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“How do frontline employees’ characteristics influence customer participation of immigrant customers in service encounters.“

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Abstract

Customer participation is a well-researched concept that describes the extent to which customers actively contribute to a service encounter by communicating in a goal-oriented way and offering relevant information. Existing research in this context has focused on how frontline employees' characteristics impact the level of customer participation of their interaction counterparts. However, literature that additionally includes an intercultural component into this relationship is lacking. Rising numbers of immigration worldwide increase the amount of intercultural service encounters. This demonstrates that adding knowledge to fill this research gap is of great importance. The literature review conducted for this thesis presents findings about the relationships between frontline employees' characteristics and customer participation, frontline employees' characteristics and intercultural encounters, and the connection between immigrant customers and customer participation. It highlights the lack of research that connects all three components. Therefore, a quantitative approach was chosen to add to the existing body of knowledge. Using data from a study conducted in 2019 at the Austrian Employment Service Institution "AMS", a sample of 196 immigrant customers was statistically assessed. Based on the literature review this thesis hypothesizes that cultural intelligence of frontline employees influences customer participation of immigrant customers, specifically their participation behavior and willingness to participate. Secondly, it assumes that frontline employees' communication is related to customer participation of immigrant customers, their behavior and willingness to participate, and to role clarity of immigrant customers. The latter can be understood as an antecedent of customer participation. Lastly, the concept of Personal Agency, an alternative approach to individuals' characteristics, was chosen to further investigate its impact on immigrant customers' participation behavior, their willingness to participate and their satisfaction with the interaction. The analysis revealed that frontline employees' characteristics, more specifically their cultural intelligence, communication abilities and personal agency significantly impact customer participation of immigrant customers. Cultural intelligence significantly impacts immigrant customers' interaction participation behavior. Frontline employees' communication abilities significantly impact immigrant customers' interaction participation behavior, willingness to cooperate and participate, their role clarity. Personal agency was significantly related to immigrant customers' willingness to cooperate and participate and to their interaction satisfaction.

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1. Introduction

Since 1990 the worldwide number of immigrants has risen steadily. In 2020 more than 280 million people were not living in their country of birth (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020). Major drivers for immigration include economic instability, wars, conflicts, and climate change (International Organization for Migration, 2019). Additionally, modern technologies further lead to an increase of international interactions (St. Amant, 2002). Accompanying these developments, intercultural communication has been heavily researched throughout the past decades (Arasaratnam, 2015).

Businesses and institutions, and especially their frontline employees must therefore be prepared for intercultural interactions. Frontline employees in service businesses are those working directly with customers and hence have an important influence on a company's success and service quality (Heskett et al., 1994). Favorable employee characteristics that promote economic efficiency goals and customer satisfaction have been investigated throughout different industries in the past (Alhelalat et al., 2017; Aslam et al., 2022; Tseng, 2019). However, when dealing with intercultural interactions, frontline employees often face additional challenges due to cultural differences (Sizoo et al., 2005). Their lack of understanding for foreign customers' expectations about adequate verbal and non-verbal communication, empathy or norms can lead to dissatisfaction among foreign customers (Stauss & Mang, 1999). Employees who show characteristics like trust, appreciation, and tolerance towards customers with other cultural backgrounds have been found to increase satisfaction among these foreign customers (Barker & Härtel, 2004). As customer satisfaction is mainly determined during the interaction itself, inappropriate employee behaviors and attitudes can have a relevant negative impact on the matter (Stauss & Mang, 1999). Therefore, businesses and institutions must take culturally relevant characteristics of their frontline employees into account when building a workforce that is able to successfully handle cross-cultural encounters (Heskett et al., 1994, Wirtz & Lovelock, 2021). One way of thoroughly analyzing individuals' characteristics, specifically their cross-cultural abilities, is using the four dimensions of cultural intelligence. They categorize and describe individuals' capabilities to understand, interpret and act in a way that is beneficial to cross-cultural encounters. Studies in this area have found that cultural intelligence is a key promoter for cross-cultural negotiation success. To be specific, employees with higher cultural intelligence are more cooperative and show higher motivation

to thoroughly understand the matter in discussion (Imai & Gelfand, 2010). Furthermore, it was shown that higher levels of self-assessed cultural competence among medical professionals improve patients' satisfaction with professionals' responsiveness, explanation of process and encouragement (Fernandez et al., 2004).

By fostering knowledge about verbal and non-verbal communication, norms and standards of different foreign cultures, frontline employees' adaptability to the requirements of cross-cultural interactions (Stauss & Mang, 1999) and intercultural sensitivity (Sizoo et al., 2005) can be increased. This is vital, as the constant delivery of good quality service is an important driver for profitability of service organizations (Zeithaml et al., 1988). As explained above, frontline employees are one contributing factor to this goal (Hesket et al., 1994). Another relevant concept in this context is customer participation (Chan et al., 2010). Customer participation describes the solution-oriented and active engagement of customers throughout service processes (Chan et al., 2010; Lovelock & Young, 1979). It can be linked to increased productivity (Lovelock & Young, 1979), service quality, improved relationships and interaction enjoyment between customers and employees (Chan et al., 2010). Customers' involvement is strongly influenced by their perception of their individual roles within service encounters, which are developed in early stages of life (McNeal, 1964). Therefore, immigrant customers may have low role clarity due to their lack of knowledge about the usual practices in their host country (Stauss & Mang, 1999; Sichtmann & Patak, 2016). In addition, customers' participation is also determined by their level of clarity about the tasks required of them (Lengnick-Hall, 1996; Sichtmann & Patak, 2016) and their ability and motivation to engage and add relevant input to the process (Auh et al., 2007; Lengnick-Hall, 1996). These factors can not only be impacted by immigrant customers' cultural background but also by frontline employees' characteristics and behaviors (Stauss & Mang, 1999; Sichtmann & Patak, 2016).

Existing literature reveals that there is research related to the connections between frontline employees' characteristics and customer participation (Auh et al., 2007; Chan et al., 2010), frontline employees' characteristics and intercultural encounters (Ang et al., 2007; Barker & Härtel, 2004; Sizoo et al., 2005; Stauss & Mang, 1999), and the connection between immigrant customers and customer participation (Chan et al., 2010; Sichtmann & Patak, 2016; Sichtmann et al., 2019). However, literature connecting these three topics is lacking.

Therefore, an empirical approach was chosen to fill this research gap and provide insights on how frontline employees' characteristics influence customer participation of immigrant customers. First, existing literature is analysed to provide a profound theoretical framework of the topic. Secondly, a quantitative analysis is used to test the developed hypotheses. For this step, existing data from a study conducted in 2019 at the Austrian Public Employment Service is used. This study included four different questionnaires. Two of which were handed out before the service encounter between a frontline employee and an immigrant customer and dealt with their characteristics and demographic details. The other two questionnaires were distributed after their interaction and gave both partners the opportunity to assess customer participation and the success of the interaction from their individual perspectives. For the aim of this thesis data from both frontline employee questionnaires and the post-interaction questionnaire for immigrant customers will be used.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Customer Participation

The conceptual definition of customer participation was strongly influenced by research contributions of Lovelock and Young (1979), Wikström (1996), Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004), and Grönroos (2008) (Mustak et al., 2013). It can be defined as the involvement of customers in services (Lovelock & Young, 1979) or as the extent to which customers disclose information, offer opinions or ideas, and partake in decision making processes (Chan et al., 2010). Early literature described the participation of customers in service encounters as co-production and focused on economic goals (Lovelock & Young, 1979). In a marketing context, customer participation is often used to measure customers' behavior that contributes to solution-oriented communication during a service encounter (Auh et al., 2007; Chan et al., 2010).

Therefore, for the purpose of this work, **customer participation** is defined as the extent to which customers actively participate in a service encounter (Lovelock & Young, 1979) by offering valuable information (Chan et al., 2010) and willingly communicating in a solution-oriented manner (Auh et al., 2007; Chan et al., 2010).

2.1.1. Advantages and Disadvantages

Customer participation has been linked to an array of **advantages** for businesses and institutions in existing literature. The following list provides an overview and demonstrates the importance of customer participation.

- Customer participation increases productivity and efficiency as customers are elevated from mere consumers to active co-producers of value (Wikström, 1996; Lovelock & Young, 1979).
- By facilitating customers to co-produce, competitive advantages can be generated (Meuter et al., 2005; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).
- The perceived quality of services can be increased due to the integration of customers throughout the whole service encounter (Dabholkar, 1990).

- Customer participation can improve the rate of success and goal attainment (Chan et al., 2010).
- By encouraging customer participation, higher service quality and customer satisfaction can be reached (Gallan et al., 2013, Meuter et al., 2005).
- Customer participation can positively influence relationships and the interaction enjoyment between customers and employees (Chan et al., 2010).
- By actively participating in service encounters customers gain more detailed knowledge of service attributes involved and thereby become better judges of the quality (Auh et al., 2007; Gallan et al., 2013).
- Customers can achieve more customized and satisfactory service outcomes if they show good levels of participation and work together with frontline employees (Auh et al., 2007).

Despite all advantages mentioned above, literature has also revealed **negative effects and risks** including heightened stress levels and lower job satisfaction for employees. Customer participation can create job stress among employees from reduced control over interactions, uncertainty about customers' behaviors and rising demands for skills necessary to perform their service (Chan et al., 2010). Another negative result can derive from the occurrence of the self-serving bias. It describes the tendency of customers to more likely take the praise than to take the blame after participating in the service process. By giving customers the choice of whether they want to participate or not, they become more likely to accept both praise and blame. Companies, that expect their services to sometimes fail customers' expectations should promote the option of participation to reduce their share of blame for non-satisfactory outcomes (Bendapudi & Leone, 2003). The self-serving bias can further be reduced through a close relationship between the customer and the employee (Campbell et al., 2000). Even if closeness results only from experimental manipulation, it still reduces the negative impact of the bias (Sedikides et al., 1998).

2.1.2. Antecedents and Related Concepts

There are a variety of related concepts, influential factors, antecedents, and challenges connected to customer participation. Therefore, companies and institutions must deeper

understand customer participation as a concept to be able to utilize its advantages and reduce the risk of negative effects. Therefore, existing literature was examined and is presented in the following paragraphs.

Customer participation can be achieved by actively prompting customers to co-operate, communicate and co-create (Wikström, 1996; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). The level of customers' participation is determined by their level of clarity about the tasks required of them (Lengnick-Hall, 1996; Sichtmann & Patak, 2016) and their ability and motivation to engage and add relevant input to the process of an interaction (Auh et al., 2007; Lengnick-Hall, 1996). Customers who understand what is expected and required of them during service encounters possess good **role clarity** (Meuter et al., 2005; Sichtmann & Patak, 2016) and **task clarity** and are thereby more likely to achieve better service results (Mills et al., 1983; Auh et al., 2007). Insufficient task clarity can be reduced through communication with frontline employees (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2000; Auh et al., 2007). **Communication** can be considered an antecedent of customer participation, due to the importance of successfully communicating information, strategies, and expectations (Auh et al., 2007). **Customer ability** describes customers' capability to contribute relevant and valuable input to a service encounter (Auh et al., 2007). Expertise on the topic in discussion is a key factor for promoting customer ability (Kelley et al., 1990; Auh et al., 2007). In addition to knowing what is required of them and having the necessary ability to contribute, customers must also have a **willingness to actively participate** in a service encounter (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2000; Auh et al., 2007).

Aligning with these findings, Meuter and colleagues (2005) have combined role clarity, motivation, and ability to create the concept of **consumer readiness**. It describes a status in which customers are likely to engage in desired service behavior. Their research efforts found that consumer readiness is a relevant predictor for determining customers' likelihood of trying out new self-service technologies. Even if customers appreciate service offerings and have a positive attitude towards them, they may still refrain from engaging. Consumer readiness was found to be an explanatory answer for this issue. Those who are insecure how to fulfill their role, lack motivation to participate or doubt their own ability to do so, may refrain from engaging in new service opportunities. Therefore, new customers should be guided through the

service process with great care, to positively influence the three components of consumer readiness and subsequently profit from effective customer coproduction (Meuter et al., 2005).

Another topic that determines the level of customers' participation is their **emotional affect** (Price et al., 1995). In general, positive and negative emotional states have been found to impact customers' behaviors, thoughts, and receptiveness. While positive affects contribute to a productive state of mind, negative affects block and irritate customers (Clore & Huntsinger, 2007). Gallan and colleagues connected these findings to customer participation and thereby contributed important research. Their efforts found that positive emotional states of customers lead to higher motivation and ability to show behaviors of customer participation. This in turn increases the overall outcome quality of services and customer's perception of their service experiences. Therefore, assessing customers' affect before service interactions could offer valuable information for frontline employees (Gallan et al., 2013). Their research defined "customer positivity as an antecedent to customer participation" (Gallan et al., 2013, p. 350).

2.1.3. Derived Constructs (ICOB, WTC)

Based on the existing literature presented in this chapter and closely following the example of Gallan and colleagues (2013) and Auh and colleagues (2007) two constructs were created to further define and investigate customer participation for the purpose of this work. While one concentrates on the participation behavior itself, the other construct deals with customers' willingness to participate.

- First, **Interaction Participation Behavior** (ICOB) deals with customers' participation behavior during an interaction with an employee. More specifically, it measures behaviors like actively engaging, discussing, and making an effort to participate in an interaction. This is based on the work of Gallan and colleagues (2013).
- Secondly, the construct **Willingness to Participate and Cooperate** (WTC) was created to measure customers' willingness to cooperate, share information, and provide answers throughout an interaction with an employee. WTC is based on the work of Gallan and colleagues (2013) and Auh and colleagues (2007).

2.2. Service Encounters

This section aims to offer deeper insights to service encounters, as they are the setting in which frontline employees and customers interact and participation can occur. At the base of this concept lies the term **service**. When “the primary or core product offering is intangible” (Gremler, 2004, p. 71), it can be considered a service. Nonetheless, tangible components can also be part of a service but are not the key element (Gremler, 2004).

When taking a step further and looking at the term **service encounter**, many different definitions can be found: Stauss and Mang described it as “the contact situation between service customer and service provider” (Stauss & Mang, 1999, p. 330). Shostack defined it as “a period of time during which the customer directly interacts with a service” (Shostack, 1985, p. 243). Therefore, for the purpose of this work, service encounters are defined as interactions between customers and employees (Stauss & Mang, 1999) where a predominantly intangible offering is pursued (Gremler, 2004)

Businesses and institutions must be aware of the different components that can be involved in service encounters and learn how they are usable to generate advantages (Stauss & Mang, 1999). Due to the complexity of service encounters three main fields of research can be identified:

- The impact of service employees’ behavior on customers’ perceived satisfaction was examined (Bitner et al., 1990; Bitner, 1990).
- The influence of the service environment on both customers and employees was investigated (Bitner, 1992; Kotler, 1973).
- The impact of customers on other customers’ satisfaction with service experiences was studied (Brocato et al., 2012, Grove & Fisk, 1997, Martin & Pranter, 1989).

For this thesis, neither the impact of the service environment nor the influence of other customers are of interest. Therefore, this work can be subcategorized under the first field of

service encounter research listed, as it deals with the impact of frontline employees' characteristics on customers' participation.

2.2.1. Interaction Satisfaction

Whether customers are satisfied with a service encounter is mainly determined during the interaction itself (Stauss & Mang, 1999). Hence, it is of great importance for businesses and institutions to deliver constant, high-quality service (Zeithaml et al., 1988). Various research projects have examined the overlying question of sources for customer satisfaction in the context of service encounters (Bitner, 1990; Walker, 1995). To achieve satisfactory service quality for both customers and providers, customers' expectations need to be met or surpassed, and providers performance measures must be reached (Stauss & Mang, 1999). Therefore, closely managing the quality of service encounters and understanding the most influential factors should be a priority for businesses and institutions (Stauss & Mang, 1999). Both frontline employees and customers play a central role during these interactions (Stauss & Mang, 1999). As stated in chapter 2.1. customer satisfaction is strongly linked to customer participation (Auh et al., 2007; Gallan et al., 2013; Meuter et al., 2005).

2.2.2. Intercultural Service Encounters

According to Stauss and Mang an **intercultural service encounter** is "called inter-cultural if the service provider and the customer involved belong to different cultures" (Stauss & Mang, 1999, p. 331).

Various authors have dealt with the definition of **culture** in the past (Kluckhohn, 1951; Hofstede, 1981; Hall, 1976; Keesing, 1974). Hofstede (1981) defines the way individuals behave in specific situations as mental programming. A group of people with similar programming share languages, food preferences, greeting habits, acts of courtesy, and other conventions. This collective programming can be understood as culture. Therefore, culture connects individuals with similar programming and differentiates their group from others. It characterizes individuals and influences how they interact with their surroundings. Culture is passed on throughout generations and assists in stabilizing groups (Hofstede, 1981). As a part of culture, values describe the irrational "tendency to prefer certain states of affairs over others" (Hofstede, 1981, p. 19). As soon as these preferences are shared by a group of people, they

become norms. After birth, one's group and surroundings influence the values and norms that are learned by them (Hofstede, 1981).

Keesing's (1974) interpretations of culture align with the findings of Hofstede. However, as Keesing's definition focuses on characteristics and cultural attitudes of individuals, it summarizes the concept very fittingly to the context of this thesis. He defines culture as "...all of what an individual knows and thinks and feels about his world. It is his theory of what his fellows know, believe and mean, his theory of the code being followed..." (Keesing, 1974, p. 89).

Intercultural service encounters can therefore be understood as interactions between customers and businesses or their employees, where the parties involved come from different cultural backgrounds (Stauss & Mang, 1999), and pursue a predominantly intangible offering (Gremmler, 2004).

As interactions between people from different cultures are on the rise, due to migration movements and modern technologies (International Organization for Migration, 2019; St. Amant, 2002) this topic is highly relevant.

Culture does not only impact groups and individuals but also strongly affects businesses and institutions. Their goals, decision-making processes, internal structures, and perceptions of competence are impacted by the predominant culture and the corresponding values. Not only the business or institution itself, but also their employees are affected. It influences their communication, ideas, reasoning for following the organizational rules and how their work is monitored. Culture also influences external stakeholders, which in turn also impact businesses and institutions. Examples for such external stakeholders are competitors, media, administration, or the public (Hofstede, 1981). Considering how strong culture's impact on businesses or institutions and their employees can be (Hofstede, 1981), it is of great importance to deeper understand and adapt to the challenges of intercultural service encounters. This includes training and selecting frontline employees with suitable characteristics (Stauss &

Mang, 1999; Barker & Härtel, 2004) and understanding and assisting foreign customers (Auh et al., 2007; Lengnick-Hall, 1996).

2.2.2.1. Public Employment Service in Austria

The Austrian public employment service provider **AMS** is an institution where intercultural service encounters are an important part of the daily business (AMS, 2022b). AMS is an abbreviation for the German term for the institution ‘Arbeitsmarktservice’ and is used in this thesis to refer to it.

Moreover, as intercultural service encounters at the AMS between frontline employees and immigrant customers are the context for the empirical analysis of this thesis, this section aims to offer deeper insights into the areas of responsibility and the relevance of this institution.

In general, public employment service institutions work closely with two parties on the job market. They aim at providing job seekers with open positions and businesses with suitable employees (Sowa et al., 2015). Therefore, there are two main groups that can be interpreted as the institutions’ customers.

- **Job seekers** receive support to enter or reenter the job market. They are urged to accept open positions as quickly as possible (Sowa et al., 2015). In the case of Austria, unemployed people have a right to receive unemployment benefits, if they fulfill the necessary requirements (Oesterreich.gv.at, 2022). To uphold their eligibility certain obligations must be met. If they do not meet these requirements, which include attending training programs or sending out applications, penalties can be applied. This creates pressure among job seekers to accept offerings (Sowa et al., 2015). In Austria, job seekers meet regularly with a frontline employee of the AMS to work on the goals of finding a new job (AMS, 2022a). Aligning with the theory on service encounters, the AMS and its employees offer the intangible service of assisting their customers during this process. If the service is successful, the employee facilitates a job for his or her customer. If not, the customer will further consume the service until the goal is reached, due to the existing rules and regulations about unemployment benefits (Oesterreich.gv.at, 2022).

- **Businesses with open positions** receive assistance in finding suitable candidates. However, there is no pressure towards businesses to accept applicants or to contribute additional open positions to the portfolio of the institution (Sowa et al., 2015).

As this thesis concentrates on the interaction of frontline employees and immigrant job seekers, the term customers is used to refer to them and not to businesses who are looking for new candidates.

The AMS is an essential institution in Austria, as it not only engages in the above listed tasks, but also offers other employment-related services including trainings, legal advice, and career counseling. It furthermore handles the Austrian unemployment insurance system. Moreover, the AMS supports people who aim at starting their own businesses (AMS, n.d.). The AMS regularly releases reports on its activities on its website, including the unemployment situation of immigrants in the nine different regions of Austria. The report for the Austrian capital city and region with the highest population, Vienna, shows that 47.677 men and women with an immigrational background were unemployed in October 2022. This number shows a decrease of 15.2% in comparison to its value of the previous year. More than 22.000 of them were participating in job trainings with AMS in October 2022. The largest groups of unemployed immigrants in Vienna come from Germany, Bosnia, Croatia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Turkey, and Hungary (AMS, 2022b). However, as presented in figure 1, more than 50% of unemployed immigrants stem from other countries than those listed.

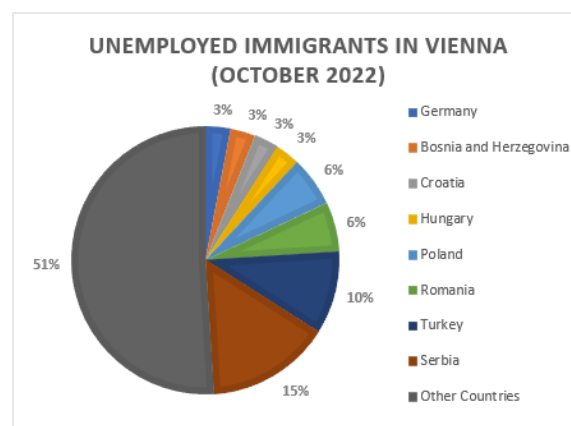


Figure 1: Pie Chart of Unemployed Immigrants in Vienna (October 2022) (AMS, 2022b)

This shows how diverse the group of unemployed people with immigrational background is. Hence, successfully dealing with immigrant customers in intercultural encounters is an essential part of business for the AMS and its frontline employees.

2.3. Immigrant Customers

Before providing deeper insights on existing literature on immigrant customers, the term itself must be examined. The International Organization for Migration defines the term **Immigrant** as follows:

From the perspective of the country of arrival, a person who moves into a country other than that of his or her nationality or usual residence, so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence. (IOM, n.d., para. 26)

Another term that is often used in this context is Migrant. **Migrant** is considered an umbrella term for a variety of legally-defined people groups and describes “a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons” (IOM, n.d., para. 39). Hence, immigration deals with the movement of people across international borders with the intent to create a new residence at the foreign target country, while migration includes movements within states and across borders for a variety of reasons and targets (IOM, n.d.).

Therefore, the definitions of the terms immigrant and immigration fit the purpose of this work best and are therefore used throughout this work.

2.3.1. Relevance of Immigrant Customers

The global number of migrants has risen continuously since 1990. In 2020, more than 280 million people were living in a country different to that of their birth (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020). Various reasons for migration and immigration exist, including economic instability, wars, conflicts, and climate change (International Organization for Migration, 2020). Regardless of the reason for their desertion of their birth country, immigrants aim to stay long-term and create a new life in their host

country (IOM, n.d.). Therefore, they become a relevant part of the host countries' economy (OECD, 2014). As immigrants most likely belong to an ethnic minority in their host country, immigrant customers expect intercultural encounters, where their cultural background and that of the host country meet (Sichtmann & Micevski, 2018). Especially in service encounters with high social contact, cultural backgrounds have a relevant influence on customers' mindsets and behaviors (Mattila, 1999). Their cultural background also impacts the evaluation of services, as different cultures prioritize different aspects to determine quality (Mattila, 1999; Winsted, 1997).

2.3.2. Customer Participation of Immigrant Customers

Although this work analyses customer participation with a focus on the influence of employee characteristics, this chapter highlights existing findings in the context of customer participation of immigrant customers.

Customers' participation is strongly influenced by their perceptions of their individual roles within service encounters, which are developed in early stages of life (McNeal, 1964). Therefore, immigrant customers, may have low **role clarity** due to their lack of knowledge about the common practices in their host country (Stauss & Mang, 1999; Sichtmann & Patak, 2016). In addition, customers' participation is also determined by their level of **clarity about the tasks** required of them (Lengnick-Hall, 1996; Sichtmann & Patak, 2016) and their ability and motivation to engage and **add relevant input** to the process (Auh et al., 2007; Lengnick-Hall, 1996). These factors are also strongly impacted by immigrant customers' cultural background (Stauss & Mang, 1999; Sichtmann & Patak, 2016). Fassaert and colleagues found that **language fluency** is an important factor for participating in services as it is the basis for effective communication and social interaction (Fassaert et al., 2009). This can impose a challenge for some immigrants. Institutions could offer informative materials for customers in different languages to meet their language skills and overcome possible language barriers (Fassaert et al., 2009). Due to cultural differences immigrant customers might show behaviors during cross-cultural encounters that are unexpected to service employees. Stauss and Mang define this as an "inter-cultural customer performance gap". This can lead to dissatisfaction among both frontline employees and immigrant customers (Stauss & Mang, 1999).

2.3.3. Derived Constructs (SAT, ROCL)

Based on the literature presented in this chapter, two constructs were developed, one to measure customers' interaction satisfaction and a second one to measure costumers' role clarity.

- The construct **Interaction Satisfaction** (SAT) was created to measure customers' level of satisfaction with an interaction. It is based on existing research done by Homburg and colleagues (2005). It specifically focuses on determining whether the services provided met customers' expectations and whether the employees' services were of satisfactory quality for customers.
- The construct **Role Clarity** (ROCL) measures and represents the degree of customers' knowledge about what is expected of them, and what rules and regulations apply in specific service encounters. This construct is based on the research of Meuter and colleagues (2005).

2.4. Frontline Employees

Frontline employees are those working directly with customers. Therefore, they have a strong impact on a company's success and, in the case of service businesses, on service quality (Heskett et al., 1994). Favorable employee characteristics that contribute to economic efficiency targets and customer satisfaction have been researched throughout different industries in the past (Alhelalat et al., 2017; Aslam et al., 2022; Tseng, 2019). The impact of employee characteristics on customer participation has also been investigated (Auh et al., 2007; Chan et al., 2010). Another field where scientific efforts have created knowledge, analysed the relationship of employee characteristics and intercultural encounters (Ang et al., 2007; Barker & Härtel, 2004; Sizoo et al., 2005; Stauss & Mang, 1999). However, research that combines all of these areas and looks at how employees' characteristics influence customer participation of immigrant customers is lacking. Therefore, the following sections aim at presenting the existing knowledge on these interactions and concepts to build a profound base for the hypothesis development and empirical analysis.

2.4.1. Frontline Employees' Characteristics and Customer Participation

As described in section 2.1., customer participation can be influenced by a variety of factors. One important influence are frontline employees and their characteristics (Auh et al., 2007). Characteristics are an important part of an individuals' personality and research found that it is "the characteristics or blend of characteristics that make a person unique" (Weinberg & Gould, 1999, p. 50). Therefore, the following paragraphs present existing knowledge on how frontline employees' characteristics are connected to customer participation.

Possessing good **communication** skills and being able to share knowledge in a simple and understandable manner is important for employees when dealing with complex service tasks (Auh et al., 2007). Customers who understand the matter of discussion are more likely to actively participate (Meuter et al., 2005). Employees who can successfully communicate expectations and requirements to their customers can increase their task and role clarity and thereby elevate their likelihood to show behaviors of customer participation (Auh et al., 2007; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2000; Mills et al., 1983). Frontline employees can promote participation by **motivating** their customers to co-operate, communicate and co-create (Wikström, 1996; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

As customer participation adds more uncertainty to service encounters, frontline employees need characteristics like **flexibility** and **responsiveness** to effectively deal with that (Auh et al., 2007; Chan et al., 2010). During service encounters frontline employees cannot control the way customers participate. Yet, the way they deal with customers' behaviors has influence on what results are achieved from interactions. Therefore, **problem-solving** and coping abilities to manage strong emotions on both their and their customers' sides are relevant characteristics amongst employees (Chan et al., 2010). Fostering positive emotional states among customers can increase their motivation and ability to show behaviors of customer participation. Therefore, employees need the ability to read customers' emotions and adapt their own behavior accordingly (Gallan et al., 2013).

Additionally, customer participation can profit from stronger **personal relationships** between customers and frontline employees. Therefore, employees should be able and willing to form these stronger connections (Auh et al., 2007). Customer participation can promote relationships

and enhance the interaction enjoyment between customers and employees (Chan et al., 2010). **Approachable** employees can foster customer participation by allowing customers to feel comfortable to share personal information. Valuable insights can be gathered from customers' active participation, including their individual goals, current situation, procedure preferences, and tolerances towards taking risks (Gallan et al., 2013).

In businesses and institutions where customer participation is newly introduced as a goal, employees need to be **accepting** of the fact that customers become co-creators of services which changes their procedures and workflows (Chan et al., 2010).

2.4.1.1. Personal Agency

An alternative approach to looking at peoples' personalities and characteristics was created by Vallacher and Wegner. The two researchers developed the **action identification theory** to analyse individuals' behavior (Vallacher & Wegner, 1989). In their work they question the concept of traits as explanatory factors for behavior and suggest that cognitive hierarchies and identification levels are more suitable to monitor regularities in individuals' behavior (Vallacher & Wegner, 1989).

The authors state that based on cognitive hierarchies "any action can be identified in many ways, ranging from low-level identities that specify how the action is performed to high-level identities that signify why or with what effect the action is performed" (Vallacher & Wegner, 1989, p. 660). Based on action identification theory, they later developed the concept of **personal agency** (Vallacher & Wegner, 1989). Personal agency can be understood as a dimension that represents to what extent people have cognitively connected their actions to broader consequences and deeper meanings. It divides people into two distinct groups. Individuals who predominantly concentrate on the steps or specific components of different actions, are called low-level agents with lower personal agency. Those, who mainly focus their thoughts on the meaning, implication or repercussion of activities are considered high-level agents with higher personal agency. Therefore, low-level agents attach higher difficulty levels to actions (Vallacher & Wegner, 1989, Vallacher & Wegner, 1987). They are more prone to errors and must concentrate on specific details of activities (Vallacher & Wegner, 1989).

Which level of identity is applied in different dimensions depends on individuals' understanding, familiarity or capability for the acts in question (Vallacher & Wegner, 1989). Therefore, one person may understand high-level implications for acts in some areas but use low-level identities for others. Difficult or new situations lead individuals to choose lower-level identities, as they concentrate on the specific mechanisms or details of the performance required. Another situation where lower levels of identities are chosen is when higher identities have not led to the desired success and the behavior must be changed. When people are able to identify their acts in their factual consequences, social implications and personal meanings, the highest level of identification is reached (Vallacher & Wegner, 1989). Moreover, individuals tend to choose identities of higher levels when two or more are possible for them (Wegner et al., 1986). Hence, when individuals who formerly thought of an activity with low level identities are presented with higher levels of identification that are understandable and sensible to them they can apply them and change their behavior in this act. The level of identity chosen must be suitable for the action at hand. Applying high-level identities to new and unfamiliar acts often leads to dissatisfactory outcomes. However, high-level agents are more likely to identify the necessary level of identity to successfully perform the act (Vallacher & Wegner, 1989).

Personal agency can provide insights into individuals' personality. It also explains activity effectiveness, activity planning and self-understanding. High-level agents are linked to higher effectiveness, as they possess a larger variety of skilled actions and a greater number of relevant experiences than their low-level counterparts (Vallacher & Wegner, 1989). High-level agents are furthermore more resistant to outside disruptions or cues as their action plan is rooted on broad knowledge and understanding. For low-level agents even subtle cues can lead to a reevaluation of their plan, impulsive behavior, and a change of action. When it comes to self-understanding, high-level agents were found to show a stronger understanding of their abstract behavioral tendencies than low-level agents. Furthermore, it was found that high-level agents are less receptive to feedback including high-level identities than low-level agents (Vallacher & Wegner, 1989). This is due to the fact that high-level agents were more confident in their traits and meaning of their activities (Vallacher & Wegner, 1989, Wegner et al., 1986).

The overall level of personal agency of individuals is derived by reviewing their answers on the **Behavior Identification Form** which includes 60 activities with one corresponding low-level and one high-level identity. Respondents are prompted to select the statement that best characterizes each activity for them. The result for personal agency arises from the sum of high-level statements selected (Vallacher & Wegner, 1989). To provide deeper understanding for readers one example is given here. The dimension “Eating” includes the two identities “Chewing and Swallowing” and “Getting nutrition”. The low-level item in this example is “Chewing and Swallowing” and the high-level identity is “Getting nutrition”. The low-level identity describes the mechanics of the act “Eating”, while the high-level alternative “Getting nutrition” focuses on the meaning and consequences of “Eating” (Vallacher & Wegner, 1989).

2.4.1.2. Cultural Intelligence in Frontline Employees

When dealing with intercultural interactions cultural differences can create challenges for frontline employees in service encounters. To avoid problems and satisfy foreign customers providers should aim to employ interculturally sensitive personnel (Sizoo et al., 2005). If employees lack understanding for foreign customers’ expectations about adequate verbal and non-verbal communication, empathy, or norms, it can lead to dissatisfaction among foreign customers (Stauss & Mang, 1999). Employees who show characteristics like trust, appreciation, and tolerance towards customers with other cultural backgrounds have been found to increase satisfaction among foreign customers (Barker & Härtel, 2004). Furthermore, research found that immigrant customers are more likely to show customer participation and contribute to the creation of value if they share cultural values with the frontline employees involved (Chan et al., 2010).

One way of thoroughly analyzing individuals’ characteristics in this context, specifically their cross-cultural abilities, is using the concept of **cultural intelligence**. The term cultural intelligence is defined as the “capability to function effectively in culturally diverse settings” (Ang et al., 2007, p 335). Thereby, it includes individuals’ abilities to understand, interpret and act in way that is beneficial to cross-cultural encounters. It is based on a framework from Earley and Ang (2003) and therefore includes the metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral dimension. The latter is the only dimension not representing a process that runs solely in the brain but describes a visible behavior (Earley & Ang, 2003). The different

dimensions are relevant in predicting intercultural effectiveness outcomes like cultural judgment and decision making, cultural adaptation, and task performance in cross-cultural interactions (Ang et al., 2007). Before highlighting these connections, the four dimensions are explained in detail:

- The **metacognitive dimension** reflects mental capabilities that are necessary to gain and comprehend cultural knowledge. Furthermore, it describes the ability of individuals to reflect on and change their own assumptions and models about people or norms from other cultures. People who possess high levels of metacognitive cultural intelligence are more likely to understand and assess cultural preferences of their counterparts throughout encounters (Ang et al., 2007; Flavell, 1979; Triandis, 2006).
- The second dimension, the **cognitive cultural intelligence**, stands for the specific knowledge about different culture's norms, values, practices, economic and social standards, or legal systems that individuals have gained during their life (Ang et al., 2007, Triandis, 2006).
- The **motivational dimension** of cultural intelligence represents individuals' ability to focus their energy and effort on understanding and successfully navigating through cross-cultural situations (Ang et al., 2007). When this dimension is strongly pronounced in individuals it derives from individuals' high intrinsic aspiration and belief in their ability to successfully interact with people from another cultural backgrounds (Bandura, 2002; Deci and Ryan, 1985).
- The last dimension, the **behavioral cultural intelligence** describes the ability to use fitting words and actions when communicating in intercultural scenarios. Individuals with high levels of behavioral cultural intelligence therefore possess a large repertoire of communication skills ranging from body language to vocabulary (Ang et al., 2007).

Ang and colleagues' research efforts have investigated which dimensions most prominently influence different **intercultural effectiveness measures**. Metacognitive and cognitive cultural intelligence have a positive impact on the effectiveness of individuals' cultural judgement and **decision making**. In the context of cross-cultural encounters, successful judgment and decision making is based on the mental process of comprehending cultural particularities and deriving

suitable interpretations while considering cultural norms and values. Broad cultural knowledge contributes to this (Ang et al., 2007). The other two dimensions, motivational and behavioral cultural intelligence, show a positive relationship with **cultural adaption**. Ang and colleagues argue that focusing energy on a challenging intercultural situation and additionally behaving in an appropriate manner are relevant skills for mastering cross-cultural encounters (Ang et al., 2007). **Task performance** is positively influenced by metacognitive and behavioral intelligence. Individuals with high levels of behavioral intelligence choose appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication in order to adapt to others' needs in the process of task performance. Additionally, through metacognitive intelligence individuals benefit from applying and tailoring their cultural knowledge to specific situations and are able to adapt when required (Ang et al., 2007).

2.4.2. Employers' Impact on Frontline Employees

Although it is clear that frontline employees' characteristics play an important role when it comes to customer participation and intercultural service encounters, it is also important to mention that **businesses and institutions** must consider what can be done on a superior level.

To foster customer participation their overall culture and values must be aligned with the relevant characteristics, as they are actively or passively communicated to the customer through the employees (Kelley et al., 1990). In organizations or businesses where customer participation has not been a priority in the past changes in their business culture are necessary to effectively incorporate the concept (Auh et al., 2007).

Furthermore, services must be designed in a way that allows employees to behave and show the characteristics that encourage customer participation. Encounters must be planned with room for employees to create personalized and unique experiences for their customers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Moreover, employees should have the possibility to build strong relationships with their customers, as customers participate more efficiently with employees who they share a personal bond with (Chan et al., 2010). Overall, businesses and institutions must offer trainings for employees to develop and strengthen characteristics that encourage participation among customers and manage the resulting challenges successfully

(Chan et al., 2010). For new hires, recruiting requirements need to be adapted to prioritize characteristics that facilitate customer participation (Chan et al., 2010).

When it comes to intercultural encounters, businesses and institutions must educate their employees. Trainings about verbal and non-verbal communication, norms, and standards of a variety of foreign cultures, increases their adaptability to the requirements of cross-cultural interactions (Stauss & Mang, 1999). Moreover, understanding the relationships and effects of the four different dimensions of cultural intelligence could be used to create tailored employee trainings and strengthen corresponding abilities (Ang et al., 2007). The concept of cultural intelligence could also be used during the hiring process to determine whether applicants are likely to successfully handle intercultural encounters or not (Ang et al., 2007).

2.4.3. Derived Constructs (COMM, PEAG, CQ)

Based on the existing literature presented in this chapter and closely following existing research approaches, three constructs were created to investigate employees' characteristics for the purpose of this work.

- The construct **Communication** (COMM) represents employees' abilities to successfully communicate information, explanations, and recommendations to customers. This construct was created in accordance with the research of Auh and colleagues (2007).
- **Personal Agency** (PEAG) as an alternative approach to using characteristics, is an interesting concept that is therefore also used in the empirical analysis of this work. For this purpose, a shortened version of the Behavior Identification Form was created that includes only 10 of the originally 60 activities and their corresponding low-level and high-level identities. A more detailed overview of this can be found in chapter 3.3.1.
- The four **Cultural Intelligence Dimensions** (MECQ, CCQ, MOCQ, BCQ) developed by Ang and colleagues (2007) were adapted to fit the scenario of the empirical study of this work. These constructs are used to measure employees' cultural intelligence, while providing individual insights for each dimension.

2.5. Hypotheses Development

This section presents the hypotheses created for the empirical analysis. The development of hypotheses is a crucial step, as it serves as the basis for statistical testing. Therefore, they are derived by applying findings from the conducted literature analysis in section 2 to the research purpose of this work.

While examining how frontline employees' characteristics influence customer participation among immigrant customers, three focus areas are tested: the impact of frontline employees' cultural intelligence (Ang et al., 2007), of their communication abilities (Auh et al., 2007) and their personal agency (Vallacher & Wegner, 1989).

2.5.1. Impact of Employees' Cultural Intelligence

Cultural intelligence is a concept that allows to measure individuals' cross-cultural abilities. For this purpose, it divides cultural intelligence into four distinct dimensions. The first dimension, the metacognitive cultural intelligence represents mental capabilities that allow individuals to comprehend and assume cultural preferences of their interaction counterparts. Cognitive cultural intelligence on the other hand measures specific knowledge about other cultures like norms, practices, or social standards. High levels in these two dimensions were found to impact and improve individuals' judgement and decision-making in intercultural interactions. The third dimension, where individuals are able to purposefully channel their energy and effort is called motivational cultural intelligence. Lastly, the behavioral cultural intelligence represents the actual words and actions individuals use in intercultural encounters. The latter two dimensions were found to be linked to high cultural adaption. Additionally, metacognitive, and behavioral cultural intelligence were found to positively impact individuals' task performance (Ang et al., 2007).

Research shows that characteristics like flexibility and responsiveness towards costumers are positively related to customer participation (Auh et al., 2007; Chan et al., 2010). This can be connected to abilities of the metacognitive and behavioral dimension of cultural intelligence (Ang et al., 2007). Solving problems and making sound decisions in intercultural encounters were also found to be important abilities for employees dealing with customer participation (Chan et al., 2010). This corresponds to metacognitive cultural intelligence (Ang et al., 2007). Furthermore, the capability of making valid assumptions about customers' preferences and

needs, and adapting one's behavior accordingly promotes customers' willingness to participate (Gallan et al., 2013). This aligns with the metacognitive and behavioral dimension of cultural intelligence (Ang et al., 2007). Using appropriate means of communication is also considered an antecedent for customer participation (Auh et al., 2007) which can be connected to cognitive and behavioral cultural intelligence (Ang et al., 2007). Being accepting towards new procedures or situations due to customers' involvement in the service encounter was found to be an important characteristic for employees dealing with customer participation (Chan et al., 2010). The metacognitive and motivational dimension of cultural intelligence align with these findings (Ang et al., 2007).

Overall, cultural intelligence can be used to predict intercultural effectiveness outcomes (Ang et al., 2007). This can be linked to other research findings showing that customer participation is also a major driver of effectiveness (Lovelock & Young, 1979; Wikström, 1996). Imai and Gelfand found cultural intelligence to be a major promotor for intercultural negotiation success as employees with higher cultural intelligence performed better (Imai & Gelfand, 2010). This aligns with the findings of Earley and Ang, that individuals who possess more cultural intelligence behave more beneficially and offer more understanding in cross-cultural interactions (Earley & Ang, 2003).

The findings of this section allow the following assumptions. Frontline employees' cultural intelligence influences encounters with immigrant customers. More specifically, it affects the customer participation of immigrant customers. Customers' participation behavior during the encounter and their willingness to participate and cooperate (Auh et al., 2007, Gallan et al., 2013) are key determinants for their customer participation. Hence, the two hypotheses listed below were created to investigate these assumptions.

H1: Frontline employees' cultural intelligence influences immigrant customers' interaction participation behavior.

H2: Frontline employees' cultural intelligence influences immigrant customers' willingness to cooperate.

2.5.2. Impact of Employees' Communication Abilities

Frontline employees' capability to convey knowledge in a simple and understandable manner is an important characteristic when aiming at promoting customer participation (Auh et al., 2007). This is due to the fact that customers who are able to follow the discussion are more likely and willing to actively participate (Meuter et al., 2005). Major customer participation drivers like customers' task and role clarity can also be promoted by effective communication (Auh et al., 2007; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2000). By good communication employees can guide customers through service encounters where they feel insecure and have low role clarity (Meuter et al., 2005). However, in intercultural encounters employees face the challenge of understanding immigrant customers' expectations about adequate verbal and non-verbal communication, empathy, and norms (Stauss & Mang, 1999). Knowledge about cultural standards, understanding for differences, motivation to put effort towards the encounter and to adapt one's verbal and non-verbal communication, are important abilities for successful employees in intercultural encounters (Ang et al., 2007). Meeting customers' expectations and needs is necessary to achieve satisfaction among customers with diverse cultural backgrounds (Stauss & Mang, 1999). Possessing knowledge about intercultural communication allows frontline employees to adapt more efficiently to different cross-cultural interactions (Stauss & Mang, 1999).

These findings from existing literature suggest a relationship between frontline employees' communication abilities and customer participation. Additionally, it is assumed that this connection is also applicable to intercultural encounters, as literature shows that they also profit from good communication skills of frontline employees. Therefore, three hypotheses are derived to examine the relationships in more detail.

H3: Frontline employees' communication influences customer participation of immigrant customers.

H4: Frontline employees' communication influences role clarity among immigrant customers.

H5: Frontline employees' communication influences the willingness to cooperate among immigrant customers.

2.5.3. Impact of Employees' Personal Agency

The alternative theory to view peoples' characteristics, coined by Vallacher & Wegner (1989), the action identification theory and the corresponding concept of personal agency are used for this hypothesis. Vallacher and Wegner found that higher personal agency among individuals increases activity effectiveness, activity planning and self-understanding. Moreover, these people are able to understand tasks on a deeper level by comprehending their consequences, social implications, and personal meanings (Vallacher & Wegner, 1989). Ang and colleagues found that in order to effectively manage intercultural encounters and promote customer participation, individuals need to have the ability to understand, interpret and act in a way that considers cultural particularities (Ang et al., 2007). Therefore, it is assumed that the higher personal agency among frontline employees is, the more effectively intercultural interactions with immigrant customers are handled. As customer participation is an important driver for effectiveness (Lovelock & Young, 1979; Wikström, 1996) and a focus in this paper, immigrant customers' evaluations of their willingness to cooperate, interaction participation behavior, and their interaction satisfaction are used to measure the effectiveness of the intercultural encounters. The determinants of good customer participation reflect immigrant customers' ability and willingness to engage in the interaction (Auh et al., 2007; Lengnick-Hall, 1996), and their capability of adding valuable information (Auh et al., 2007; Chan et al., 2010). Additionally, their satisfaction with the encounter is considered a further relevant variable to show whether the intercultural encounter was effectively handled (Chan, 2010; Stauss & Mang, 1999).

Considering the findings in existing literature mentioned above, a positive effect of personal agency on the effectiveness of intercultural encounters is suggested. Therefore, a directional hypothesis is derived as follows.

H6: Frontline employees' personal agency has a positive impact on the effectiveness of encounters with immigrant customers. (C_WTC_N; C_SAT; C_ICOB)

3. Empirical Analysis

After analyzing existing literature and developing a broader understanding of the topic, an empirical approach was chosen to fill the discovered research gap. The literature review in chapter 2 shows that research has been done on the three main topics (frontline employees' characteristics, customer participation, immigrant customers) individually or at maximum on the relationship of two of them. Analysis that connects all three components is lacking. The empirical analysis section of this work aims to fill this gap and produce knowledge on the present research question.

How do frontline employees' characteristics influence customer participation of immigrant customers in service encounters?

Therefore, an analysis of quantitative data is performed. This aims to add concrete statistical findings to the hypotheses derived from the existing literature and produce learnings for both theory and practice. Statistical testing of quantitative data allows to examine the hypotheses systematically and evaluate the significance and validity of the derived findings. During this process, existing quantitative data from a study conducted in 2019 will be tested using IBM's SPSS Statistics software. This software was chosen, because it is easily accessible and offers a functional user-interface (IBM, n.d.). The existing data set from 2019 consists of objective, numerical data and represents service encounters between frontline employees of the Austrian public employment service provider (AMS) and immigrant customers. Hence, this is the contextual setting used for the examination of the research question and the hypotheses. More details on the study design are presented in the following subchapters.

3.1. Study Design

The data set for this empirical analysis was collected in a study in 2019 at the AMS using standardized questionnaires. The research aimed at interviewing both frontline employees of AMS and immigrant customers before and after their service encounters in different AMS branches in Vienna. These interactions were real meetings that occur regularly for both immigrant customers and frontline employees. During the survey at AMS, data from 199 service encounters between immigrant customers and frontline employees was collected. More specifically, 199 immigrant customers were matched with one of 45 frontline employees.

During the data collection process, participants were asked to fill out questionnaires autonomously to avoid interviewer effects. Four different questionnaires were developed to measure the desired data. Two of them were handed out to both frontline employee and immigrant customer before the service encounter between them and dealt with their characteristics and demographic details. The other two questionnaires were distributed after their interactions and gave both partners the opportunity to assess customer participation and the success of the interaction from their individual perspectives. As this thesis concentrates on the analysis of the impact of frontline employee's characteristics, only data from three out of the four different questionnaires will be used for the statistical testing. Data from both frontline employee questionnaires and the post-interaction questionnaire for immigrant customers will be included.

In the questionnaires respondents were asked to rate a variety of statements on a 7-point Likert scale, which included the options "Strongly disagree", "Disagree", "Somewhat disagree", "Neutral", "Somewhat agree", "Agree", and "Strongly agree". The question whether Likert scale results should be treated as ordinal or interval, is heavily discussed in existing literature. Both streams of thought follow valid reasoning, which leads to the coexistence of the two contrary views (Joshi et al., 2015). Throughout this work, Likert-scaled items are part of constructs and therefore result in composite scale scores for individuals. Hence, Likert scale results are treated as interval and therefore metric variables. Other question types were used to collect demographic data and data on personal agency. These included open-ended, single- and multiple-choice questions.

Data collected in this study was also used in other research projects that looked at the matter from a different perspective and focused on the impact of acculturation of immigrant customers on customer participation (Bico, 2021; Mora, 2020).

3.2. Data Preparation

To perform statistical tests on the data collected, it was examined and prepared for statistical testing. As mentioned above 199 immigrant customers interacted with one of the 45 AMS employees. Therefore, the data of the three questionnaires was matched using the interaction and employee identification codes. This was done to connect data from both pre- and post-

interaction frontline employee questionnaires with the post-interaction questionnaire of immigrant customers. Furthermore, the variables were named and categorized for further usage. Additionally, an important step during the preparation process included the removal of invalid or incomplete data and the handling of missing data. Dealing with missing data in research projects is an important issue for statistical testing because analysis derived from a dataset with missing values can produce findings that differ from those resulting from complete sets of data (Hawthorne & Elliott, 2005). Specifically, information can be lost and complications and biases in the data analysis process may arise (Noor et al., 2015). Reasons for missing data range from technical issues to respondents' unwillingness or inability to answer all items (Noor et al., 2005; Downey & King, 1998). In the case of this study, respondents were either unwilling or unable to answer all items listed on the provided questionnaires.

There are different options to handle missing data. Firstly, missing data can be ignored in calculations but acknowledged during interpretation. Secondly, respondents with incomplete data can be excluded from the sample. Thirdly, respondents with incomplete data can be excluded from individual analysis. Fourthly, missing data can be replaced through a variety of substitution methods (Downey & King, 1998).

For the purpose of this work three data cases were excluded from the sample due to insufficient completeness. Two of them lacked answers from customers and one of them lacked the identification number connecting customer answers with the corresponding frontline employee. Therefore, the sample used for analysis consists of 196 cases.

However, the remaining cases still show occasional missing values. It has been strongly discussed in existing literature whether or not substitution is necessary and which substitution methods create the most reliable results (Downey & King, 1998; Roth & Switzer, 1995). As most items demonstrate a count of missing values between zero and three, no substitution methods were applied. Cases where items showed more than three missing values are further described in the following section. An overview of the missing values for all statements can be found in the appendix.

3.3. Variables and Scales

The questionnaires were comprised of a variety of constructs, that included between 3 and 7 statements each. Respondents rated each item via a 7-point Likert scale. For further analysis, scales combining the corresponding items were necessary. Therefore, the corresponding statements were transformed into scale variables for each construct. This was done for all scales using SPSS and the mean function. Negative items' scores were reversed for the purpose of their inclusion into the scale variables. More specific details on this matter are presented in the list below. Additionally, ensuring reliability of the computed scales Cronbach's alpha was calculated. Cronbach's alpha's usage for the purpose of testing reliability or internal consistency of multi-item scales is common practice (Schmitt, 1996; Taber, 2018), especially when measuring different elements of personality (Streiner, 2003). Alpha values range between 0 and 1, while results of 0.7 and higher are considered to indicate sufficient reliability (Taber, 2018). However, results above 0.9 may point towards redundancy within the scales. This means that the test instruments alpha values close to 1 have a risk of not being as reliable as intended to measure a specific phenomenon. However, these thresholds should be treated as rule of thumb, as variables with Cronbach's alpha greater than 0.9 can still be useful measures (Streiner, 2003). During this work, the author aims to achieve Cronbach's alpha values between 0.7 and 0.9 whenever possible. More details are presented in the individual variable descriptions below.

The first list presents a brief overview of all variables derived from **employee ratings**. It provides details on the variables' purposes, their Cronbach's alpha scores, missing values, and necessary data preparation steps.

- **Interaction Participation Behavior (ICOB)**

The variable ICOB is a scale describing immigrant customers' interaction participation behavior and represents frontline employees' ratings after their service encounters. The scale consists of 7 items asking about the customers' participation behavior. These statements are based on existing research by Auh and colleagues (2007) and Gallan and colleagues (2013). One item was reversed to transform the measurement into the same direction as the other 6 items (*"I had to ask everything myself (the customer did not explain everything himself/herself)"*). Cronbach's alpha for all seven items (including the reversed

item) for the ICOB scale revealed a result of 0.707. This indicates sufficient reliability of the scale. Two items showed 4 and another one 7 missing values.

- **Cultural Intelligence Dimensions (MECQ, CCQ, MOCQ, BCQ)**

To measure the four dimensions of Cultural Intelligence, questionnaire items from the Cultural Intelligence Scale (Ang et al., 2007) were used. Thereby, the levels of Metacognitive, Cognitive, Behavioral, and Motivational Cultural Intelligence of the AMS frontline employees were measured before the service encounter. Data was collected through self-evaluation of frontline employees which aligns with the procedure of Ang and colleagues (2007).

Cronbach's alpha for the four variables representing the dimensions of Cultural Intelligence showed acceptable values between 0.748 and 0.810. MECQ, the metacognitive cultural intelligence scale, consists of three items, CCQ, the cognitive cultural intelligence scale, of four, MOCQ, motivational cultural intelligence scale, of three statements, and BCQ, behavioral cultural intelligence scale, is comprised of four items.

- **Willingness to Participate and Cooperate (WTC)**

For the variable WTC immigrant customers' willingness to participate and cooperate (Auh et al., 2007) was rated by frontline employees after the service encounter. The four statements of the scale WTC showed a Cronbach's alpha of 0.954. This indicates that there might be problems with redundancy within the scale. However, a removal of individual statements to improve the value was not effective in this case. As explained above, WTC can still be used for further analysis. One item showed 5 missing values.

- **Communication (COMM)**

COMM is a scale representing frontline employees' self-evaluation of their communication towards the immigrant customer (Auh et al., 2007). The data was collected after the service encounter. The scale includes four items. For one of these items six missing values were registered. The statements show a Cronbach's alpha of 0.790 which is a good result that indicates reliability of the scale.

- **Personal Agency (PEAG)**

To include an alternative system of explaining individuals' behavior, a shortened version of the Behavior Identification Form (Vallacher & Wegner, 1989) was used to analyse the level of personal agency among employees. 10 activities and the corresponding low-level and high-level identities were chosen and provided to the respondents in the questionnaire. It can be viewed in the appendix.

In order to use the responses for further analysis preparations were necessary. Firstly, responses were transformed from string into numerical values. Secondly, six variables were reversed to ensure that all 10 items value high agency statements with 1 and low agency statements with 0. Subsequently, the individual results for personal agency were calculated as a sum of all high agency statements chosen by each participant (Vallacher & Wegner, 1989). Results range from 0 (low-level agency) to 10 (high-level agency) and represent an ordinal variable.

One employee did not answer this question. This person had service encounters with three immigrant customers. Therefore, the missing three data sets were excluded from the analysis performed using this variable resulting in a sample size of 193.

Variables representing immigrant **customers' evaluations** start with the abbreviation "C_" to distinguish them from those based on frontline employees' data. The following list sheds light on these variables.

- **Interaction Participation Behavior (C_ICOB)**

C_ICOB measures interaction participation behavior of immigrant customers (Auh et al., 2007; Gallan et al., 2013), through self-evaluation of the customers. Aligning with ICOB, item 7 was reversed to ensure measurement in a uniform direction. Cronbach's alpha for seven items (including one reversed item) showed an insufficient result of 0.476. This indicates little reliability of the variable. However, excluding the seventh item "*The AMS employee had to ask everything himself/herself (I didn't explain all of the issues myself).*" improved the value strongly. Therefore, the scale is comprised of only six items for further analysis. This results in an acceptable Cronbach's Alpha of 0.710. Among the remaining statements, one item showed 4 and another one 5 missing values.

- **Willingness to Participate and Cooperate (C_WTC)**

Immigrant customers' willingness to participate and cooperate was also rated by the customers themselves. This is represented in C_WTC. Including all four items for C_WTC showed a Cronbach's alpha of 0.930. This indicates redundancy within the scale. However, removing the second statement "*I was willing to share all the necessary information (e.g. qualifications, prior work experience, etc.) with the AMS employee.*" improved the value and lead to an acceptable Cronbach's alpha result of 0.898. Therefore, the scale variable used for further analysis includes only three of the four items to avoid redundancy problems indicated by Cronbach's alpha results > 0.9 .

- **Communication (C_COMM)**

C_COMM represents immigrant customers' ratings of frontline employees' communication. This data was collected through the questionnaire after the service encounter. C_COMM is comprised of four items which shows a good Cronbach's alpha result of 0.896.

- **Role Clarity (C_ROCL)**

C_ROCL is a scale used to understand role clarity of customers (Meuter et al., 2005) and represents immigrant customers' self-evaluation after the service encounter. The scale includes three items and shows a good Cronbach's alpha value of 0.842.

- **Interaction Satisfaction (C_SAT)**

Customer satisfaction describes the evaluation of services. Items to measure customer satisfaction were created in accordance with the work of Homburg and colleagues (2005). When customers' expectations are met or exceeded, satisfaction is achieved. When expectations are not met, customers are not satisfied (Oliver, 1980). The variable C_SAT measures the interaction satisfaction of immigrant customers and represents their own ratings. Cronbach's alpha shows a good value of 0.882. The variable C_SAT is comprised of four statements.

3.3.1. Overview Table - Employee Perspective

The following summary table lists all variables created from employee evaluations. It provides an overview of the constructs, Cronbach's alpha values, corresponding items, and the data preparation procedures performed.

Interaction Participation Behavior - ICOB (Auh et al., 2007; Gallan et al., 2013)	
Cronbach's Alpha 0.707	
Items	Data Preparation
The customer tried to make my job easier.	
The customer tried to help me serve him/her better.	
The customer prepared before coming to AMS.	
The customer openly discussed his/her needs with me so that I can deliver the best possible advice.	
The customer shared a lot of information about his/her unemployment status.	
The customer talked about personal issues, not directly related to his/her unemployment status.	
I had to ask everything myself (The customer didn't explain all of the issues himself/herself).	Reverse coded
Metacognitive Cultural Intelligence - MECQ (Ang et al., 2007)	
Cronbach's Alpha 0.748	
Items	Data Preparation
I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge when I interact with people from different cultural backgrounds.	
I adjust my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from a culture that is different from mine.	
I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I use when interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds.	
Cognitive Cultural Intelligence - CCQ (Ang et al., 2007)	
Cronbach's Alpha 0.760	
Items	Data Preparation
I know the legal and economic systems of other cultures.	
I know the rules (e.g., vocabulary, grammar) of other languages.	
I know the cultural values and religious beliefs of other cultures.	
I know the rules for expressing nonverbal behaviors in other cultures.	
Motivational Cultural Intelligence - MOCQ (Ang et al., 2007)	
Cronbach's Alpha 0.810	
Items	Data Preparation
I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.	
I am confident that I can socialize with locals in a culture that is unfamiliar to me.	
I am sure I can deal with the stresses of adjusting to a culture that is new to me.	
Behavioral Cultural Intelligence - BCQ (Ang et al., 2007)	
Cronbach's Alpha 0.778	
Items	Data Preparation

I change my verbal behavior (e.g., accent, tone) when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.	
I use pause and silence differently to suit different cross-cultural situations.	
I vary the rate of my speaking when a cross-cultural situation requires it.	
I change my nonverbal behavior when a cross-cultural situation requires it.	

Willingness to Participate and Cooperate - WTC (Auh et al., 2007)

Cronbach's Alpha 0.954

Items	Data Preparation
The customer was willing to cooperate with me.	
The customer was willing to share all the necessary information (e.g. qualifications, prior work experience, etc.) with me.	
The customer was willing to provide answers to all my questions.	
The customer was willing to help me in whatever I needed from their side.	

Communication - COMM (Auh et al., 2007)

Cronbach's Alpha 0.790

Items	Data Preparation
I kept the customer well-informed about their employment options.	
I explained everything to the customer in a meaningful way.	
I provided the customer with all the necessary information.	
I explained all of my recommendations to the customer in detail.	

Personal Agency - PEAG (Vallacher & Wegner, 1989)

Reading	Washing clothes
Following lines of print Gaining knowledge (High-level)	Removing odours from clothes (High-level) Putting clothes into the machine
Locking a door	Eating
Putting a key in the lock Securing the house (High-level)	Getting nutrition (High-level) Chewing and swallowing
Growing a garden	Cleaning the house
Planting seeds Getting fresh vegetables (High-level)	Showing one's cleanliness (High-level) Vacuuming the floor
Paying a rent	Greeting someone
Maintaining a place to live (High-level) Writing a check	Saying hallo Showing friendliness (High-level)
Talking to a child	Voting
Teaching a child something (High-level) Using simple words	Influencing a vote (High-level) Marking a ballot

Table 1: Overview Table - Employee Perspective

3.3.2. Overview Table - Customer Perspective

The following table presents all variables that are based on customers' evaluations. They provide insights on constructs, Cronbach's Alpha values, items, and data preparation steps.

Interaction Participation Behavior – C_ICOB (Auh et al., 2007; Gallan et al., 2013)	
Cronbach's Alpha 0.710	
Items	Data Preparation
I tried to make the AMS employee's job easier.	
I tried to help the AMS employee serve me better.	
I prepared before coming to meet the AMS employee.	
I openly discussed my needs with the AMS employee to help her/him deliver the best possible advice.	
I shared a lot of information about my unemployment status.	
I talked about personal issues, not directly related to my unemployment status.	
The AMS employee had to ask everything himself/herself (I didn't explain all of the issues myself).	Reverse coded but removed
Willingness to Participate and Cooperate - C_WTC (Auh et al., 2007)	
Cronbach's Alpha 0.898	
Items	Data Preparation
I was willing to cooperate with the AMS employee.	
I was willing to share all the necessary information (e.g. qualifications, prior work experience, etc.) with the AMS employee.	Removed
I was willing to provide answers to all the questions of the AMS employee.	
I was willing to help the AMS employee in whatever s/he would need from my side.	
Communication - C_COMM (Auh et al., 2007)	
Cronbach's Alpha 0.896	
Items	Data Preparation
The AMS employee kept me well-informed about my employment options.	
The AMS employee explained my options in a meaningful way.	
The AMS employee provided me with all the necessary information.	
The AMS employee explained to me his/her recommendations in detail.	
Role Clarity - C_ROCL (Meuter et al., 2005)	
Cronbach's Alpha 0.842	
Items	Data Preparation
I am well informed about how unemployment support services in Austria work.	
I know what is expected of me if I go to an unemployment support agency like AMS in Austria.	
I know all the rules and principles that have to be considered when going to an unemployment support agency like AMS in Austria.	
Interaction Satisfaction - C_SAT (Homburg et al., 2005)	
Cronbach's Alpha 0.882	
Items	Data Preparation

Overall, I am satisfied with the visit to the AMS.	
Overall, the interaction with the AMS employee met my expectations.	
I think that the services of the AMS employee were of high quality.	
I think the AMS employee did a great job today.	

Table 2: Overview Table - Customer Perspective

3.4. Sample and Descriptive Statistics

To provide deeper insights into the sample used for this analysis, this section presents descriptive statistics on both AMS frontline employees and immigrant customers. Selected variables are presented as bar or pie charts to allow for clear and concise depictions. As this paper focuses on the impact of frontline employees' characteristics the frontline employee sample is described in more detail.

Before showing insights into the two respondent groups of the sample, details on the sites of the interviewing processes are provided. As explained in section 3.2., the data collection process was conducted in different AMS branches throughout Vienna. 12 different branches were included. However, the number of interviews varied between branches. Out of all 196 valid interviews most of them were conducted in die Viennese districts 1110, 1160, and 1130.

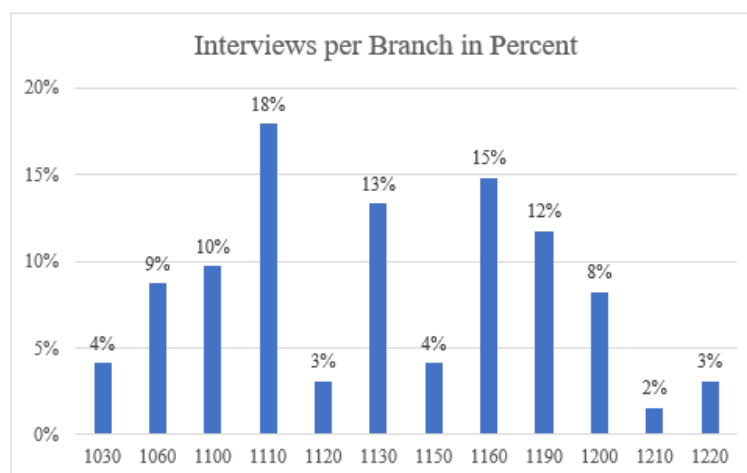


Figure 2: Bar Chart: Interviews per Branch in Percent

3.4.1. Frontline Employees

45 AMS frontline employees participated. Nearly 70% were female, while close to 30% were male. One person refrained from disclosing their gender. The sample of frontline employees shows a broad age spread ranging from 21 to 66 years of age.

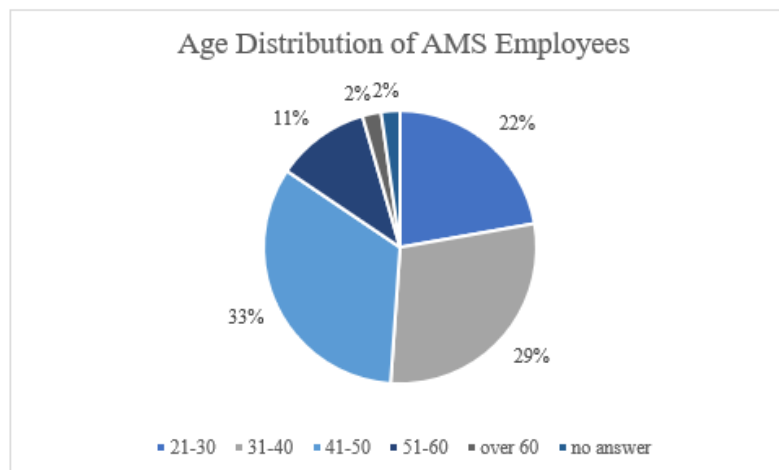


Figure 3: Pie-Chart: Age Distribution of AMS Employees

When examining their working time at AMS, over 82% of employees stated that they had been working for the AMS for more than 2.5 years. More than 57% had been working there for 5 or more years.

Another researched topic was employees' personal immigrational background. While 73% of frontline employees said they did not have immigrational backgrounds, around 22% indicated that either them or their parents had immigrational background. Two people refrained from answering.

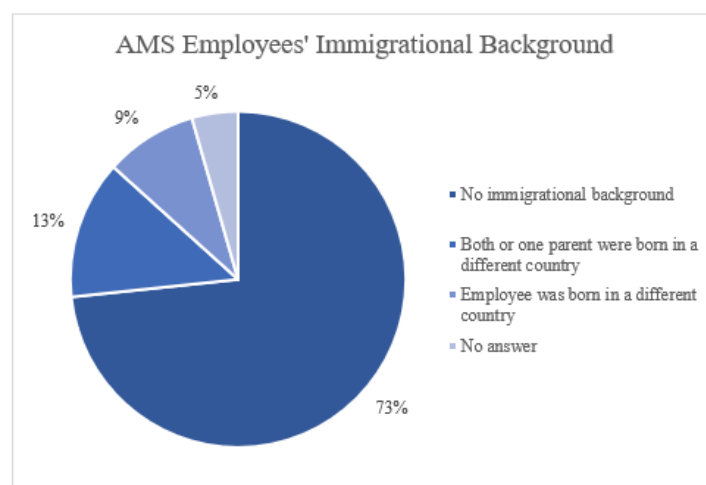


Figure 4: Pie-Chart: AMS Employees' Immigrational Background

Figure 5 shows that over half of AMS employees speak more than one foreign language. While 98.5% stated that they speak English, the second most frequently spoken language among AMS

employees was French. Other spoken languages include Italian, Russian, Turkish, Serbo-Croatian and many others.

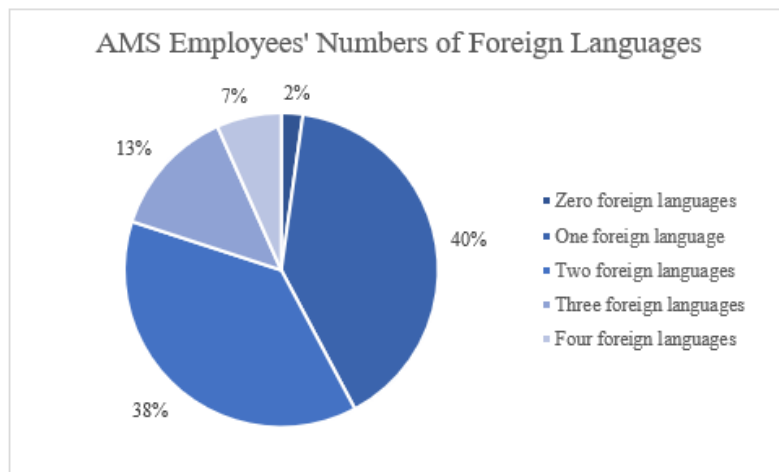


Figure 5: Pie-Chart: AMS Employees' Number of Foreign Languages

Furthermore, employees were asked about their travel habits especially for trips outside of Austria. The results show that 89% of employees travelled internationally at least once a year.

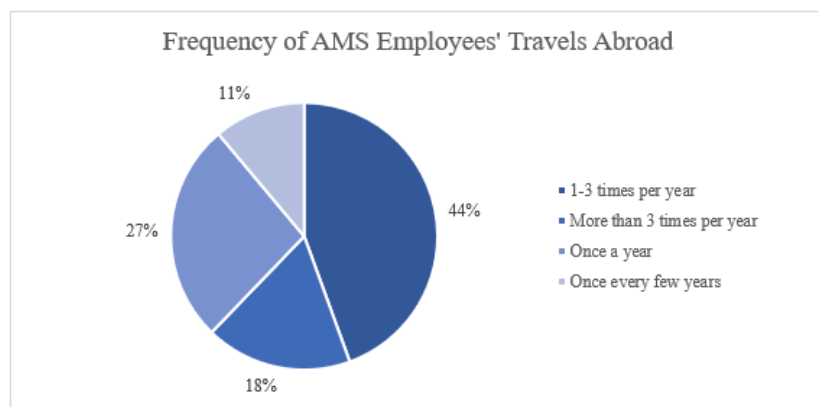


Figure 6: Pie-Chart: Frequency of AMS Employees' Travels Abroad

Overall, the sample includes AMS frontline employees of different age groups, genders, working experience, language skills, international travel habits, and personal immigrational backgrounds. Therefore, this diverse sample is a good foundation for further analysis.

3.4.2. Immigrant Customers

A closer look at the customer sample shows that respondents came from over 40 countries. With participants from Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America, the sample included a wide variety of nationalities and cultures. Serbia, Turkey, Syria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Afghanistan were mentioned most frequently. Around 47% of immigrant customers interviewed were female, 52% male and 1% refrained from answering the question. Figure 7 shows a broad age distribution including participants between 15 and 65 years of age.

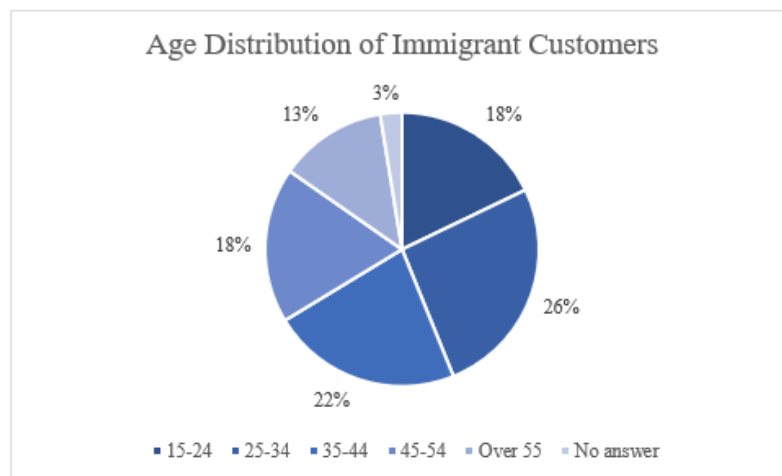


Figure 7: Pie-Chart: Age Distribution of Immigrant Customers

Overall, the immigrant customer sample shows a balanced gender and age group distribution. Most importantly, it includes people from four different continents and 40 countries. Hence, a wide variety of cultures and origins are represented in the sample.

3.5. Hypotheses Testing and Results

The hypotheses created in chapter 3.1. are tested in this section. Depending on the aim of the hypotheses and the type of data involved, suitable statistical methods were chosen. For hypotheses 1 to 5 regression analyses were conducted. Thereby the relationships between independent and dependent variables were investigated to find those factors significantly influencing the outcome variables of interest. Regression analysis allows to assess the predictive power of the chosen predictor variables and sheds light on magnitude and direction of effects. Hypothesis 6 was tested using a Spearman correlation, as this is suitable to examine the relationship between ordinal and metric variables.

Additionally, corresponding assumptions and requirements for the different statistical test methods were investigated to provide insights into the validity and generalizability of the findings. This step was necessary to detect possible biases or errors. It showed that while most assumptions are met, there were some cases of normality and heteroscedasticity violations. However, a violation of normality does not obstruct the performance of a regression analysis for the data present, due to its large sample size (Schmidt & Finan, 2018). Research has found that outcome transformations for large samples, which are often applied in cases of normality violations, can even worsen the validity of results (Schmidt & Finan, 2018). The violation of homoscedasticity is not dependent on the sample size and can present problems even for large data sets (Schmidt & Finan, 2018). However, slight heteroscedasticity was found to have hardly any effect on significance testing (Berry & Feldman, 1985). Therefore, in the case of the following hypotheses with homoscedasticity concerns, the regression analyses can still be performed and interpreted. The findings and SPSS Outputs for the assumption testing can be found in the appendix for each hypothesis.

Finally, results for each empirical analysis were interpreted within the research context of this work. Possible assumption violations were considered during this step to provide nuanced findings that account for validity and generalizability.

3.5.1. The Impact of Frontline Employees' Cultural Intelligence

In this subchapter analysis and results for hypotheses one and two are presented. Both deal with the impact of frontline employees' cultural intelligence, which was measured in the four corresponding dimensions, on customers' interaction participation behavior and willingness to cooperate.

Before performing the first three regression analyses the requirements for the statistical method were examined. It showed that while most assumptions were met, the requirements of normality and homoscedasticity were violated for H1A, H1B and H2. However, regression analyses were still possible due to the sample size and the low severity of the violations. More elaborate details can be found in the appendix.

H1A: Frontline employees' cultural intelligence influences immigrant customers' interaction participation behavior (employee evaluation).

To test the first hypothesis, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. The dependent variable used was immigrant customers' interaction participation behavior [ICOB]. The independent model predictor variables included are the four dimensions of cultural intelligence: Metacognitive [MECQ], Cognitive [CCQ], Motivational [MOCQ], and Behavioral Cultural Intelligence [BECQ]. These four variables used are derived from frontline employees' ratings of themselves. The customer participation behavior variable used is deducted from frontline employees' evaluation of the immigrant customers after their encounter.

					Change Statistics					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
1	.277a	.077	.057	1.04596	.077	3.964	4	191	.004	1.611
a.	Predictors (Constant): BCQ Scale, CCQ Scale, MECQ Scale, MOCQ Scale									
b.	Dependent Variable: ICOB Scale									

Table 3: Model Summary Multiple Regression Analysis H1A

As stated in table 3, the model explains 5.7 percent ($\text{Adjusted } R^2 = 0.057$) of the variance in the dependent variable. The adjusted R^2 (0.057) is close to the R^2 value (0.077) and both values are very close to zero. This indicates a weak model fit and implies that there may be relevant predictor variables missing. The F Change value shows 3.964 with $p < 0.05$. This suggests a statistically significant result for the influence on immigrant customers' interaction participation behavior.

The coefficient matrix in table 4 provides deeper insights into the impact of each individual predictor variable. MECQ and CCQ show significant results with $p < 0.05$. BCQ also provides an interesting finding as it can be considered a significant result when viewing the numbers from a one-tailed test perspective. In this case $p < 0.05$ ($p = 0.032$) and t is bigger than the critical value of -1.65. The only predictor variable with no significant result is MOCQ. Therefore, the metacognitive, cognitive, and behavioral dimension of cultural intelligence have

a significant effect on immigrant customers' interaction participation behavior. These findings indicate that frontline employees' knowledge of cultural values, legal and economic systems [CCQ], their ability to adjust their cultural knowledge during intercultural interactions [MECQ], and their ability to adjust verbal and non-verbal behavior [BCQ] are relevant factors that impact immigrant customers participation behavior. Frontline employees' confidence about intercultural interactions [MOCQ] does not have a significant importance.

For a deeper understanding of the direction of the impact of the significant predictors, the unstandardized B is interpreted. It shows a positive relationship between MECQ and ICOB. More specifically, as MECQ increases by one unit, ICOB increases by 0.310. CCQ and ICOB have a negative relationship, meaning that as CCQ rises by one unit, ICOB decreases by 0.195. BCQ shows a negative effect of -0.159. This means that as BCQ increases by one unit, ICOB decreases by 0.159 which aligns with the effect direction of CCQ. To sum up, the findings show that higher metacognitive cultural intelligence leads to better interaction participation behavior, while higher cognitive cultural intelligence and higher behavioral cultural intelligence have a negative effect on the interaction participation behavior.

		<i>Unstandardized coefficients</i>		<i>Standardized coefficients</i>			<i>95.0% Confidence Interval for B</i>		<i>Collinearity Statistics</i>	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	Constant	4.286	0.663		6.467	0.000	2.979	5.594		
	MECQ	0.310	0.109	0.256	2.838	0.005	0.095	0.526	0.595	1.681
	CCQ	-0.195	0.088	-0.180	-2.210	0.028	-0.370	-0.021	0.731	1.368
	MOCQ	0.150	0.143	0.105	1.047	0.296	-0.133	0.432	0.477	2.095
	BCQ	-0.159	0.085	-0.153	-1.863	0.064	-0.327	0.009	0.713	1.402

a. Dependent Variable: ICOB Scale

Table 4: Coefficient Table Multiple Regression Analysis H1A

H1B: Frontline employees' cultural intelligence influences immigrant customers' interaction participation behavior (customer self-evaluation).

Another regression analysis was conducted to investigate H1. H1B looks at the relationship by focusing on customers' self-evaluation of their interaction participation behavior [C_ICOB]. This variable is used as the dependent variable. Again, the independent model predictor variables are the dimensions of cultural intelligence ([MECQ], [CCQ], [MOCQ], [BECQ]). These four cultural intelligence variables are based on frontline employees' ratings of themselves.

					Change Statistics					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
1	.173a	0.03	0.01	0.98597	0.03	1.469	4	191	0.213	1.941

c. Predictors (Constant): BCQ Scale, CCQ Scale, MECQ Scale, MOCQ Scale

d. Dependent Variable: C_ICOB Scale

Table 5: Model Summary Multiple Regression Analysis H1B

As visible in table 5, the model does not explain the variance in the dependent variable (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.01$). The findings point to a poor model and demonstrate that there are relevant predictor variables missing. The F Change value shows 1.469 with $p > 0.05$. This suggests a non-significant result for the influence on immigrant customers' self-evaluated interaction participation behavior. The coefficient matrix is presented in table 6. It shows that although the model itself is non-significant, behavioral cultural intelligence has a significant negative impact on customers' interaction participation behavior [C_ICOB] with an effect of -0.166. Hence, as BCQ increases by one unit, C_ICOB decreases by 0.166, which means that higher behavioral cultural intelligence has a negative effect on the interaction participation behavior of customers. This finding aligns with the result from H1A where employees' ratings of ICOB were used as the dependent variable and BCQ also showed a significant negative effect.

		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	Constant	6.132	0.625		9.815	<.001	4.899	7.364		
	MECQ	-0.013	0.103	-0.011	-0.121	0.903	-0.216	0.191	0.595	1.681
	CCQ	0.099	0.083	0.099	1.191	0.235	-0.065	0.264	0.731	1.368
	MOCQ	0.076	0.135	0.058	0.562	0.575	-0.19	0.342	0.477	2.095
	BCQ	-0.166	0.08	-0.174	-2.065	0.04	-0.325	-0.007	0.713	1.402

a. Dependent Variable: C_ICOB Scale

Table 6: Coefficient Table Multiple Regression Analysis H1B

H2: Frontline employees' cultural intelligence influences immigrant customers' willingness to cooperate.

To examine the second hypothesis, a multiple regression analysis was conducted where the dependent variable is immigrant customers' willingness to cooperate [WTC]. The independent model predictor variables include the four dimensions of cultural intelligence: Metacognitive [MECQ], Cognitive [CCQ], Motivational [MOCQ], and Behavioral Cultural Intelligence [BECQ]. Again, all the variables used, are derived from frontline employees' responses.

					Change Statistics					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
1	.124a	0.015	-0.005	0.88578	0.015	0.748	4	191	0.56	1.926

a. Predictors (Constant): BCQ Scale, CCQ Scale, MECQ Scale, MOCQ Scale

b. Dependent Variable: WTC Scale

Table 7: Model Summary Multiple Regression Analysis H2

As table 7 shows, the multiple regression at hand does not present a valuable model (Adjusted $R^2 = -0.005$) and no significant results ($p > 0.05$). This is also confirmed by the coefficient matrix in table 8 which shows no significant impacts of any of the four dimensions of cultural intelligence on the outcome variable WTC. Therefore, no significant influence of frontline employees' cultural intelligence on immigrant customers' willingness to cooperate was found in the data at hand.

		<i>Unstandardized coefficients</i>		<i>Standardized coefficients</i>			<i>95.0% Confidence Interval for B</i>		<i>Collinearity Statistics</i>	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	Constant	6.751	0.561		12.027	0.000	5.644	7.858		
	MECQ	0.140	0.093	0.141	1.517	0.131	-0.042	0.323	0.595	1.681
	CCQ	-0.065	0.075	-0.073	-0.871	0.385	-0.213	0.082	0.731	1.368
	MOCQ	-0.130	0.121	-0.111	-1.070	0.286	-0.369	0.109	0.477	2.095
	BCQ	0.023	0.072	0.027	0.320	0.750	-0.119	0.166	0.713	1.402

a. Dependent Variable: WTC Scale

Table 8: Coefficient Table Multiple Regression Analysis H2

3.5.2. The Impact of Frontline Employees' Communication

This subchapter presents the analysis and results for hypotheses three to five and deals with the impact of frontline employees' communication and its influence on participation behavior, role clarity and willingness to cooperate among immigrant customers.

A closer look at the assumption of linear regression analysis for the following three hypotheses revealed that most requirements are met. However, there are violations concerning normality and homoscedasticity. As explained above, these violations do not preclude the performance of the analysis due to the sample size and the intensity of the violations. Further details can be found in the appendix. Even though the regression analysis can be performed, it is important to point out assumption violations to provide transparency.

H3: Frontline employees' communication influences customer participation of immigrant customers.

To investigate the third hypothesis, a linear regression analysis was performed using immigrant customers' interaction participation behavior [ICOB] as the dependent variable and frontline employees' communication [COMM] as the independent variable. Both variables used were derived from frontline employee's responses.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.391a	0.153	0.149	0.99133	0.153	34.744	1	192	0.000	1.698

a. Predictors (Constant): COMM Scale

b. Dependent Variable: ICOB Scale

Table 9: Model Summary Regression Analysis H3

Table 9 shows an R value of 0.391 which indicates a positive relationship between COMM and ICOB. R^2 shows that this model explains 15.3 percent ($R^2 = 0.153$) of the variance in the dependent variable ICOB. The F Change results in a value of 34.744 with a $p < 0.01$. This indicates a significant result and confirms that frontline employee's communication has a significant impact on immigrant customers' interaction participation behavior.

The coefficient matrix in table 10 shows that COMM has a positive relationship with ICOB. More specifically, as COMM increases by one unit, ICOB increases by 0.518 which allows the conclusion that better communication by frontline employees leads to improved interaction participation behavior of immigrant customers.

		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	Constant	1.987	0.563		3.532	0.001	0.877	3.096		
	COMM	0.518	0.088	0.391	5.894	0.000	0.345	0.691	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: ICOB Scale

Table 10: Coefficient Table Regression Analysis H3

H4: Frontline employees' communication influences role clarity among immigrant customers.

A linear regression analysis was conducted to test the fourth hypothesis. Both variables involved in this statistical model were derived from customers' ratings. Customers' role clarity [C_ROCL] was used as the dependent variable, while frontline employees' communication [C_COMM] was used as the independent variable.

					Change Statistics					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
1	.453a	0.205	0.201	1.10715	0.205	50.172	1	194	0.000	2.233

a. Predictors (Constant): C_COMM Scale

b. Dependent Variable: C_ROCL Scale

Table 11: Model Summary Regression Analysis H4

As listed in table 11 the model explains 20,5% ($R^2 = 0.205$) of variance in the dependent variable C_ROCL. The R value of 0.453 shows a positive relationship between C_COMM and C_ROCL. The F Change value of 50.172 with a $p < 0.01$ indicates a significant result. Therefore, a significant impact of frontline employees' communication on customers' role clarity can be found.

For a deeper understanding of the significant relationship the coefficient matrix in table 12 must be analysed. C_COMM has a positive impact on the relationship with C_ROCL. An increase of unit in C_COMM leads to an increase in C_ROCL of 0.479. Hence, better communication leads to higher role clarity among immigrant customers.

		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	Constant	3.004	0.419		7.166	0.000	2.177	3.831		
	C_COMM	0.479	0.068	0.453	7.083	0.000	0.346	0.613	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: C_ROCL Scale

Table 12: Coefficient Table Regression Analysis H4

H5: Frontline employees' communication influences the willingness to cooperate among immigrant customers.

Again, a linear regression analysis was conducted to test the hypothesis. For this purpose, both variables used for this statistical model were derived from customers' ratings. Immigrant customers' willingness to cooperate [C_WTC] was used as the outcome variable, while frontline employees' communication [C_COMM] was again chosen as the predictor variable.

					Change Statistics					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
1	.527a	0.278	0.274	0.81496	0.278	74.688	1	194	< 0.001	1.827

a. Predictors (Constant): C_COMM Scale

b. Dependent Variable: C_WTC Scale

Table 13: Model Summary Regression Analysis H5

The model calculated for hypothesis five explains 27,8 percent ($R^2 = 0.278$) of the variance in the outcome variable C_WTC. With an R of 0.527 a positive relationship between the variables can be found. With an F Change value of 74,688 and a $p < 0.01$ the model presents a significant

finding. Frontline employees' communication significantly influences immigrant customers' willingness to cooperate.

The coefficient matrix in table 14 shows that C_COMM and C_WTC are positively related. An increase of unit in C_COMM leads to a significant increase in C_WTC of 0.430. Therefore, this analysis shows that better communication of frontline employees leads to improved willingness to cooperate among immigrant customers.

		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	Constant	3.922	0.309		12.710	< 0.001	3.313	4.531		
	C_COMM	0.430	0.050	0.527	8.642	< 0.001	0.332	0.529	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: C_WTC Scale

Table 14: Coefficient Table Regression Analysis H5

3.5.3. The Impact of Frontline Employees' Personal Agency

H6: Frontline employees' personal agency has a positive impact on the effectiveness of encounters with immigrant customers. (C_WTC; C_SAT; C_ICOB)

To measure correlations between personal agency [PEAG] scores of frontline employees and interaction effectiveness measures of immigrant customers [C_WTC; C_SAT; C_ICOB], a Spearman correlation was calculated. The Spearman correlation allows to investigate correlations between metric and ordinal variables. Since the hypothesis is directional because it assumes a positive impact of PEAG on effectiveness measures of immigrant customers, a one-tailed test approach was chosen.

			PEAG	C_WTC	C_ICOB	C_SAT
Spearman's rho	PEAG	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.154*	0.043	.126*
		Sig. (1-tailed)		0.016	0.276	0.040
		N	193	193	193	193

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Table 15: Correlation Table H6

The correlation table shows that a significant correlation can be found between frontline employees' personal agency [PEAG] and customers' willingness to cooperate [C_WTC] with $p < 0.05$. The correlation coefficient is 0.154. This indicates a positive correlation between the variables. This means that higher personal agency among frontline employees is related to higher willingness to cooperate among immigrant customers.

A second significant finding is the correlation between personal agency [PEAG] and customers' interaction satisfaction [C_SAT]. The table shows a significant result of $p < 0.05$ with a correlation coefficient of 0.126. This indicates a positive correlation, meaning higher personal agency among frontline employees is connected to higher interaction satisfaction among immigrant customers.

No significant results were found for the correlation between personal agency [PEAG] and immigrant customers' interaction participation behavior [C_ICOB]. This indicates that no significant effect of higher personal agency on higher interaction participation behavior among immigrant customers can be found in the data at hand.

In summary, personal agency has a positive significant influence on immigrant customers' willingness to cooperate and participate in service encounters and their satisfaction with these interactions. Personal agency is significantly related to two out of three encounter effectiveness measures.

4. Discussion

This paper aims to generate knowledge on the question of how employees' characteristics influence customer participation of immigrant customers. The results present answers to this research question and provide contributions to the existing body of knowledge on customer participation, the impact of frontline employees' characteristics in service encounters, and on immigrant customers. Additionally, managerial implication can be drawn from the findings of this work that can be used to better understand and manage situations in which frontline employees' characteristics impact customer participation of immigrant customers.

By conducting an extensive literature review and combining it with an empirical analysis a number of contributions towards the research gap are revealed. While most findings aligned with existing literature, some showed unexpected results. The following paragraphs elaborate on these findings and connect them to existing literature.

Cultural intelligence was found to be a relevant concept for measuring frontline employees' characteristics related to intercultural interactions. Firstly, it was found to have a significant effect on immigrant customers' interaction participation behavior. Especially, metacognitive, cognitive, and behavioral cultural intelligence were found to have significant impacts. Motivational cultural intelligence was the only dimension that did not show a significant result. The findings reveal that immigrant customers' participation behavior is influenced by frontline employees' capabilities to change and adapt their cultural assumptions and knowledge during interactions, their knowledge about cultural standards, norms, and systems, and their ability to adapt their words and actions to the cultural needs of the interaction. More specifically, the analyses revealed that metacognitive cultural intelligence positively impacts customer participation behavior of immigrant customers. Existing literature connects individuals' metacognitive intelligence dimension to improved judgment, decision making and task performance in culturally diverse settings (Ang et al., 2007). Connecting this to customer participation literature, where flexibility, problem-solving skills and responsiveness was found to improve customer participation in service encounters (Auh et al., 2007; Chan et al., 2010), the finding aligns with the direction of both bodies of knowledge and contributes towards connecting them. This finding implies that employees' ability to observe intercultural

interactions with customers and to change personal assumptions or cultural preconceptions about them is an important characteristic when trying to promote customer participation. Therefore, customers dealing with employees with cultural prejudice are likely to participate less as they might not feel comfortable engaging with them.

The direction of some of the significant effects of the other cultural intelligence dimensions revealed unexpected findings. Cognitive and behavioral cultural intelligence showed a negative relationship towards customer participation behavior. This negative relationship indicates that increasing cognitive and behavioral intelligence leads to less customer participation behavior among immigrant customers. This is an unexpected finding, as existing literature allowed the assumption that since cultural intelligence positively impacts intercultural effectiveness outcomes (Ang et al., 2007) and customer participation is also considered a strong driver for effectiveness measures (Lovelock & Young, 1979; Wikström, 1996), cultural intelligence would also positively influence customer participation. An explanation for the negative relationship could be that employees who know about their customers' cultural norms, procedures and standards and adapt their communication accordingly manage the service interaction in a way that does not prompt customers to participate. One possible reason for this could be a mindset where due to their profound cultural knowledge and verbal and non-verbal communication skills employees feel that they do not need the participation of the customers. Another explanation could be that customers may think that it is not necessary to participate as the employee understands their cultural needs and handles the service with their interests in mind. Further research should be done to examine this negative relationship and investigate the underlying reasons for the negative impact of these two cultural intelligence dimensions.

The design of the questionnaires made it possible to statistically analyse this question for both employees' evaluations of customers' interaction participation behavior as well as for self-evaluations of immigrant customers' participation behavior. The analyses reveal that a significant model was only found in the regression that included employees' evaluations of the outcome variable. The regression that included immigrant customers' self-evaluation of their interaction participation behavior did not produce a significant model. Despite the non-significant model, the coefficient table revealed that the behavioral dimension has a significant negative effect on immigrant customers' interaction participation behavior (customers' self-

evaluation). This aligns with the finding of the hypothesis 1A where the behavioral dimension showed a significant negative effect on employees' evaluations of the outcome variable interaction participation behavior. As the negative effect of behavioral cultural intelligence was found in both analyses it appears to be a highly important variable in this context and additional research should be devoted to understanding this relationship.

Based on the data at hand the second analysis revealed that no significant relationship between cultural intelligence of frontline employees and immigrant customers' willingness to cooperate and participate was found.

Next, the impact of frontline employees' communication on customers' interaction participation behavior of immigrant customers was investigated. The analyses found a positive, significant impact of communication on participation behavior. Therefore, frontline employees' communication has a positive impact on immigrant customers' interaction participation behavior. The better frontline employees communicate, the more interaction participation behavior is demonstrated by immigrant customers. This aligns with findings in existing literature and confirms the importance of good communication as a driver for customer participation (Auh et al., 2007) and intercultural service encounters (Ang et al., 2007). Therefore, the two blocks of existing literature can be connected through these findings, which is a relevant contribution towards closing the research gap. This finding implies that employees that keep their customers informed and explain the necessary information clearly increase immigrant customers' participation in service encounters and leads to the conclusion that the better immigrant customers understand the matter in discussion, the higher interaction participation behavior they show. Being an informed part of the service allows them to engage and contribute and feel more comfortable to add information, voice opinions, or ask questions.

Aligning with the finding described in the paragraph above, another significant connection of frontline employees' communication was found in the course of this work. It is the relationship towards role clarity among immigrant customers. The regression analysis revealed a positive and significant impact of frontline employees' communication on role clarity among immigrant customers. This aligns with customer participation literature, where role clarity is seen as an antecedent to customer participation that can be improved by communication of service

providers (Auh et al., 2007), and literature on intercultural encounters where communication helps customers with diverging cultural backgrounds to deeper understand their role in a service process (Stauss & Mang, 1999; Sichtmann & Patak, 2016). This finding therefore manages to connect these two bodies of knowledge and adds knowledge towards closing the gap in literature. Furthermore, it aligns with the findings of this work described in the paragraph above, where frontline employees' communication was found to positively impact immigrant customers participation behavior.

The last hypothesis dealing with the impact of communication investigated whether frontline employees' communication impacts immigrant customers' willingness to cooperate and participate. The analysis shows a significant and positive result, which means that frontline employees' communication positively influences immigrant customers' willingness to cooperate and participate. This finding aligns with existing research on communication as a driver for customer participation and its relevance for individuals' willingness to participate (Auh et al., 2007; Lengnick-Hall, 1996). Furthermore, it is in accordance with the other results about employees' communication produced in this work. The finding suggests that the better frontline employees explain the topic in discussion and share information, the more willing immigrant customers are to participate. Their willingness to participate increases as they are educated and informed during the encounter. A possible explanation for this is that if employees make an effort to explain and share information in detail customers become more willing to put effort into the service encounter themselves.

As an alternative approach to characteristics, personal agency (Vallacher & Wegner, 1989) was used to further examine the impact frontline employees have on the effectiveness of service encounters with immigrant customers. To measure the effectiveness of service encounters three constructs were used: willingness to cooperate and participate, interaction satisfaction, and interaction participation behavior. The Spearman correlation revealed that frontline employees' personal agency has a positive significant relationship with customers' willingness to cooperate and participate, a positive significant relationship with immigrant customers' interaction satisfaction and a non-significant positive relation to customers' interaction participation behavior. Despite the fact that there was no significant result for interaction participation behavior, the findings overall align with existing literature, which suggests that individuals with

higher personal agency are more successful in handling challenging situations (Vallacher & Wegner, 1989). Satisfying immigrant customers can be considered a challenging task due to the cultural differences that have to be managed carefully (Stauss & Mang, 1999). Moreover, high levels of personal agency also allow individuals to think in a more abstract manner and consider the implications of ones' own behavior (Vallacher & Wegner, 1989). This corresponds to literature that found that the feeling of being treated appropriately can increase customers' willingness to cooperate and participate (Auh et al, 2007). The discovered positive relationship of personal agency to immigrant customers' willingness to participate and to their interaction satisfaction therefore connects the listed literature and adds knowledge to the research gap. The findings imply that employees who are able to think about their actions with a broader understanding and are aware of the consequences of their behavior can contribute to more interaction satisfaction among immigrant customers. This might be due to employees with high personal agency being able to understand how their behavior affects immigrant customers and therefore choose it more carefully. Furthermore, they might be able to keep the goal of having a satisfactory encounter in mind throughout the whole encounter and offer overall better service, as they are able to grasp the interaction on a higher level. Moreover, their ability to increase immigrant customers' willingness to participate in a service encounter might stem from them being able to offer a comfortable interaction as they monitor and think about their behavior with all its consequences and implications. Additionally, immigrant customers might be more willing to participate as they receive an improved quality of service due to the employees' high personal agency.

From a managerial perspective this thesis offers learnings for businesses and institutions dealing with intercultural service encounters with immigrant customers. The first implication is that cultural intelligence in frontline employees influences immigrant customers. However, businesses and institutions must be aware of how the different dimensions of the concept take effect. Employees that show high levels of metacognitive intelligence can improve customer participation among immigrant customers. Therefore, employers could foster this characteristic among their existing workforce with specific trainings (Ang et al., 2007) or include it as a recruitment priority for new staff. On the other hand, cognitive and behavioral cultural intelligence negatively impact customer participation. Here, businesses and institutions might need to remind employees with high results in these two dimensions of the importance of customer participation. Despite their high cultural knowledge and behavioral skills, they might

have to be encouraged to still include the customers. Next, employees who are characterized by good communication abilities were found to positively impact customer participation behavior of immigrant customers and their willingness to participate. Furthermore, they were found to improve role clarity among immigrant customers. This means that employers should value communication skills among their employees, as they lead to more willingness to participate, more interaction participation behavior, and help immigrant customers to better understand their role and position during a service encounter. Businesses and institutions should consider this in the hiring process and offer trainings that promote this characteristic among existing staff. The trainings should focus on improving employees' ability to explain relevant details and keeping customers informed during service encounters. Lastly, businesses and institutions could use the concept of personal agency during the hiring process to find high-level agents who are able to understand their actions on a higher level and grasp their consequences. This would be valuable information as high levels of personal agency were found to positively relate to immigrant customers' interaction satisfaction and their willingness to participate.

The AMS, where intercultural service encounters occur on a regular basis, could use the findings of this work to improve their immigrant customers' participation behavior. Prioritizing a workforce that possesses relevant characteristics could allow the AMS to profit from the advantages that can be generated from increased customer participation. Therefore, the organization should look for employees who possess high cultural intelligence, good communication abilities and can be categorized as high-level agents.

A critical look at the study design shows that while the immigrant customers sample consisted of a good amount of 196 individuals, the frontline employee sample who engaged in service encounters with the immigrant customers included only 45 AMS employees. Therefore, the data set could be further improved by increasing the number of frontline employees. However, this could potentially increase the effort for the data collection process heavily, as a larger number of employees who are able and willing to participate in the study would be needed.

5. Conclusion

This thesis aimed at investigating how frontline employees' characteristics impact customers participation among immigrant customers. This research gap was identified by examining existing literature. The review revealed that while there is literature that connects employees' characteristics and customer participation, or immigrant customers and customer participation, research connecting all three topics is lacking. Therefore, an empirical approach was used to fill the identified research gap.

To investigate the impact of frontline employees' characteristics three focus areas were chosen: frontline employees' cultural intelligence, their communication abilities, and their personal agency. The results show that frontline employees' characteristics play a significant role and impact immigrant customers' participation behavior, their willingness to cooperate and participate, their role clarity, and their interaction satisfaction. Therefore, the goal of this paper, namely examining how frontline employees' characteristics influence customer participation among immigrant customers was achieved. Hence, this work has generated knowledge connecting research on frontline employees' characteristics with the body of knowledge on customer participation while including an intercultural component through immigrant customers.

The first specific finding of this work is that cultural intelligence dimensions proved to be relevant measures that impact customer participation behavior among immigrant customers. Specifically, the metacognitive, cognitive, and behavioral dimension of cultural intelligence demonstrated significant impacts on immigrant customers' interaction participation behavior. Metacognitive intelligence showed a positive influence, which aligns with existing literature. Cognitive and behavioral cultural intelligence on the other hand demonstrated a negative impact. This is an unexpected finding as the effect counters the expected direction. Further analysis revealed that cultural intelligence was not significantly related to immigrant customers' willingness to cooperate and participate.

The second focus area of frontline employees' characteristics that was investigated for this present thesis was communication abilities. The research efforts tested the impact of frontline

employees' communication on immigrant customers' interaction participation behavior, their role clarity, and their willingness to cooperate and participate during the service encounter. All three regression analyses revealed significant positive impacts of frontline employees' communication.

The last focus area of the empirical analysis included the concept of personal agency as an alternative approach to characteristics. The results show that personal agency has positive and significant relationships with customers' willingness to cooperate and participate and immigrant customers' interaction satisfaction. While also positive, the connection with customers' interaction participation behavior was non-significant. These findings and the positive relations align with existing literature and confirm the hypothesis created.

Based on the findings in literature and the empirical analysis of this work it can be concluded that frontline employees' characteristics, more specifically their cultural intelligence, communication abilities and personal agency significantly impact customer participation behavior of immigrant customers.

Further research could be done and include a wider variety of frontline employees' characteristics. Additionally, research could be done to investigate the unexpected directionality of the two cultural intelligence dimensions cognitive and behavioral cultural intelligence that was found based on the data of this work. Another research effort that could be derived from this work is recreating a similar study design for a different service area than public employment service providers.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Missing Values SPSS Outputs

C_ICOB and ICOB

		Statistics											
		I tried to make the AMS employee's job easier.	I tried to help the AMS employee serve me better.	I prepared before coming to meet the AMS employee.	I openly discussed my needs with the AMS employee to help her/him deliver the best possible advice.	I shared a lot of information about my unemployment status.	I talked about personal issues, not directly related to my unemployment status.	The customer tried to make my job easier.	The customer tried to help me serve him/her better.	The customer prepared before coming to AMS.	The customer openly discussed his/her needs with me so that I can deliver the best possible advice.	The customer shared a lot of information about his/her unemployment status.	The customer talked about personal issues, not directly related to his/her unemployment status.
N	Valid	196	194	192	194	194	191	193	193	192	196	189	192
	Missing	0	2	4	2	2	5	3	3	4	0	7	4
		Reversed ICOB7											
N	Valid	196	194	192	194	194	191	193	193	192	196	189	192
	Missing	0	2	4	2	2	5	3	3	4	0	7	4

Cultural Intelligence items (MECQ, CCQ, MOCQ, BCQ)

		Statistics											
		I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge when I interact with people from different cultural backgrounds.	I adjust my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from a culture that is different from mine.	I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I use when interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds.	I know the legal and economic systems of other cultures.	I know the rules (e.g., vocabulary, grammar) of other languages.	I know the cultural values and religious beliefs of other cultures.	I know the rules for expressing nonverbal behaviors in other cultures.	I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.	I am confident that I can socialize with locals in a culture that is unfamiliar to me.	I am sure I can deal with the stresses of adjusting to a culture that is new to me.	I change my verbal behavior (e.g., accent, tone) when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.	I use pause and silence differently to suit different cross-cultural situations.
N	Valid	196	196	196	196	196	194	196	196	196	193	196	193
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	3	0	3
		I vary the rate of my speaking when a cross-cultural situation requires it.											
N	Valid	196	196	196	196	196	194	196	196	196	193	196	193
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	3	0	3

WTC and C_WTC

		Statistics					
		The customer was willing to share all the necessary information (e.g., qualifications, prior work experience, etc.) with me.	The customer was willing to provide answers to all my questions.	The customer was willing to help me in whatever I needed from their side.	I was willing to cooperate with the AMS employee.	I was willing to provide answers to all the questions of the AMS employee.	I was willing to help the AMS employee in whatever she would need from my side.
N	Valid	196	191	196	194	195	195
	Missing	0	5	0	2	1	1

COMM and C_COMM

		Statistics							
		I kept the customer well-informed about their employment options.	I explained everything to the customer in a meaningful way.	I provided the customer with all the necessary information.	I explained all of my recommendations to the customer in detail.	The AMS employee kept me well-informed about my employment options.	The AMS employee explained my options in a meaningful way.	The AMS employee provided me with all the necessary information.	The AMS employee explained to me his/her recommendations in detail.
N	Valid	190	194	194	194	195	195	195	193
	Missing	6	2	2	2	1	1	1	3

C_ROCL and C_SAT

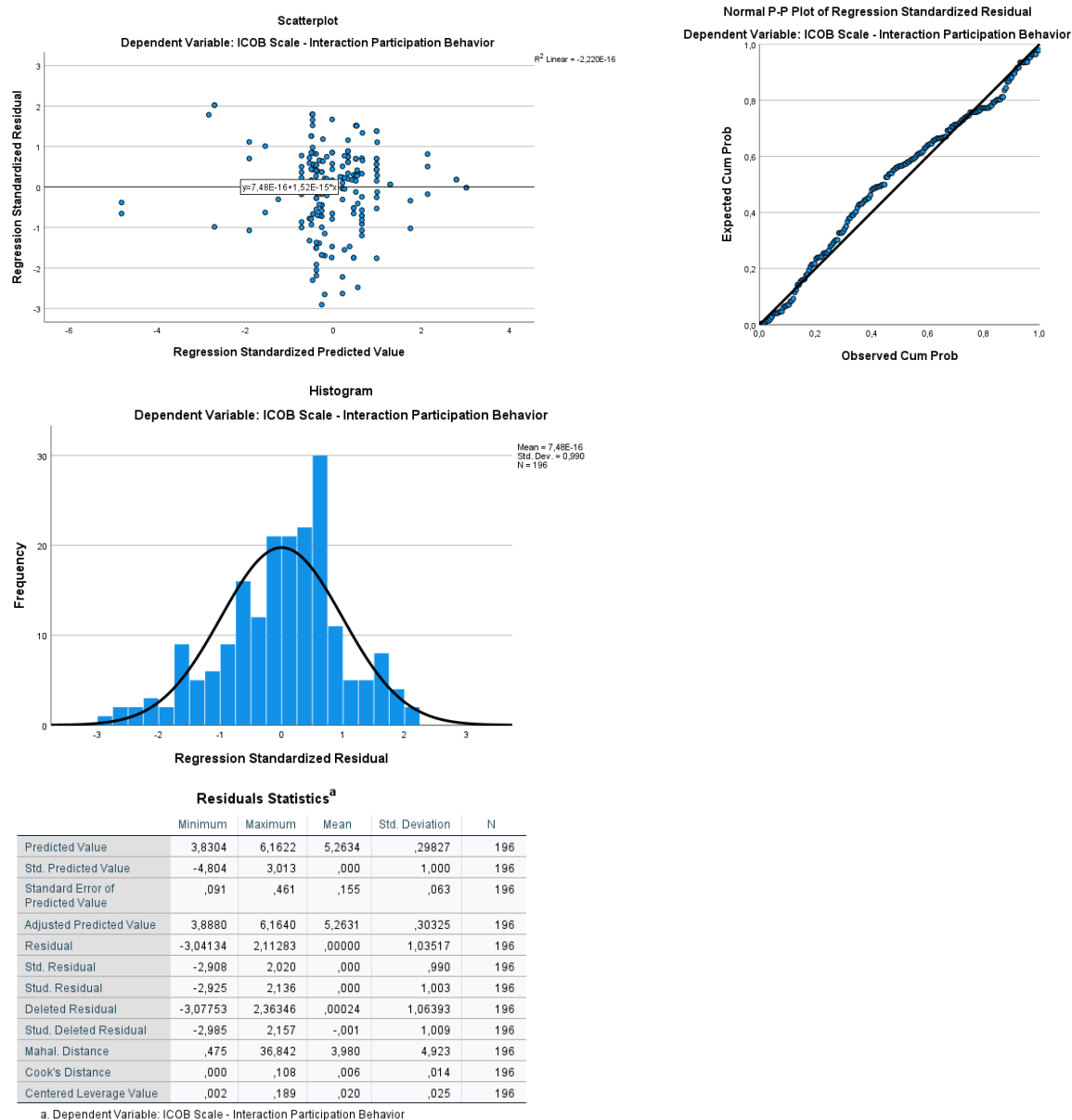
		Statistics					
		I am well-informed about how unemployment support services in Austria work.	I know what is expected of me if I go to an unemployment support agency like AMS in Austria.	I know all the rules and principles that have to be considered when going to an unemployment support agency like AMS in Austria.	Overall, I am satisfied with the visit to the AMS.	Overall, the interaction with the AMS employee met my expectations.	I think that the services of the AMS employee were of high quality.
N	Valid	195	195	194	196	193	194
	Missing	1	1	2	0	3	2

PEAG items

		Statistics									
		EG10A2_R	EG10A4_R	EG10A6_R	EG10A7_R	EG10A9_R	EG10A10_R	EG10A11_N	EG10A3_N	EG10A5_N	EG10A8_N
N	Valid	193	190	193	193	190	193	193	190	193	193
	Missing	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	3	0	0

Appendix 2: Supplementary SPSS Outputs and Assumption Test Results

- H1A:**

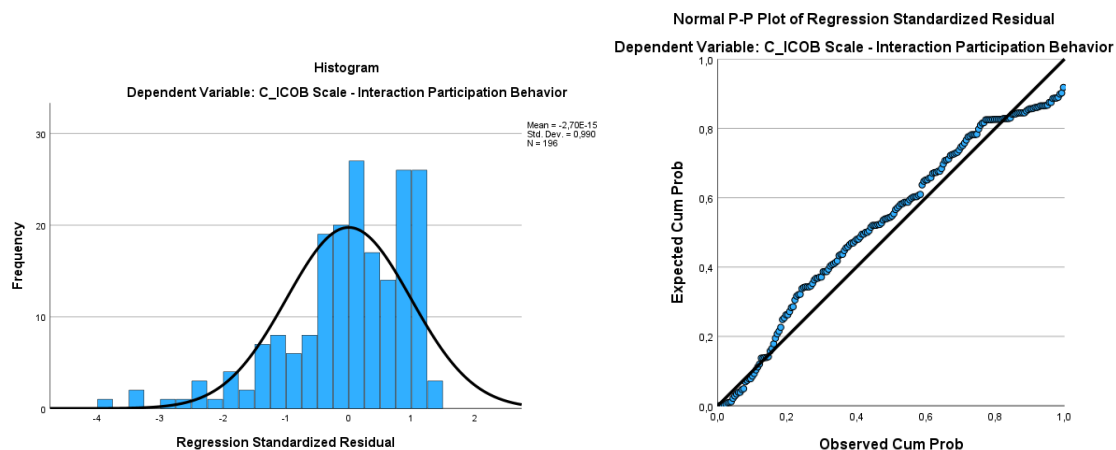


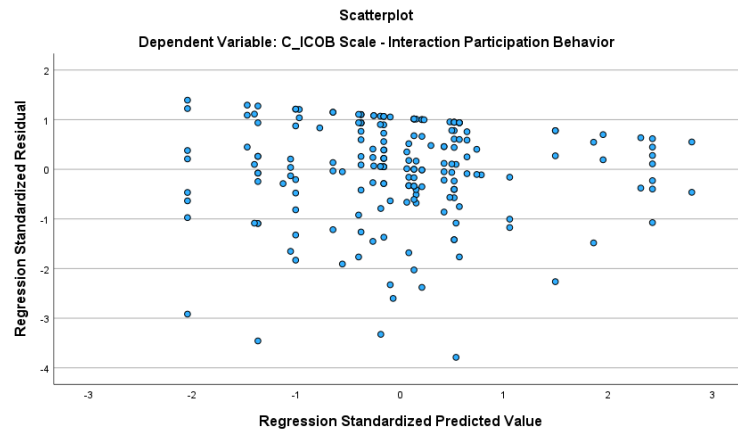
Additionally, the basic assumptions of multiple regression analyses were examined for hypothesis 1A.

- The outcome variable ICOB and all predictor variables are using a continuous scale and represent independent observations.
- The Durbin-Watson test result of 1.611 points towards a slight positive autocorrelation. However, values bigger than 1.5 can be considered acceptable for further analysis. Therefore, this is not considered a violation of the assumption of independent errors.

- The scatterplot, where the residuals are plotted against the dependent variable, shows signs of heteroscedasticity as the data points are not evenly dispersed. Although no typical shapes of heteroscedasticity like funnels or cones are visible, the assumption of homoscedasticity is still violated. However, there is only slight heteroscedasticity which means the regression analysis can still be performed and interpreted.
- The standardized residual histogram presents itself slightly skewed and asymmetrical which suggests a violation of the normality assumption. This is also visible in the P-P-Plot as the data points do not consistently overlap the line. Due to the sample size this does not present a problem for statistical testing.
- The absence of multicollinearity between independent variables is confirmed, as the correlations between the predictor variables are below 0.7, VIF values range between 1.3 and 2.1, and Tolerance values exceed 0.2.
- Additionally, the model was further assessed. The standard residuals listed in the residuals statistics fall into the acceptable -3 to 3 threshold. Cook's Distance does not indicate any concerning influential cases impacting the model.

- **H1B:**





Residuals Statistics^a

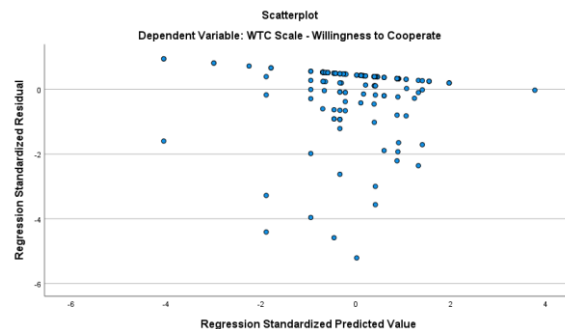
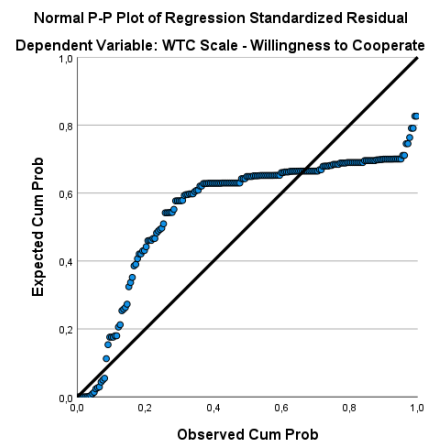
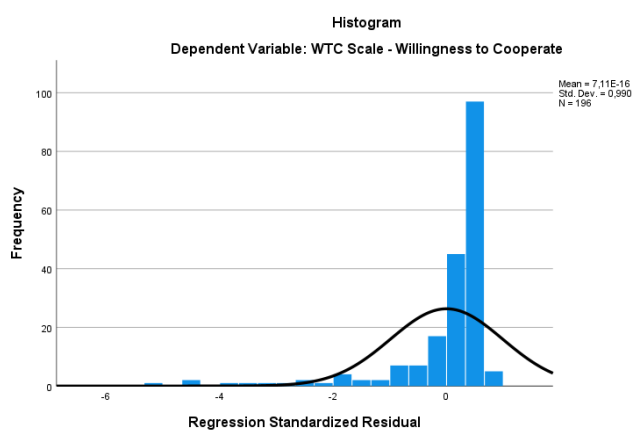
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	5,6267	6,4571	5,9771	,17117	196
Std. Predicted Value	-2,047	2,804	,000	1,000	196
Standard Error of Predicted Value	,086	,434	,146	,060	196
Adjusted Predicted Value	5,5599	6,4995	5,9792	,17466	196
Residual	-3,73554	1,37330	,00000	,97580	196
Std. Residual	-3,789	1,393	,000	,990	196
Stud. Residual	-3,817	1,426	-,001	1,003	196
Deleted Residual	-3,79221	1,44009	-,00207	1,00215	196
Stud. Deleted Residual	-3,961	1,430	-,004	1,013	196
Mahal. Distance	,475	36,842	3,980	4,923	196
Cook's Distance	,000	,119	,005	,013	196
Centered Leverage Value	,002	,189	,020	,025	196

a. Dependent Variable: C_ICOB Scale - Interaction Participation Behavior

The requirements for H1B were tested.

- The dependent variable C_ICOB and all predictor variables are using a continuous scale and represent independent observations.
- The Durbin-Watson test result of 1.941 points towards the absence of autocorrelation. Therefore, the assumption of independent errors is met.
- The scatterplot, where the residuals are plotted against the dependent variable, shows signs of slight heteroscedasticity as the data points are not entirely evenly dispersed. However, no typical shapes of heteroscedasticity like funnels or cones are visible but the assumption of homoscedasticity is still considered violated. Nonetheless, the performance of the regression analysis is still possible as it presents only slight heteroscedasticity.
- The standardized residual histogram presents itself slightly skewed and asymmetrical which suggests a violation of the normality assumption. This is also represented in the P-P-Plot where the data points differ from the line. Due to the sample size this does not present a problem for statistical testing.

- The absence of multicollinearity between independent variables is confirmed, as the correlations between the predictor variables are below 0.7, VIF values range between 1.3 and 2.1, and Tolerance values exceed 0.2.
- Cook's Distance does not indicate any concerning influential cases impacting the model.
- **H2:**



Residuals Statistics^a

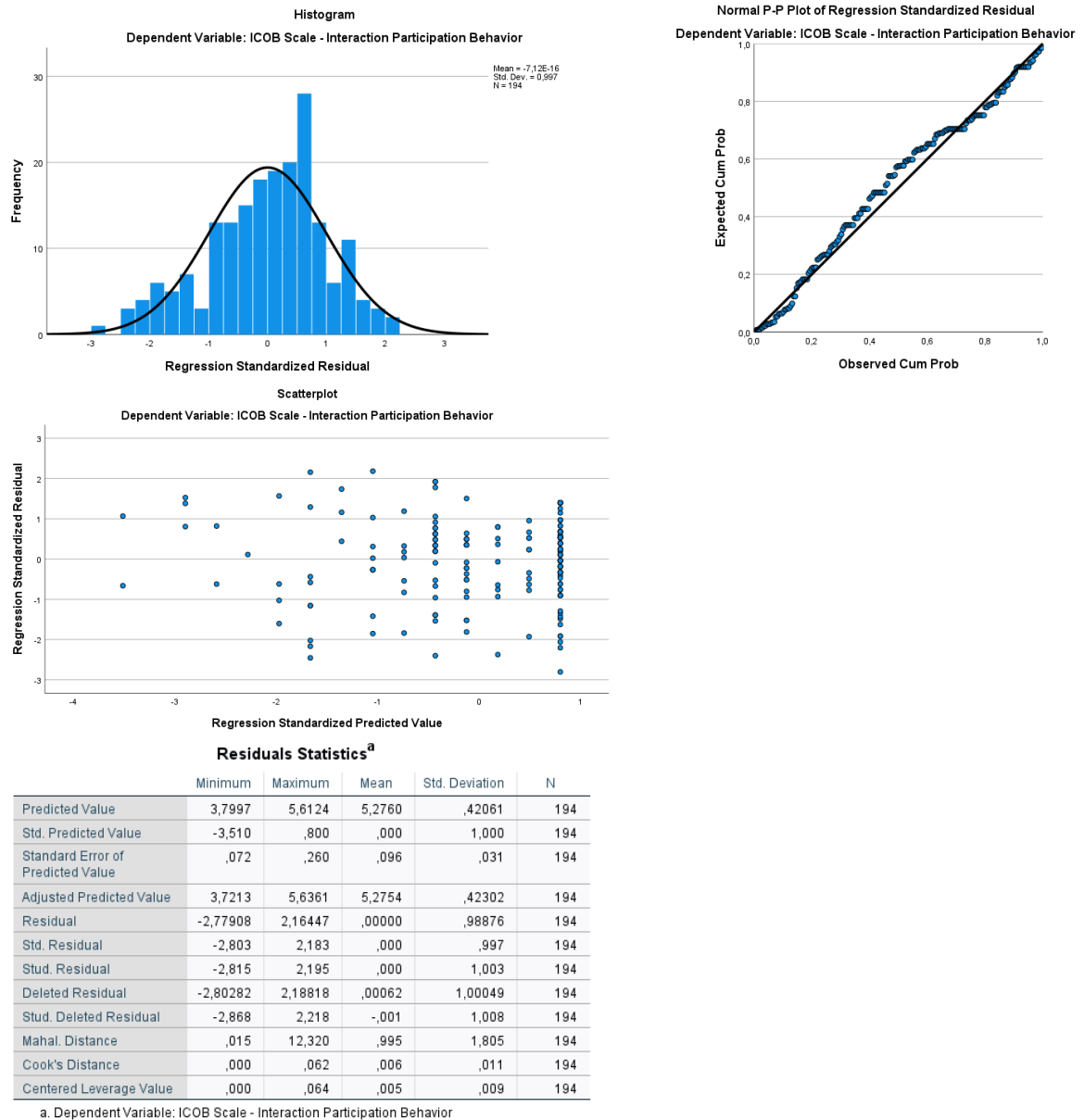
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	6,1676	7,0257	6,6114	,10972	196
Std. Predicted Value	-4,045	3,776	,000	1,000	196
Standard Error of Predicted Value	,077	,390	,131	,054	196
Adjusted Predicted Value	6,0689	7,0319	6,6107	,11680	196
Residual	-4,61373	,83238	,00000	,87665	196
Std. Residual	-5,209	,940	,000	,990	196
Stud. Residual	-5,248	,994	,000	1,003	196
Deleted Residual	-4,68373	,93112	,00074	,90027	196
Stud. Deleted Residual	-5,658	,994	-,008	1,036	196
Mahal. Distance	,475	36,842	3,980	4,923	196
Cook's Distance	,000	,150	,005	,019	196
Centered Leverage Value	,002	,189	,020	,025	196

a. Dependent Variable: WTC Scale - Willingness to Cooperate

A closer look at the relevant requirements for hypothesis 2 shows that while some assumptions of multiple regressions are met, two others are violated.

- The outcome variable WTC is using a continuous scale and presents independent observations.
- No signs of autocorrelation are found, as the Durbin-Watson test shows a good result of 1.926.
- The absence of multicollinearity between independent variables is confirmed, as the correlations between the predictor variables score below 0.7, VIF values range between 1.3 and 2.1, and Tolerance values exceed 0.2.
- The P-P-Plot demonstrates a strong non-linear relationship. The standardized residual histogram presents a negatively skewed, asymmetrical image. These findings indicate a violation of the normality assumption and on account of the sample size, this does not present a problem for statistical testing.
- The scatterplot shows slight heteroscedasticity, as data points are not evenly dispersed. Hence, the assumption of homoscedasticity is violated. However, the analysis can still be performed and interpreted as the violation is only weak.
- Cook's Distance does not indicate any concerning influential cases impacting the model.

- **H3**



The requirements for a simple linear regression for hypothesis 3 are analysed as follows.

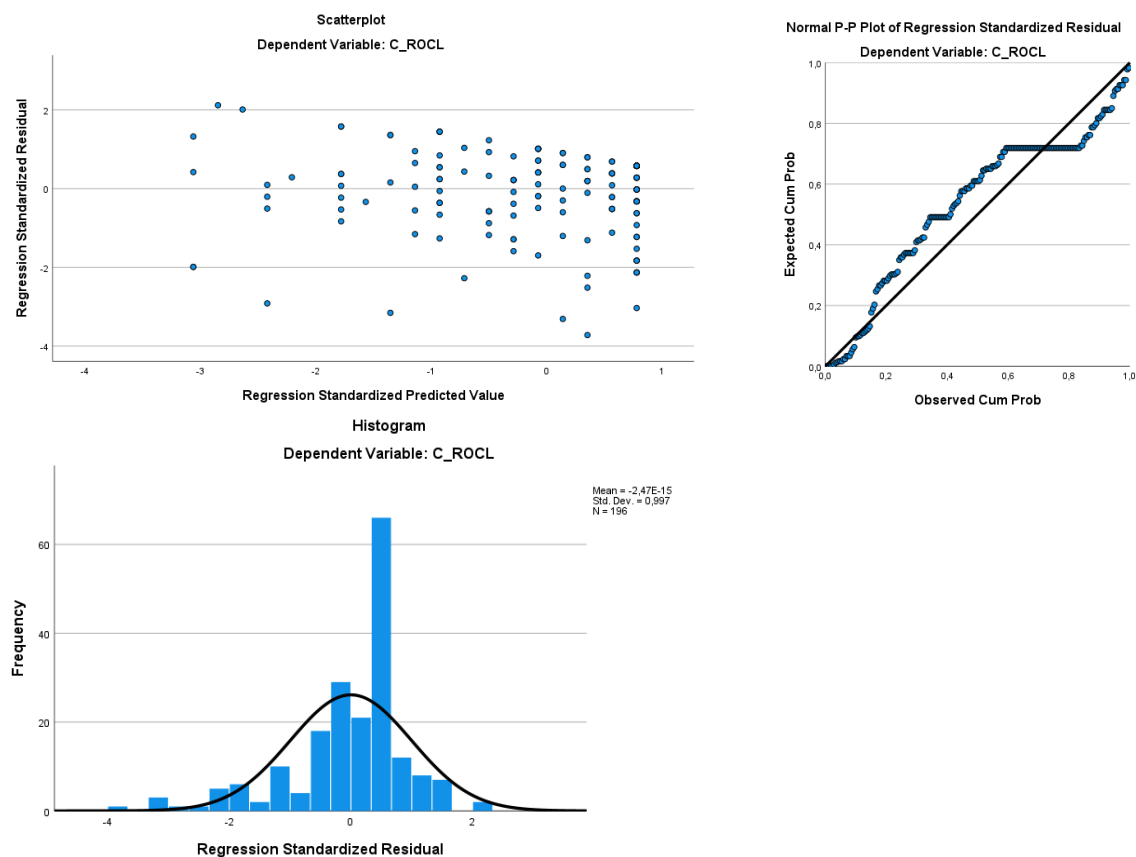
- Both ICOB and COMM are using a continuous scale and represent independent observations.
- The scatterplot shows unevenly dispersed data points which indicates heteroscedasticity. Hence, the assumption of homoscedasticity is not met. However, the heteroscedasticity is weak and therefore not hindering the regression analysis.
- The assumption of independent errors was investigated using the Durbin-Watson test. The result of 1.698 points towards a positive autocorrelation. However, as the result is

bigger than 1.5 it can be considered to be acceptable, which means the assumption has been met.

- The P-P-Plot demonstrates a non-normal image, as data points clearly deviate from the line. Therefore, the normality requirement is not fulfilled. Due to the sample size, this does not present a problem for statistical testing.
- The standard residuals range within the -3 and 3 margin. Cook's Distance shows an acceptable value and does not raise concern for influential cases impacting the model.

In summary, most assumptions are met. However, the assumptions of normality and homoscedasticity are violated.

• H4



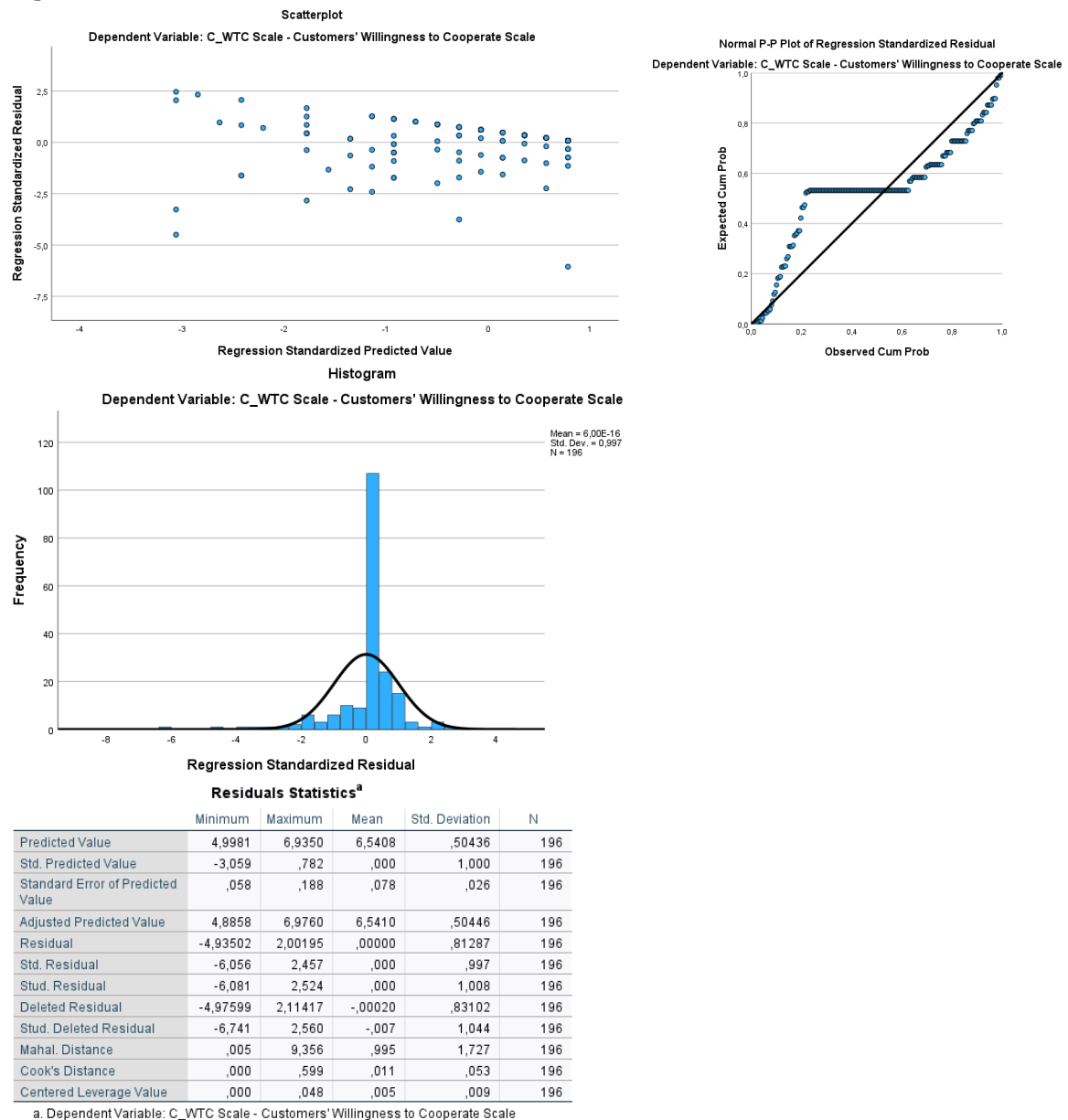
Residuals Statistics ^a					
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	4,2023	6,3590	5,9201	,56159	196
Std. Predicted Value	-3,059	,782	,000	1,000	196
Standard Error of Predicted Value	,079	,255	,106	,035	196
Adjusted Predicted Value	4,1202	6,3869	5,9200	,56157	196
Residual	-4,11936	2,34459	,00000	1,10431	196
Std. Residual	-3,721	2,118	,000	,997	196
Stud. Residual	-3,731	2,169	,000	1,004	196
Deleted Residual	-4,14317	2,45924	,00005	1,11954	196
Stud. Deleted Residual	-3,863	2,190	-,003	1,015	196
Mahal. Distance	,005	9,356	,995	1,727	196
Cook's Distance	,000	,160	,007	,021	196
Centered Leverage Value	,000	,048	,005	,009	196

a. Dependent Variable: C_ROCL

The assumptions for hypothesis 4 were investigated to understand the validity and generalizability of the findings.

- Both C_COMM and C_ROCL are metric variables and represent independent observations.
- Signs for heteroscedasticity are visible in the scatterplot, as data points are not evenly dispersed. Therefore, the requirement of homoscedasticity is violated. However, the effect is small, which means there are no problems for performing regression analyses.
- The results of the Durbin-Watson test with a value of 2.233 provides a good result. Hence, the assumption of independent errors is met.
- With strongly deviating data points the P-P-Plots indicates a non-normal distribution. The assumption of normality is violated. However, on account of the sample size, this does not present a problem for statistical testing.
- The result for Cook's Distance does not raise concern for influential cases impacting the model.

• H5



A closer investigation of the required assumptions for hypothesis 5 was done.

- Both C_COMM and C_WTC are metric variables and can be considered independent observations.
- The scatterplot presents unevenly dispersed data points which indicates that the assumption of homoscedasticity is violated. Due to the weak intensity of heteroscedastic the regression analysis can still be performed.
- The Durbin-Watson test shows a very good value of 2.077, indicating that the requirement of independent errors is fulfilled.

- The P-P-Plot demonstrates a non-normal distribution of data. Therefore, it is concluded that the assumption of normality is not met. Due to the sample size, this does not present a problem for statistical testing.
- Cook's Distance shows an acceptable value and does not indicate influential cases impacting the model.

Appendix 3: Abstract German

Kundenbeteiligung ist ein Konzept, zu dem es ein breites Spektrum an wissenschaftlichen Erkenntnissen gibt. Es beschreibt das Ausmaß der aktiven Beteiligung an Dienstleistungen von Kundinnen und Kunden durch eine zielorientierte Kommunikation und die Bereitschaft relevante Informationen offenzulegen. Bisherige wissenschaftliche Arbeiten in diesem Bereich haben den Einfluss von Charakteristika von Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeitern auf die Kundenbeteiligung untersucht. Literatur, die darüber hinaus auch auf kulturelle Unterschiede der Gesprächspartnerinnen und -partner eingeht, fehlt. Erkenntnisse zu diesen Zusammenhängen zu gewinnen wäre allerdings von großer Bedeutung, da in Anbetracht der weltweit steigenden Migrationsbewegungen auch Service Begegnungen mit kulturellen Unterschieden zunehmen. Daher ist es das Ziel dieser vorliegenden Arbeit, diese Lücke in der bestehenden Literatur zu schließen. Zu diesem Zweck wurde eine umfangreiche Literaturrecherche durchgeführt und bestehende Erkenntnisse zu den Zusammenhängen von Charakteristika von Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeitern und Kundenbeteiligung oder interkulturellen Service Begegnungen herausgearbeitet. Weiters wurde der Wissenstand zum Zusammenhang zwischen Kundinnen und Kunden mit Migrationshintergrund und deren Kundenbeteiligung dargelegt. Diese Ausarbeitung hat nochmals bestätigt, dass es an wissenschaftlicher Arbeit, die diese drei genannten Themenbereiche verknüpft, mangelt. Daher wurde ein quantitativer Forschungsansatz gewählt, um Erkenntnisse zum Schließen der Lücke zu generieren. Ein Datensatz, der das Ergebnis einer Studie beim österreichischen Arbeitsmarktservice aus dem Jahr 2019 widerspiegelt, wurde für die statistische Auswertung herangezogen. Auf Basis der Literaturrecherche wurde angenommen, dass die kulturelle Intelligenz von Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeitern ein Einfluss auf das Kundenbeteiligungsverhalten und die Bereitschaft sich zu beteiligen von Kundinnen und Kunden mit Migrationshintergrund hat. Zweitens wurde die Hypothese aufgestellt, dass die Kommunikationsfähigkeiten von Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeitern einen Einfluss auf das Beteiligungsverhalten, die Bereitschaft sich zu beteiligen und das Rollenverständnis von

Kundinnen und Kunden mit Migrationshintergrund haben. Drittens wurde angenommen, dass das Konzept der „Personal Agency“, ein alternativer Ansatz, um menschliche Charaktereigenschaften zu messen, im Zusammenhang mit Kundenbeteiligung, der Bereitschaft sich zu beteiligen und der Zufriedenheit mit Dienstleitungen steht. Die Ergebnisse der statistischen Auswertung zeigen, dass die Charakteristiken von Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeitern tatsächlich einen signifikanten Einfluss auf die Kundenbeteiligung von Kundinnen und Kunden mit Migrationshintergrund haben. Konkret hat sich gezeigt, dass kulturelle Intelligenz eine signifikante Auswirkung auf das Kundenbeteiligungsverhalten von Migrantinnen und Migranten hat. Es wurde weiters festgestellt, dass die Kommunikationsfähigkeiten der Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeiter einen signifikanten Einfluss auf das Beteiligungsverhalten, die Bereitschaft sich zu beteiligen und das Rollenverständnis von Kundinnen und Kunden mit Migrationshintergrund haben. Darüber hinaus hat sich gezeigt, dass das Konzept der „Personal Agency“ eine signifikante Beziehung zur Bereitschaft sich zu beteiligen und der Zufriedenheit mit Dienstleitungen unter Kundinnen und Kunden mit Migrationshintergrund hat. Die Erkenntnisse der vorliegenden Arbeit tragen dazu bei, die identifizierte Lücke der Literatur zu schließen.