts without recognition for the fact that people are sometimes less proficient in the society through getting jobs, there are quite a bit of people who are disenfranchised and therefore don’t necessarily want to work and then there are some people who don’t have the opportunity to get interesting work etc. There is a sort of political discourse which demonises people who want free hand-outs but at the same time if we look at the history of work at the turn of the century, 20th C we are largely an industrial society where people bodies were managed to work really hard in factories and that then we sort of managed the techniques that govern human relations to motivate us through incentives and then in a kind of cultural way to identify with the brand. What a late post capitalist, post-industrial Britain is doing making people work hard by targeting peoples soul, spirit, bodies to make everything a means of production for capitalist interests. This is not discussed broadly but most people would acknowledge if they think about it. We are forced to be productive in those ways, where we are less productive than other countries is that we have moved from producing things in a manual work sense because industry has generally moved abroad, and production is much more service oriented now, we don’t really make anything.

Appendix VI
Appendix VII  Transcribed Sample Interview T&T (Paper 2 & 3)

1: SC: Were you born in Trinidad & Tobago? Are you currently living in Trinidad?
   RD: Yes, I was born in T&T and lived here for my entire life. Yes, I currently reside in T&T.

2: SC: Did you live or study in a foreign country? What about in the last 3 years?
   RD: No I have never lived or studied in a foreign country.

3: SC: Do you have a degree? What are your qualifications?
   RD: I have a first degree and currently pursuing my Masters. I work full-time but currently I just have to complete my written thesis to complete my Masters.

4: SC: How old are you?
   RD: 25

5: SC: In what category would you classify yourself? As working class, middle class, upper class?
   RD: I would definitely say Trinidadian middle class.

6: SC: How would you describe yourself from an ancestral/ethnic or family background?
   RD: I classify myself as mixed. I am mixed with East Indian and my father is a mixture of what they call French creole in Trinidad and black. My Mom is East Indian.

7: SC: What religion are you?
   RD: Roman Catholic

8: SC: What’s your occupation? Employment status?
   RD: Marketing Deployment Executive at XXXXX.

9: SC: Are you married or single? How many people live in your household?
   RD: I am single and just me and my Dad in the household. I have a half-brother but he lives with my mother.

10: SC: Do you live in an urban or rural community?
    RD: I would consider this area suburban as we are just outside of the main city area.

11: SC: What do you think is unique or different about Trinidad & Tobago culture?
    RD: I think it’s definitely the racial mix, the religious mix, especially when I compare it to places in the Caribbean. Certainly the level of development in Trinidad and the amount of businesses we have, Trinidad is like an economic hub of activity and culturally too, it is like a melting pot of a lot of different races here so it has a lot of history behind it.
12: SC: What about T&T culture makes you most proud?

RD: Trinidad some makes me feel like it is a little America because you know when you visit some places wealth is within a certain race or class but in Trinidad there is the ability for people to really establish themselves and move up within the classes… there is some much opportunities for young people in Trinidad that it make me feel, I prefer to live here than I would anywhere else in the Caribbean. I am proud of my culture and what we have done in terms of Carnival, while we have a lot of work to be done I am quite proud of that, it’s one of the first things I tell people and I boast about Angostura Rum and its share ownership in a lot of other rum distilleries in the region.

13: SC: If you could change one thing about T&T culture, what would it be?

RD: Definitely, what really annoys me about Trinidad is that it is a very lazy society, with 60% of our population being public servant or probably more, in Trinidad politics is for the masses and you find that a lot of people just get bye, they relaxed in were they are. You go to business places and it really is not very friendly the kind of service you get people just do their job and that’s it, it’s kind of difficult to deal with sometimes when people are not willing to help when you go to businesses, you have long lines, you have people with disgusting attitudes. Government agencies are inefficient, like those kind of things, I would definitely want to change that mind-set.

14: SC: If a group of people just came to T&T from overseas, what advice would you give them in terms of settling down and dealing with service organizations?

RD: I would probably give them a security advisory the first thing, tell them 2 or 3 places where you can set up business, the central business district Chaguanas is becoming more and more prevalent, port of Spain, and San Fernando. I would also tell them to be prepared for the slow and glacial pace for business to set up.

SC: What about people coming to live?

RD: I will give them a security advisory telling of the places they can and can’t go, I will them the best place to live and that real estate is very expensive but at the end of the day there are key places you can go to hang out Ariapita Avenue, you need to take part in the food, the beaches aren’t as fantastic as others in the region but trust you can spend $US50 and go to Tobago and you can still have a mini vacation there.

SC: What about dealing with service organizations?

RD: It is not going to be a walk in the park, you would find that some places people are going to be inefficient, and a bit of unkind and rude sometimes. But surprisingly there may be instances where people may not experience that because if they are expats people are able to recognise that they are foreign and they may have the tendency to be much kinder to them. I would also advise if they are buying things from street vendors that accents may in fact inflate prices.

SC: Do you think Trinbagonian go out of their way to treat foreigners better than their own people?

RD: Yes, I say this because I work in an organization with a lot of expats and sometimes you hear stories of how people are very friendly to them in lines, for example at HILO... I think once someone’s sees a well-dressed foreigner and they hear an accent, especially depending on the
hue of that person skin… we still have that slavery mentality and think well this person probably resides somewhere in the nice urban/suburban area. I think there is a lot of profiling in Trinidad so you will get a different kind of service depending on how you look, how you speak.

SC: This is profiling within our own population too?

RD: Yes

15: SC: If you could choose three aspects of T&T culture that you wish would never disappear, what would they be?

RD: I would not want there to be ever a situation where one class is trying to persecute another class, or a certain race trying to persecute another race, literally like genocide… I would be very fearful; if that were to happen. I think the shame our society carries for the underlying issues we have with race and religion, I wish that will always stay so we confine certain conversations about race etc. to our peers or within our households but it is never something that happens in the street.

SC: Are suggesting we are not fully integrated or not, could you clarify based on your earlier point?

RD: We are integrated but I am gauging based on what a friend of mine was explaining in terms of like, for example, in places like south Georgia in the USA there is still some places not yet integrated, so we are integrated in that theoretical sense but we cannot deny that we still have things like tribal politics, for example, like the Maha Saba we still elements of those things in society that people would prefer to stay within their own clan and they would have those conversations in their homes. I am certain about this because I have grown up with an East Indian grandmother and I cannot say it is only something I have heard in my home but I would have heard it among her friends when we visit their homes, I would hear in different little pockets things people would say.

16: SC: Do you think there are similarities and differences between T&T culture and that of other Caribbean countries?

RD: We definitely have certain foundational similarities like things historically that you can tell it is a Caribbean culture so there are elements of the food, dress, and art that is the same that you would just notice it is Caribbean. There are elements of religion, things that we practice and say, for example, the dialect you would find similarities between St Lucian creole and Haitian creole, or Trinidadian creole and Barbadian creole so there are similarities in the language, and in the structure of the society how certain races may have settled or the businesses they may have gotten themselves into. Those islands that have a Chinese population who came as indentured labourers you would find that may have Chinese shoppers that were there from 50 years ago. And they would also have a lot of Chinese nationals coming in, it would be used as a hub to come and set up business. We have similarities in politics the same issues with public goods, or things with education, we still have those similarities as Caribbean islands because we all gained independence around the same time with the exception of Haiti of course… issues with currency, importation, agriculture those kind of things.

SC: Differences?

RD: Hah, I was not aware for example that the majority of East Indian indentured labourers came to Trinidad so for example you would find that only a small bit of them in Barbados and thus you would not fine a mixture between them and the other races. For example, in Haiti there is still a level of slavery that exists whereas in Trinidad we may have a house help and you pay
that person NIS etc. you do not have that in Haiti, they still have segregation where black people
cannot go certain places or a person from a different social class cannot for example go into a
Hilo they have to stay outside, the guard would block them immediately. In Trinidad it does not
matter where you come from you can come from a board house in Caroni and you can walk into
West moorings Hilo it does not matter… There are stark differences of things you can and cannot
do in some countries, like in Guyana it is different from Trinidad in the sense that they are
developing but developing in Georgetown only and you can see elsewhere people appear to be
holding on to the traditional sense of living whereas in Trinidad everybody wants to emulate
American living, it is only those who can afford in Guyana…

17: SC: What does good service mean to you?

RD: I would have over the last couple years done some classes on customer service and I
would have done some myself. For me elements of good service fundamentally reside in the
person that is representing that organization and have a complete understanding of that
organization and its function and its objectives. So whilst they may not have all the answers they
are aware of the next person to refer you to. It is very straightforward that they understand the
reason for their business, when it comes to service they understand not that the customer is
always right but they understand the need of the customer that’s the first thing they try to get. So
in order to fulfill and satisfy that customer need they are very well aware of what that customer
would look for at the end of the day. Good service would also be a very well thought out plan of
how to provide a satisfactory experience for your customers and it would be from the layout,
their communications such as flyers, posters any sort of communication, to cleanliness of parking
lot, is it well paved, the surroundings are clean, it is everything that attracts you to the
organization, as well as accommodate you and make you feel valued during the service
experience.

18: SC: What are the top 3 most important things for you when judging that the service you
received was good? Why?

RD: Every time I use a service I don’t want to be stressed or have the need to explain what
my needs are when I am receiving a service. I have a tendency when I think of excellent service
it has always been people who have laid out things to me, they initiated the call to follow up,
they kept me informed about the progress of something, or I am at a restaurant and that person is
like let me know what you like they actually go through the menu with me and suggest what I
may like so it guides my choosing the services and products they offer. Polite people it is very,
very important, when I think about excellent experiences, the people were very knowledgeable,
polite, always kept their calm, they understood perhaps I was having a bad day and they never
reciprocated if I gave them any sort of bad vibe… And as well I think good service would be a
place that was well kept you can tell that the management was forward thinking when they
designed the place to ensure everything had its place and there was never a moment where there
was a bottleneck through the process and even if there was, they made the waiting wait process
very comfortable for me that I never really felt it.

19: SC: What makes a service bad? What bothers you the most when you receive bad service? Any
pet peeves?

RD: From the beginning if I go to an organization and someone tells me good evening and
its afternoon, goodnight and it evening those things bother me because I am bother by staff that is
not well trained. For me the experience starts going sour for me from when I enter and that place
and for example, I realize staff are carrying on their own conversations behind the counter, they
are telling you can you wait please instead of saying to me more politely. I really don’t like
attitude from salespeople whenever I go into a place, I don’t like to feel like I am being followed
or hounded for a sale. If I go to a restaurant, cleanliness, layout of the place is very important I
would prefer if there are clean surroundings, parking is a pet peeve of mine. For example, recently I went to an interview and there was no parking for people and it was actually a place that sells luxury cars, I found it strange do you expect someone purchasing luxury cars to come travelling. Those kinds of things really bother me, I don't like to wait, I don't like when people do not understand the process or where to direct me to, and even if they don't know they should never let me feel they don’t know that frustrates me. I don’t like when there are so many long lines and I go to pay a bill and there is one cashier or at grocery trying to check out my items and there is one cashier… it is a peeve of mind because it makes me feel that even though management have all the backend stuff organized, goods logged and lanes and condolas look good etc. but they aren’t paying attention to the process.

20: SC: In general, how would you rate the level of service in T&T? Good, bad, fair?

RD: I would rate Trinidad as bad.

SC: Could you tell me about a time when you received good service? What about the experience made the service good?

RD: In Trinidad? Every time I speak to someone at Scotiabank I always feel like I am in the right place I always tell them that, although they taking my money and charging me a lot of backend fees I happy about it… It’s simple things like if I call the credit card centre, very polite it’s the way they speak to you…Miss next, miss I see you just got a new credit card is everything fine with it. Did you know we actually have you for a pre-approved loan… Thank you for choosing Scotiabank can I assist you with anything else today… Even recently when I got a new credit card, the employee he was always prompt, he understood the times I would be available and would never make a call during working hours, he would always call me on my way to work or afterwards and those were times he would not have been in the office… he would always time the appointment where I never had to wait long, never encountered any situation with Scotia with people being impolite, they always try to appease the customer, at least me.

21: SC: Could you tell me about a time when you received bad service? What about the service you received was bad/poor? What did you do? What was your reaction?

RD: My most recent bad service is usually always in the hospitality industry, once you dealing with anything to do with food and beverage and lines it is the same thing... Last Sunday I was at Movie Town surprisingly and it’s the first time I had gone there, this girl had to be new, I purchase some items and a coffee for my mom. The coffee machine was a couple cashiers down at the end so after I paid, she looked at me “you going to have to go down there and collect it”. As soon as I heard that I was like improper English, I can’t stand this why is it that she is speaking to me as if she is at home. I questioned why I need to go down there and the employee said “that is just how it is” and said can you get it for me and the employee said “you have to go down there and pick it up”. I push through all the lines and went down and said to an employee, hi I came to collect a coffee that could not be brought to me, and all the cashiers rolled their eyes, I said where the coffee is and they all looked in the direction. They were like “look it dey”. So I picked it up and was like what the big deal to pick up two is sugars and give it to me… it is usually the same issue at places where I am ordering food. The last time I came back from work and went to KFC for a Zinger and the lady was taking forever and I said Madam I really need to go, could you just tell me how much for the Zinger you don’t even have to give me a receipt, and she said well you are going to have to wait because I am dealing with a customer right now… I think because of the level of education needed people who take these jobs you have to deal with these types of deficiencies and attitudes. People bring their problems to the work place but I just always find the same issue.
SC: You mentioned education; do you think people receive better service in sectors where employees are more educated?

RD: Bad behaviour in Trinidad transcends all the way from politicians down to the man in the street because Trinidad is a kind of lawless society. I would want to say education but I spent a considerable amount of time in a society like Haiti and because people there are so poor and they get jobs they are so grateful for it and understand the need to not offend guests etc. Even the different class structures people who cannot even read or write will treat you so differently. For example, my house keeper where I say staying in Haiti, perfect customer service although she had no formal training... she understood she was there as a servant to me and she had to figure out exactly what I needed and give that to me in a timely manner. Whereas in Trinidad, there is a certain air that goes with a Trinidadian when they are behind a counter, they are very frustrated, they have a tendency to probably think they are indispensable at that level in Trinidad, I don’t know what it is but they have a tendency, education wise someone who works at KFC has O’level passes and say that same person working in the public service, in the public service those people definitely think they are indispensable or there is a certain comfort that comes with that so they do not care about the level of service they give you because they would never be fired. In the other areas like hospitality I don’t know if it is these people are simply bombarded with too much work but there is a tendency to be no formal training in customer service that they have a tendency to let personal attitudes and feelings come out behind the counter.

22: SC: What is your typical reaction when you receive bad service, for example, the situation with the coffee?

RD: I have two reactions that I normally give to people. Sometimes I have a tendency to sweet talk people, so if I realise somebody is having a bad day I can either sweet talk them and get my way or if I am definitely not in the mood to deal with it I would reciprocate those feelings. So I told the woman immediately are you serious, you mean to say you are getting paid to do this and you would not bring me that coffee… I am usually very stern and if I really think it is out of hand I ask to speak to a manager immediately but in most instances there is a tendency for managers to be not so educated either so it really makes no sense. Sometimes I just have to accept it, other times I may have spilled the coffee and leave and don’t pay for it.

SC: Why do you say sometimes you just have to accept it?

RD: First of all in Movietowne because there is a concession stand there I did not have the option to purchase it from anywhere else or leave the movie to get my mom the coffee. In a seating like that I am forced to weigh my options whether or not I am willing to not pay for the coffee and have my mom dissatisfied and all of those things. Or in instances where I have options I simply choose not to purchase at the organization. I just would not do it.

23: SC: Do you think other Trinbagonians react similarly to you in such situations?

RD: Trinis complain but then they just, that’s it! They complain but they will purchase. We are a society of people who would not boycott X, Y, Z because their service is horrible. I feel in Trinidad I don’t know if it is people do not have the options so they are forced to seek the services or it is the typical Trinidadian is not aware of the fact that they are empowered as consumers to stop purchasing at an organization and if several people do it starts affecting business. For example, there is a store my mom and I patronize opposite the Tunapuna market and I went there recently to purchase something for her and I realize it was defective so I went back and gave it to the cashier and she said you can take anything else for the value. I said I don’t want anything for the value and request my money and she said that it’s the policy. I said Madame I know it is not you who made the policy but what you would do for me is give my number to your manager and tell her to call me and I made a threat to her, but when you speak to
the manager you may not be aware but if I go to the consumer rights board and they are aware of this this company could be closed down… within 5 minutes there were able to change that policy and I got back my money. I don’t think Trinis are aware of the rights they have to place pressures on services for managers who do not want to get their employees in line.

SC: Do you think as a consumer you have some responsibility for the level of service that is being delivered?

RD: It is everybody’s responsibility; we are a small society in Trinidad so we are aware who gives good service, who doesn’t give good service, so it is all of our responsibility to ensure we demand from service providers the type of service we want. Maybe I am a very picky consumer but from my exposure travelling and getting excellent experiences abroad and experiencing some good customer service at home here in Trinidad, I know we are capable of it so I have a tendency to demand proper service, to demand people do not break the law and the manager is informed that I am a well-informed consumer and I know my rights.

24: SC: What do you think about the general attitude of the employees delivering service in Trinidad?

RD: it is a function of not being paid very well; working long hours and all of those frustrations that comes with someone who has to take a job like that, it is something that is manifested in the experience they are able to give. So I will not expect someone working behind a counter in KFC to be well travelled or a waitress at Trotter, to have travelled and have excellent experiences, she is somebody who requires a job like this probably works several jobs like this. She is tired and has a family to look after and as a result of that those frustrations permeate her attitudes in the work place as well. You would find a lot of people in Trinidad especially at that level and it is something politicians feed on they definitely are struggling, If public servants are making 4-5000 a month and barely getting bye far less for a person working in a place like that. Plus we are not a tipping society so that you can be at the mercy of a job that could be frustrating for you and in addition there are no options to move up. There is no sort of recognition within this organization, Prestige Holdings etc. they do not have performance appraisals, careful planning so employees just look at this job that this is all it is. You do not get recognition, you do not get tips, it is lowly paid, it is long hours so those things contribute to the attitudes floor staff would have.

SC: At higher levels of service such as banks, insurance companies etc. what is the service quality like?

RD: Typically insurance agents are not the best people with because they are very, very persistent but I have to say my insurance agent I have fallen in love with this woman. For example, she would meet with me in the Trincity area because she knows I have not time to meet between Monday-Friday. I am pretty sure my agent has a lot of wealthy clients, she is well-dressed, very articulate, we have conversations about a lot of things, so her level of education is different and higher and it is the same for people in Scotiabank and they have a tendency beyond the level of the tellers, they have exposure to a lot of people who have money in Trinidad… so when you have that level of clients you understand the business value, the Net present value of that customer and their ability to invest even more and I think that is something that is stressed, I am pretty sure they have targets to hit. With all of that you understand the net present value of the customer, the need to keep them happy to keep them coming back to you for more and the impact their network can have in possibly tarnish your image or career image…

25: SC: In T&T, do you think there are differences between public and private sector service quality? How and in what ways? Why?
RD: Public sector in Trinidad is the reason why our country cannot move forward, the public sector is an indispensable work force just for job security to ensure people in Trinidad do not start rioting and looting... because they have a job to go to everyday but they are not expected to perform... they are just expected and in some instances they are not expected to show up... they get someone to sign in for them... in the public service you not going to get excellent service. You go to the ID card office people are very slow, the atmosphere alone the walls are not painted, they using technology from 2004, employees look very dejected they do not greet you with a smile, they seemed annoyed to be there that is the kind of thing you would get in public sector. There is going to be long lines, it is going to be quiet, boring and dull for you. Whereas in the private sector the environment there is much lighter you may even have a television to occupy you while you are waiting people have a tendency to be more accommodating, lot more friendly, simple things like a water cooler etc. is provided to ensure you are comfortable. It really is chalk and cheese when you dealing with public and private sector. But in the private sector you still have to consider whether his office places you going to, like places you have to long up for or if you are dealing with hospitality. At the hospitality level like at trotters and TGIF, people know how to behave in certain environments. You would never have someone bursting open a soft drink and drinking it in Hilo but you can get that in another Mom and Pop shop. So people know how to behave in a line in TGIF but you would have rowdiness in a line in KFC.

SC: You said the difference between public and private sector is chalk and cheese but earlier on you also mentioned that generally service quality is poor across service sectors?

RD: Yes, customer service in Trinidad and Tobago is bad and therefore the private sector is the lesser of two evils you have to deal with but it does not make it anymore excellent... public sector is dead it's the worse you probably will ever encounter and even in the private sector there is so much that can be done to make the system much more efficient because it is not great.

26: SC: How many countries have you been to? Have you lived or stayed for an extended period of time?

RD: I have travelled extensively in this hemisphere so everything from South America, Caribbean, and North America. I would consider my travel over the last two years as extensive. In the last three months I have been to three different places in the Caribbean and some of these places I visited more than once... Cayman, British Virgin Islands, the US Virgin Islands, Guyana, Suriname, Venezuela, couple of the states in the USA, southern Georgia and the nice Manhattan area. Barbados, Grenada.

27: SC: To what extent would you say you are regularly exposed to things foreign, such as do you watch foreign TV programs, interact with friends and relatives from other countries, or are in general interested in and exposed to information about other cultures?

RD: over the last two years I would consider my entire life as foreign so much that when I come back home I have a problem readjusting to our culture, readjusting to a lot of things the side of the road we drive on, the weather, the humidity, everyday it is difficult for me at work because it is not the same environment, it have people who speak languages I do not understand and have to do when things like images and governments in foreign governments. It is like I am in a little bubble and every now and then I step out and come home and have to readjust.

28: SC: Based on your travel experiences, which country did you have the best service experiences? What about the service experiences made it the best?

RD: Responded previously
29: SC: Do you think your travel experiences have influenced your attitudes and behaviours towards service in your home country? If yes, in what ways?

RD: Once I travel I come back on a high and I become frustrated with what I am dealing with in Trinidad and specifically because when I am abroad on business it is a complete different service I get because I am a foreigner in a business suit ordering MacDonald’s or whatever fast food, I am being profiled whereas if I was standing in that same suit in KFC airport it is very difficult for me. I become more demanding from the point of view that Trinidad is an educated society, “we have so many people getting university degrees,” we have an entrepreneurial spirit, Trinidadians are naturally hustlers we have found ways to be successful in other countries in the Caribbean so I know we have what it takes… and it just annoys me when I go to another country and get far better service than I get in Trinidad. For example, the best service I received by far this year is from a bartender in a restaurant in Las Vegas, he is the best waiter in the world and I say to myself there is nothing stopping someone in Trinidad from delivering that level of service because Trinbagonians can be very, very warm people, engaging and we have the ability to replicate that same service I get abroad and even make it better. Because the products we have at home are so much better, our KFC tastes better… our events are much better, picture that with excellent customer service or my God that is something we can package and sell to people!

SC: In a natural social setting, the warmth this is who we are as Trinis but it does not necessarily transcend into the workplace? Is that what you are saying?

RD: Yes, I am… I was just about to add that in the US while I am aware it is customer service and it is excellent, you can tell that people there are not very warm and it is something I have gotten from even my friends who live abroad. They comment that whenever they come to Trinidad there is a real warmth about the people, they want to reach out to you, they want to take you everywhere to have a beer, to have you relax and talk and laugh, that is the society that we are, we are a society we always want to relax, talk, laugh and have a good time. Even in social settings when you are amongst your peers you would throw your inhibitions to the wind and you would be a lot more relaxed in those settings. I think in Trinidad we always have a genuine concern, whether you want to call it macocious or not, we do, and it’s a place for example if you see a car accident you would still see people stopping to help, it is not superficial it’s a genuine concern in our culture for others and embracing other people. Regardless of whom they are and what social background etc.

30: SC: In general, how would you rate service in T&T when compared to other countries? Better or worse? Why do you think this is the case?

RD: I recently met someone who told me he has travelled to over 50 countries in the world and there is something about Trinidad that is so enchanting, and it’s the people, I don’t what it is about you all! He loves carnival, and somehow we are able to give people that excellent experience that they keep thinking they need to come back for more.