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Certification Statement

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotations marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, of writings of another.

Signed,

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Abstract

Not only nowadays but also in the past people were moving across countries and settling in different cultures. Given different reasons for migration, people entering a new cultural environment face the demanding process of acculturation. While multicultural societies have always existed since migration set in, migration has just most recently become again an important public topic. Subsequently, service providers have to adjust their marketing strategies. Plural societies lead to the identification of migrant customers as a distinct customer group. Tackling these ideas, the following pages analyze what role communication barriers in service encounters play for migrants' customer participation. And even further on what additional factors impact this relationship. Throughout a study in cooperation with the Austrian Employment Service, communication barriers have been identified as a major impact on migrants' customer participation. Additionally, the migrants' ability to identify themselves with Austria and cultural diversity as well as personally perceived cultural dissimilarity between home and host country culture affect the extent of their willingness and/or expertise to participate in the service process. Both perspectives, the customers' and the employees' results and impressions of the service encounter are considerably different. In the long run, the following thesis shall complement the existing service and acculturation literature in the marketing context and contribute to improved services for migrants and supports policymakers in their demanding tasks in this respect.

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List of Abbreviations

AMS	Arbeits Markt Service (Employment Service Austria)
BMEIA	Bundesministerium für Europa, Integration und Äußeres (Austrian Federal Ministry of European and International Affairs)
CB_Cust	Communication Barriers Customer
CB_Empl	Communication Barriers Employee
CP	Customer Participation
Exp_part	Employees' Expertise to Participate in Service
Exp_partC	Customers' Expertise to Participate in Service
FH	University of Applied Science (Fachhochschule)
ID_home	Identification with Home Country
ID_host	Identification with Host Country
PCD	Perceived Cultural Distance
Will_part	Employees' Willingness to Participate in Service
Will_partC	Customers' Willingness to Participate in Service

1. Introduction

Today, five years after the European migrant crisis in 2015, there is still a continuous flow of people moving from one country to another. According to the European Union in 2018 22.3 million non-EU citizens were living in the European Union (Eurostat). Are these numbers emerging from political or economic happenings, or do people migrate due to personal objectives? Different reasons drive people to leave their country of birth to start a new life somewhere else. From distinctive economic and political points of view, migration is a continuous event with great need of monitoring. With the constant arrival of new people in a country different challenges arise which have to be controlled to assure a pleasurable living together.

In Austria about a quarter of the population are people with migration background. Reflecting the Integration Report (2018) of the Austrian Ministry of Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, almost 16% of the people living in Austria have a foreign citizenship. From 2015 to 2019 Austria accounts almost 180.000 asylum applications (Fonds Soziales Wien, 2019). This is a considerable impact on the Austrian social system and subsequently on its economy. This figure is related to the considerable Middle East immigration of the last few years (BMEIA, 2018). In particular, these numbers of migrants gave reason to undermine the importance and public appreciation of cultural diversity (to which migration contributed), driven mainly by public economic concerns. In retrospect, these facts should let us reconsider the migrants' undisputed potential as respected consumer group for the market.

Considering the existence of plural society, cultural diversity and migrants (Berry, 1997) as a customer group, we face cross cultural service interactions, where customer and employee have different cultural backgrounds. This makes acculturation and cross-cultural communication two major topics in today's world economy.

Particularly the service sector is to be considered when it comes to customers with different cultural background entering market relationships. As previously mentioned, the continuously growing number of migrants implicate managerial actions in the service field with a focus on cross-cultural customers (e.g., Becker 2000; Craig & Douglas 2010). Given the fact that it is crucial for service quality to fulfil any and all requirements of the customer, it is noticeable that evidence shows, that within cross-cultural service these requirements differ significantly (Smith & Reynolds, 2002).

There is already an existing number of studies considering culture and its impact on service participation of customers. Obviously missing is a distinctive research on migrant customers and the identification of factors influencing cross-cultural service interactions, e.g., the existence of communication barriers and its influence on customers' participation in service processes.

Specific literature reveals, that to participate and take an active role in the service process communication is a key element, it is essential for consumer and service employee to interact effortlessly and that the way customer and employee communicate influences the service outcome (Holmqvist & Grönroos, 2012). But what happens when participants speak different languages? Communication theory underlines that for transporting a message from sender to receiver, the sender transmits the coded message (by language) and the receiver subsequently decodes the message to understand its meaning. Considering the process of effective two-way communication and language problems interfere with the exchange process, problems in communication are obvious. In this case, communication barriers in service are occurring, when employee and customer either share limited language knowledge or speak completely different languages (Ramlan et al., 2018). On these grounds, communication barriers are an existing obstruction in the field of intercultural service interaction which requires further studies.

In line with communication barriers, there are additional factors identified when analyzing migrants' customer participation in the service processes. The forerunning work in this area conducted by Prof. Dr. Sichtmann, Davvetas, Bleich and Romanyuk (2018) delivers already first findings supporting a relationship between acculturation and migrants' service participation. These previous findings already show that different factors within the acculturation process (e.g., cultural embeddedness, social integration, language adaption) influence the service outcome (Sichtmann, Davvetas, Bleich & Romanyuk, 2018). Reviewing the literature on service marketing it has already been underlined by various authors that customer participation influences customers co-production, service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (e.g., Auh, S., Bell, S. J., McLeod, C. S., & Shih, E. 2007; Bendapudi, N., & Leone, R. P. 2003). With these findings one may assume that customer participation is a noteworthy outcome variable for the success of services. However, none of the recent literature considers migrants as a potential customer group.

Within international marketing, we miss the fact that migrants can be treated as a distinct customer group for service marketing. However, migration is a continuously present topic, cross-cultural interactions are permanently happening on a daily basis, while the awareness of

the impact on command of language and the resulting difficulties from the lack of it, as well as the level of migrants' cultural identification have still not been identified.

Consequently, the presented thesis aims to close this gap in research and focuses on the identification of relevant factors, which influence migrants' customer participation in service interactions with a specific focus on communication barriers. The following research question shall be responded to:

Do communication barrier influence migrants' customer participation in service processes and do what further factors influence this process?

This empirical research contributes to different areas. However, the most important aim for all fields is to build awareness and identifying the importance and impact of communication barriers and cultural identification in service outcomes. From a political perspective, it is true that migration will stay a relevant topic and the Commission of the European Union declares that "long term steps" have been made to manage ongoing migration (European Commission, 2019). The European Union together with its Member States deliver important initiatives to safeguard the opportunity of migrants' complete integration in the European society. As stated in the Agenda of the European Union it is one key element of the new policy on legal migration to support effective integration with focus on plans to increase language skills. And by this initiative the European Union provides better access to services and increase chances for migrants in labor markets (European Commission). Assisted by this research, it will provide important findings to outline effective initiatives, e.g., the support and education for employees working with migrant customers in the service field. Following the employment service sector, these initiatives to increase the quality of support for migrant customers are also to be seen as further productive step in acculturation to the host society. For Austria, fostering the participation of migrants in the national labor market is, as explained in Austria's National Action Plan for Integration 2015, a dependent factor to increase the country's GDP (Integration Report, 2015).

From a managerial point of view, the study serves service areas where cross-cultural communication is on the agenda and where verbal communication is a crucial tool for the service outcome. The role of language is one factor of the customers' ability to participate in the service process (Lengnick-Hall, 2000). Reflecting on this idea of communication barriers, it is crucial in a managerial perspective to identify the factors influencing the relationship of communication issues and customer participation. Distinguishing the influencing factors,

employees can be trained to interact differently in the service process. If we find factors of identification with home or host country influencing the strength of communication barriers on customer participation, one can state that the higher the level of identification with the host country, the lower the impact of communication barriers is on the customers' participation. As this study is focused on unemployment service, the managerial improvements of the service process assist in delivering additional benefits to the migrants' acculturation, since work is part of sociocultural acculturation.

The following research contributes to contribute to the presently barley tapped field of migrants' customer participation in service. On top of that, it delivers valuable content in respect of cultural identification, communication barriers and customer participation. It contains reflections on the importance of language and on the construct of communication barriers as well as migration and the influence of cultural identification. The conducted research sheds a different light on the analysis of different factors in the field of acculturation and customer participation.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Customer Participation

Generally, one can observe in daily routines that marketing strategies change rapidly in today's fast-living economic world. The most crucial aim of marketing strategies is to comply with customers' needs and wants. Today there is a variety of possibilities to reach this aim and most certainly not limited to one exclusive possible way. Every company, producer or service provider implements its own individual approaches to get customers satisfied that provides in return beneficial product or service feedback for the provider and its way of distribution to the customer. What accounts for everyone in the business world and more specially in service marketing is the undisputed fact, that satisfied customers and a positive service outcome result primarily from customers' participation in the service process (e.g., Auh, Bell, McLeod & Shih, 2007; Bendapudi and Leone, 2003; Lengnick-Hall, 1996).

Service interactions are an active and integral part of our lives. Building a house, hiring a nanny, being served at the restaurant, buying groceries at supermarket – almost every product purchase comes with service. The rapid technology progress brought us so far that we can be even our own cashier at the supermarket. We actively take part in the service the supermarket provides to us. That is why marketing strategies go hand in hand with technological progress and new marketing strategies aim to involve customers directly and actively in the purchasing or service process to turn each customer into an “active co-creator” (Chan et al., 2010). Focusing directly on service marketing the direct involvement of customers in the process is crucial. As we face an interaction between the provider of the service and the customer, two perspectives are available, two sides interacting with each other. Both aiming at a positive and beneficial outcome of the service interaction.

By participating in the service process the customer creates important additional value for the service success, this economic value derives, according to Chan et al. (2010), from better service quality, customized service and increased control. When customers work together with the service provider, wishes can easily be expressed and choices made regarding the service encounter. This creates a customized service atmosphere and increases the chance to achieve the goals for the service provider as well as meeting the customer's intentions (Schneider and Bowen, 1995; Bendapudi and Leone, 2003; Auh 2010).

To enable customers to interact with the service provider and to build beneficial relationships, firms want their customers to actively participate in the service process (Auh, Bell, McLeod & Shih, 2007; Bendapudi and Leone, 2003; Lengnick-Hall, 1996). Service firms' long-term success is considered to depend on the organizations ability to make their customer

participate in the service (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2000). The concept of customer participation is defined as the crucial ability of the customer to involve him- or herself in the service process (Dong and Sivakumur, 2017). Additionally, it is also explained as a behavioral construct to measure the extent the customer contributes to the service processes by sharing information and providing involvement (Chan et al. 2010). The direct involvement of customers in the service process creates value which benefits in the satisfaction of the customer and the final service interaction is considered to be more pleasant in contrast when customers do not involve themselves in the process the service process, is not considered to be satisfactory (Bendapudi and Leone, 2003).

Thus, it is evident that for beneficial customer participation the customer needs to be able to participate in the process and the customers' ability to participate in the service process is given through his or her expertise to participate, which refers to the set of skills the participant has. Cross-cultural service encounters therefore face the challenge to overcome existing barriers to give their customers the possibility to participate in the service. One main barrier hindering the ability of the customer to participate and interact in the service is evolving through communication of the participants. The construct of communication barriers as a specific ability form is so far a research field within service participation which requires attention. This is indeed underlined in the relevant literature that communication between customer and employee is a very important part of the participation process (Kellogg, Youngdahl & Bowen, 1997). In the chapter *Communication and Language* this is to be further addressed.

By now customer participation has been already researched and provides great possibilities for improving the service marketing sector (e. g., Lengnick-Hall, 1996; Bettencourt, 1997; Auh, Bell, McLeod & Shih, 2007). Chan et al. (2010) summarizes the results in this field that customers' participation in the health care service process has effects on the level of care beneficial for the customer as well as for the employee as it is related to the fulfilment of their social needs and sentiment for their reputation in the organization (Chan et al., 2010). These facts conclude that the participation of the customer in the service process is a beneficial tool for both sides, the customer and the employee. Customer participation thus influences also the employee's behavior in the service process in sense of their productivity, performance and emotional response (Kelly, Donnelly, and Skinner, 1990). Customer behavior varies across cultures. The way of interaction in the service encounter is clearly influenced by different cultural factors (Holmqvist, 2011).

2.1.1 Customer Participation and Culture

Within multicultural societies and global business, service encounters happen at international levels as well. Service interaction should be identified as inter-cultural if customer and employee do not belong to the same culture. In particular, one can speak of an inter-cultural service encounter if a customer consumes a non-domestic service (service from another culture as the one of the consumers) (Stauss and Mang, 1999). The interaction between customer and employee in intercultural service situations play an important role as culturally bound expectations and perceptions of the participants are distinct – a multicultural perspective (Youngdahl, Kellog, Nie, Bown, 2003).

At this point the literature about customer participation and culture discusses the fact that service interactions cannot be produced without the participation of the customer (Youngdahl; Kellog; Nie; Bown; 2003). Reflecting that the quality of the output is once again depending on the participation of the customer and summarizing the findings with culture and customer participation we know that the quality of the process further identifies the success of the service. (Auh, Bell, McLeod & Shih, 2007; Bendapudi and Leone, 2003; Lengnick-Hall, 1996; Stauss and Mang, 1999).

Within this work the importance of culture is to be manifested. As the father of cultural studies Hofstede (2001) identifies culture on different levels. He analyses culture and behavior of society through different cultural patterns. He emphasizes the importance to understand culture, one ought to know that each individual is influenced by different factors such as religion, country and family (Youndahl, Kellog, Nie, Bown, 2003). Analyzing service encounters with participants with different cultural backgrounds one can assume that various factors influence the ability of the customer to participate in the service. Hofstede introduced the “onion diagram” (2001) which describes a culture at different levels. The first layer of the onion on the outside is *Symbols*, this can mean cultural symbols such as language, objects, artefacts, monuments, flags or traditional clothing. The next layer *Heroes* include people which are popular in the given culture such as public figures, politicians or athletes. With the next layer *Rituals* are already close to the core of the diagram, here we find here habits within the culture like greeting people, holidays or simple gestures typical for the culture. The last layer *Values* is a cultural characteristic that is transmitted through the individuals. It is an environment where we grow up. Shortly, the behavior in certain situations (Hofstede, 2001).

Culture is a very broad and complex field. Having in mind that culture is something people belong to with different values, beliefs, habits, languages and religious interaction across

cultures, the definition of culture is difficult. The authors Youngdahl, Kellog, Nie and Bown (2003) explain it very simple: “It cannot be assumed that what holds true in one culture will apply to another” (2003:110). Thus, it is of great interest, following the research of international service encounters, to analyze the different factors influencing the customer participation.

2.1.2 Language

One particular factor referring to the cultural background of people is language. A tool that is used for communication in everyday interactions. As already been mentioned at the beginning of the paper, communication is an essential key element for the success of a service encounter (Holmqvist and Grönroos, 2012). It provides the customer and the employee the possibility to interact with each other.

A service encounter without the communication of service employee and customer seems impossible. In everyday service encounters whether they are intracultural or cross-cultural, the aspect of communication between one and another is essential to come to a satisfying output for both parties. This fact is relevant for non-verbal as well as verbal communication between customer and service employee. Reflecting on the process of communication in service encounters between individuals with different cultural background brings up different challenges that should be overcome to achieve a beneficial result.

“Good communication is a crucial part of the service encounter, and it is the interaction between the company and the consumer that determine how consumers perceive service quality.”
(Holmqvist, Vaerenbergh, 2013:1278)

Communication is an essential key element for the success of a service process (Holmqvist and Grönroos, 2012). Nevertheless, it is crucial for a successful service outcome that the interaction is effortless, and the customer has to have the possibility to participate and take an active role in the service process (Auh, Bell, McLeod & Shih, 2007; Bendapudi and Leone, 2003; Lengnick-Hall, 1996). Considering the situation of intercultural interactions, barriers appear if customer and employee differ with their cultural background. The fact that the interacting parties have different knowledge in language leads to the assumption that participants do not understand each other.

Apart from misunderstanding the counterpart there can be a second scenario observed in cross-cultural service encounters. The first problem is that participants, customer and employee do not understand each other because they have different knowledge of language. Besides that,

the second scenario could be that participants have little language knowledge in common. In these particular cases the customer will not be served in his native language. Research evidence shows that there is an impact on customers service behavior whether they are attended in their native language or not (Holmqvist & Vaerenbergh, 2013).

The evidence on the importance of language in service marketing is indisputable. Language is the tool for communication that drives the outcome of every service interaction. In case of cross-cultural service encounters the influence of language differs between cultures and cultural factors of communication are additionally important to be identified when working among different cultures, e.g., the languages' emotional factor. Using language in service marketing is considered to encompass "emotional connotations" (Holmqvist, 2011:180).

"It would thus seem that bilingual consumers show an emotional preference for use of their first language" (Holmqvist, 2011:181). According to this preference found in customer behavior in service the service interaction held not in the first language is stated to have a negative influence on the service. (Holmqvist & Vaerenbergh, 2013)

2.1.3 Two-Way Communication

In communication theory the model of effective two-way communication (Ramlan) provides an insight on what is happening in this situation and where the barriers hinder the communication process. It has been broadly explained in the literature of communication theory that for transporting a message from the sender to the receiver, the sender has to encode his or her message (Ramlan et al., 2017). In this particular case we assume he or she encodes the message in a language as we speak of verbal communication processes. Transmitting the encoded message to the receiver, he or she has to decode the message with his or her personal set of skills to understand the meaning of the message. Simply encoding and decoding would not be a problem should both participants use the same coding scheme. But facing intercultural service encounters we have participants with different knowledge in language. Language barriers interfere in the communication process as customer and employee either share limited language knowledge or speak completely different languages (Ramlan et al., 2017).

Table 1: Relevant Studies on Communication and Language Barriers in Service Marketing

Author	Title	Abstract	Findings	Sector	Country
Perkins, 1999	Overcoming Language Barriers to health care	The need of translation service to health care	Awareness of linguistically accessible health care to policy maker and organizations and service providers	Health care	USA
Timmis, 2002	The Impact of Language Barriers on Health Care of Latinos	Examining language barrier in health care for Latino population	Decreased access to care and decreased quality of care	Health care	USA
Jacobs, Shepard, Suaya & Stone; 2004	Overcoming Language Barriers in Health	Impact of interpreter service on the cost and utilization of health care service	Patient with interpreter service received more preventive service	Health care	USA
Williams, Hampton, 2005	Barriers to Health Service	Determine the barriers to health care as perceived by the Marshallese community using a participatory approach by the Marshallese community and community health professionals.	Impacting factors: frustration for clients/customers, language mayor barrier for communication Health care conditions are known to exacerbate due to communication barriers	Health care	USA
Bischoff, Denhaerynck, 2010	What do Language Barriers Cost?	Language barriers impacting quality and costs of health care service	Health care costs are higher where language barriers exist	Health care	CH
Kim, Matilla, 2011	The Impact of Language barriers & Cultural Differences in Restaurants	Koreans in the USA ESL (English as a second language customers) Findings suggest that the language barrier generate negative emotional and cognitive responses	Language barriers associated with stress Customers blame themselves for service failure	Tourism	USA
Pöchhacker, 2010	Language Barriers in Vienna Hospitals	Non-German-speaking patients in Viennese hospital interpretation service to improve communication	Interpretation service as best option to overcome communication barriers in health care.	Health care	AUT

First important findings including intercultural service encounters (migrants as customers) are, as mentioned previously, published in the health care sector. It is stated there that differences in language influence the service outcome. Predominantly these findings address directly migrant health care customers in the United States (e.g., language barriers in health care; Timmins, 2002; Jacobs, Shepard & Suaya, 2004; Schenker, Wang, & Selig, 2007). These first findings show that existing language barriers in service encounters influence the

customers' ability to interact in the service. In the table illustrated above seven studies were listed that researched the field of communication barriers in services. All of them were omnipresent during the literature research for the present work.

In summary most of them were studies conducted in the field of health care. In this particular sector the findings are very identical. All though there is a limited number of research done in Europe two studies from Switzerland and Austria also indicate that language is the mayor barrier for communication in the particular sector of health care service (e.g., *language barriers in health care*; Perkins 1999; Timmis 2002; Jacobs, Shepard & Suaya, 2004; Pöchhacker 2010). It was determined that the chances for the appropriate treatment were better when there were no language barriers identified in the service interaction (Timmins, 2002; Jacobs, Shepard & Suaya, 2004). Resulting from this determination is that consequentially health conditions in general tend to exacerbate due to communication barriers (Williams & Hampton, 2005). Facing comprehension problem is also resulting in stress and the feeling of frustration for customer, and due to these negative sentiments customer tend to blame themselves for the service failure (*tourism*; Kim, Matilla, 2011).

For all the studies mentioned in the above illustrated table on communication barriers in service encounters, the most significant impacts were found in the access to care, the quality of care and the costs of care. Whereat the latter factor results in the fact that translation and interpretation service is needed to compensate the communication barriers. But the need of translations and interpreters is also stated to be the best tool to overcome communication barriers in health care (Pöchhacker, 2010). At this point it can be stated that what is crucial for the health care sector is also widely applicable for many other sectors where service encounters on intercultural level are happening, e.g., the service sector as presented in this particular paper. It is worthwhile to mention that these barriers are considered to arise from the process individuals undergo when they enter into a new cultural environment. The already comprehensively studied process of acculturation provides the source for communication barriers with migrant customers.

2.1.4 Antecedents of Customer Participation

Customer participation is almost a boundless expression. It is obviously difficult to catch the core value for the customers participation. It is feasible to measure or analyze a specific outcome and reflect on the degree of the participation the customer had in this process. Alternatively to measure the participation is with two antecedents of the construct. Specific literature shows that willingness and expertise to participate in a service process is often

assessed by using the antecedents for customers participation (e.g., Elsharnouby & Mahrous, 2015; Opata, Xiao, Nusenu, Tetteh & Opata, 2019). For the empirical part of this research, customers' willingness and customers' expertise to participate in the service are used in the survey to anticipate customers participation in the service process.

As listed in the table below there are differences when measuring the antecedents for customer participation. For the research this method assists in achieving a more detailed result when analyzing the impact of variables.

Table 2: Constructs for Willingness and Expertise to Participate

Willingness to participate (Will_Part)	Employee	• The customer was willing to cooperate (EI1A1) • The customer was willing to share all information about his or her qualifications, past employments and so on (EI1A2) • The customer was willing to answer all questioned asked (EI1A3) • The customer was willing to help with everything he or she could provide from his or her part (EI1A4)
Expertise to participate (Exp_Part)	Employee	• I think the customer has a good knowledge in terms of unemployment support (EI1B1) • I think the customer has experience with the consultancy service of the AMS (EI1B2) • In general, the customer understands the services of the AMS (EI1B3) • In general, the customer understands all aspects of the services of the AMS and its employees (EI1B4) • The customer has good knowledge about how unemployment support is working in Austria (EI1C1) • The customer knows what is expected from him if he consulted the support of the AMS in Austria (EI1C2) • The customer knows the guidelines and principles of the AMS (EI1C3)
Willingness to participate (Will_partC)	Customer	• I was willing to cooperate with the AMS employee (CI1A1) • I was willing to share all the necessary with the AMS employee (CI1A2) • I was willing to provide answers to all questions asked (CI1A3) • I was willing to help the AMS employee in whatever he or she need from my side (CI1A4)
Expertise to participate (Exp_partC)	Customer	• I think I possess a good knowledge of issues related to unemployment support (CI1B1) • I think I am quite experienced in consultations with people from the AMS (CI1B2) • In general, I understand the services provided by unemployment support services like AMS (CI1B3) • In general, I understand almost all aspects of the service provided by the AMS and its employees (CI1B4) • I am well informed about how unemployment support services in in Austria work (CI1C1) • I know what is expected of me if I go to an unemployment support agency like AMS in Austria (CI1C2) • I know all the rules and principles that have to be considered when going to an unemployment support agency like AMS in Austria (CI1C3)

2.2 Acculturation

Acculturation processes are common, and it is noticeable that these processes have become an interesting portion of each country's legacy and still leave plenty of room for research and investigation. Literature about acculturation is therefore found in the field of anthropology and lies some years back, but the definitions are still widely used for today's research. For the following task the concept of acculturation plays a significant role in identifying the concept of communication barriers and other factors which influence the migrants' participation in a service process. Reflecting the relevant literature, it has been brought to one's attention that the spectrum of ideas and definitions is enormous (Redfield et al., 1936; Graves, 1967; Berry, 1997; Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga & Szapocznik, 2010).

Acculturation is defined by the process an individual or a group undergoes by entering into a new cultural context (Berry, 1997). A more detailed definition was made by Redfield, Linton and Herskovits suggestion that the phenomena of acculturation "result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups" (Redfield et al., 1936:149). Immigration and cross-cultural communication are two important topics in today's world economy. People are leaving their home countries and start their life in other parts of the world, resulting in cultural diversity and plural societies (Berry, 1997).

The acculturation process, therefore, is an interactive and continuous process that evolves in and through the communication of an immigrant with the new sociocultural environment. The acquired communication competence, in turn, reflects the degree of that immigrant's acculturation (Young, 1978). Following the idea of multicultural societies, the change in culture is faced by both parts, the immigrants and the host country society, whereby Berry (1997) manifests that changes of the cultural factor of individuals and groups are bigger for those entering into a new culture.

This power distribution of the acculturation process leads to the concept of dominant and non-dominant cultures identified in the process of acculturation. Declared by Berry (1997) the dominant culture refers to the group of cultures where the host culture defines the way to acculturate, whereas migrating to non-dominant cultures leaves the opportunities how to adapt to the new culture to the individuals. To explain the existence of plural societies and the reasons of acculturation Berry delivers three factors impacting the outcome of the process: *voluntariness*, *mobility*, and *performance* (1997: 8). First, the factor of voluntariness characterizes the extent of free choice of the individual or group to migrate to a new place. The second term, mobility identifies the fact that the new culture was either experienced in terms of

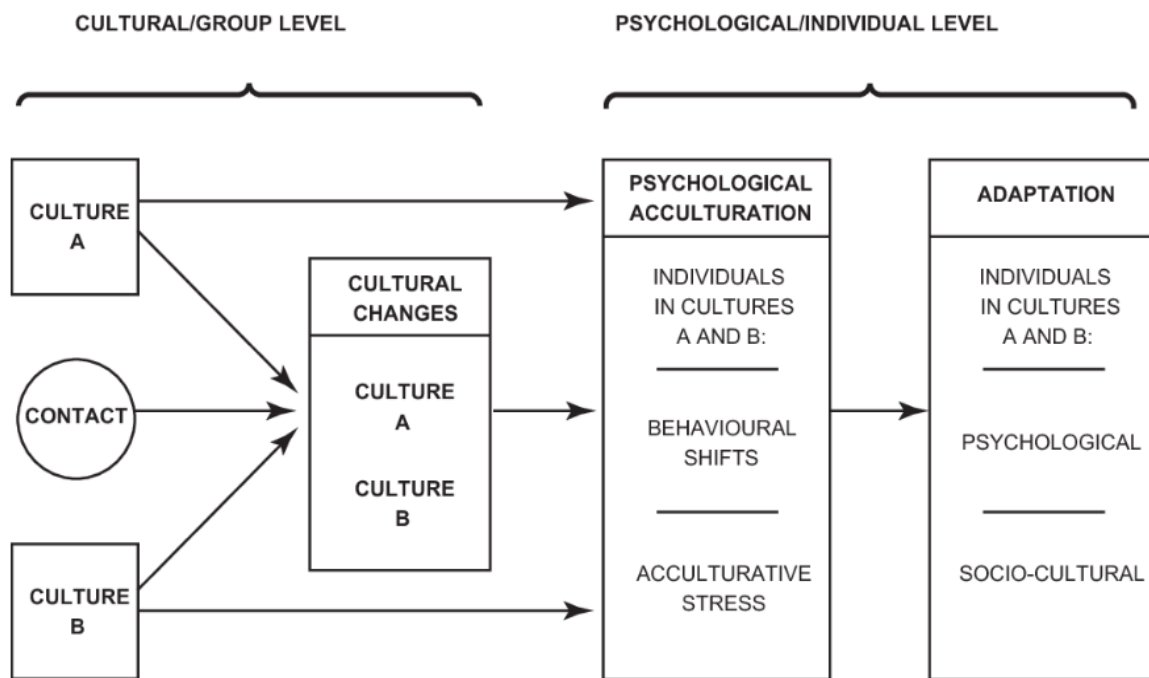
people moving to a new location or given the fact that the new culture was brought to them, for example in cases of indigenous or national minorities. Thirdly, the performance characteristic complies with the finality of the acculturation process. For example, there is a difference in the aim of acculturation of people temporally entering a new culture and individuals having the objective of settling forever (Berry, 1997).

At the beginning two similar but distinctive concepts are crucial – intercultural contact and acculturation (Clanet, 1990 & Berry, 1997). The former idea is defined by Clanet (1990) as process occurring when people with different cultural background interact together with the understanding of being “culturally distinct” (Berry, 1997:8). Whereas the acculturation concept refers to the change of “cultural factors on human behavior” as a process of the fact that individuals start living in a new cultural context (Berry, 1997:8). This process can happen on two different levels, first as a collective phenomenon, defined as change in the culture of a group and as psychological acculturation as change of the psychology of an individual (Graves 1967). The present research will concentrate on psychological acculturation.

2.2.1 Berry’s Acculturation Strategies

The phenomenon of acculturation is very complex, it is settled in different fields of research and contains numerous design ranges. Analyzing acculturation in relationship to service marketing and customers participation, Berry’s acculturation strategies are a proper way to categorize acculturation types and allocate them to different customers. This has already been done by important studies in the field of service marketing and customer participation (e. g., Weber, Hasu & Sparks, 2014; Poulis, Poulis & Yamin, 2013)

Figure 1: Framework for Conceptualizing Acculturation Component and Relationships

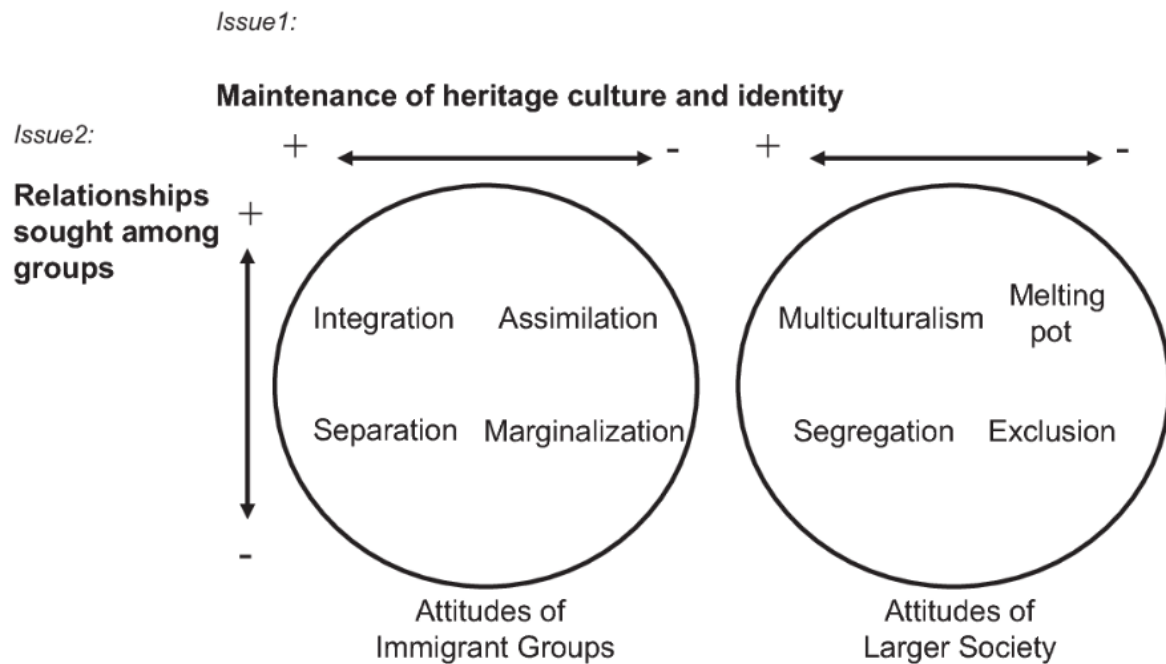


Source: URL: <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Acculturation%3A-When-Individuals-and-Groups-of-Meet.-Sam-Berry/9bfdcc2b1d9ffd41b72f2299084726a1e433df59/figure/0>

The concept of acculturation strategies explained in the work of Berry (1997) concentrates on the question how the process is performed. Differentiated from the general acculturation framework (figure 1), the following strategies, presented in figure 2 are the key components of psychological acculturation (Berry & Sam, 2006).

Primarily, Berry (1997) identifies two major issues to exist. Number one, cultural maintenance explaining to what extent cultural identity and characteristics and their maintenance are important. Secondly, the issue of contact and participation clarifying the extent of involvement in other cultural groups or staying among themselves. Given these two facts four sub-dimensions for the characterization of acculturating groups can be made, dependent on whether they are considered as dominant or non-dominant. Following this explication, it is assumed that non-dominant groups and their individual members have the freedom to choose how they want to acculturate (Berry, 1997).

Figure 2: Acculturation Strategies in Ethnocultural Groups and the Larger Society



Source: URL : <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Acculturation%3A-When-Individuals-and-Groups-of-Meet.-Sam-Berry/9bfdcc2b1d9ffd41b72f2299084726a1e433df59>

Considering the two issues explained above (figure 2) shows that cultural maintenance and contact and participation are both concepts varying from high to low, indicated by a two-way arrow. With focus on the first circle of figure 2 the different strategies coming from distinctive attitudes of immigrating groups. First *integration* is explained by the wish to maintain the original culture and interact in daily relationships with other groups. Individuals with less interest in maintaining their cultural identity and high affinity to get among other groups are allocated to the *assimilation* strategy. *Separation* is defined should the individual does not want to interact in daily relationship with others and wants to maintain his or her cultural identity. No or little interest in cultural maintenance and little to no interest in having relationships in the new society refers to the strategy of *marginalization* (Berry, 1997).

If acculturation is forced by the dominant group individuals often choose separation as a consequence of unwillingness to acculturate. When individuals are free to choose assimilation, it is often a process under pressure. Marginalization is mostly not chosen but a consequence of forced assimilation in combination with forced exclusion. Finally, Berry emphasizes in an earlier work that “integration strategy is only successfully pursued by non-dominant groups when the dominant society is open and inclusive in its orientation towards cultural diversity.” (Berry, 1997:10)

The second circle of *figure 2* contains the acculturation strategies driven by the attitudes of a larger society. Reflecting on concept of dominant and non-dominant cultures, should the dominant culture ask for assimilation it is called “melting pot”. If the larger society demands separation it is called “separation”. Following this concept demanded marginalization is then defined as “exclusion”. And finally, if there is the aim of integration of new people and cultures into host society, the strategy of acculturation is called “multiculturalism” (Berry & Sam, 2010). In summary, the acculturation strategies of Berry (1997) can be explained from two perspectives regarding the concept of dominant and non-dominant cultures. The characterization of acculturation decided by the immigrating society itself is defined as the concept of acculturation strategies. However, if the dominant culture, the host culture has expectations about the way about immigrating societies acculturate, this is called acculturation expectations (Berry & Sam, 2010).

More specific elaborations on the concept of dominant and non-dominant cultures it is stressed in the work of Berry (Berry, 1997; Berry, 2003; Berry & Sam, 2010) that in multiculturalism power differences of the interacting groups are the driving force for the freedom of choice how to acculturate and participate in intercultural activities. For example, the strategy of integration can only be pursued if the host culture defined as dominant is open with regards to cultural diversity. In addition, Berry and Kalin (1995) established three preconditions for societies to ensure the possibility for integration as acculturation strategies for immigrating individuals and groups. First, acceptance of a culturally diverse society. Second, an ideology of little prejudice (no racism and discrimination) and third, willing to identify with the larger society. Given these facts it is possible for the immigrating society to integrate by maintaining their cultural heritage and additionally acculturate by adding the new culture to their ideology - presupposing that the dominant culture invests in institutions such as education, health and labor to support integration of the new and a livable plural society (Berry & Sam, 2010).

2.2.2 Plural Societies

The increasing phenomena of plural societies and the existence of cultural diversity drives the need for research in intercultural interactions. As mentioned above, in our daily lives we are faced with various cross-cultural interactions in which individuals with distinct cultural backgrounds interact with each other. Due to the movements of societies from one country to another, now or in the past we have the existence of plural societies. People who come together at a certain space and live together in the presence of cultural diversity. Taking a deeper look

at these multicultural societies we find differences in language, religion, behavior and appearance and exactly these disparities build barriers in situations of interactions. As a normal process when one individual enters in a new cultural context, we have the phenomena of acculturation already mentioned at the beginning of this thesis.

2.3 Hypothesis Development

2.3.1 Communication and Language

Language, identified as part of communication barriers, has been proven by Holmqvist et al. (2017) i. e. that language influences customer participation. First findings including language problems can be drawn from research on health care institutions addressing the impact of language barriers. In this area there are already studies addressing directly migrant health care customers. These first findings show that existing language problems in service encounters influence the customers' ability to interact in the service. For example, it has been identified that the chances for the right treatment are better when there were no language problems identified in the service interaction (e.g., language barriers in health care, e.g., Bischoff & Denhaerynch, 2010; Schenker et al. 2007; Jacobs, Shepard & Suaya, 2004; Timmins, 2002).

H1: Communication barriers predict customer participation. High communication barriers lower customer participation

For the concept of communication barriers in service encounters, the following research assumes that this problem derives from the acculturation process people face when they enter into a new culture. At this point it is to mention that the following work uses communication barriers as variable for the analysis which will be later on defined and explained in detail. But it is worth mentioning that communication barriers are problems that occur when two individuals interact verbally or non-verbally with each other. These problems can arise because of different factors such as cultural background including verbal and non-verbal language, physical discrepancies of the participants or environmental circumstances. For this work, communication is happening on the basis of a face-to-face interaction.

2.3.2 Identification with Home or Host Country

Culture is defined by Hofstede, the renowned founder of culture related theories as the phenomena of "collective programming of the mind, which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others." (Hofstede, 2011:3)

Culture is a broad concept, it is particularly in the field of cross-cultural interactions the key factor which determines consumers' behavior, attitudes and the way consumers behave and live their lives (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007). Every individual can acquire culture, it is not genetically transported information. Culture has much to do with identification and it is said to be arising from different ethnical movements throughout time. The way people identifying themselves with a certain group will impact the way they think, feel, act and behave. It is determined as an ongoing process, and external changes influence the way of the process. This is why culture is not a fixed concept (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007).

At this point Berry's (1997) described acculturation strategies deliver the conceptualization of the phenomenon. There are different ways individuals cope with entering into a new cultural environment:

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 1. Integration: | Maintain the original culture and interact in daily relationships with other groups. |
| 2. Assimilation: | Individuals with less interest in maintaining their cultural identity and high affinity to get among other groups. |
| 3. Separation: | Individuals do not want to interact in daily relationship with others and want to keep their cultural identity. |
| 4. Marginalization: | No or little interest in cultural maintenance and little to no interest in having relationships in the new society. |

Obviously, entering into a new cultural context always comes with either a loss of the home culture identity or the issue of accepting the new culture. However, the existence of multiculturalism and plural society shows that there is a choice and not only one culture or the other. On these grounds, not only Berry but other reliable researchers in the field of acculturation (e. g., Mendoza & Martinez, 1981, Laroche et al., 1997) suggest that the process an individual undergoes when entering into a new culture should be bidirectional. This means that it is important to use strategies when measuring the extent of the acculturation to include both home and host country. In other words, to which extant the individual identifies him-/herself with the culture of the home and host country (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007).

As broadly discussed in the chapter before, cultural adaption can be explained by the strategy of acculturation, where different ways of adapting a new culture are described. Approaching these different strategies, one comes across a very important mechanism of individuals, namely "ethnic identification" which explains the maintenance of the original culture (Laroche et al., 2007). Exactly this attitude is represented in the strategies of *integration*

and *separation* according to Berry (1997). According to Laroche et al. (2007) who studied cultural matters in children's purchase behavior, including the aspects of acculturation and ethnic identification, they consider the two contrarian concepts contrarian as high level of acculturation means less ethnic identification and vice versa. Results showed that acculturation positively affected the children's purchase intentions for products, whereas the effect for ethnic identification on the purchase behavior was negative (Laroche et al., 2007). Replicating the theory on acculturation this means in this particular case that explains that the better the children are acculturated given various factors that support this feeling, such as integration of the whole family in the new cultural setting has a positive effect on their behavior in the host country market. Vice versa, this implicates that children identifying themselves largely with more with their home country – high ethnic identification, resulting in a rather low level of acculturation i. e. affecting negatively their purchasing intentions on products in the host country market negatively (Laroche et al., 2007). Regarding the concept of ethnic identification, which represents the degree of an individual identifying him or herself with his/her home country and culture, it is to be reiterated that the stronger the ethnic identification the lower the new culture's acculturation factors.

Considering the role of language in this concept it is significant to mention that language is an essential factor for identification and the self-identity feeling of an individual (Ramlan et al., 2018). Moving on with this statement it can be mirrored with the findings of Laroche et al. (2007) and it can be concluded that knowledge of language of a culture is conclusively a key element for the identification with the culture. Thus, language knowledge of the host country leads to better self-identity feelings of an individual with the host culture (Ramlan et al., 2018). In addition to that it was just recently determined by Sichtmann, Davvetas, Bleich, Romanyuk (2018) that host country identification is the main influencing factor of service quality in the field of migrant customer participation. Identifying oneself with the host culture has according to the mentioned findings a positive influence on one's behavior in the host country market.

Summarizing all the above-mentioned results it is obvious that migrants with a high level of acculturation identify themselves with the host country. And, on the contrary, a high level of ethnic identification is considered to explain a low level of acculturation subsequently the individual identifies him- or herself stronger with his/her home country. The measurability of this variable is given through the identification construct measured through seven items (*I identify myself with the Austrian culture; I see myself as a member of Austria*).

For the following research on the impact of communication barriers on the participation in service encounters it constitutes conclusive evidence that communication barriers do not

have an significant impact on migrant's customer participation as long as the identification with the host country, contrasting stronger identification with the home country (high ethnic identification), which could impact the relationship of language barriers and customers' service participation negatively, concluding that language barriers have an impact on the outcome. Reflecting these findings on the following research below hypotheses can be presented:

H2: Identification with home country predicts customer participation. Higher migrant's identification with the home country predicts lower customer participation

H3: Identification with the host country predicts customer participation. Higher migrant's identification with the host country predicts higher customer participation

2.3.3 Perceived Cultural Distance

Perceived Cultural Distance explained by Hofstede (1980) is a construct to measure the extent cultures differ from each other. It is a concept occurring in intercultural service encounters and describes the perception of individuals with regard to their cultural background. In terms of service marketing, the perceived cultural distance occurs when customer and employee are culturally distinctive (Sharm et al., 2015) and both service partner are aware of the extent of their cultural background's difference. For the measurability of this particular factor, the perceived cultural distance is measuring the extent of similarities of the migrant customer home and host country culture, i.e., "customs and culture of Austrians are very different to mine". The more differences the two cultures show or the customer personally identifies the greater is the perceived cultural distance (PCD).

In the situation of human interactions, it is stated that a low PCD increases the attractions for individuals to have contact with each other. This results from the fact that participating cultures might have similar characteristics. High PCD thus reduces the desire of interaction (Etgar & Fuchs, 2011).

Recent findings show that higher PCD result in less interaction comfort (Sharma et al., 2015; Sharma and Wu, 2015), meaning that a high PCD reduces the interaction contentment of the customer within the service process (Sharma at al., 2015). The other way around a lower PCD would implicate a positive effect on customers' satisfaction. As Kulik and Holbrook (2000) investigated, service interactions with employees from the same culture are perceived more positively by the customer than with employees form different cultures. This results in a negative effect on customer satisfaction and perceived service quality (Kulik and Holbrook, 2000). The interaction with a service employee from the same culture implies thus a closer

relationship, which “reduces communication barriers and enhances the mutual understanding” (Ihtiyar and Ahmad, 2014). Another essential concept that is to be addressed with PCD is interaction comfort or customer comfort (IC). According to Sharma et al. (2014) it is explained as the feeling of comfort in a service interaction. Important findings from Sharma et al. (2012) explain the positive relationship of PCD and IC for customers. This statement results in the assumption that high PCD – a great difference between home and host culture – influence the relationship of communication barriers and customer participation.

H4: Perceived cultural distance predicts customer participation. Higher perceived cultural distance of the migrant customer predicts lower customer participation

2.3.4 Language Knowledge

Intercultural contact always comes with change. In line with the different dimensions of the acculturation processes it has already been elaborated that communication plays a major role in the success of the service outcome. The communication ability and the sociocultural adaption have been settled in the theory of the cultural learning approach. As communication being a central factor in the acculturation process, Young Kim (1978) studied acculturation from a communication perspective which provides relevant theories on the basis of the cultural learning theory. At this point it has already been underlined that the individuals entering a new cultural context undergo various changes and processes of learning to acculturate in their new society. Young Kim (1978) describes the acculturation process an “interactive and continuous process” deriving from the communication of the immigrant in the new cultural environment. Reflecting on the “acquired communication competence” of the migrant that can be used to identify his or her degree of acculturation, communication is essential for acculturation as it helps with the adjustment process of the immigrant’s abilities to interact in the new sociocultural environment. It can facilitate the process of acculturation of immigrants as it is a tool that helps individuals to meet personal and basic needs in the host culture (Lakey, 2003).

Reflecting the aforementioned communication process with transporting a message from sender to receiver it is crucial in the acculturation theory that an immigrant is able to encode and decode messages in that sense that they can “recognize, accept and respond” to the message (Lakey, 2003). At this very moment the question arises how immigrants can achieve this ability to interact without problems in the host culture. According to Kim (1978) different key constructs can be identified which are crucial for the “communication-acculturation process”. These key elements are interpersonal communication, mass media behavior and

communication environment (Kim, 1978). Additionally, important to the acculturation process is the personal network of the immigrant. Y. Kim (1978) studied the strength of native ties as concept influencing the immigrant's communication competence in the host country. In general, results show that the more non-migrated individuals are included in the personal network of an immigrant, the higher is the level of competence to communicate in the host country (Lakey, 2003).

Driven by the results of Kim (1978) the cultural learning approach studied and described by Masgerot and Ward (2006) interlinks the concept of communication performance with the acculturation process of the migrant. The literature on acculturation and behavioural studies implies that integrated individuals who are adapted to the host culture in terms of the cultural learning approach by Masgoret and Ward (2006) face less problems with communication barriers. The cultural learning approach explains the process of acquiring cultural-specific behavioral skills. It is evident that the most crucial factor for communication success across cultures is speaking the host country's language. The essential skills to interact in daily-life situations are additionally very important to establish a personal network within the host country. Which is as mentioned above, one key element for the "communication-acculturation process" (Kim, 1978). Also, the degree of the language practice in the host country contributes to the aforementioned theory, which underlines the importance of sociocultural adjustments to the host country. According to the study of Ward and Kennedy (1993a) language fluency is strongly related to sociocultural adjustment. Reviewing these finding on language knowledge and ability to communicate, it is obvious that language knowledge influences the process of acculturation.

Above statements provide further input for the research of language knowledge interfering in the relationship of communication barriers and customer participation. As the original source for cross-cultural service interaction, the acculturation process produces various barriers, especially in communication, which remain to be analyzed. Communication barriers influencing the participation in service interactions, relevant factors are to be assessed and identified to overcome these problems. For the first hypothesis of the recent thesis, I conclude in s consideration of the findings from different researchers in this specific field (Masgerot & Ward, 2006; Ward & Kennedy 1993; Vaernbergh & Holmqvist, 2013) that knowledge of the host countries' language influences positively the acculturation process.

In line with these findings another important approach results for the following study. Masgoret and Ward (2006) found out that language skills and knowledge is positively related to cultural

adaption and that second-language skills have a positive influence on acculturation. The same results are also appointed by Vaerenbergh and Holmqvist (2013) which elaborate further on the importance of second language skills in service encounters. Obviously, consumers prefer to be served in their first speaking (negative) language, but bilingual consumers may have a better ability to communicate in a service encounter with a foreign language than consumers not speaking any further languages than their mother tongue. The presence of better communication abilities has then been interlinked with less communication barriers in the interaction process. To measure the extent of language knowledge customers' assessment of their language practicing is relevant for this particular factor.

This leads to the following hypothesis:

H5: (German) language knowledge predicts customer participation. Higher German language knowledge predicts higher customer participation

3. Presentation and Analysis of the Results

3.1 Methodology

The survey instrument was designed by Prof. Dr. Sichtmann from the Chair of International Marketing at the University of Vienna. The aim of the study is to measure the key acculturation factors of migrants (cultural embeddedness, social integration, language adaption) and their influence on the perceived quality of and satisfaction with the service. The collection of the data was of exploratory nature in form of a survey, undertaken from two sides. The customers perspective and the employee's perspective, to measure both perceptions from the face-to-face service processes.

The acquisition of the data started in September 2019 with help from the Public Employment Service (shortform: AMS) in Vienna. In total 45 employees and 199 customers were questioned at 12 branches of the AMS in Vienna. The employees were contacted to participate in the study and by doing so, after the meeting with a migrant client both, migrant customer and employee were asked to participate in survey. In general customers' participation was measured from the customer's perspective and the employee's perspective. The acculturation aspects were measured in a self-evaluating process of the customer by questioning different influencing concepts provided by the relevant literature, which assumed to impact the process of acculturation (e. g., identification, global/local, language knowledge, ...). The survey was from both perspectives exploratory, based on the customers own self-reflection and the employee's reflection on the customers behavior.

For the following research the same dataset is used. The design of the research aims – in this particular task – at identifying the influencing factors (cultural identification, perceived cultural distance and language knowledge) of customers participation in consideration of the role of communication barriers.

3.2 Sample

3.2.1 Demographic Information of Migrant Customers

The data were collected from 199 respondents in total (52.8% male and 46.2% female). The mean age of the sample was 37.32 years (SD = 10.7), ranging from 15 to 65 years old. In terms of education the data represents respondents adequately from all education cohorts tested (basic education: 28.6%, secondary education: 30.7%, Matura: 17.6% and university: 15.1%). The origin of the respondents can be split into foreign born (81.4%) and first-generation born migrants (17.6%), whereby more than one third of the respondents have Serbian or Turkish

roots (19.6% and 18.1%) the remainder are of Balkan and Middle East nationalities. In respect of language use about 149 (74.9%) of the 199 respondents indicate to use German often in their daily lives. A more detailed information is pictured in appendix B (a).

3.2.2 Demographic Information of Employees

As this study focuses on two perspectives, sample also consists of 45 employee respondents (28.9% male and 68.9% female). The mean age of the employees was 39.36 years (SD = 10.7) almost the same as with the customers and ranging from 21 to 66 years old. According to the highest education of the employees' cohorts from secondary education to university were tested (secondary education: 42.2%; Matura: 28.9%; University/FH: 22.2%). In terms of the cultural background the employees are mainly born in Austria (73.3%) only a smaller number indicates having migration background (22.2%). Almost all respondents of the employee sample indicate that they have knowledge of English (97.8%) and also half of the sample speaks another foreign language (51%). A more detailed information is pictured in appendix B (b).

To measure the presented hypotheses variables were used based on scales drawn from the relevant literature. At the beginning of the analysis the reliability of the scales of the items is tested with Cronbach's alpha (inter-item correlation).

The Cronbach's alpha test is a measure to identify reliability and helps to determine whether the variables are justifiable for the following analysis or not. To test the internal consistency of a questionnaire, made up with multiple Likert-Type scales, it enables to measure the strength of a concept's consistency of variables used for a given test. We are seeking with testing the constructs with the Cronbach's alpha test for high reliability of our constructed variables. As Cronbach's alpha is based on correlations it can be said that the larger the construct, meaning, the more items we use for a construct the more reliable it will be (University of Virginia). For testing the scale items of the questionnaire with Cronbach's alpha we seek for a correlation of $\alpha > .6$ and < 1 (Streiner, 2002).

The independent variable *communication barriers* is measured with four items on a 7-point scale ("The customer had problems of understanding during the conversation due to language barriers"; "During the conversation the customer faced language problems") from the perception of the employee and same from the customers perspective ("I faced problems of understanding during the conversation due to language barriers"; "During the conversation I faced language problems"). The predictor variables are all measured with items on a 7-point

scale. The variables *identification with the home country* (ID_home) (“I see myself as part of my country; I feel a strong attachment towards my country of origin; ...”) and *identification with host country* (ID_host) (“I see myself as part of Austria; I feel a strong attachment towards Austria; ...”) are both including eight items. *Perceived cultural distance* (PCD) (“The Austrian ethnicity is very different from mine; ...”) *German* (“Generally, I am comfortable with German language; ...”) are measured with four and five items of the questionnaire.

The dependent variable *customer participation* is first of all measured with five items from the questionnaire answered from the employee (“the customer tried to make my job easier; the customer tried to help me serve him/ her better; ...”). But in order to obtain a more detailed result of the influence of the factors on customers participation, for the final results the antecedents of customer participation, willingness to participate and expertise to participate are used as dependent variable. This implies that for every test both variables are used separately. For *willingness to participate* (“The customer was willing to cooperate; ...”) and *expertise to participate* (“I think the customer has experience with the consultancy service of the AMS; ...”) four and seven items were used.

All constructs were found reliable (Cronbach’s alpha ranging between .811 and .959 (see appendix A.).

3.3 Procedure

First, the variables were tested on multicollinearity. It was tested that there was no medium or high correlation. All variables show small correlation values (range of .7 to 1.2). It can be said that there are no relevant intercorrelations of the predictors (see appendix B.).

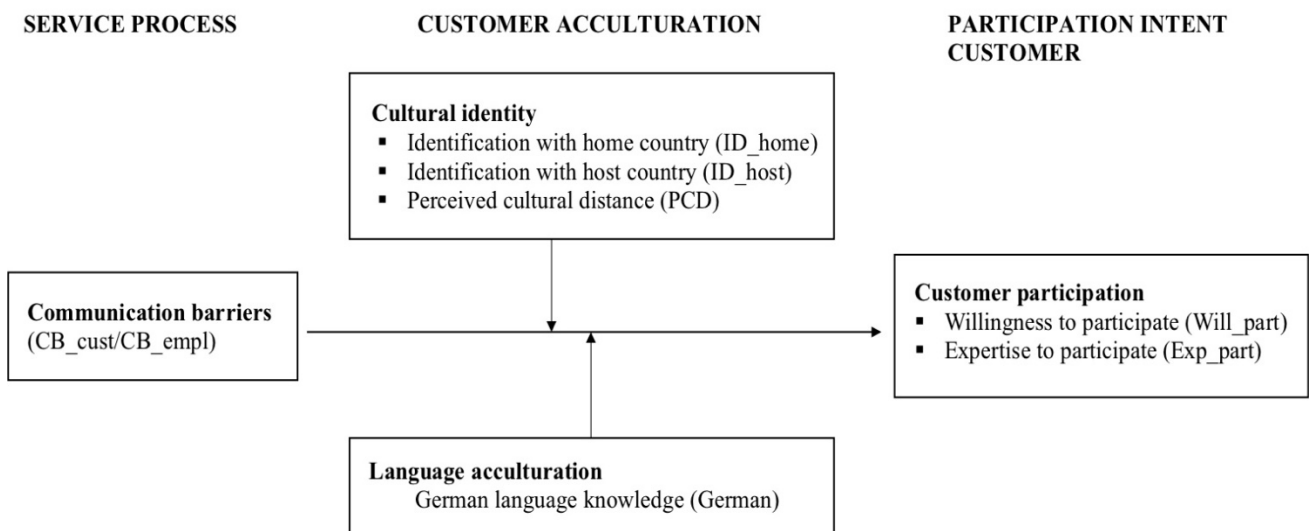
In order to analyze the influence of the predictors on the migrant’s customer participation with focus on communication barriers a multiple regression tests are used. The analysis was chosen, because it is used to predict the value of an outcome variable from several predictors. In case of this particular study the test is used to conduct the influence of communication barriers on customer participation and further including several predictors for a second model. For a more detailed analysis of the construct of customer participation, the second part of the questionnaire of the customers, where the service encounter is analyzed, provides the possibility to look at antecedents of customer participation. Therefore, as literature suggested, the willingness and expertise of the customer to participate in the service encounter are defined to be the precursors for the customers’ participation.

The hypotheses were tested with a two-step hierarchical regression, where in a first step the fixed independent variable *communication barriers* was tested and in a second step the four

predictors (ID_home, ID_host, PCD and German) were included to observe the changes of the predictability of the fixed independent variable. The second step will provide answers to which extent the predictors interfere within the influence of the first step. As dependent variable, the variables willingness to participate and expertise to participate are used.

Additionally, to identify different outcomes of the two antecedents of customer participation, willingness to participate and expertise to participate in the service process, the tests were conducted from both perspectives, communication barriers from employee perspective and communication barriers from customer perspective. Results from both perspectives are compared to identify differences in the customers' and employees' experience.

Figure 3: Overall Model



3.4. General Results

Starting step by step firstly the identification of the communication barriers shows that both perspectives had almost the same experience in the service encounter. Tests indicate that employees as well as the customer do not identify huge barriers in communication of the customer during the service process as table 5 and 6 (below) will show. The communication barriers are measured for all 199 cases from both sides. Indicator for the communication barriers to be identified by the respondents are barriers in language of the participants. Language is a major tool for the communication process when speaking about effective two-way communication (verbal communication). The communication partners encode and decode the message in spoken language, to the extent as their language skills allow (Ramlan et al., 2017).

As already described for the measurement of the variables a Likert Scale consisting of seven grades (1 to 7) was used, whereby in this context 1 is “I strongly disagree” and 7 “I strongly agree” is reflected by these statements (see table 5 and 6). To organize the data the scale values from 1 to 3 were identified to indicate disagreement, value 4 means “undecided” and with values from 5 to 7 the respondent expresses his or her agreement with the statement. For the item of communication barriers two specific statements had to be addressed (see table 5 and 6). The data is first analyzed for the two statement separately to have a detailed overview about the respondent’s own impression of the communication progress. For the model analysis both statements count for the item “communication barriers” – one for the employee perspective and one for the customer perspective.

Table 3: Communication Barriers Employee Perspective

During the conversation the customer had comprehension problems due to linguistic barriers				During the conversation the customer had linguistic difficulties			
Scale value		Frequency	Percent	Scale Value		Frequency	Percent
Valid	1 – 3	135	67.9	Valid	1	136	68.4
	4	10	5.0		4	13	6.5
	5 - 7	49	24.6		5 – 7	46	23.1
	Total	194	97.5		Total	195	98
Missing	System	5	2.5	Missing	System	4	2.0
Total		199	100.0	Total		199	100.0
Mean		2.62		Mean		2.59	

The results show that employees think in a quarter of the cases communication barriers existed (24.6% and 23.1%) but for the majority of the cases employees do not think that communication barriers existed in the service encounter (67.9% and 68.4%). In about 10 (5%) cases they were not sure or undecided.

Table 4: Communication Barriers Customer Perspective

During the conversation I had comprehension problems due to linguistic barriers				During the conversation I had linguistic difficulties			
		Frequency	Percent			Frequency	Percent
Valid	1 – 3	127	63.8	Valid	1	133	66.9
	4	13	6.5		4	16	8.0
	5 – 7	55	27.6		5 – 7	46	23.1
	Total	195	98.0		Total	195	98.0
Missing	System	4	2.0	Missing	System	4	2.0
Total		199	100.0	Total		199	100.0
Mean		2.86		Mean		2.61	

For the customers perspectives the data show similar results. Here communication barriers are identified more often (27.6% and 23.1%) but there are also more respondents not sure or undecided (6.5%). In the majority of the cases the customer did not think that they had difficulties in the communication process (63.8% and 66.9%).

Table 5: Customers Participation Employee Perspective

		Will_part	Exp_part
N	Valid	198	198
	Missing	1	1
Mean		6.62	5.66
Std. Deviation		.88	1.2

Table 6: Customer Participation Customer Perspective

		Will_partC	Exp_partC
N	Valid	199	198
	Missing	0	1
Mean		6.51	6.25
Std. Deviation		.98	.1

General findings about the customer participation show that the overall willingness to participate (answered by the employees) was - above average - good (mean: 6.6), same counts for the expertise of the migrant customers to participate in the service process (mean: 5.6). The first indicators show that there is in general a good customer participation of the sample. And again, both sides seem to have the same impression of the quality of the customers participation – results are similar (mean: 6.5 and 6.2). For the model analysis the customer participation is measured by the customers willingness and expertise to participate identified by the employee and the customer to finally compare the results.

Taking a closer look at the predictor variables ID_home, ID_host, PCD and German show that means reside in the upper half of the scale ranging from 4.68 to 5.60 (table 9). What attracts interest is that the customers identification with their home countries indicates the lowest factor at 4.68 but nevertheless the identification with the home countries is still in the upper half of the scale, meaning that the identification is quite strong. Coming to identification with the host country Austria the values are higher than the identification with the home country (mean: 5.55 and median 5.75) evidencing that there is a stronger identification with Austria than with home countries of the customers. The value for the perceived cultural distance is also closer to 7 than to 1 (mean 4.92). This indicates that customers think that there are differences between their home countries' culture, language and values and the Austrian culture, language and values. Another surprising result comes from the results of German language knowledge. The data show that customers do think that they have good understanding of German (mean: 5.6).

Table 7: Predictor Variables

		ID_home	ID_host	PCD	German
N	Valid	197	197	195	197
	Missing	2	2	4	2
Mean		4.68	5.55	4.92	5.60
Median		4.88	5.75	5.00	6.00
Mode		7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00
Std. Deviation		1.62	1.13	1.59	1.50

Nevertheless, the aim of the present analysis is besides revealing the influencing to identify what role communication barriers play for migrants' customer participation in the service process. The sample show that communication barriers exist. The following results

show the magnitude, and the effect other variables have on communication barriers and further on customer participation.

3.4.1 Employee Perspective

Analyzing the regression model for both perspectives separately the results can be compared at the end. Starting with the employee's perspective, meaning communication barriers and customer participation indicators are identified by the employees' answers.

In more detail the existence of communication barriers measured from the employees' perspective negatively affect willingness ($\beta = -.076$, $p < .05$) and expertise to participate ($\beta = -.221$, $p < .001$) confirming H1. It can be said that there is a greater effect of communication barriers on expertise to participate ($R^2 = .137$) than on willingness ($R^2 = .030$). Including all four predictors (ID_home, ID_host, PCD and German) in the first model communication barriers no longer predict willingness and expertise to participate but the predictors ID host ($\beta = .226$, $p < .001$; $\beta = .258$, $p < .001$) and PCD ($\beta = -.128$, $p < .01$; $\beta = -.114$, $p < .001$) do. Willingness to participate and expertise to participate are positively affected by the predictor identification with host country confirming H3 and negatively affected by the predictor perceived cultural distance confirming H4. For the predictors ID home and German there were no significant effects found. For both outcome variables H2 and H5 were not confirmed by the results of both regression models.

Table 8: Regression Results Employees Perspective

M		Willingness to participate (Will_part)		Expertise to participate (Exp_part)	
		B – coefficient	R-squared	B – coefficient	R-squared
1	CB_Empl	-.076*	.030	-.221***	.137
2	CB_Empl	-.057	.132	-.193	.207
	ID_home	.031		.931	
	ID_host	.226***		.258***	
	PCD	-.128**		-.114**	
	German	.002		.674	

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

3.4.2 Customer Perspective

Letting the customer identify his or her communication barriers in the service process as well as his or her participation in the service encounter shows that communication barriers do not affect both participation antecedents at all. No statistically significant result is found and H1 is not confirmed. However, the second part of the analysis shows similar results, communication barriers stay without effect on the participation variables after including further predictors. The only statistically significant effects found for some variables included in the second step of the analysis. Effect sizes show small effects ranging from .073 to .163 (see table 11).

As already mentioned, communication barriers do not influence the customers participation. This also accounts for the second step of the analysis where further predictors are included. H1 is not confirmed. For the variable ID_host the same results as in the previous analysis were found. For both antecedents of customer participation, a positive effect was found ($\beta = .191$, $p = .01$; $\beta = .193$, $p = .01$). For the predictor German knowledge there is also a significant effect found on willingness to participation ($\beta = .133$, $p = .05$). This result again only partly confirms H5 because for the second indicator for customer participation no effect was found. The predictor PCD lastly shows in this particular model a positive influence on willingness to participate ($\beta = .090$, $p = .05$). This does not confirm H4 as this effect is not negative.

Table 9: Results Customer Perspective

M		Willingness to participate (Will_partC)		Expertise to participate (Exp_partC)	
		B – coefficient	R-squared	B – coefficient	R-squared
1	CB_Cust	-.005	.000	-.026	.003
2	CB_Cust	.014	.163	-.035	.073
	ID_home	.010		-.027	
	ID_host	.191**		.193**	
	PCD	.090*		.078	
	German	.133*		-.035	

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

3.4.3 Mixed Perspectives

Since there was no direct effect of communication barriers on the participation variables a further analysis was done. Running the same analysis (communication barriers customer perspective) with the participation variables identified by the employees. The test shows slightly different results. In the first place there is a negative effect of communication barriers on expertise to participate ($\beta = -.126$, $p < .01$) whereas no effect for willingness to participate was found. According to this results H1 is partly confirmed. Including the further predictors (ID_home, ID_host, PCD and German) for the second model communication barriers still show a negative effect on expertise to participate ($\beta = -.110$, $p < .01$). Additionally, a positive effect for the predictor ID_host ($\beta = .278$, $p < .001$) and a negative effect of PCD ($\beta = -.137$, $p < .05$) on expertise to participate was found. Reflecting these results H3 and H4 seem to be confirmed but as no effect of the model 1 on willingness to participate was found the hypotheses were only partly confirmed. Results from this analysis do not support H2 and H5.

Table 10: Results Communication Barriers Customer and Participation Employee Perspective

M		Willingness to participate (Will_part)		Expertise to participate (Exp_part)	
		B – coefficient	R-squared	B – coefficient	R-squared
1	CB_Cust	.029	.005	-.126**	.051
2	CB_Cust	-.024	.133	-.110**	.152
	ID_home	.038		.011	
	ID_host	.239***		.278***	
	PCD	-.139***		-.137*	
	German	.024		.255	

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Vice versa, testing communication barriers identified by employees on customer participation if the customer itself can reflect his or her performance, no direct effects of the antecedents' willingness or expertise to participate were found.

Table 11: Results Communication Barriers Employee and Participation Customer Perspective

M		Willingness to participate (Will_part)		Expertise to participate (Exp_part)	
		B – coefficient	R-squared	B – coefficient	R-squared
1	CB_Empl	-.024	.003	.003	.000
2	CB_Empl	.007	.148	.004	.067
	ID_home	.017		-.041	
	ID_host	.198**		.192**	
	PCD	.078		.067	
	German	.103*		-.024	

*** p < .001, ** p < .01, * p < .05

3.5 Summary of the Results

Considering all regressions undertaken for the analysis it can be said that communication barriers influence the antecedents of customer participation, willingness to participate and expertise to participate. However, there are noticeable differences between employee and customer perspective. In summary, employees think that communication barriers effect the migrant customers' participation whereas the migrant customers do not think that communication barriers have effects on their participation in the service encounter.

Starting with the employees' perspectives, in the first model communication barriers predict both antecedents of customer participation. These results confirm H1 meaning that communication barriers predict customer participation. A rise in communication barriers negatively affects the customers participation. Including the predictors for the second model communication barriers no longer influence the customers participation. However, the customers identification with Austria positively influences his or her participation. The more the customer identifies himself or herself with Austria (ID_host) the better the participation in the service process gets. H3 is confirmed. Same accounts for the perceived cultural distance (PCD), the less differences the customer identifies between his home culture and Austria the better the migrant's customer participation. H4 is confirmed. H2 is not confirmed and also H1 as in the first model without the predictors is no longer confirmed.

Analyzing the results from the customers perspectives it is noticeable that communication barriers do neither predict willingness to participate nor expertise to participate. Results from the second model including the four predictors of communication barriers show that “identification with Austria”, “perceived cultural distance” and “German” are significant predictors. Although the variable for German language knowledge of the migrant only shows an effect on willingness to participate of the customer. These results do not confirm hypotheses as the assumption for the regression analysis are not given. There is no direct effect of communication barriers on customer participation. Having said that, the identification with the home country of the migrant does not influence the willingness or the expertise to participate neither from the employees’ perspective nor from the customers perspective. H2 is not confirmed. This leads to the assumption that communication barriers have less effect on the customers’ participation than the feeling of identification the customers have. H5 was not confirmed on both perspectives.

Mixing the models with the constructs for customers and employees no further significant effect was found. It seems to be crucial to get a clear picture of both perspectives to analyze the data separately.

4. General Discussion

4.1 Main Findings

Surprisingly enough, data for the constructs communication barriers and customer participation are quite similar when comparing both perspectives. Accordingly, it can be said that customer and employee had a very similar impression of the service encounter. However, analyzing both perspectives separately the results of the model were different.

Overall, the results are clear as the interpretation of issues and difficulties are different when comparing employee and customer perspective. Generally, from a personal point of view more barriers in communication have been excepted as the communication with the customers respondents during the data collection process was - in most of the cases - very difficult because of comprehension problems.

However, after analyzing all predictors, customers had a good self-assessment for their German language knowledge. This explains the low identification with communication barriers. Furthermore, with the analysis of the predictors proved that the identification of the migrant customers with Austria was also quite strong. This had also greater effects on the customer participation than on the communication barriers, speaking of the employees' perspectives. In general, the feeling or the connection the customers felt towards Austria play a significant role in the service process. As stated by Cleveland & Laroche (2007) "The way people identifying themselves with a certain group will impact the way they think, feel, act and behave".

These feelings of identification with Austria are notable in the way that they assist in overcoming the existing barriers in communication. Considering these findings, they support the relevant literature on acculturation and behavioral studies that integrated individuals who are adapted to the host culture in terms of the cultural learning approach by Masgoret and Ward (2006) face less problems with communication barriers (the cultural learning approach explains the process of acquiring cultural-specific behavioral skills). It is evident that the most crucial factor in communication success across cultures is speaking the host countries' language. The variable for the host country language (German) itself did not show any effect on customer participation.

Another very strong variable affecting customer participation was the perceived cultural distance. Generally, the customers identified their home countries and Austria as culturally distinct. In the results of the analysis, it has been noted that this affected the participation of the migrants in the service process. As Sharma et al. (2015) already found out the bigger the perceived cultural distance the lower the participation factors are speaking of both perspectives.

The fact the lower the perceived cultural distance between his/her home country and Austria is, the more similarities he or she identifies with both cultures, proves that participation effects are stronger. This is where different strategies explain the phenomena of entering into new habits and coping with different cultures. Reflecting these statements to the acculturation strategies by Berry (1997) it is reasonable to think that the strategy of *integration*, maintain the original culture and interact in daily relationships with other groups, is obviously positively associated with host country identification, furthermore, for actively dealing with a new culture and its habits.

After analyzing both perspectives it is undisputable that communication barriers are an influencing factor for the participation of migrant customers in the service process. However, this can only be said where communication barriers and customer participation are measured from the employees' perspective. Nevertheless, it can be stated that the migrants' individual feeling of identification with Austria overrules the impact of the communication barriers. Finally, it is worthwhile to mention that originally communication barriers were hardly identified at all – neither from both sides the customer's and from the employee's perspective. Summarizing the results, it is clear that identification with Austria and the connection with the country, the habits, the values and the culture play a major role in the participation process during the public employment service. To add a personal point of view, the fact that the results show that the concept of acculturation and also the cultural identification of migrants play a major role in the successful service and support the importance of identifying migrant customers as a distinct target group.

4.2 Implications of the Thesis

Inspired by global societies and international service encounter, this present work analyzes how communication barriers and other important factors influence the participation of migrants in the service process. The research particularly contributes to the wide field of migrants' acculturation, the existence, importance and impact of communication barriers and cultural identification in service outcomes. The findings of the work will bring additional benefits for theoretical as well as practical implications.

Firstly, from a theoretical point of view the research ties in with migrants' acculturation literature in the service marketing context. The present paper elaborates on important factors that need to be considered when offering services for customers with migration background. The process of acculturation influences the participation engagement of the customer.

Communication barriers and the identification of the customer with Austria (culture, values, habits and people) are important factors that affect the participation of the customer. What is very important to be considered at this point, is that the relevant findings prove distinct differences between the customer and the employee perspective. Customers as well as employees discovered communication barriers. Whereas, for the employees they seem to influence the participation of the customers, however for customers themselves the effects of communication barriers are not showing any relation to the customers' participation. The additional influence of migrants' host country identification (identification with Austria) plays a significant role in the process for both sides, the same accounts for the perceived cultural distance. Identification with the host country as well as similarities between home and host country have been identified as crucial factors for the service outcome.

Secondly, the results of the research contribute to managerial as well as policy implications. Speaking of managerial contributions, the findings show that communication barriers during the service have an impact on the service outcome. This could be overcome when service providers motivate and support their employees to gain additional linguistic skills as well as psychological knowledge when working with customers with migration background. From both sides the results show that specifically the German language knowledge per se does not seem to have an influence on the service outcome, but still communication barriers play a distinctive role. Additionally, further findings show that the identification of the customer with the host country outplay the role of communication barriers. This is where service providers working with migrant customers should consider assisting in enhancing migrants' relationship of any sort with the host country. Additional workshops for customers to build their relationship with the host country and also increase their knowledge about the country, its values, people, language, traditions and the like. Service providers could ultimately benefit should they offer such programs to their customers, by providing a considerably better service quality in the long run.

Thirdly, policy makers can also benefit as well from this research as communication barriers and the migrants' identification with the host country influence the service outcome. Additional acculturation helps and programs for migrated people such language courses, cultural programs and social gatherings bridge a divide, help overcome the existing barriers in communication as well as assisting in finding one's own identity in the host country. Further to these three areas this paper shall assist any service provider who seeks to address migrants as a special target group constructively and respectfully. It shall also help employees in such areas where migrants are a regular customer group to cope with existing problems in the service

process and to overcome barriers to have a beneficial service outcome for both sides. Summarizing the above integration policies in general and work in the field of integration policy is an increasingly important subject in today's global world. Migration will continue and increase in the foreseeable future. This will not only become a demanding challenge for some but for most of the wealthy countries on this planet. Markets are no more growing just nationally but have become an international playground. Policy makers should face the challenge of migration, address subsequently integration topics seriously and anticipatory and shape practical guidelines well ahead to work with and integrate migrants in an increasing number, considering them as a specific target group. As long as we – as human beings – are unable to live up to the highest human qualities, cannot prevent wars, famine and poverty, keep ignoring injustice, migration will continue for all reasons we can imagine, in pursuit of happiness and survival. Subsequently, immigration is concerning everyone in most parts of the world, and it remains on the world's to-do list for decades to come.

5. Excursion: Data Collection

5.1 Data Collection Bias

After many hours of research and time spent with facts and data obtained by from my studies, there is also an important aspect to be tackled in my thesis: the time personally spent with the customers and employees when collecting the relevant data. At this point I experienced very interesting human interactions and gained a deeper insight into real-life service situations. In summary, I experienced myself all the aspects I analyzed in this present work that made service interactions with migrant customers challenging by my own. At the stage of collecting the data I noticed the difficulties that might occur with culturally distinct people. But I also experienced that general allegations are hardly reliable. In the field of research studies, the certain distinct differences coming up when dealing with migrants are to be considered when preparing the data collection methodology and material (e. g., language, ethical questions, such as income or religion).

Another important point to be aware of when collecting data, beyond cultural differences, is the data collection bias. In this particular stage of my work, during the data collection, the setting and surroundings where the test person answers the questions could be manipulating. For a deeper understanding, bias is defined as “an inclination or prejudice for or against one person or group, especially in a way considered to be unfair”; “a concentration on an interest in one particular area or subject”; “a systematic distortion of statistical results due to a factor not allowed for in their derivation” (<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com>).

Bias is a popular phenomenon that occurs in almost every research. No matter what specific research design is applied, bias might occur at different stages of the process. However, for this is the reason, why one should be aware of the existence of research bias. Identification and elimination are very important for the research work because bias influences the reliability and validity of the study results (Smith & Noble, 2014). More precisely, speaking there are different types of bias in research. At this point I would like to recall the issues presented in the data collection excursion. The personal experience and feelings shared in this chapter identify really clearly some important aspects that come along in the data collection stage (Smith & Noble, 2014).

The setting and the situation for the respondents was almost the same at every branch. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, at the after-service meeting between migrant customer and employee both parts filled out their questionnaires. The main difference at this moment was that the employee completed the questionnaire unobserved in his office, while the customer

completed the questionnaire in another office where sometimes more than one study participant was present.

5.2 Personal Experience with Data Collection

First of all, the different AMS branch offices in Vienna which were invited to participate in the research were very helping and committed to support the study. After conducting first rounds with the branches there was a strong participation notable. The aim was having about 200 customer respondents to start with the analyzing the data. Following the count of participating customers after the first round more respondents were needed. When we asked for a second rounds in at branch offices with a high potential of a good number of participants. To our disadvantage (and disappointment) the second rounds became really difficult. In most cases either employees did not reply to our request to start another round at all or even the head of the branch communicated that the employees no longer will be available for the study. This was really surprising to the entire team since most of the employees have been asked personally if they would participate for a second round and they reacted very enthusiastic and motivated. It is therefore difficult to identify whether this change in attitude resulted from the coordinating branch center or directly from the branches themselves. Another topic related incident has been experienced when the head of one branch refused to contact particular employees again. At this point we already felt rejected and disappointed since the reaction by the employees themselves at the branches did not provide any feedback which would explaining that situation.

When trying to move on with other employees from other branch offices it was tough to motivate them to participate again. Even after setting an appointment, employees were nervous about participating again and asked also to get in touch with their superiors. Other employees explained that they were really concerned about data protection and legal implications. In one particular case an employee communicated that he needed a signed data privacy statement that his data won't be released to third parties. He even explained that he was afraid of losing his job. Of course, it was in our interest to protect private data. We assured the employees the questionnaires will be only gathered by our team and no third parties will have access private information about the respondents.

From the customers' side there were also some problems surfacing when collecting the data. Primarily, employees set the appointments when they really knew that a lot of potential customers for the study will be available at the branch office. Unfortunately, lots of customers did not show up to for their appointments, obviously fairly common on a daily basis. Another point, customers are busy and wish not to participate and have not time after their appointment.

First reaction of the customers was mostly about the length of the questionnaire's size. About ten to fifteen minutes seemed to be demanding for them.

Regarding the questions' content, it was notable, that the questions about acculturation were hard to understand. Almost every time I had to explain different words or meanings of a particular statement. The most confusing words for the participants were *identify* and *define*. Overall, we got the impression that the customers did not understand what the questions were about, by this I mean that they could not think of the relate to the subject emotionally. Statements of global or local affiliation had no meaning (e. g., most of the participants said, 'I don't know', 'what does global mean'). Moreover, it seemed in some cases that the participants had second thoughts about the questions and became afraid to answer incorrectly or felt being incapable to respond to various questions. I got the impression that participants who really understood the questions' meaning required more time since they asked for definitions of terms within the questions.

Obviously, by my experience people with less German skills were keen to fully comprehend every single word and subsequently they used translation applications to answer the questions. Most of the customers ask for German questionnaires. There are cases where interpreters helped customers to fill out the questionnaire. Customers with comprehension problems asked politely for synonyms or if I would rephrase the questions. Especially the first section of the questionnaire about the home and host country has been found to be hard to understand for most participants. Not because of the lack of language knowledge but because of the specific meaning of the questions.

Sometimes the unexpected happens and customers like one Chinese woman who filled out the questionnaire and then asked me about the different questions. She was afraid not being able to answer the questionnaires about her meeting she had with the AMS employee because she thought she could not know what exactly the service of the AMS would be. And the questions about home and host country and her perception as seeing herself as part of the world made her really think about identification. And she told me she was really glad since now thought more profoundly about identification. To meet a participant with such an eagerness and high level of participation has been inspiring.

A positive experience while collecting data was that despite the comprehensive questionnaire almost all customers took their time to fully comprehend the questions before answering.

After handing out the questionnaire to a handful of participants, it came to my attention that they were not sure about the meaning of a Likert scale. I started to explain the meaning of

the scale from one to seven when introducing the questionnaire to the customers. Most of them had difficulties in understanding how it works to agree or disagree on a statement relating to values reaching from one to seven. I even asked the participants after filling out the questionnaire whether they understood that selecting 1 would mean “I totally disagree with the statement”, even though I explained it in the first place. In some cases, they had to re-check and correct their answers. Through the conversations with the participants, I also experienced that it was the first time for them to fill out a questionnaire anonymously or even to take part personally in a study.

What really surprised me was the fact how the customers, particularly the ones with background from the Middle East reacted to the question about their monthly household income. In most of the cases the participants asked me to explain what exactly is meant by household income and when explaining them they told me about their income situation without hesitation. This was not what I had expected. As I know from my own experience that in Austria asking about someone’s income is frowned upon in Austria.

Particularly with customers in need of protection (defined by the AMS) I experienced some kind of fear of the participants to answer the questions “wrong”, I really tried to explain to them, that there is no wrong or right and that the only thing that matters is their opinion and that the questionnaire is anonymous. But nevertheless, some customers did not understand that and asked me several times about their answer. Most of them even explained every answer of the questionnaire.

One customer explained that the question about seeing himself as a member of the Austrian society is presently not agreeable, since he is not employed presently and being in an actively employed is, for him personally, the relevant factor for being a member of the Austrian society. He explained that the fact not to contribute completely to the Austrian society allows no member status and in return the Austrian society does not see him as a member when unemployed. This is a statement that has – in my opinion – really potential for further research and such an unconventional approach has not been thought of by the other participants.

During the data collection for this study, I spend a lot of time in different AMS branch offices talked to many employees and got in contact with many migrants searching for work or other social services the AMS offers. Every branch office was different, the employees were different and also the customers. What the AMS also offers is specific support in specific branches. This is why various AMS branch offices in Vienna do not automatically focus on migrant customers. My time in the branch offices made me realize the wide variety of different

customers the AMS employees are supposed to work with. Every case is different, every customer has different needs and – so to say – every service provided seems to be unique and personalized.

In the field of service marketing this presents a real challenge, whereby the intercultural aspect is not even considered. Facing different barriers coming from cross-culture-interaction and also in respect to home and host country effects and customer acculturation level. Considering all these various aspects and challenges a successful service outcome is in my eyes a major accomplishment and definitely is to be researched further and in greater detail in the field of service marketing and customer participation.

Finally, I would like to mention that working together with customers and employees from the AMS Austria was interesting and demanding at the same time. On one hand it was sometimes really frustrating not achieving the desired cooperation of various branch offices and customer participation could have been intensified, since it was really hard to involve the aim of 200 participants. On the other side I never learned more about a permanently evolving public organization which not only faces the hardship of unemployment, social disillusion, poverty and fight for survival on a daily basis but also multiethnicity, barriers of any sort in a permanently demanding process of reducing national unemployment rates and associated expenses and still being compassionate and supportive of their multicultural clientele. Never before I heard so many interesting stories and anecdotes as never before. The practical work on my thesis did not only broaden my horizon, but also changed my way of thinking about migrants, asylum seekers, department of social services, public officials and last but not least, migration.

6. Conclusion

In today's fast-growing digital world, the experience to examine real-live situations and human interactions has been interesting, disturbing and demanding at the same time. Now where we all witness tremendous technological progress, minimal personal contact and digital encounters (in personal as well as in professional situations) are prioritized, analyzing real-life situations almost seem to be out of time. Speaking about the time when I started to write this thesis at the end of the year 2019, I didn't know about circumstances and happenings in 2020. Now at the beginning of 2021 in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic (and at our national lockdown) our economy came to a screeching halt, changing our professional and private life quickly, and we seem far away from the regular normal to be the same when thinking one year back. First thing in mind, nowadays the data collection process would be impossible. Again, the world is facing a significant change, the feeling of being invincible is gone, letting the digital and virtual world grow even faster. Social distancing is on everyone's agenda these days. Personal contact has to be cut back to a minimum. Daily encounters and services are becoming rarer and personal distance is a key factor in overcoming a world-wide pandemic. Now at the third lockdown people feel unfavorably isolated, rules and regulations start wearing down entire societies and individuals start missing social contacts, social services and real-life shopping situations. One can only imagine the full impact of this pandemic on all the key factors of my thesis, including, but not limited to migration and acculturation. Analyzing the pandemic and all its consequences on economy, employment, migration, marketing, culture and individual human lives, life itself will definitely be reflected in the future overall assessment of next generation's master theses.

Personal interaction is the basic case of this analysis. Customer participation is an important key factor of successful service. Customers with migration background show different behavior patterns and think differently of service interaction and during participation. Different languages, different comprehension levels and various personal and cultural backgrounds, acquired and learned personal habits and vastly different expectations lead to different individual behavior. One major factor influencing this interaction is the process of acculturation. The fact that people entering and being exposed to a new, and in most cases a different cultural environment, has a significant impact on the way migrant customers participate in the service. The different acculturation strategies lead to new opportunities and enhance different skills of the migrants. According to their behavior in the society and approach as well as attitude in respect to the available service processes major individual differences have

been observed. One important factor in this analysis was communication. Migrants with the intention to integrate or assimilate to the new culture are keen to learn how to communicate within their new habitat. Service marketing communication between customer and employee is a key element and this can be further supported by results proving indisputably that integration or assimilation strategies are beneficial for customer participation since the customer relies on participation in the process. Less communication barriers enhances the customers participation is better which is leading to a higher probability of successful service interaction.

Another very important concept that was identified when working with migrant customers in the service sector is identification. As Cleveland Laroche (2007) found out that there is a meaningful relation between aspects of acculturation and ethnic identification. Considering the two concepts contradictory high level of acculturation means less ethnic identification and vice versa. As documented in the personal thoughts about the data collection process the question of acculturation was considerably challenging for the migrants. Questions about identification could have been misunderstood or even misinterpreted, but even then, sometimes the participants could not be clearer to decide where they belong to – now. Some were still overwhelmed by grave incidents in their home countries, and subsequently their personal assessment of identification with “home country” was affected by that.

Coming back to the acculturation theory of Berry (1997) manifesting the matter of fact that high level of acculturation means high level of identification with the host country. This is clearly supported by the results of this particular analysis as data shows that migrants identifying themselves strongly with Austria, their participation level of both antecedents, the willingness and the expertise to participate in the service process is considerably higher.

Similar to the migrants’ identification with Austria is the fact of the existing cultural diversities between home and host country. The perceived cultural distance was another very important construct that showed influence on the participation of migrant customers in the service process with the AMS. Here it is to say that the more significant the differences and between the migrant’s home country culture and Austria appear, the lesser the participation effect kicked in.

These factors all appear quite reasonable when talking about the migrant’s customer participation. What was found to be interesting is that, although the more communication barriers were found the less participation was provided, the language variable was not controlling the participation of the customers. Personally, at the beginning of the thesis communication barriers and language were constructs appeared to influence each other. At first sight, the literature about communication also manifested this since communication depends

on language. However, the appeared difference is or the reasoning to explain why German language knowledge hardly had any influence on the customers' participation is the fact that generally the migrants identified individually their command of the German language as good. Furthermore, language was not identified to be a problem in the process. As the command of language together with the comprehension of the language worked together and the customers had a good impression of their command of German language during the process. Almost all migrant participants filled out their questionnaire in German, although – in sometimes instances – they required assistance from interpreters. Nevertheless, this fact and the resulting level of accuracy leaves space for further research in the future. Revising the last factor without effect on the customers' participation it is to be said that the fact that the migrant has a very strong identification to his or her home country does not actually help the case of the service process when cultural differences are very dominant. According to Berry's strategy of acculturation precisely speaking of separation and marginalization, the migrant wishes to keep his cultural identity as much as feasible or holds forcefully and exclusively on to maintain his own original ethnic identification with no serious intention to interact with the new cultural society's cultural background. Both strategies show a clear identification with the original home country culture which makes interaction and integration with the new one hard, if not unachievable. Obviously, it is hard to understand the new culture and to interact with the new if there is neither willingness nor intention of any sort to learn or understand the host culture. After this insight reflection it is obvious that cultural identification plays a major and powerful role and is considered to be an important tool in marketing.

In total, for successful service the importance customer participation has been repeatedly highlighted. This is why all factors are to be identified and their actual value to be assessed. Should service marketing be appropriately adjusted and clearly focused on migrants as a distinctive and individual consumer group, the various different factors, e. g., communication barriers are to be considered in the process. The service can be made available without barriers, as long as we are aware that they exist and have the various strategies on hand on how to overcome them. Different ways are feasible, whereby in the long run it is recommendable to proceed uniformly. Employees to be trained to interact individually – based on existing strategies – should consumers' communication barriers be identified. Furthermore, building up staff unites to manage diverse customer groups based on specific skills, e. g., experience, knowledge and empathy. This affects the personal hiring process as well, as manager are to hire specific personnel with particular competence, background and talents. Lobbying might be a further step to provide expertise to policy makers, politicians and influencers on the subject of

migration, immigration and incorporation into a foreign culture or society. Leading to the fact that supporting customers with migration background in the unemployment sector aims at the ability of any migrant to acculturate him or herself better, assisted by the individually necessary extent of support. As finding work and introducing daily routines in individual migrant's life as well as creating a social environment is essential for successful acculturation (integration, assimilation). Once again, the constantly growing number of migrants implicates to take managerial actions to a considerably larger extent in the service area with a specialized focus on cross-cultural customers. Last, but not of lesser importance is the provision of best opportunities to migrants in the host country, identical to the service available to the local residents.

It has been an interesting journey and with this particular analysis is that on the one hand a personal interaction and communication process between the identified parties with distinctly different cultural background has been analyzed, which now allows for a comparison between the individual impressions the identified parties within the encountered service process. The fact that the entire thesis is about diversities in culture and different strategic approaches to overcome cross-cultural barriers, it shall provide guidelines to facilitate intercultural activities, fight racism and prejudice and lead to a better understanding of each other, since all of us, whether now or generations ago have been migrants at one point. The underlying results of the analysis show that the impressions of both sides do in fact not vary very much. Both parties with different cultural roots and backgrounds, which at first glance seem to be far apart in many ways and culturally distinctively different, share to a certain extent a common history of mankind. And above all, in respect to the process, the service encounter itself, the migrant customers and employees did almost have the same perception.

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Appendices

Zusammenfassung

Nicht erst seit heute, sondern schon vor vielen Jahren haben sich Menschen über Grenzen hinwegbewegt und sich in den verschiedensten Teilen der Welt niedergelassen. Migration hat die unterschiedlichsten Gründe. Sich in einer neuen Kultur niederzulassen bedeutet aber immer auch Akkulturation – der Prozess sich einer fremden Kultur anzupassen (Redfield et al., 1936; Graves 1967; Berry 1997; Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga & Szapocznik, 2010). Die Tatsache, dass multikulturelle Gesellschaften immer schon ein Bestandteil der Menschheit waren und Migration ein Phänomen ist, welches bereits über Jahrzehnte existiert ist, unumstritten. Aus diesem Grund ist es vor allem für Dienstleister essentiell, Migration als wesentlicher Bestandteil zur Etablierung ihrer Marketing Strategien zu betrachten und Migranten als Konsumentengruppe zu identifizieren und diese gezielt am Markt anzusprechen. Auf Grundlage dieser Idee untersucht die vorliegende Arbeit den Einfluss von Kommunikationsbarrieren zwischen Dienstleister und Migranten und deren Auswirkungen auf die Beteiligung der Migranten am Dienstleistungsprozess. In Zusammenarbeit mit dem Arbeitsmarkt Service Österreich (AMS) konnte analysiert werden, dass Kommunikationsbarrieren einen essentiellen Einfluss auf die Beteiligung am Dienstleistungsprozess der Migranten haben. Im selben Zug konnte durch die Analyse festgestellt werden, dass die Fähigkeit sich mit Österreich, als Land, zu identifizieren und die kulturelle Diversität zwischen Heimatland der Migranten und Österreich, die Bereitschaft und/oder die Kompetenz der Migranten am Dienstleistungsprozess beeinflusst. Schließlich soll die vorliegende Arbeit dazu beitragen die Literatur über Akkulturation und Dienstleistungsmarketing zu bereichern und zusätzlich dazu führen Verbesserungen für Dienstleistungsprozesse vorzuschlagen sowie Gesetzgeber dazu zu animieren Migration als wichtiges Thema nicht aus den Augen zu verlieren.

Appendix A.: Questionnaire Items to Create the Constructs for the Analysis and Cronbach's Alpha Test

Construct:	Perspective	Items:	Cronbach's Alpha:
Communication Barriers (CB_Cust)	Customer	- I faced problems of understanding during the conversation due to language barriers (CI1D1) - During the conversation I faced language problems (CI1D2)	$\alpha = .916$
Communication Barriers employee (CB_Empl)	Employee	- The customer had problems of understanding during the conversation due to language barriers (EI1D1) - During the conversation the customer faced language problems (EI1D2)	$\alpha = .959$
Customer participation (CP)	Employee	- The customer tried to make my job easier (EI6A1) - The customer tried to help me serve him/ her better (EI6A2) - The customer prepared before meeting with me (EI6A3) - The customer openly discussed his/her needs with me to help me to deliver him/her the best possible advice (EI6A4) - The customer shared a lot of information about his /her unemployment status (EI6A5)	$\alpha = .884$
Willingness to participate (Will_part)	Employee	- The customer was willing to cooperate (EI1A1) - The customer was willing to share all information about his or her qualifications, past employments and so on (EI1A2) - The customer was willing to answer all questioned asked (EI1A3) - The customer was willing to help with everything he or she could provide from his or her part (EI1A4)	$\alpha = .954$
Expertise to participate (Exp_part)	Employee	- I think the customer has a good knowledge in terms of unemployment support (EI1B1) - I think the customer has experience with the consultancy service of the AMS (EI1B2) - In general, the customer understands the services of the AMS (EI1B3) - In general, the customer understands all aspects of the services of the AMS and its employees (EI1B4) - The customer was in good knowledge about how unemployment support is working in Austria (EI1C1) - The customer knows what is expected of him if he consulted the support of the AMS in Austria (EI1C2) - The customer knows the guidelines and principals of the AMS (EI1C3)	$\alpha = .884$
Willingness to participate (Will_partC)	Customer	- I was willing to cooperate with the AMS employee (CI1A1) - I was willing to share all the necessary with the AMS employee (CI1A2) - I was willing to provide answers to all questions asked (CI1A3) - I was willing to help the AMS employee in whatever he or she need from my side (CI1A4)	$\alpha = .931$
Expertise to participate (Exp_partC)	Customer	- I think I possess a good knowledge of issues related to unemployment support (CI1B1) - I think I am quite experienced in consultations with people from the AMS (CI1B2)	$\alpha = .898$

		• In general, I understand the services provided by unemployment support services like AMS (CI1B3) • In general, I understand almost all aspects of the service provided by the AMS and its employees (CI1B4) • I am well informed about how unemployment support services in in Austria work (CI1C1) • I know what is expected of me if I go to an unemployment support agency like AMS in Austria (CI1C2) • I know all the rules and principles that have to be considered when going to an unemployment support agency like AMS in Austria (CI1C3)	
1a. ID_home	Customer	• I see myself as part of my country of origin (CA2B1) • I feel a strong attachment towards ma country of origin (CA2B2) • I define myself based on my country of origin (CA2B3) • I relate to people from my country of origin with great ease (CA2B4) • I feel a strong attachment to people from my country of origin (CA2B5) • Ethnic values of my home culture play an important role in my life (CA2AC1) • I identify with my home culture (CA2AC2) • I believe that I fit well into my home culture society (CA2AC3)	$\alpha = .922$
1b. ID_host	Customer	• I see myself as part of Austria (CA2D1) • I feel a strong attachment towards Austria (CA2D2) • I define myself based on Austria (CA2D3) • I relate to people from Austria with great ease (CA2D4) • I feel a strong attachment towards people from Austria (CA2D5) • Ethnic values of Austrian culture play an important role in my life (CA2E1) • I identify with the Austrian culture (CA2E2) • I believe that I fit well into Austrian society (CA2E3)	$\alpha = .885$
2. PCD	Customer	• The Austrian ethnicity is very different from mine (CA3E1) • German is very different form my native language (CA3E2) • Customs and culture of Austrians are very different from mine (CA3E3) • Religious beliefs of Austrians are very different from mine (CA3E4)	$\alpha = .811$
3. German	Customer	• Generally, I am comfortable with German language (CA3A1) • I am comfortable with writing in German (CA3A2) • I am comfortable with speaking in German (CA3A3) • I am comfortable with reading and understanding German (CA3A4)	$\alpha = .940$

Appendix B.: Statistical Tables

a) Demographic and Language Information of Customer Respondents

Variable	Category	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	105	46.2
	Female	92	52.8
Age	below 20 years old	13	6.7
	21-29 years old	54	27.8
	30-39 years old	46	23.7
	40-49 years old	41	21.1
	over 50 years old	40	20.6
Highest level of education	Basic	57	28.6
	Secondary	61	30.7
	Matura	35	17.6
	University/FH	30	15.1
	Other	6	7.5
	None	1	.5
Migration Background	Born in Austria	35	17.6
	Not born in Austria	162	81.4
Home country	Serbia	39	19.6
	Turkey	36	18.1
	Syria	21	10.6
	Afghanistan	10	5.0
	Bosnia	10	5.0
	Poland	7	3.5
	Egypt	6	3.0
	Hungary	5	2.5
	Bulgaria	4	2.0
	Croatia	4	2.0
	Other countries	57	28.7
Language use	German	149	74.9
	Turkish	9	4.5
	Arabic	7	3.5
	English	7	3.5
	Serbo-Croatian	5	2.5
	Other	16	11.1

(b) Demographic and Language Information Employees

Variable	Category	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	13	28.9
	Female	31	68.9
Age	21-29 years old	11	23.9
	30-39 years old	14	30.4
	40-49 years old	12	26.1
	over 50 years old	9	19.6
Highest level of education	Secondary	19	42.2
	Matura	13	28.9
	University/FH	10	22.2
	Other	2	4.4
Migration Background	born in Austria	33	73.3
	not born in Austria	4	8.9
	one or both parents were born in a different country	6	13.3
Years at AMS	below 5 years	19	42.2
	5-15 years	23	51.1
	16-30 years	3	6.7
English knowledge	yes	44	97.8
	no	1	2.2
Language knowledge (excluding English)	French	6	13.3
	Italian	4	8.9
	Serbo-Croatian	4	8.9
	Polish	2	4.4
	Turkish	2	4.4
	Other	8	11.1
	Sum	26	51.0
	None or no answer	19	49.0

c) Collinearity

Employee perspective

Model		Collinearity Statistics		Model		Collinearity Statistics	
		Tolerance	VIF			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)			1	(Constant)		
	CB_Empl	1.000	1.000		CB_Empl	1.000	1.000
2	(Constant)			2	(Constant)		
	CB_Empl	0.826	1.211		CB_Empl	0.826	1.211
	ID_home	0.903	1.108		ID_home	0.903	1.108
	ID_host	0.819	1.220		ID_host	0.819	1.220
	PCD	0.867	1.154		PCD	0.867	1.154
	German	0.725	1.379		German	0.725	1.379
a. Dependent Variable: Will_part				a. Dependent Variable: Exp_part			

Customer Perspective

Model		Collinearity Statistics		Model		Collinearity Statistics	
		Tolerance	VIF			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)			1	(Constant)		
	CB_Cust	1.000	1.000		CB_Cust	1.000	1.000
2	(Constant)			2	(Constant)		
	CB_Cust	0.859	1.164		CB_Cust	0.859	1.164
	ID_home	0.880	1.136		ID_home	0.880	1.136
	ID_host	0.802	1.247		ID_host	0.802	1.247
	PCD	0.872	1.147		PCD	0.872	1.147
	German	0.759	1.317		German	0.759	1.317
a. Dependent Variable: Will_part				a. Dependent Variable: Exp_part			

d) Frequencies: Communication Barriers Employee

During the conversation the customer had comprehension problems due to linguistic barriers				During the conversation the customer had linguistic difficulties			
Scale		Frequency	Percent	Scale		Frequency	Percent
Valid	1	101	50.8	Valid	1	100	50.3
	2	25	12.6		2	26	13.1
	3	9	4.5		3	10	5.0
	4	10	5.0		4	13	6.5
	5	15	7.5		5	14	7.0
	6	23	11.6		6	23	11.6
	7	11	5.5		7	9	4.5
	Total	194	97.5		Total	195	98
Missing	System	5	2.5	Missing	System	4	2.0
Total		199	100.0	Total		199	100.0
Mean		2.62		Mean		2.59	

e) Frequencies: Communication Barriers Customer

During the conversation I had comprehension problems due to linguistic barriers				During the conversation the customer had linguistic difficulties			
Scale		Frequency	Percent	Scale		Frequency	Percent
Valid	1	97	48.7	Valid	1	108	54.3
	2	22	11.1		2	20	10.1
	3	8	4.0		3	5	2.5
	4	13	6.5		4	16	8.0
	5	13	6.5		5	15	7.5
	6	18	9.0		6	10	5.0
	7	24	12.1		7	21	10.6
	Total	195	98.0		Total	195	98.0
Missing	System	4	2.0	Missing	System	4	2.0
Total		199	100.0	Total		199	100.0
Mean		2.86		Mean		2.61	

f) Descriptive: Gender Employee

		Frequency	Percent
Valid		1	2.2
	Female	31	68.9
	Male	13	28.9
	Total	45	100.0

g) Descriptive: Age Employees

Range	Min.	Max.
	21	66

h) Years Working at the Austrian Employment Service (AMS)

Years		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2.0	5	11.1	11.1	11.1
	2.5	3	6.7	6.7	17.8
	3.0	9	20.0	20.0	37.8
	3.5	2	4.4	4.4	42.2
	5.0	7	15.6	15.6	57.8
	6.0	5	11.1	11.1	68.9
	7.0	4	8.9	8.9	77.8
	9.0	1	2.2	2.2	80.0
	10.0	1	2.2	2.2	82.2
	12.0	1	2.2	2.2	84.4
	14.0	1	2.2	2.2	86.7
	15.0	3	6.7	6.7	93.3
	19.0	1	2.2	2.2	95.6
	27.0	1	2.2	2.2	97.8
	28.0	1	2.2	2.2	100.0
	Total	45	100.0	100.0	
	Median	5.0			
	Mean	6.9			

i) Migration Background Employees

Country		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid		19	42.2	42.2	42.2
	Albanian	1	2.2	2.2	44.4
	Arabic	1	2.2	2.2	46.7
	French	6	13.3	13.3	60.0
	German	1	2.2	2.2	62.2
	Greek	1	2.2	2.2	64.4
	Hungarian	1	2.2	2.2	66.7
	Italian	4	8.9	8.9	75.6
	Japanese	1	2.2	2.2	77.8
	Polish	2	4.4	4.4	82.2
	Russian	1	2.2	2.2	84.4
	Serbian	2	4.4	4.4	88.9
	Serbo-Croatian	2	4.4	4.4	93.3
	Spanish	1	2.2	2.2	95.6
	Turkish	2	4.4	4.4	100.0
	Total	45	100.0	100.0	