Exploring Emotional Intelligence: A study of Vietnamese hotel workers

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Bournemouth University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

June 2019

BOURNEMOUTH UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

Recent research recognises the importance of Emotional Intelligence (EI) in the hospitality industry. Hospitality employees are required to regulate their emotions effectively during face-to-face interactions with customers, which forms a crucial part of the experience.

Research on EI in hospitality are predominantly quantitative to measure the relationship between EI and work-related factors: education and training, leadership or management, and culture. Furthermore, EI research is heavily Western centric because of the selection of sample and place of the research.

This study explores Vietnamese hotel workers' practice of EI in interactions with customers and colleagues in the workplace in Vietnam. The study adopted a qualitative approach using three methods; focus groups with 20 hotel employees, the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) to record favourable and unfavourable incidents (114 incidents in total), and semi-structured interviews with 34 hotel employees. All the data was collected in Nhatrang, Vietnam in October 2015 and September and October 2016.

The research findings show that their EI practice varied depending on the context and with whom they interacted, which highlights the advantage of employing the qualitative approach. Vietnamese hotel workers employed different strategies to recognise and regulate their own emotions and the emotions of customers and colleagues. These were obtained through higher education, hotel training programmes, their experiences and those of colleagues and managers. In addition, Vietnamese culture was found to influence their emotions and how they managed them and others' emotions. Also, a significant source of knowledge of emotional management derived from their religion and culture. Implications are discussed from theoretical, methodological, and managerial perspectives, which will benefit stakeholders in the sector.

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List of Abbreviations

ASEAN   Association of Southeast Asian Nations

CIT   Critical Incident Technique

EI   Emotional Intelligence

EL   Emotional Labour

EQ   Emotional Quotient

ER   Emotion Regulation

ESC   Emotional Social Competence

ESI   Emotional and Social Intelligence

FB   Food and Beverage

FDI   Foreign Direct Investment

FO   Front Office

GDP   Gross Domestic Product

HGM   Hotel General Manager

HK   Housekeeping

HR   Human Resource

HRM   Human Resource Management

IQ   Intelligence Quotient

MA   Masters of Arts

OCB   Organisational Citizenship Behaviours

RO   Research objective

TESOL   Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

UNWTO   United Nations World Tourism Organisation

Acknowledgements

It is an indescribable feeling to write this section for my thesis which marks the beginning of an end. There are many people that I would like to thank for being there during my PhD journey.

First of all, I would like to send my deepest gratitude to Professor Adele Ladkin for her consistent support and patience from the beginning to the end of my PhD journey. I highly appreciate that Dr Hanaa Osman always opened her door for me and treated me as a sister or daughter. In addition, I am thankful for the scholarship from the Department of Tourism and Hospitality for making this PhD research happen. I would also like to thank to the participants for spending their time on my research and providing me with valuable insights.

In addition, the greatest emotional support I have received over the years is my family back in Vietnam and particularly my late mother. I believe my mother has always been there watching over me. My family has given me the unconditional love and accepted my absence in most occasions. I feel so blessed to have the friends-as-family Sue and Eddie Curry who have always been by my side and taken me to see more of the beautiful world.

It would be a miss not to mention the friendship I have had with peer students who went through the same journey and saw me in different moods. Thank you for being a part of my life Rutendo, Maheshan, Wen, Dan, and Yuvraj. I am also grateful for having Mickey who listened, took care of me, and provided good company during my ups and downs.

Thank you everyone! I highly appreciate your support!

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1. Introduction to chapter 1

Emotional Intelligence (hereafter EI), also known as Emotional Quotient (EQ), was first coined by the two psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer (1990) and it emerged as a buzzword when Goleman's (1995) book *'EI: why it can matter more than IQ'* achieved phenomenal success. The EI concept per se and whether the claim that EI is more important than IQ (Intelligence Quotient) is a myth or reality has attracted and inspired academics and practitioners in various disciplines such as psychology, nursing, education, and particularly organisational behaviour and management studies. As a labour-intensive industry, the tourism and hospitality sector is a fruitful area to study EI and its significance, which has been proven by the proliferation of research on EI in tourism and hospitality over the past few decades. Nevertheless, the controversy surrounding definitions, models and measures of EI still exists and the situation has become more complicated by the confusing evidence from quantitative research (Smollan and Parry 2011). In an attempt to focus on answering the questions of *'why'*, *'how'* and *'when'* EI is employed in the hotel workplace, the study looks at how Vietnamese hotel workers practise EI in their interactions with customers and colleagues.

This research is driven by three main factors. First, studies on EI are heavily Western Centric because the populations under study are mainly from Western cultures such as the USA, the UK, and Australia (Emmerling and Boyatzis 2012). Cultural differences between the East and the West have been empirically proven to impact emotional experience and display (Markus and Kitayama 1991; Eid and Diener 2001). For instance, individual achievement and feelings are valued in Western countries, whereas the interdependence of the self and community is more valued in Eastern countries (Scott-Halsell et al. 2013). Seeing the issue in the same light, Lincoln (2009) raises the possibility of moving EI cross-culturally given the fact that globalised societies relying on the autonomous self and individual identity are rarely comparable to those operating on models of extended family units or of the community. These cultural differences will determine an individual's thinking and actions in each culture.

Therefore, this study will offer a different perspective on EI in relation to Vietnamese culture.

Secondly, previous research on EI lacks a contextual understanding of the processes underlying EI, despite decades of largely quantitative management research (Lindebaum 2015). The findings reported from these quantitative studies remain controversial regarding the validity of the EI construct – whether it is ability-based or personality-based or both and the reliability of EI measures (Smollan and Parry 2011). There exists a shortage of processes underlying EI that explain how and why it works (Lindebaum 2015) and that may reveal how different individuals perform EI mechanisms (Fiori 2009). Similarly, it is proposed that researchers' pre-defined representations of what constitutes emotionally intelligent behaviour could be replaced by more naturalistic ways such as interviews or focus groups to achieve individuals' understanding and sense-making processes in workplace contexts, as no shoes are *"one size fits all"* (Lincoln 2009, p.789). The qualitative approach employed is appropriate for this study because it enhances the exploration of the EI practice from Vietnamese hotel workers' perspectives, which is hard to achieve from quantitative studies.

The third driver lies in the rapid growth of Vietnam's tourism and hospitality industry and its considerable contribution to national employment. A report published in June 2017 by the UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organisation) ranked Vietnam as the seventh fastest growing country in the world, and it is also the only Southeast Asian country to be in the top ten list (Vu 2017). The open-door policy in 1986 has fostered growth in the tourism sector through the proliferation of FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) from USD 7.4 million (2% of total FDI) in 1988 to USD 1.9 billion (30.7% of total FDI) in 1995, growing approximately 100% year-on-year (Suntikul et al. 2010). This change reveals the increase in investors' confidence in the development of tourism in Vietnam. In addition, the tourism industry has gained its importance in the national economy with its stable contribution to GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of approximately 5.5% during 2006-2010; and it is anticipated to increase to 6.5-7% in 2020 (UNWTO 2012). A national report published in 2016 indicates a dramatic surge of domestic and international visitors to Vietnam in the period of 2000-2015 from 2,656,000 to 11,811,000 and from 7,674,000 to 102,200,000 respectively (GSO

2017). The boost in the number of foreign visitors to Vietnam results in an increasing demand for dealing with guests from different countries. This may challenge the weak labour market due to the limited linguistic and cultural skills – a common problem facing the tourism workforce in the Asia-Pacific (Solnet et al. 2014). As a response to the customisation of services, workers are required to perform high-end skills including operational, emotional and aesthetic skills (Solnet et al. 2014). In Vietnam, there exists a training gap between the university curricula which is theory-driven and the input of corporations (Cox and Warner 2013). In addition, the skill shortages in terms of professional and technical qualifications highlight the need for integrating the Vietnamese national education and training systems with various stakeholders (Montague 2013). On the other side of the coin, Easterners are well-known for the practice of controlling their emotions in the workplace through meditation and other forms of self-reflection over centuries (Hosie et al. 2016). Taking these strengths and weaknesses into consideration, this study is a part of the pioneering work exploring how Vietnamese hotel workers manage their emotions and the emotions of others.

1.2.   The study in context

Emerging from the realm of psychological research, EI has been studied extensively in different occupations such as teachers (Dolev and Leshem 2017), bank employees (Salami and Ajitoni 2016), manufacturing workers (Nguyen 2015b), community nurses (Karimi et al. 2014), or hotel employees (Jung and Yoon 2014) in relation to life aspects including personal well-being, quality of social relationships and professional effectiveness (Bar-On 2006). It is particularly popular in management studies since previous research shows that EI can be developed through training at any age (Goleman 1998); and attempts to develop EI in the workplace can enhance personal and professional effectiveness as well as organisational productivity (Abraham 2005). In a technical report introducing EI in the workplace, Cherniss et al. (1998) claim that an emotionally intelligent employee can deal with angry customers effectively by reassuring them and resolving their complaints.

There is also an established body of work that recognises the importance of EI in the hospitality industry with samples ranging from hospitality students (Walsh et al. 2015), hotel managers (Wolfe and Kim 2013) or frontline hotel employees (Kim et al.

2012). Nevertheless, research on EI is predominantly quantitative with the aim of measuring the relationship between EI and other work-related factors such as burnout and job satisfaction (Lee and Ok 2012), personality traits and socio-demographic factors (Kim and Agrusa 2011) or service performance (Prentice and King 2011). It is argued that the contemporary literature on EI has turned the observational data into statistics which are sold as attempts to measure EI in the organisational environment (Lincoln 2009).

Hospitality workers are required to regulate their emotions effectively during face-to-face interactions with customers (Karatepe 2011), which forms an important part of the experience or, as Langhorn (2004, p.229) calls it *"part of the product itself"*. In addition, customers' impressions of the company depends on employees' attitudes and emotions during service encounters (Lee and Ok 2012). Research on front-line hotel workers shows that workload and emotional labour are driving factors in staff burnout (Hsieh et al. 2016). In order to successfully cope with stress from the intense contact with customers, hotel workers tend to seek support from their colleagues who turn out to have direct impact on their working environment and attitudes (Limpanitgul et al. 2014). Therefore, EI appears to attract academics and practitioners as a panacea for improved work performance and customer service. For instance, EI can assist customer-contact workers in listening to customers, recognising and meeting their needs as well as encouraging them to express their own desires and expectations (Cavelzani et al. 2003).

In addition, research on EI possibly needs to take account of the contextual sensitivity since both service providers and customers bring their cultural characteristics to the service encounter and emotional display, which in turn makes up the overall experience. For instance, whereas constant attention and substantial assistance to foreign visitors is a cultural imperative in Vietnam, American guests find this annoying, pushy and untrustworthy (Truong and King 2010a). Fedoruk and Lumley (2015) posit that research on the impacts of culture on EI is still limited and highlight the importance of understanding EI, particularly in a multicultural environment. In a study examining the influence of culture on parenting practices and EI, Sung (2010) emphasises the crucial part that culture plays in the development of an individual's EI.

Therefore, the impact that Vietnamese culture exerts on Vietnamese hotel workers is undeniable in terms of EI performance and development.

Chen et al.'s (2012) review of contemporary literature on culture in hotel management research reveals that Asia is the research centre for 29% of the papers with China taking the top position (9%); and the rest are Taiwan (7%), Hong Kong (2%), Japan (2%), Korea (2%) and others (7%). Apparently, research on culture in the hotel context in Vietnam may be included in the last group, which implies the under-researched area in the realm of hotel management research. Amongst the six major models of national culture including those developed by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961), Hofstede (1980, 2001), Hall (1976), Trompenaars (1993), Schwartz (1992, 1994), and GLOBE (2004), Hofstede's model is the only one to provide numerical scores for each cultural dimension and implications for Vietnamese culture in comparison to other nations. The limited understanding of Vietnamese culture has led to the failure of early business collaborations where foreign leaders attempt to adopt Western human resource management (HRM) practices in Vietnam (Nguyen 2003; Bartram et al. 2009). According to Truong et al. (1998), the key to success for international joint ventures in Vietnam lies in building relationships, creating a mutual understanding and fostering shared values. Besides, saving face and trust are particularly important in retaining Vietnamese employees (Kamoche 2001). The strong impact of Vietnamese culture on the way people behave and interact with each other is relevant to the hospitality sector which relies on human contact as a prominent role in service encounters. It is of crucial importance that special attention be paid to the cultural element in Vietnamese hospitality in order to enhance hotel workers' capability in interacting with customers and colleagues.

1.3. Contributions of the study

The contributions of the study are built upon three main aspects: theory, methodology, and management.

Theoretically, the research offers in-depth insights into how EI was practised from Vietnamese hotel workers' perspectives. Despite decades of research, contemporary literature on EI, dominated by quantitative studies, relies heavily on scientific and often researcher-determined definitions of EI (Lincoln 2009). The adopted interpretive

approach allows for in-depth insights into Vietnamese hotel workers' practice of EI in their workplace.

Furthermore, Delcourt et al. (2016) identify the gap in research regarding interpersonal EI, while intrapersonal EI is extensively investigated. In the hospitality context, intrapersonal EI, or how one manages their own emotions, is closely related to the concept of Emotional Labour (hereafter EL) which Hochschild (1983) defines as the display of the required emotions in the workplace. Although EL has gained considerable interest amongst academics and practitioners in tourism and hospitality research for its significance to the sector (e.g. Chu and Murrmann 2006; Hofmann and Stokburger-Sauer 2017), Cruz (2008) considers EL as a part of EI. This echoes Lee and Ok's (2012) suggestion that EI is one's capacity to control emotions and EL is an expression of that capacity. Therefore, this study investigates how Vietnamese hotel workers manage their own and others' emotions to provide insights into both intrapersonal and interpersonal EI.

In addition, previous research shows that Buddhist teachings rooted in collectivist cultures provide practices towards happiness, one of the positive emotions (Hofmann 2013). The overwhelming focus of EI research in the Western world has neglected the well-founded practice of self-reflection, contemplation and meditation in Eastern cultures (Hosie et al. 2016). Moreover, previous research suggests individuals in a collectivist society tend to suppress their own emotions for the benefit of the collective (Gunkel et al. 2014) and place more value on co-worker support than their counterparts in an individualist society (Limpanitgul et al. 2014). Based on this cultural difference, the research looks at interactions of Vietnamese hotel workers with both customers and colleagues as opposed to existing studies focusing on workers' EI in interactions with customers (e.g. Prentice 2016, Kim et al. 2012). This current study, therefore, fills this gap in the literature on EI.

Methodologically, the study adopts Critical Incident Technique (CIT) to investigate incidents where emotion is intense and how hotel workers use their EI to deal with customers and colleagues. CIT has been widely used in research on service quality and service experience from customers' viewpoint. To the researcher's best knowledge, this is the first study to adopt CIT for exploring EI from the hotel workers' perspective. In this study, CIT is used to collect emotionally intense situations of hotel

workers' interaction with customers and colleagues, which includes both favourable and unfavourable incidents from the hotel workers' perspective. The combination of CIT and semi-structured interviews yielded detailed insights into these real-life situations and the participants' personal experiences which are scarcely captured in quantitative research on EI.

The managerial contribution lies in three aspects. Firstly, it is one of the first attempts to explore hotel work and workers in Vietnam. The study collects incidents where EI is employed by hotel workers in their interactions with customers and colleagues. In so doing, both favourable and unfavourable incidents are revealed, which would serve as a good source of reference for hotel workers. Secondly, the gaps in higher education and hotel training, and training needs were addressed from the hotel workers' perspectives. These findings would be of great use for educators and hoteliers. Thirdly, the research findings can be used as a guideline for foreign hoteliers on working with Vietnamese hotel workers.

1.4. Research aim and objectives

The research aims to explore how Vietnamese hotel workers practise EI in interactions with customers and colleagues.

To achieve the aim, five objectives are established:

Objective 1 – To investigate cultural factors that influence the workers' emotions in the workplace.

Objective 2 – To explore the sources of their knowledge of emotional management.

Objective 3 – To explore their EI practice through examples of favourable and unfavourable incidents.

Objective 4 – To discover strategies the workers use in managing their own emotions and the emotions of their customers and colleagues.

Objective 5 – To suggest ways to improve hotel workers' practice of EI.

The first objective is to investigate cultural factors which may exert positive and negative influences on the hotel workers' emotions on a daily basis in the workplace. Objective two explores sources of knowledge where Vietnamese hotel workers learn how to manage their own emotions and emotions of others, and use them as reference when practicing EI. Objective three compiles an inventory of both favourable and unfavourable incidents to illustrate how EI is used in a particular situation. The fourth objective investigates the strategies Vietnamese hotel workers adopt to perform both intrapersonal EI and interpersonal EI. The last objective is to reflect on Vietnamese hotel workers' suggestions for improving their EI practice which, in turn, sheds some light on designing curricula and training programmes for hotel workers in Vietnam.

1.5. The structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of the following chapters:

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the research in terms of its drivers, contributions, and research aim and objectives.

Chapter 2 is the first chapter of literature review presenting the origin of the EI concept, theoretical approaches to EI and the controversy surrounding EI. The second part of the chapter reviews EI and the other two constructs related to EI, ER, and EL. Thirdly, the chapter provides an overview of research on EI in the hospitality sector. In so doing, the chapter provides a theoretical understanding of the EI concept, the current state of EI research in general and in hospitality, and highlights the relevance of studying EI in the hospitality sector.

Chapter 3 is the second chapter of literature review which offers insights into the impacts of Vietnamese culture on hotel workers' EI practice. The chapter starts with six leading theories of national culture comprising those developed by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961), Hofstede (1980, 2001), Hall (1976), Trompenaars (1993), Schwartz (1992, 1994), and GLOBE (2004). The divergence and convergence of these theories are discussed to explain the rationale behind the adoption of Hofstede's cultural model for interpreting Vietnamese culture. The second part of the chapter is dedicated to understanding the relationship between national culture and EI. The third part of the chapter offers insights into Vietnamese culture by exploring how the

mixture of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism is practised in Vietnamese people's daily life. Furthermore, Vietnamese culture is explored by interpreting Hofstede's cultural model and previous research on Vietnam following Hofstede's model. These three parts of the chapter serve as a cultural base for investigating how Vietnamese culture influences Vietnamese hotel workers' EI practice. The chapter ends with the problems arising from the misinterpretation of Vietnamese culture.

Chapter 4 outlines the methodology and the methods adopted in this study. Firstly, the research philosophy is presented in terms of the chosen paradigm and philosophical assumptions with respect to ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology. The second part of the chapter discusses the research strategy involving the rationale for adopting the qualitative approach and its methods, sampling and the data analysis carried out for each method. Three methods adopted in the research include focus group interview, Critical Incident Technique (CIT), and semi-structured interview. The third part reviews the research evaluation and ethics considerations. Finally, limitations of the entire study and each research method are reviewed.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 report the research findings in accordance with each method and are discussed in relation to previous research. Chapter 5 presents findings from the focus group interviews with three main themes: cultural factors influencing Vietnamese hotel workers' emotions, sources of their knowledge of customer service and emotional management, and the understanding of customers' behaviours and emotional expressions based on their countries of origin. Chapter 6 records all the incidents collected from the CIT and puts them into four categories: favourable incidents with customers, unfavourable incidents with customers, favourable incidents with colleagues, and unfavourable incidents with colleagues. Each category is then presented in themes to reflect how EI was practised in these incidents. Chapter 7 presents findings from semi-structured interviews with in-depth insights into their practice of EI with regard to the recognition and regulation of their own emotions and those of customers and colleagues. The chapter also provides additional findings on cultural factors influencing their emotions and sources of their knowledge. The last part of chapter 7 presents their suggestions for improving EI practice.

Chapter 8 presents the conclusion and implications. The first part reviews key findings from secondary research. The second part is a summary of key findings from primary

research which shows how each research objective was achieved alongside the discussion with literature. This allows for the combination of findings obtained from both focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews as in the case of objectives 1 and 2. Objective 3 is fulfilled by the adoption of CIT whereas objectives 4 and 5 are met by employing semi-structured interviews. The third part of the chapter reflects on the implications with respect to theory, methodology, and management. Fourthly, the chapter discusses limitations of the entire research and a personal reflection from the researcher's point of view. The chapter ends with the final conclusion.

1.6. Summary

This chapter serves as an introduction to the thesis. Background knowledge is also outlined to highlight the position of the study in relation to current research on EI and hospitality, through which major contributions of the research in three areas – theory, methodology, and management are discussed. The chapter also explains the research aim and objectives which will drive and connect all aspects of the research. The chapter ends with the structure of the thesis by summarising the functions of each chapter.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review: Research on EI and its state in the hospitality sector

2.1. Introduction to literature review chapters

The literature review of the thesis consists of two chapters each with a different focus. The first chapter is concerned with research on EI and how it is studied in the hospitality sector. This chapter starts with an overview of research on EI and the relationship between EI and related constructs including Emotion Regulation (ER) and Emotional Labour (EL). The second part of the chapter discusses EI in the hospitality context, which highlights the important role of EI in hospitality and explains the rationale behind the need to research EI in the hospitality sector. The second chapter reviews Vietnamese culture and its influence on Vietnamese hotel workers' EI practice.

2.2. Introduction to chapter 2 – Research on EI and its state in the hospitality sector

This chapter offers a review of research on EI and its current state in the hospitality sector. Firstly, a review of EI research is provided by tracing back to the origin of the EI concept and theoretical approaches to EI. The controversy surrounding EI is also discussed to explore the theoretical aspects of EI and justify the theory adopted in this research. Secondly, the chapter examines EI in relation to similar constructs including ER and EL. Thirdly, the chapter reflects the distinctive features of the hospitality sector which distinguish hospitality work from other sectors and emphasises the importance of EI in the hospitality context. Current research on EI in the hospitality sector is also reviewed through the classification of research topics. The section ends with a review of qualitative research on EI in hospitality compared to other sectors.

2.3. Review of research on EI

Originating from Salovey and Mayer's (1990) proposed definition, EI has become a prosperous area of multidisciplinary research and practice (Ybarra et al. 2014). A

growing body of research shows EI increases with age (Van Rooy and Viswesvaran 2007) and can be improved after a brief training which in turn leads to positive consequences in terms of well-being, social relationships and employability (Nelis et al. 2011). Reviewing various forms of EI-related training, Lopes (2016) argues EI has gained a strong position in organisations because managers are more interested in changing behaviours for better work results compared to scholars who pursue fine distinctions between various mental abilities. This may be a credible explanation for the proliferation of research on EI in different occupations such as hotel employees (Darvishmotevali et al. 2018), teachers (Mérida-López and Extremera 2017), fitness employees (Lee and Woo 2017), bank employees (Salami and Ajitoni 2016), public sector employees (Lindebaum 2015), community nurses (Karimi et al. 2014), physicians (Mintz and Stoller 2014), tour guides (Min 2014), travel agency employees (Tsai and Lee 2014), and social workers (Ingram 2013). It is noteworthy that these occupations involve a high degree of human interaction, which will be further discussed.

A search for the term *'Emotional Intelligence'* on SCOPUS in March 2018 yielded 12,454 documents in the period from 1994 to 2018; and Ackley (2016) found 11,183 publications on APA's PsycNET. In public media such as Google and Amazon, the search returned 3,410,000 and 6,000 results respectively. The popularity of EI is shown in the volume of information about it on the internet; the fact that human resource professionals accept the use of the term in business settings and the anchoring of the concept in popular language (Furnham 2006).

Spector and Johnson (cited by Murphy 2006, p.325) comment *"there is perhaps no construct in the social sciences that has produced more controversy in recent years"*. This results from several claims about the importance of EI in predicting an individual's job success (Martinez 1997; Goleman 1998), and improving human life by fostering personal growth and minimising psychological harm (Salovey et al. 2002; Roberts et al. 2005). The extravagant claims and anecdotal evidence made about EI has provoked heavy criticism on its overlap and elusiveness with other constructs. It is, therefore, of crucial importance to understand where the origin of the EI concept came from and how it was approached theoretically.

2.3.1. Origin of the EI concept

It is widely known that the term EI was coined by Peter Salovey and John Mayer in their first publication *'Emotional Intelligence'* (Salovey and Mayer 1990) and in another article with Maria DiPaolo (Mayer et al. 1990) (the latter presented the EI concept with more restrictions and is less well-known). However, in one of their publications (Mayer et al. 2004), the authors revealed EI first appeared in literary criticism (Van Ghent 1953) and psychiatry (Leuner 1966). Almost two decades later, EI was used in an unpublished doctoral thesis by Wayne Payne (1986).

The notion of EI was then popularised by Daniel Goleman in his first book entitled *'Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ'* published in 1995. Interestingly, EI or EQ appeared on the cover story of Time Magazine in the same year (Gibbs and Epperson 1995) and was voted as the most useful new phrase of that year (Brodie 1996). Though EI is considered to have the right initials, EQ is more frequently used in the marketplace since it emphasises the contrast with IQ and sounds more familiar with the public (Ackley 2016).

Inspired by Goleman's book, Reuven Bar-On who had just completed his doctoral thesis on psychological well-being, adapted the scale he developed in his thesis to measure EI (Ashkanasy and Daus 2005). He named it as emotional and social intelligence (ESI) and launched the associated measure (Bar-On 1997). This was soon followed by the introduction of several definitions and measures proposed by other researchers (see McCleskey 2014).

2.3.2. Theoretical approaches to EI

Research on the EI concept varies in conceptualisation and measurement but follows three main approaches. The first group of scholars view EI as an ability and are mainly based on the initial conceptualisation proposed by Salovey and Mayer (1990). The second group posits that EI is determined by individual's personality and thus names it as trait-based EI. Finally, EI is believed to be a combination of both ability and personality, known as mixed EI. This section outlines the major works concerning each approach to provide a theoretical understanding of the EI concept.

2.3.2.1. Ability-based EI

In the first paper introducing EI, Salovey and Mayer conceptualised EI as *"the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate amongst them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions"* (Salovey and Mayer 1990, p.189). This early definition of EI highlights EI as *'the subset of social intelligence'*, which derives from the work of Edward Thorndike on three intelligences including mechanical intelligence, social intelligence, and abstract intelligence in as early as 1920. According to Thorndike (1920), social intelligence is the ability to understand and manage people, to have wise behaviours in human relations. This has roots in Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences consisting of verbal, musical, logical, spatial, kinaesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. Whereas interpersonal intelligence is the ability to understand others to enhance work effectiveness, intrapersonal intelligence relates to the ability to understand oneself and use it effectively to regulate one's life (Gardner 1983).

Salovey and Mayer's initial concept of EI included factors such as empathy, planning and motivation which are more associated with personality instead of abilities or skills (Kim and Agrusa 2011). Furthermore, Mayer and Salovey recognised their early definitions of EI focus on perceiving and regulating emotions and neglect thinking about feelings, another definition of EI is proposed, *"EI involves the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth"* (Mayer and Salovey 1997, p.10). Based on this definition, Mayer and Salovey (1997) propose a four-branch model of EI from basic to higher psychological processes referring to the ability to perceive emotions, use emotion to facilitate thought, understand emotions, and manage emotions (Figure 1). Please see Mayer and Salovey (1997) for an explanation of each branch of the model.

Based on Mayer and Salovey's (1997) ability model of EI, Joseph and Newman (2010) propose a cascading model of EI with three sequential dimensions; emotion perception, emotion understanding, and emotion regulation in relation to job performance. The authors excluded the emotion facilitation facet due to its conceptual redundancy with other EI dimensions and its lack of empirical support. Through their

research, Newman and colleagues (Joseph and Newman 2010; Newman et al. 2010) consider ER as a mediator of other EI effects on job performance and EI as a strong predictor for high EL jobs. Further discussion on the relation between these three constructs EI, ER and EL is presented in section 2.4.

Figure 1. Four-branch model of ability EI

Reflective Regulation of Emotions to Promote Emotional and Intellectual Growth

Ability to stay open to feelings, both those that are pleasant and those that are unpleasant.	Ability to reflectively engage or detach from an emotion depending upon its judged informativeness or utility.	Ability to reflectively monitor emotions in relation to oneself and others, such as recognizing how clear, typical, influential, or reasonable they are.	Ability to manage emotion in oneself and others by moderating negative emotions and enhancing pleasant ones, without repressing or exaggerating information they may convey.

Understanding and Analyzing Emotions; Employing Emotional Knowledge

Ability to label emotions and recognize relations among the words and the emotions themselves, such as the relation between liking and loving.	Ability to interpret the meanings that emotions convey regarding relationships, such as that sadness often accompanies a loss.	Ability to understand complex feelings: simultaneous feelings of love and hate, or blends such as awe as a combination of fear and surprise.	Ability to recognize likely transitions among emotions, such as the transition from anger to satisfaction, or from anger to shame.

Emotional Facilitation of Thinking

Emotions prioritize thinking by directing attention to important information.	Emotions are sufficiently vivid and available that they can be generated as aids to judgment and memory concerning feelings.	Emotional mood swings change the individual's perspective from optimistic to pessimistic, encouraging consideration of multiple points of view.	Emotional states differentially encourage specific problem approaches such as when happiness facilitates inductive reasoning and creativity.

Perception, Appraisal, and Expression of Emotion

Ability to identify emotion in one's physical states, feelings, and thoughts.	Ability to identify emotions in other people, designs, artwork, etc., through language, sound, appearance, and behavior.	Ability to express emotions accurately, and to express needs related to those feelings.	Ability to discriminate between accurate and inaccurate, or honest versus dishonest expressions of feeling.

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Source: Mayer and Salovey (1997)

2.3.2.2. Trait-based EI

Taking a different perspective on the EI construct, Petrides and Furnham (2000b; 2000a, 2001) propose the concept of trait EI to highlight the distinction between trait EI and Salovey and Mayer's (1997) ability EI, or they call it information-processing EI. Trait EI refers to *"cross-situational consistencies in behaviour as opposed to information-processing EI, which concerns abilities"* (Petrides and Furnham 2000b, p.314) and it is defined as *"a constellation of emotional self-perceptions located at the lower levels of personality hierarchies... a domain... which clearly lies outside the taxonomy of human cognitive ability"* (Petrides 2010, p.137). By proposing this concept, Petrides and Furnham (2000b) argue trait EI is embedded in the personality framework and therefore includes both personality variables (e.g. empathy, optimism, impulsivity) and other correlated constructs (e.g. motivation, self-awareness, happiness). Thus, trait EI is distinguished from ability EI in three main aspects; (1) trait EI involves behavioural dispositions and self-perceived abilities as opposed to the actual abilities in ability EI, (2) trait EI should be studied in a personality framework whereas ability EI should be researched in relation to psychometric intelligence, (3) trait EI can be measured through self-report instead of maximum-performance tests for ability EI (Petrides and Furnham 2001).

2.3.2.3. Mixed EI

Daniel Goleman came across Salovey and Mayer's original article on EI (1990) when he was a science reporter. Inspired by this short academic journal article, he popularised the notion of EI in public literature with his first book entitled '*Emotional Intelligence – Why it can matter more than IQ*' (Goleman 1995). According to Goleman (1995, p.34), EI is the ability *"to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations, to control impulse and delay gratification, to regulate one's moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think, to empathise and to hope"*. He also proposed a framework of EI comprising five dimensions: self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and handling relationships (Goleman 1995).

After the phenomenal success with his bestselling book published in 1995, Goleman focused on the importance of EI in work performance and organisational leadership, especially for CEO or leader roles. In his subsequent work, Goleman and his colleagues (Goleman 1998; Goleman et al. 2002) added more personality

characteristics and behavioural competencies to his initial model, which has made it a commercial mixed-model of EI and been criticised for ultimately describing characteristics of a good person, which undermines the credibility of his approach (Sternberg 2001).

Goleman's (1995) statement that EI is twice as important as IQ in predicting an individual's performance is challenged by Van Rooy and Viswesvaran (2004) in their meta-analysis of EI measures. EI is also stated to be a stronger predictor of job performance than cognitive ability (Martinez 1997; Goleman 1998), which is opposite to previous research findings in personnel psychology (e.g. Schmidt and Hunter 1998). The claim that has stimulated widespread critique is EI contributing 80% to life success compared to the contribution of 20% from intellectual intelligence (Cherniss et al. 1998). Researchers in the field have criticised Goleman's claims as grandiose and misinterpreted data (Mayer et al. 2000a; Jordan et al. 2002b), heavy reliance on anecdotal evidence with the term *'Madison Avenue'* approach to science and practice (Barrett et al. 2001) and considering EI as a *"panacea for individuals and society alike without even knowing it!"* (Salovey et al. 2000, p.516). Goleman's framework of EI is also modified and developed into the Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI) (Boyatzis et al. 2000). Despite the criticism Goleman has received from scholars in the psychology paradigm, his model has been used widely in studies in organisational behaviour as well as tourism and hospitality management (e.g. Scott-Halsell et al. 2007; Scott-Halsell et al. 2008; Sharma 2012).

Taking another approach, Bar-On established the EI model based on Gardner's (1983) concepts of intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences, which also serves as the foundation for Bar-On's argument to refer to EI as ESI because of the combination of both intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies and skills (2000, 2006). He defines EI as "*an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressure*" (Bar-On 1997, p.16). Bar-On is one of the pioneers who hold this view and suggest conceptualising EI as emotional-social intelligence (ESI) which is "*a cross-section of interrelated emotional and social competencies, skills and facilitators that determine how effectively we understand and express ourselves, understand others and relate with them, and cope with daily demands*" (Bar-On 2006, p.14). Bar-On (2006) consists

of five components; intrapersonal, interpersonal, stress management, adaptability and general mood.

Appendix 1 provides a summary of these three theoretical approaches. A review of three main conceptualisations and models of EI indicates the complexity facing lay researchers in the realm of EI. On top of that, there exists a long-standing controversy surrounding EI which is covered in the following section.

2.3.3. Controversy surrounding EI

Despite being the research focus for almost three decades; definitions, models and measures of EI remain a critical and controversial issue predominated by researchers in psychology (Mayer et al. 2000b; Wong and Law 2002; Joseph and Newman 2010) and expanding to other areas such as organisational behaviour (Ashkanasy and Daus 2005; Murphy 2006), industrial and organisational psychology (Van Rooy et al. 2010) and communication (Dougherty and Krone 2002).

Furnham (2006, p.156) suggests three reasons for the popularity of EI in both public and academics. First, EI is repackaged from Dale Carnegie's book '*How to win friends and influence people'* published in 1936 which stimulates interest in interpersonal skills and remains popular. Second, it reflects the positivity and optimism of important, relevant and learnable skills. The last reason lies in the differences between IQ and EQ (the more well-known short form of Emotional Intelligence in public); whereas IQ is considered as stable and those with low or average IQ reject the idea that IQ is a predictor of success in life, EQ gives some hope to people since it comprises a set of skills or competencies, particularly emotional social competence (ESC) that can be improved. It is the intuitive appeal of EI that has made it a perennial target for academic criticism (McCleskey 2014).

Cherniss (2010) outlines three major foci of criticism; conflicting definitions and models of EI, validity of existing measures, and the significance of EI as predictor for organisational outcomes such as job performance or leadership effectiveness. Accordingly, Cherniss suggests three solutions for each problem; (1) adopting the most widely agreed by theorists and distinguishing EI and ESC, (2) relying on existing alternative measurement strategies and developing new context-sensitive measures, and (3) taking context into consideration since EI tends to be a stronger predictor than

ESC in some certain areas and vice versa. The following section covers main issues and debates in each aspect.

2.3.3.1. The conceptualisation of EI

The criticism of the EI conceptualisation can be summarised by Neubauer and Freudenthaler's (2005, p.43) comment as follows:

> *"If abilities and traits and emotional as well as non-emotional constructs can be labelled emotional intelligence, where are the (necessary) borders of such a psychological construct? Is then the whole domain of personality psychology simply a domain of emotional intelligence?"*

In other words, the main problem of defining EI is to clarify the boundaries between the three theories; ability EI, trait EI, and mixed EI. These different theoretical approaches to EI have led to different conceptualisations of the EI constructs; therefore, each EI model is adopted and supported for different reasons. Pérez et al. (2005) highlight the distinction between these constructs can result in different measures with broader theoretical as well as practical implications. One of the reasons for the popularity of ability-based model is that it describes EI as an aspect combined from crystallised intelligence and emotion while the mixed models have blended a wide variety of motivation, well-being, and personality characteristics (Cartwright and Pappas 2008). In contrast, it is argued that the mixed model has been more influential in terms of EI in the workplace thanks to media coverage and marketing so as to better showcase the language and culture of contemporary business (Murphy and Sideman 2006).

EI researchers may reach a consensus on the conceptualisation of EI in four dimensions: perception, regulation, understanding, and utilisation of emotions (Ciarrochi et al. 2000). Spector (2005) suggests EI is typically defined as the abilities to recognise and regulate emotion in the self and others. This serves as the working conceptualisation for exploring EI practice of Vietnamese hotel workers and collecting data in this study for its straightforward and easy-to-understand definition.

In developing a model of wise ER, Cote et al. (2006) point out the possible gap between abilities and behaviour given abilities represent what a person can do and there is chance that an individual has a specific ability but never uses it. Consequently, EI, defined as a set of abilities associated with emotions, is possible to develop through

experience and learning and this is proven by several empirical studies (Cote et al. 2006; Nelis et al. 2011). EI can be built up through training and experience, which may explain for its widespread popularity in organisational behaviour and management studies (Cartwright and Pappas 2008).

A review of EI literature shows it is predominated by the controversy surrounding the EI construct during the period of 2000-2010. Nevertheless, for the last decade, researchers tend to shift their attention towards researching EI in relation to other constructs; for instance, EI and teacher burnout (Mérida-López and Extremera 2017), EI and the influence of culture (Gunkel et al. 2014; Gunkel et al. 2016) or EI and other work-related factors (Gao et al. 2013; Njoroge and Yazdanifard 2014; Salami and Ajitoni 2016). This may indicate a healthy development of such a controversial concept as EI and optimistically EI still inspires researchers and practitioners.

In addition, Ashkanasy and Daus (2005, p.446) posit that Mayer and Salovey's (1997) four-branch model *"for the time being at least, remains the only scientifically defensible model of EI"*. Similar opinions are also found elsewhere (Cherniss 2010; Jordan et al. 2010) supporting the adoption of this hierarchical model of ability EI since it is the most widely accepted and used in peer-reviewed articles. This current research, therefore, is based on this four-branch model of EI to explore the processes underlying the EI practice of Vietnamese hotel workers in their workplace. This work-based exploratory study of EI amongst Vietnamese hotel workers fulfils the need for additional research on the cultural impacts on EI addressed in Walter et al. (2011).

2.3.3.2. The measurement of EI

Researchers propose their definition of EI and its associated models, which determines how it is measured. As a result, the lack of a consensual definition has made the establishment of an acceptable measure of EI even more problematic (Matthews et al. 2006).

Law et al. (2004) suggest measuring trait EI through self-report tests as opposed to ability EI measured through performance-based tests. As one of the first attempts to distinguish approaches to measuring EI, Ashkanasy and Daus (2005) propose three streams of research on EI measures; stream one is based on the four-branch ability model developed by Mayer and Salovey's (1997), stream two comprises self- and

peer-report instruments based on Mayer and Salovey's (1997) model, and stream three are EI models with components that go beyond Salovey and Mayer's definition.

Three critical articles against the EI construct and its measurement to be mentioned are those by Landy, Locke, and Conte. Landy's (2005) criticism is mainly concerned with the lack of scientific measures of EI, its root in social intelligence and weakly designed research. To a greater extent, Locke (2005) addresses problems with the theoretical underpinning of EI in terms of definitions, research, and application. Conte's (2005) argument focuses on the measures of EI through an overview of four major EI measures including Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI), Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i), Multifactor Emotional Intelligence Scale (MEIS), and Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test V2 (MSCET 2.0). Please see McEnrue and Groves (2006) for a review of major EI measures.

The debate surrounding EI becomes intense due to the fact that science- or marketing-oriented evaluation exerts significant influence on measurement considerations (Conte and Dean 2006). In addition, the practicality of the existing measures of EI is questioned due to the administration cost in real organisational settings (Schutte et al. 1998; Law et al. 2004). Self-report EI measures are likely to be widely adopted in business training and consultancy because they are easy to develop and administer with the aim of predicting performance and leadership success in the workplace (Conte and Dean 2006). Nevertheless, ability-based EI measures have become more popular in academic research than self-report tests which are proven to lack psychometric support (Conte 2005). Despite the variations and conceptually overlapping frameworks of EI, EI definitions seem to complement rather than contradict with each other highlighting the distinctive value of each measure (Ciarrochi et al. 2000). In the same vein, O'Boyle et al. (2011) suggest all three streams of EI research to some degree measure the EI core elements. For better assessments of EI, it is recommended to focus on the demonstration of emotional ability (Van Rooy et al. 2010).

2.3.3.3. EI as predictor for organisational outcomes

The muddle over the EI construct is made more problematic by leadership researchers due to the claims about EI being a predictor of job performance and leadership effectiveness. There is a substantial body of work investigating the role of EI on

leadership and business settings (Ashkanasy 2002; Jordan et al. 2002a; Jordan et al. 2002b; Prati et al. 2003; Antonakis 2004; Antonakis et al. 2009). However, quantitative research on EI and leadership provides confusing findings and qualitative studies are rare (Smollan and Parry 2011). As a response to this issue, O'Boyle et al. (2011, p.806) provide *"the most comprehensive, and focused, EI meta-analysis to date"* that proves EI is a significant predictor of job performance. This may explain for the influx and predomination of quantitative research on the relationship between EI and other work-related factors.

According to Day (2004), it is a common phenomenon of any new construct to promote debate on theoretical approaches amongst academic researchers. In addition, the fact that EI is popularised in public has created its burgeoning interest in media and organisations, which makes the situation even more complicated. It is unlikely that any researcher will reach a consensus on the definition and measurement of EI but a consensus on some main aspects of the EI concept seems possible. In response to the criticisms of the EI construct, Ashkanasy and Daus present two papers (Ashkanasy and Daus 2005; Daus and Ashkanasy 2005) to express their agreement and disagreement with these criticisms, through which they reinforce their previous suggestion (Ashkanasy and Daus 2002, p.83) of four points which are likely agreed upon; (1) EI is distinct from, but positively related to other intelligences; (2) EI is an individual difference, some people are more endowed and others are less so; (3) EI develops over a person's life span and can be enhanced through training; (4) EI involves, at least in part, a person's abilities effectively to identify and to perceive emotion (in self and others), as well as possession of the skills to understand and to manage those emotions successfully. Based on this theoretical foundation, the current research on EI aims to explore how Vietnamese hotel workers perceive their own and others' emotion and manage these emotions in the hotel context. The research also discovers which part of training is beneficial for hotel workers' EI practice and how it can be improved over time.

2.4. EI and related constructs

A review of EI literature reflects the existence of other theoretical constructs relevant to studying EI such as ER and EL. It is crucial to present an overview of ER and EL to examine their theoretical link with the EI concept.

2.4.1. Emotion Regulation
2.4.1.1. Theory of ER

Gross (1998, p.275) defines ER as *"the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions"*. Gross's theory of ER can be explained through Figure 2.

Gross (1998) proposes five families of ER strategies in temporal sequence; the first four families including situation selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, and cognitive change represent antecedent-focused ER (occurring before the emotion is generated) and response modulation relates to response-focused ER (occurring after the emotion is generated). These strategies are outlined as follows (Gross and Barrett 2011, p.12).

"*Situation selection* refers to the actions we take that make it more likely we will be in a situation we expect to give rise to the emotions we would like to have (or less likely that we will be in a situation that will give rise to emotions we would prefer not to have). *Situation modification* refers to the efforts to directly change a situation so as to modify its emotional impact. *Attentional deployment* refers to influencing emotional responding by redirecting attention within a given situation. *Cognitive change* refers to changing one or more of one's appraisals in a way that alters the situation's emotional significance, by changing how one thinks either about the situation itself or about one's capacity to manage the demands it poses. Finally, *response modulation* refers to influencing experiential, behavioural, or physiological responses after response tendencies have already been initiated. For example, one may hide from another person the emotion one is feeling by inhibiting emotional behaviours (verbal and facial) that typically accompany that emotion."

Figure 2. Process model of Emotion Regulation
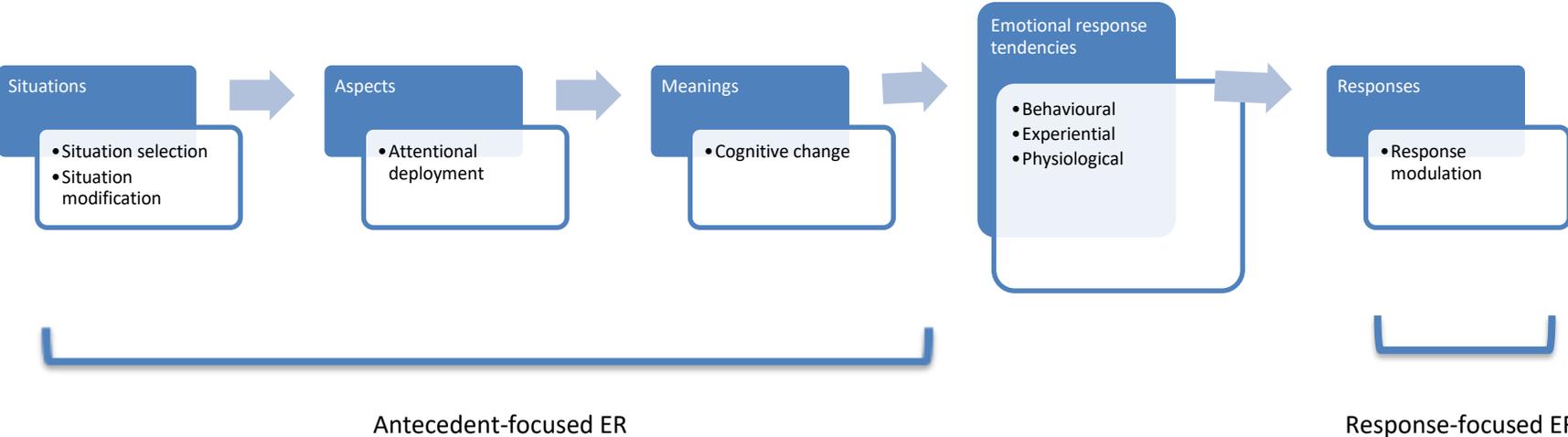
Source: Amended from Gross (1998)

2.4.1.2. Relationship between EI and ER

The relationship between EI and ER is proven through both theoretical and empirical research. Adopting Mayer and Salovey's (1997) ability model, Lawrence et al. (2011) suggest the emotion management dimension of EI (branch four) refers to understanding the regulation and expression of emotion and point out that EI researchers tend to use the terms *'emotion management'* and *'emotion regulation'* interchangeably. This poses the need for tracing back to the conceptualisation of EI. Mayer and Salovey (1997, p.14) conceptualised their highest branch of EI model, reflective regulation of emotions as *"the conscious regulation of emotions"*. Later on, they attempted to clarify their model by defining *'managing emotions'* as *"concerning regulating emotions in oneself and others"* (Mayer et al. 1999, p.285). In so doing, Mayer and Salovey conceptualised the EI construct upon the ER theory and ER is included as the fourth dimension in the model of ability EI.

In reviewing Mayer and Salovey's (1997) EI model, Wranik et al. (2007) conclude that the fourth branch of EI (managing emotions) illustrates a link between emotionally intelligent skill sets and effective ER whereas branch 3 (understanding emotion or emotion knowledge) is the background for predicting intelligent ER. In other words, one's knowledge about emotions, themselves and their social world determines their perception, their chosen regulation strategies and the reasons behind that.

In a similar vein, Joseph and Newman (2010, p.58) suggest their cascading model of EI is a *"conscious emotion regulation process"* in which the relationship between the ability to perceive emotion and the ability to regulate emotion is mediated by the ability to understand emotion. Therefore, ability EI is built upon ER theory and this explains why it is crucial to refer to the theories of emotions and ER when researching EI. This is in line with Lindebaum's (2015) conclusion that the processes underlying ability EI are better defined through the construct of ER. However, it is noteworthy that EI differs from ER regarding its emphasis on abilities or the potential for behaviour rather than actual behaviours as in the case of ER (Cote et al. 2006). This notion serves as the theoretical underpinning for the current research which investigates how Vietnamese hotel workers employed their EI practice in a particular incident as well as how they built up their emotional knowledge.

2.4.2. Emotional Labour

2.4.2.1. Theory of EL

Another concept relevant to researching EI is EL because these two concepts appear to have a close theoretical association. Researchers have attempted to empirically prove the relationship between EI and EL but the findings are inconsistent (Yin et al. 2013).

Table 1. Definitions of EL proposed by key authors in the field

Source	Definition
Hochschild (1983, p.7)	The management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display
Ashforth and Humphrey (1993, p.90)	The act of displaying the appropriate emotion (i.e., conforming with a display rule)
Morris and Feldman (1996, p.987)	The effort, planning, and control needed to express organisationally desired emotion during interpersonal transactions
Mann (1997, p.5)	The work involved in managing emotions in the workplace by either displaying appropriate emotions or suppressing inappropriate ones
Grandey (2000, p.97)	The process of regulating both feelings and expressions for the organisational goals

Table 1 collects definitions of EL from key authors in the field to highlight the similarities and differences amongst these conceptualisations. Despite minor

differences, the common conceptualisation of EL is concerned with the way an individual manages his own emotions to meet organisationally desired emotions.

EL was coined by Hochschild (1983) in her seminal work on flight attendants which has its root from Goffman's (1969) dramaturgical perspective of customer interactions in which the worker is considered as the actor and their workplace is the stage with the customer being the audience. Hochschild (1983) suggests two strategies of managing one's emotions: surface-acting and deep-acting; whereas the former refers to the regulation of one's emotional expressions, the latter relates to the modification of one's feelings to express the required emotion.

Taking a different perspective from Hochschild, Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) regard EL as an observable behaviour which may become routine and require no effort. Apart from surface acting and deep acting, they provide the third strategy, the expression of spontaneous and genuine emotion. Grandey (2000) summarises two main differences in Ashforth and Humphrey's conceptualisation of EL compared to Hochschild's perspective; (1) their definition emphasises observable behaviours instead of feelings and thus emotional displays are effortless or genuine, (2) their EL conceptualisation relates EL impacts to task effectiveness rather than the employee's health or stress. Grandey (2000) draws the definition of EL upon Gross's (1998) theory of ER and adds the display of genuine emotion as another type of EL. Grandey's (2000) definition of EL is considered as the most influential approach for successive theoretical and empirical research on EL (Diefendorff et al. 2008).

Although EL scholars provide different definitions of EL, there appears to be a uniform key feature of adjusting one's emotional display in accordance with workplace regulations, which is far less complicated as in the case of EI. Furthermore, most theorists agree upon EL conceptualisation in terms of surface acting and deep acting and there exist a considerable number of reliable and validated scales for measuring EL (Wang et al. 2011).

2.4.2.2. Relationship between EI and EL

One of the key authors who have contributed to the theoretical link between EI, EL and ER is Alicia Grandey. Taking the theories of ER and EL together, Grandey (2000) proposes a conceptual framework of ER performed in the workplace and provides a

revised model of EL as ER in which EI belongs to one of the individual differences (Grandey and Melloy 2017). As this revised model is beyond the focus of the present study, it will not be discussed in detail. However, based upon previous theories on EI, ER, and EL; there exists a close theoretical relationship between these three constructs.

The current research follows the theoretical framework presented in Figure 3 to explore how Vietnamese hotel workers practise EI in their interactions with customers and colleagues in the workplace. The adoption of Mayer and Salovey's (1997) four-branch model of EI allows the research to explore how Vietnamese hotel workers practise their EI through these four hierarchical processes. The lowest branch, emotion perception, refers to one's ability to perceive their own and others' emotions in their face-to-face interactions. This research examines how Vietnamese hotel workers perceive their own emotions and the emotions of customers and colleagues. The next branch up, emotion facilitation, refers to how they generate their feelings to facilitate thoughts, which may involve the consideration of multiple perspectives. The third branch relates to the ability to understand emotions and use emotional knowledge. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the sources of their knowledge of emotion management. Furthermore, as a work-based research, this branch can be extended to the exploration of training programmes which may assist them with improving their EI practice. Finally, the highest branch is concerned with their ER in the interactions in the workplace which will be explored by following Gross's (1998) theory of ER illustrated by the five strategy families; situation selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, cognitive change, and response modulation. According to Grandey (2000), attentional deployment and cognitive change reflect deep acting strategy since they involve the modification of feelings whereas response modulation refers to surface acting strategy because it modifies the expression. This conceptual framework is employed as the starting point for exploring the EI practice of Vietnamese hotel workers.

Apart from the theoretical relationship, there is a growing number of empirical studies evaluating the relationship between EI and EL. By empirically testing the relationship between ability-based EI and job performance, Joseph and Newman (2010) reveal that EI positively predicts performance for high EL jobs and negatively predicts performance for low EL ones. It can be inferred that those who perform in occupations

that involve high EL tend to require higher levels of EI. This may explain the popularity of investigating EI in jobs that require EL such as teachers (Yin et al. 2013), nurses (Karimi et al. 2014) or flight attendants (Herpertz et al. 2016). Please see Jung and Yoon (2014) for a review of previous research on the relationship between EI and EL.

In a recent study with larger sample sizes, Newman and Smith (2014) confirm findings from previous research (Grandey 2000; Wong and Law 2002) and conclude that EL serves as a moderator of the relationship between EI and performance, which has crucial implications for organisations to enhance their employee efficacy by investing in the development of their EI. Furthermore, it is emphasised that work roles involving frequent customer contact are likely to require higher levels of some certain EI competencies (Newman and Smith 2014). This notion highlights the case for studying EI in the hospitality sector and is proven by an increasing body of work on EI and EL in the sector (e.g. Kim et al. 2012; Lee and Ok 2012; Li 2013; Jung and Yoon 2014; Yadisaputra 2015; Wu and Shie 2017). The next chapter offers an overview of the hospitality sector and its characteristics to highlight the need for researching EI in the hospitality sector.

Figure 3. The theoretical framework of EI, ER, and EL
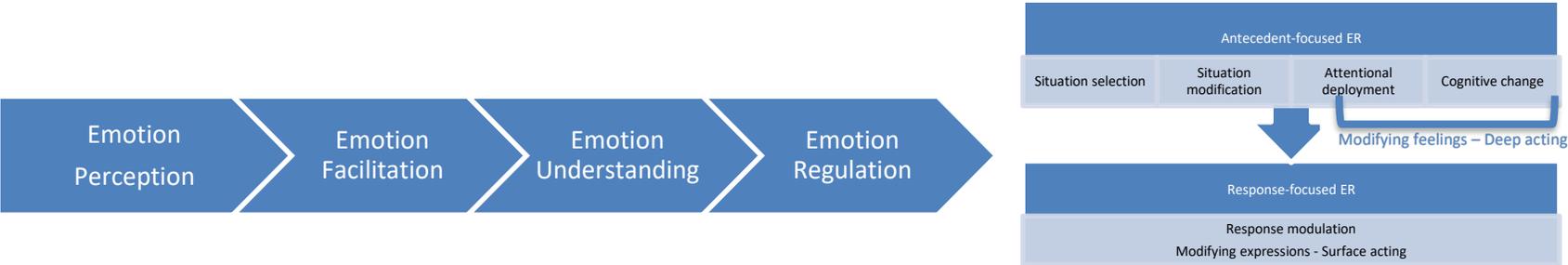
Source: Amended from Mayer and Salovey (1997), Gross (1998), and Grandey (2000)

2.5. EI research in the hospitality sector

Since the idea of the experience economy was introduced, experience has become the core of entertainment business. Whenever there is a customer-employee interaction; the customer is likely to undergo a personal experience which is tailor-made for him/herself by the company (Pine and Gilmore 1998). In the hospitality context, the employee is an integral part in the production process of experiences (Lundberg 2011). Carlzon (1989, p.2) proposes the term '*moments of truth*' to mention the time when employees interact with customers in the hospitality context and emphasises the importance of these moments to a business, which may lead to either success or failure. In fact, hospitality workers play an important role in enhancing service quality, attracting more satisfied and loyal customers, gaining competitive advantage, increasing profitability, and delivering organisational performance (Baum et al. 2006; Kusluvan et al. 2010; Davidson et al. 2011).

Recognising the importance of the human element in the hotel industry, both practitioners and academic researchers have made considerable attempts to introduce and adopt good HRM practices (e.g. Riley 1996; Nickson 2007; Boella and Goss-Turner 2013). In a review of HRM articles in hospitality, Lucas and Deery (2004) show that the majority of HRM studies in hospitality have been replicated from the mainstream HRM, little has been done in the hospitality context. The problem remains as Madera et al. (2017) conduct their review of strategic HRM literature from the perspectives of general management and tourism and hospitality. The authors emphasise the difference lies in the important role of frontline employees who deliver the majority of the service experience. In a similar vein, Davidson et al. (2011) conclude that it is the workforce in the service industry that differentiates hospitality from other sectors. Therefore, this section reviews the human element embedded in the hospitality sector, which is the reason underlying the need for studying emotions in general and particularly the EI practice of workers in the sector.

In order to set the stage for EI research in hospitality, this section firstly outlines the main characteristics of hospitality work. Secondly, EI research in hospitality is reviewed through a classification of topics concerning EI. In so doing, achievements

and gaps in the research area are identified and discussed. The last part of the chapter presents how EI is researched qualitatively in hospitality and the contribution it makes.

2.5.1. The characteristics of hospitality work

The main characteristics of employment in this industry include high labour intensity, instability of employment and high levels of labour turnover, the unskilled and semi-skilled nature of jobs, weak internal labour markets, gendered nature of employment, low status of employment, mostly in small and medium-sized organisations, low level of unionisation, the transferability of skills, employment of marginal and disadvantaged labour, and poor conditions of employment (Kusluvan 2003). Zhao and Ghiselli (2016) list long working hours, irregular work schedules, frequent job turnover, unsociable hours, split shifts and relatively low pay as six main characteristics of hospitality work. Given that the current research looks at the hotel workers' EI practice in the context of Vietnamese hospitality, four characteristics are identified as relevant and have strong implications for justifying why EI research is needed in hospitality and how Vietnamese culture may influence the overall practice of EI. Four important characteristics to discuss are the image of hotel work, the gendered nature, turnover culture, and low-skilled versus high-skilled jobs.

2.5.1.1. The image of hotel work

The image of hotel work is both positive and negative. Positively, it is often associated with glamour such as travel opportunities, meeting people, use of foreign language and a wide variety of tasks (Szivas et al. 2003). Ladkin (2011) adds the attractiveness of hotel work lies in its flexible hours, job opportunities for minorities and females as well as skill development. Interestingly, as early as 1941, hotel work was illustrated in a book called *'Hotel Splendide'* by an American writer Ludwig Bemelmans. Regarded as a "*supreme optimist*" (Baum 2007, p.1386), Bemelmans painted a glamorous picture of hotel work from his own experience working in luxury hotels such as the Ritz during his youth (Bemelmans 1942). Although the book is his autobiography starting as a waiter and ultimately becoming a restaurateur, his experience of hotel work is unlikely to be representative.

In contrast, hotel work can be associated with manual and dirty tasks, repetition, and low pay (Adler and Adler 2004). Completely opposed to Ludwig Bemelmans, George

Orwell exhibited a vivid picture of hotel work in *'Down and out in Paris and London'* when he was working as a plongeur in Paris hotels. He describes himself as "*one of the slaves of the modern world... He is no freer than if he were bought and sold. His work is servile and without art; he is paid just enough to keep him alive; his only holiday is the sack*" (Orwell 1949, p.122). Although the book was written in the context of the depression in the 1930s, Orwell successfully revealed the negative aspects of hotel work such as physically demanding, low-paid, low-status, low-skilled, long and unsociable hours as well as poor working conditions (e.g. Szivas et al. 2003; Lindsay and McQuaid 2004; Lai and Baum 2005). This is in line with Westwood's (2002, p.3) claim of service work as "*a low-pay, low-prestige, low-dignity, low-benefit, no-future job*". Split shifts and alcoholism are also listed as social and practical consequences for hospitality employees (Wood 1997).

Baum (2006, p.124) summarises the drawbacks of working in the hospitality sector as long and difficult hours, dirty jobs, hard and monotonous work together with long periods of standing. A sharp criticism of service jobs characterised by Coupland (1992, p.5) as "*McJob: a low-pay, low-prestige, low-dignity, low-benefit, no-future job in the service sector. Frequently considered a satisfying career choice by people who have never held one*". Unfortunately, Baum (2007) claims that few improvements have been made in terms of working conditions for tourism and hospitality employees since Wood's (1997) proposition. These negative images of hotel work seem common and exist across the globe as reflected by previous research in Israel (Reichel et al. 2014), the UK (Janta et al. 2011b), New Zealand and Dubai (Brien et al. 2017). In China, Kong (2011) reveals a lack of competent workforce for hotels and travel agencies resulting from negative perceptions of their jobs. It is suggested that providing training and development programmes may convey the support and care from the organisations to hotel workers, which in turn generates positive feelings amongst workers and retain them. Given that Vietnam is experiencing vocational and skill shortages in manufacturing and service sectors (Montague 2013), similar measures can be implemented and ultimately workers' emotions are enhanced.

2.5.1.2. The gendered nature

In the early 1990s, Adkins's (1995) pioneer book on tourism and female work shed some light on the gendered nature of tourism employment. The topic of gender and

tourism has attracted some other scholars (e.g. Kinnaird and Hall 1994). In a more recent book, Pritchard et al. (2007) provide a more detailed discussion on the theme by emphasising the importance of taking into consideration the issues of gender in tourism. A significant growth in female workers in tourism, especially in developing countries (Shah and Gupta 2000) has brought additional benefits to women, apart from a paid job, such as empowerment and advancement which enhances their own voice and independence with their new roles in their families and communities (Pritchard et al. 2007). Despite the potential benefits, Prichard et al. (2007) thoroughly evaluate the two sides of the picture. On the one hand, the tourism sector provides favourable conditions for women in terms of economics, society and politics. On the other hand, it may pose some threats to women such as ghettoisation, oppression, and inequality. Given that gender discrimination is beyond the scope of this thesis, further discussion on this issue will not be presented. However, the notion of gender discrimination, particularly the obstacles for female workers in hospitality has already been studied widely (e.g. Purcell 1993; Kinnaird and Hall 1994; Woods and Kavanaugh 1994; Crafts and Thompson 2007; Ineson et al. 2013).

According to Janta (2011), the majority of hospitality jobs are socially constructed which tend to be specific for either males or females as well as for nationality. Interestingly, the workforce in tourism and hospitality industry is getting gradually *"feminised"* (Nickson 2007, p.71). Reviewing previous gender-based studies (e.g. Spradley and Mann 1975; Hochschild 1983; Cockburn 1985; LaPointe 1992), Korczynski (2002) finds the same voice that gender determines different nature or experience of front-line work for a female employee compared to her male counterparts. Kim and Agrusa (2011) emphasise the shortage of gender focused studies despite the heavy reliance on female workforce in hospitality industry. This statement implies the gendered nature of hospitality deserves more attention from academic researchers as well as practitioners. More importantly, a work-based research investigating the interactions of hotel workers with customers and colleagues will inevitably involves the dark sides of hotel workplaces. Sexual harassment is one of those which may be perpetrated by colleagues, managers, and customers as identified by Mkono (2010b)'s research on the Zimbabwean hospitality.

2.5.1.3. Turnover culture

Wood (1997, p.95) asserts that there are two opposite views on labour turnover: "*The first sees labour turnover as problematic for the industry, the second regards high turnover as an unavoidable and even necessary and desirable feature of hotels and catering*". Johnson (1981) claims that high staff turnover rate can be detrimental to a service establishment and decrease profitability as well as service quality. Also, Deery and Iverson (1996) consider how a high labour turnover rate affects morale. On the other hand, Bowey (1976) argues that labour turnover is not a complete drawback of tourism industry because it enhances staff mobility which fosters their skill acquisition. Agreeing upon this, Riley (1992) suggests staff turnover can be used as a management tool in terms of flexibility.

In the context of the economic transition, tourism employment serves as "*any port in a storm*" (Szivas and Riley 1999, p.748), which is still true in contemporary labour market (Janta 2011). The phenomenon of high staff turnover rate is characterised as the *'turnover culture'* in the hospitality sector, which refers to the acceptance of turnover as part of the workgroup norm (Iverson and Deery 1997). The question brought forward is what makes the tourism industry experience such a phenomenally high rate of staff turnover? Walmsley (2004) conducted a study on labour turnover in a seaside resort in the south-west of England and reports an exhaustive list of reasons for turnover, comprising working hours, pay, interpersonal environment, nature of the job as well as the industry, career, staff under-qualification and other personal reasons. Other studies concerning hotel employees also reveal workplace-related problems including job stress and psychological capital (Namra and Tahira 2017), threat to work-life balance (Wong and Ko 2009), and drawbacks of hotel work such as physical demands, low wages and insufficient opportunities for promotion which result in a dearth of commitment amongst employees with bachelor or higher degrees (Kong and Baum 2006). In brief, the negative images of hotel work have contributed to increased labour turnover and these are still unresolved.

Davidson et al. (2010) found high staff turnover rate is putting more pressure on training to maintain service quality. Empirical research (Tews et al. 2013; Kang et al. 2015) suggests support from co-worker and supervisor is particularly important for hospitality workers to recharge and decrease the effort in EL, through which turnover

intention can be reduced. Given that the work-family conflict causes high labour turnover, it is suggested that the working environment be enhanced to help hospitality workers relieve stress and foster their well-being, which in turn improves service quality (Wang et al. 2017). The work-family balance is an important factor to consider in the context of Vietnamese hospitality because family plays a prominent role in Vietnamese life as discussed in 3.4.1.

2.5.1.4. Low-skilled or high-skilled job?

Defining skills per se is a controversial issue in literature because of the subjectivity and relativity of skill perception (Riley et al. 2002). The majority of tourism, hospitality and leisure work is widely considered as a low-skilled sector in not only media but also academic research (Baum 2008). Rigby and Sanchis (2006) point out two reasons for the devaluation of service work. Firstly, jobs in the service sector tend to emphasise interpersonal skills which are likely to be associated with experience rather than qualifications compared to those skills in manufacturing industry. Secondly, the majority of service workers are female and young who are often considered the disadvantaged group in the process of the social construction of skill. Burns (1997) also argues that it is the social construction rooting in human resource planning from the manufacturing sector and the role of trade unions that results in this separation. Poon (1993, p.262) describes hospitality workers as follows:

> *"... [employees] must be trained to be loyal, flexible, tolerant, amiable and responsible… at every successful hospitality establishment, it is the employees that stand out… Technology cannot substitute for welcoming employees."*

Poon's statement reinforces Hochschild's (1983) proposition of EL that service workers are paid to manage their emotions as a part of the service delivered to their customers.

In addition to the requirements of EL and EI in hospitality, Baum (2006) suggests adding aesthetic labour to the skills demands. The notion of aesthetic labour is defined as *"a supply of embodied capacities and attributes possessed by workers at the point of entry into employment"* (Warhurst et al. 2000, p.4) and extended to include *"the animate component of the material culture that makes up the corporate landscape"* (Witz et al. 2003, p.44). Beyond appearances, aesthetic labour is also reflected in the way customer-contact employees engage with their customers with respect to cultural

topics such as politics, music, sport, which requires a certain degree of education, cultural exposure and a willingness to stay well-informed (Baum 2006). Therefore, it would be wrong to generalise hotel work as a low skill occupation.

In fact, there is evidence to suggest that some hospitality workers are highly educated (e.g. Szivas et al. 2003; Baum et al. 2007; Janta 2011). Hoque's (2002, p.154) analysis of hotels in the UK argues that the image as *'bad employers'* is not relevant for the sector any more based on their constant efforts on training their employees in the skills needed for a better service. It is the lack of empirical work in the context of developing countries that has resulted in a blurred picture of tourism employment at either semi-skilled or unskilled level compared to the heavily researched developed countries (Baum 2006).

Although managers from both developed and less developed countries are involved in the same activities and adopt similar skills (Lubatkin et al. 1997), little has been done to compare front-line work in the service sector (Baum 2008). Similar opinion is also found in Burns's (1997) argument that the irrelevance of the discussion on low-skilled jobs in tourism lies in its context-specific and Western-centric view. Baum (2008) takes the discussion a step further by clarifying the marginal change from domestic and consumer life into the workplace in Western countries. In contrast, hospitality jobs are more demanding for employees in less developed countries due to the lack of knowledge of Western cookery and service, let alone other social and interpersonal skills in communications including foreign languages. It is also important to maximise the relationship between hospitality workers and their customers regarding their background and exposure to international tourism and hospitality, which Baum (2006) names as *"social distance"*. Echoing the same voice, Noon and Blyton (2002) claim that the so-called skilled work in one context may not be skilled work in another because of the cultural context and the application of technology.

Baum (2008) emphasises the high level of social distance between customers and workers in developing countries results from the combination of economic, cultural, political and experiential divergence. So, hoteliers can establish a skill profile required from their workforce to maintain a minimum distance between their staff and customers.

In brief, the debate of low versus high-skilled jobs in the hospitality sector may heavily depend on the context in which the occupations are considered. Regarding Vietnamese hospitality, the definition of high-skilled job seems more relevant since Vietnamese hotel workers are expected to interact with customers from a wide range of cultural backgrounds and different languages. For this reason, it is important to take into account the elements of knowledge and foreign language in their interactions with customers.

As a concluding remark for this section, the discussion of four main characteristics of hospitality work highlights the nature of hospitality work in an under-researched context as compared to the predominance of Western-centric studies. Taken together, these characteristics may generate positive and negative emotions on Vietnamese hotel workers, which in turn influences their EI practice in the workplace.

2.5.2. EI in hospitality

The previous section covers main characteristics of hospitality work in order to highlight the distinctiveness of hospitality compared to other sectors. The high intensity of frequent interpersonal interaction and constant emotional demand heightens the need to study EI and how it can be developed through training activities and programmes in the sector (Min et al. 2011). In the hospitality sector, EI research is probably popular because of its practical applications and EI is appreciated by hospitality managers for its positive impacts on profitability (Wolfe 2017).

The important role of EI in the hospitality sector is indicated by the proliferation of research in this area. A search for two key words *'Emotional Intelligence'* and *'hospitality'* in April 2018 generated 62 peer-reviewed papers on EBSCO and SCOPUS during the period from 2003 to 2018. Table 2 categorises these studies into four themes consisting of EI in relation with other work-related factors, training and educational purpose, leadership or management, and culture. There are two studies which do not belong to any of the above themes and thus are put into the fifth group.

Table 2. Studies on EI in the hospitality sector

Theme	Research
EI and work-related factors	Wu and Shie (2017), Jung and Yoon (2016b), Prentice (2016), Lee and Ok (2015), Jung and Yoon (2014), Tsai and Lee (2014), Lee and Ok (2014), Wolfe and Kim (2013), Prentice and King (2013), Prentice (2013), Prentice et al. (2013), Li (2013), Lee and Ok (2012), Kim et al. (2012), Jung and Yoon (2012), Neustadt et al. (2011), Demir (2011), Kim and Agrusa (2011), Magnini et al. (2011), Lee et al. (2011), Prentice and King (2011), Cichy et al. (2009), Cha et al. (2009), Scott-Halsell et al. (2008), Cichy et al. (2007a), Sy et al. (2006)
Training and education	Lynn (2017), Wolfe (2017), Wilson-Wunsch et al. (2016), Wilburn et al. (2016), Walsh et al. (2015), Lonis-Shumate et al. (2015), Wolfe et al. (2014), Behnke (2012), Scott-Halsell et al. (2011), Min et al. (2011), Ineson et al. (2011), Ineson (2011), Behnke and Greenan (2011), Van Lill (2005), Whitelaw and Morda (2003)
Leadership/ management	Bratton and Waton (2018), Han et al. (2017), Lin and Vajirakachorn (2015), Haver et al. (2014), Al-Taee and Alwaely (2012), Maier (2011), Scott-Halsell et al. (2007), Cichy et al. (2007b), Avril and Magnini (2007), Cichy et al. (2006), Whitelaw (2005), Langhorn (2004)
Culture	Darvishmotevali et al. (2018), Alshaibani and Bakir (2017), Rivera and Lee (2016), Fedoruk and Lumley (2015), Butler et al. (2014), Bharwani and Jauhari (2013), Scott-Halsell et al. (2013)
Others	Cavelzani et al. (2003), Doncean (2014)

Source: Author

2.5.2.1. EI and work-related factors

Wu and Shie (2017) find that EI moderates the relationship between customer orientation and three dimensions of EL including surface acting, deep acting, and expression of genuine emotion amongst Chinese employees working in five-star hotels; through which they highlight the need to incorporate assessment of EI in recruitment and selection procedures and train hotel workers on EL. In the same vein, Wolfe and Kim (2013) reinforce the idea of screening job applicants by using one of the EI measures because EQ-i is found to positively associate with job satisfaction and industry tenure, but not with company tenure.

Jung and Yoon (2016b) suggest that enhancing employees' EI can increase their job satisfaction and those with high EI can benefit the organisations. This is in line with Sy et al.'s (2006) research findings which reflect positive association between restaurant employees' EI with job satisfaction and performance. From a theory-focused perspective, Prentice (2016) points out how employees' EI can manage emotionally charged service encounters and service performance, which in turn influences customers' perception of casino service quality associated with customer loyalty and casino profitability. Lee and Ok's (2015) study reveals the relationship between EI and service orientation amongst customer-contact hotel managers and line workers, which supports the proposition that EI may result in positive forms of EL.

Significant relationships between EI and employee creativity in Taiwanese travel agencies were reported in Tsai and Lee's (2014) study. Jung and Yoon (2014) reveal that hospitality workers with high EI perform surface acting to a higher degree in the EL context and the authors emphasise offering education or training to manage employees' EI and EL. In contrast, Lee and Ok (2014) report that employees with high EI tend to use the abilities defined by Mayer and Salovey (1997) as foundational resources to perform EL and thus reduce service sabotage. Another study conducted by Lee and Ok (2012) emphasises that EI predicts EL, burnout, and job satisfaction. They found that there is a difference between employees with high EI and those with low EI; emotionally intelligent employees tend to feel the emotions desired, feel personal achievement, and satisfied with their jobs whereas those with low EI are likely to hide or fake their emotions and suffer from emotional exhaustion (Lee and Ok 2012). Kim et al.'s (2012) empirical research confirms the importance of EI in EL

context by examining how EI impacts the EL acting strategies and their behavioural outcomes, through which emphasis on adopting EI measure for recruitment and promotion is made.

Prentice and King's (2013) research findings prove the relationship between EI and adaptability amongst casino hosts and support Petrides and Furnham's (2000b) classification of trait EI that is embedded in the personality framework. Prentice (2013) also reports EI as a moderator in the relationship between the two EL acting processes and burnout in another study in the US, that employees' EI facilitates service transactions, which subsequently leads to fewer customer complaints, and less stress and burnout is experienced by the employees. In 2011, Prentice and King found that EL had a positive relationship with service performance in jobs that require a high level of EI, through which they supported Petrides and Furnham's (2001) distinction between trait EI and ability EI and that research on trait EI should be conducted in the personality framework (Prentice and King 2011).

In addition, Prentice et al. (2013) contribute to EL literature by incorporating EI and occupational commitment as moderators and by including organisational citizenship behaviours (OCB) in performance analysis. Similarly, Li's (2013) study looks at EL, EI and OCB and the author concludes that hotel workers with high EL, high EI and low emotional exhaustion are more likely to enhance OCB. It can be said that OCB is one of the common factors used in EI research. Jung and Yoon's (2012) study attempted to investigate the effect of EI on counterproductive work behaviours and OCB. Their study shows three elements of EI, others' emotion appraisal, use of emotion, and self-emotion appraisal significantly influence CWB whereas self-emotion appraisal and use of emotion influence OCB.

Another study on hospitality managers found that secure/autonomous attachment orientation at work has positive relationship with self-esteem, trait EI, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and job performance (Neustadt et al. 2011). Demir (2011) reports that EI is positively related to quality of work life and negatively related to organisational deviance and turnover intention. Taken together, these studies imply hiring the right people can bring a lot of benefit to hospitality organisations.

Nevertheless, Kim and Agrusa (2011) offered a different view of EI; EI may have both positive and negative influences on employees' coping behaviours and religion may be one of the missing coping behaviours.

Magnini et al. (2011) claim their study to be one of the first to examine the relationship between EI and exercise in a hospitality context and suggest exercise can benefit the workers with respect to some components of EI such as self-regard, self-actualisation, and stress tolerance. Lee et al.'s (2011) is also said to be the first to identify EI as an antecedent of schedule flexibility satisfaction, which implies that employees who enjoy being at work are less likely to experience negative emotions. Cichy et al.'s (2009) research find a connection between EI and contextual performance amongst automated and vending service industry executives. Cha et al. (2009) contribute to EI research by suggesting that social skills and stress-management skills should be regarded as outcomes of EI instead of components of EI model, which indicates that those with high EI tend to manage their work-related stress better and have better social skills than their counterparts with lower EI. A study on the relationship between socio-demographic variables and the EI levels of hospitality professionals reveal that the professionals possess above average levels of EI, which may indicate their achievement and longevity in the service sector (Scott-Halsell et al. 2008). Besides, Cichy et al. (2007a) report that EI and affective commitment are strongly connected while there exists a negative relationship between EI and continuance commitment. Generally, EI has been well researched by a small group of hospitality researchers.

2.5.2.2. EI, education, and training

The studies in this group used students as a sample and so recommendations were made mainly for training and educational purposes. An exception to this was Lynn's (2017) study stated as the first of its kind to offer evidence for the relationship of coaching awareness and practice and the incremental benefits of EI scores amongst hospitality junior management teams in the UK.

Although the studies in this group are limited to student samples rather than workforce, their findings reinforce the fact that improving EI over time leads to career success and should be encouraged (Wolfe 2017). Providing a different finding, Wilson-Wünsch et al. (2016) suggest personality, EI and learning style are not as important as

posited in previous research. Several implications are made from their study; 1) adopting EI tests in combination with personality tests to hire the right people; 2) learning strategy should be changed to fill the gap between education and the workplace; 3) greater attention should be paid to the internship period; 4) it is important to identify the knowledge needed for success in the industry (Wilson-Wünsch et al. 2016). A research on the relationship between EI and attachment styles implies those with high EI are likely to have secure attachments to others; consequently, it suggests an understanding of employees' attachment styles can help with recruitment and leadership development (Lonis-Shumate et al. 2015).

Wilburn et al. (2016) report that there is little correlation between EI and academic performance amongst hospitality students, which may result from GPA incorporating other factors rather than just EI score. In an attempt to examine how access criteria, EI and academic success contribute to high performance of hospitality students, van Lill (2005) reports academic achievement accounts for 58 per cent and EI contributing 16 per cent. However, students' EI is a predictor for their intention to join the hospitality industry which results from their satisfaction with the industry (Walsh et al. 2015). Walsh et al.'s (2015) additional analyses of the EI dimensions propose that the ability to understand and manage one's own emotions is an important predictor for overall satisfaction with the industry, through which it is recommended that hospitality organisations be aware of the personality traits they are looking for.

Using hotel supervisors as a benchmark for hospitality students, Wolfe et al. (2014) reveal that hospitality students are similar to the supervisors regarding EI scores but they have lower scores in problem-solving abilities. However, capstone students are more similar to hotel leaders than their entry-level counterparts (Wolfe et al. 2014), which implies the possibility of training these skills to students and enhance the skills they need to succeed in the industry. In the same light, Scott-Halsell et al. (2011) found significant differences between hospitality professionals and hospitality undergraduates in all areas of EI and suggest these managers were forced to enhance their EI or maybe those with EI tend to stay in the industry. An EI assessment of hospitality employees and students suggests a combination of maturity and industry experience enhances one's EI (Whitelaw and Morda 2003). Putting these results

together, it is possible to train hotel students on the skills needed for working in the hospitality sector and their exposure to the industry will eventually increase their EI.

Min et al.'s (2011) study on the EI needs of Taiwanese tourism management undergraduates show that they consider themselves skilled in performance, health, productivity, and satisfied with life but incapable of managing stress and communicating which represent intrapersonal and interpersonal areas of EI. Reflecting the perspective of Bulgarian hotel general managers (HGMs), Ineson et al. (2011) suggested intrapersonal and interpersonal skills and competencies which include elements of EI are the best predictors of success in hotel management. In another study, Ineson (2011) found that managers are better than students in such EI domains as self-awareness, self-control, and social skills; and identify three key fields that may be effectively applied in hospitality including communication, people management, and self-management.

With respect to the form of learning and instruction, hospitality students preferred an interactive, non-linear, and unstructured form of computer-based instruction (Behnke and Greenan 2011). Later on, Behnke (2012) posits that students with average-high ESI tend to be more positive towards e-learning than those possessing average-high ESI and their positivity increases when their ESI increases.

2.5.2.3. EI and leadership or management

Maier (2011) identified discrepancies between academic research and industry practices; while the former party focuses on bureaucratic leadership, generational leadership, transformational leadership, workforce engagement and EI; the latter pays more attention to business acumen, work-life balance, loyalty programmes, branding-co-branding and social media. It is suggested that more academic research findings are made accessible to practitioners, students, and hospitality workers to benefit the workplace. This exploratory study aims to shed light on the EI practice of Vietnamese hotel workers which may be of use to both academics and industry professionals.

One piece of pioneering work on EI and leadership in the hospitality sector is conducted by Langhorn (2004) which provided crucial insights into the role of EI amongst managers in the UK hospitality and has been widely cited. The main research result indicates that general managers' EI is related to their performance which is

determined by the ability to recognise and understand their own emotions (emotional self-awareness) and the ability to maintain good relationships with people around them (interpersonal relationships) (Langhorn 2004). Langhorn (2004) also highlights the role of general managers in controlling their emotions through stress tolerance, creating a positive working environment, solving problems effectively and showing empathy through the understanding of others' emotions.

Despite different contexts, Scotland and Thailand respectively; studies conducted by Bratton and Waton (2018) and Lin and Vajirakachorn (2015) highlight the importance of EI for workers in the hospitality sector. Bratton and Waton (2018) call for more formal training on EL and EI for senior and line managers since no training was provided to them. EI is listed as one of the five traits required for hotel employees together with work attitude, skills in multiple languages, service-oriented personality, and professional appearance (Lin and Vajirakachorn 2015). EI is also included in the variables needed for hospitality expatriates' success as well as family status, dietary and exercise habits, and his/her learning orientation (Avril and Magnini 2007).

Han et al. (2017) report that manager EI and support significantly affect employees' job satisfaction. The results of this empirical research examined the impact of two EI domains (behaviour and knowledge) on job satisfaction. To be specific, the behavioural domain of leaders' EI, consisting of self-management and relationship management, strongly impacts employees' task satisfaction whereas the knowledge domain representing the recognition and understanding of one's own and others' emotions is not related to employees' job satisfaction (Han et al. 2017). The researchers explain that possibly their awareness of their own and others' emotions is not sufficient to encourage employees' job satisfaction.

A qualitative study on wise ER of experienced hospitality leaders show it is comprised of various ER strategies depending on the situation. Researchers suggest resilient leaders would be unable to perform ER efficiently without EI (Haver et al. 2014). Al-Taee and Alwaely's (2012) research shows strong correlations between human resource (HR) roles, professional competencies and EI of international hotels in Jordan and recommend hotel managers vigorously engaged in HR roles to achieve the combination of professional competencies and EI.

Scott-Halsell et al. (2007) developed a model illustrating the direct relationship between transformational leadership and EI; through their pilot study, the results show that hospitality undergraduates have not obtained the level of EI required to be successful transformational leaders and EI needs to be embraced in orientation and training programmes. Interestingly, Whitelaw's (2005) research findings reveal that hospitality leaders are likely to exaggerate their levels of EI and transformational leadership style and outcomes; hence, the adoption of leadership styles may not be the only function of EI but can be taught.

In order to identify EI of leaders in the private club industry, a new EI framework encompassing the most important common domains of existing EI models is introduced with three aspects; 'IN' refers to one's ability to understand and lead one's emotions, 'OUT' related to the ability to read, perceive and be sensitive to others' emotions, and 'RELATIONSHIPS' points to the ability to express emotions for mutual satisfaction (Cichy et al. 2007b). This framework was tested in a pilot study on EI of leaders in the automatic merchandising and coffee service industries to cross validate the three dimensions of EI (Cichy et al. 2006).

2.5.2.4. EI and culture

The fourth group are studies investigating EI in the light of culture, emphasising the role of context. Notably, these studies are quite recent ranging from 2013 to 2018, which may indicate the shift in academic focus. This is consistent with Bharwani and Jauhari's (2013) proposed construct of Hospitality Intelligence comprising EI, Cultural Intelligence, and Hospitality Experiential Intelligence. Similarly, Cultural Intelligence is most relevant in relation to employee performance and customer perception of service quality compared to employee personality and EI (Alshaibani and Bakir 2017). Nevertheless, the last two recommendations were from secondary research and may have little value. A recent research shows that hotel frontline employees who are emotionally and culturally intelligent are likely to demonstrate novel ideas and creative performance, which should be taken into consideration when screening, hiring and training personnel (Darvishmotevali et al. 2018).

Empirical research shows contradictory findings as to the role of culture on EI. Fedoruk and Lumley (2015) showed no differences in EI scores in terms of ethnicity

of owner managers in the micro restaurant sector in the UK. Further discussion on the relationship between EI and culture is presented in section 3.3. Arguing that one's emotional management varies from culture to culture, Rivera Jr and Lee (2016) examined hospitality undergraduates' EI after completing a course on diversity issues, it revealed that two areas of EI significantly changed – the perception of emotion and management of one's own emotions. Employing self-awareness as one of the EI components, Butler et al. (2014) showed that each type of self-awareness emerged as an important predictor of leadership effectiveness for hospitality managers from uncertainty-avoiding cultures; with those in uncertainty-accepting cultures, self-awareness in personal relationships with subordinates predicts effectiveness. More specifically, EI levels of hospitality students from Eastern and Western cultures are proven to significantly differ, which supports the need to incorporate national culture into hospitality education and training programmes (Scott-Halsell et al. 2013). This is one of the objectives of the current research which aims to explore EI from Vietnamese hotel workers' perspective.

2.5.2.5. Others

There are two studies which do not fit in the aforementioned categorisation. The first one is conducted by Cavelzani et al. (2003) which showed that tour operators employed EI to provide tourists with more personalised travel solutions and that an understanding of cultural values and social etiquette fosters a good relationship between tourists and local residents. The second study shows the importance of the ability to identify and manage one's emotions in improving knowledge and tourism products (Doncean 2014).

2.5.3. Qualitative studies on EI in hospitality

A review of EI research in the hospitality sector shows it is predominated by quantitative research with a few exceptions of exploratory studies conducted by Bratton and Waton (2018), Lin and Vajirakachorn (2015), Haver et al. (2014), and Cavelzani et al. (2003). The qualitative approach allows for more in-depth insights into the role of EI in hospitality, which is illustrated by the research findings from those conducted by Cavelzani et al. (2003) and Haver et al. (2014). It is stated that EI can assist customer-contact staff in listening to customers, recognising and meeting their needs as well as encouraging them to express their own desires and expectations;

and knowledge of different cultures can enhance mutual understanding between tourists and hosts (Cavelzani et al. 2003). Haver et al. (2014) report five ways that HGMs regulate their emotions; positive emotions and positivity, changing mind-sets through reappraisal and deep acting, faking and hiding by using surface acting and suppression, expressing naturally felt emotions, and deep acting.

As a response to the contemporary issue surrounding Brexit and its impact on the Scottish hospitality industry, Bratton and Waton (2018) emphasise the need to provide training on EL and EI to senior and line managers through interviews and roundtable discussion on talent management with managers and HR practitioners. Similarly, in the context of the launch of the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Economic Community in Bangkok in 2015, Lin and Vajirakachorn conducted the study to examine the qualifications required by HRM in the hotel industry and EI was identified as one of the required traits. Therefore, the importance of EI has been recognised in hospitality but these two qualitative studies did not go deep enough. Furthermore, researchers and practitioners are aware of its importance and raise it as a requirement but neither managers nor employees are formally trained on EI. There is a lack of qualitative research around hotel workers' EI which this research will seek to redress.

2.6. Summary

This first chapter of the literature review provides an overview of theories and research on EI concerning its origin, the theoretical approaches, and the controversy surrounding EI. The rationale for reviewing the EI concept in other disciplines is to indicate a sound theoretical underpinning for the current study. Furthermore, a review of the current literature on EI helps establish the stance of the research and its direction amongst contradictory perspectives. The research adopts Mayer and Salovey's (1997) conceptualisation of ability EI which encompasses four sequential processes; emotion perception, emotion facilitation, emotion understanding, and emotion regulation. It is also important to trace back to the theory of ER developed by Gross (1998) since the fourth component of the EI ability construct is built upon this concept. This clarifies the reason why emotional management and emotion regulation are used interchangeably in emotion and EI literature, which causes confusion and

contradiction (Lawrence et al. 2011). In the same vein, Lindebaum (2015) recommends EI researchers refer to theories on emotion and ER for a comprehensive understanding. In addition to ER theory, EI is closely related with EL both in theory and empirical research. It is this theoretical link between EI and EL that emphasises the need for studying EI in EL context since people tend to show their EI capacity in high EL occupations (Joseph and Newman 2010).

The last part of the chapter outlines the main characteristics of the hospitality sector and particularly hotel work. Though the influence of culture on EI and Vietnamese culture are discussed in a separate literature review chapter, it was taken into consideration when selecting relevant features of the hospitality sector to the research including the images of hotel work, the engendered nature, turnover culture, and the debate of low-skilled versus high-skilled jobs. This highlights the distinctiveness of the hospitality sector and determines how EI research is conducted in the sector.

Chapter 3 – Vietnamese culture and its influence on Vietnamese hotel workers' EI

3.1. Introduction to chapter 3

This chapter explores Vietnamese culture and its influence on Vietnamese hotel workers' EI in the hotel context. Firstly, an overview of six leading theories on national culture is presented including those developed by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961), Hofstede (1980, 2001), Hall (1976), Trompenaars (1993), Schwartz (1992, 1994), and GLOBE (2004). Divergence and convergence amongst these theories of national culture are identified, through which the adoption of Hofstede's theory of national culture for this study is justified. Secondly, the chapter reviews current research on the influence of national culture on EI. In order to do this, the influence of culture on the emotional process is explained. Also, differences in emotional process between the East and the West are covered leading to an assessment of the suitability of the Asian workforce for hospitality. The third part of the chapter offers an insight into Vietnamese culture through the mixture of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Vietnamese culture is also investigated through the lens of Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions which fits well with the research compared to other theories. Fourthly, the chapter discusses the impact of Vietnamese culture on Vietnamese hotel workers' EI practice in the workplace. The chapter ends with problems arising from the misinterpretation of Vietnamese culture recorded in previous research.

3.2. The theories of national culture

Culture has been extensively studied with 164 definitions (Olie 1995), amongst which the most widely cited definition is proposed by Hofstede as *"the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another"* (Hofstede 1984, p.21). Pizam et al. (1997, p.128), on the other hand, posit that *"culture exists everywhere and everyone belongs to at least one"* and proposes different levels consisting of supranational, national, ethnic and other social units such as occupational groups, corporations, and industries. It is noteworthy that culture should not be treated as a fixed, uniform, and universally applicable entity but highly

differentiated and dynamic (McSweeney 2002). Members from different cultures have the tendency to *"see, interpret, evaluate things differently, and consequently act upon them differently"* (Adler 2003 cited by Kittler et al. 2011, p.64). In a review of current literature on culture in hotel management research between 1985 and 2010, Chen et al. (2012) reveal that 40% of the research in HRM is concerned with national culture, which implies a powerful impact of national culture on HRM. However, popular subjects of investigation in HRM are expatriate management and cultural diversity issues pertaining to employers. An overview of prominent models of national cultures aims to find a cultural base that fits well for the study into Vietnamese culture and Vietnamese hotel workers.

3.2.1. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's cultural dimensions

Two anthropologists Florence Kluckhohn and Fred Strodtbeck introduced their cultural dimensions framework in their book "Variations in Value Orientations" in 1961 which put a strong emphasis on studying differences within cultures rather than the tendency to paint a static and simplified picture amongst traditional anthropologists (Maznevski et al. 2002). They look at culture as a response to social problems and propose that different societies have different solutions to the same problems, through which these cultures can be compared (McNett 2005). The sample for testing their theory is five cultural groups in Southwest USA. Their model comprises six cultural dimensions; Relationship with nature, Relationship with people, Human activities, Relationship with time, Human nature and Space. Their work was based on that of Florence's husband, Clyde Kluckhohn, who suggested people tend to view their own cultural beliefs and practices as normal whereas others are strange or even inferior (Hills 2002).

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's framework is an influential and valid framework to study cross-cultural values which are central to human thought, emotions, and behaviour (Hills 2002; Maznevski et al. 2002; Nardon and Steers 2009). The framework has been applied in such areas as higher education, healthcare, and management (see Gallagher 2001). In management, Value Orientations Model was applied to resolve cross-cultural conflict by helping both parties understand their own values and those of others (Gallagher 2001). Watkins and Gnoth (2011) argue that business and tourism research has extensively adopted Hofstedian framework for empirically derived etic

dimensions and neglect Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's framework for its usefulness in obtaining an emic analysis of meaning This is the first reason why Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's framework was not chosen for the current study which does not aim to explore EI practice from an emic perspective. Secondly, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck considered their theory incomplete because they did not provide measures for all the proposed orientations (Hills 2002). There are other theories of values including those developed by Rokeach (1979), Hofstede (1980, 2001), and Schwartz (1992). According to Smith and Bond (1998), there is considerable overlap between Hofstede's and Schwartz's theories despite employing different methods, which will be discussed in the subsequent sections.

3.2.2. Hofstede's cultural dimensions

Geert Hofstede's original model was built upon four problem areas previously defined by Inkeles and Levinson (1969 cited by Hofstede 2011) including the dependence on superiors, the need for predictability, the balance between the individual and the company, and the balance between ego and social values. The empirical data used in his research were provided by the IBM Corporation which was collected from 1967 to 1973 in 72 countries. The four dimensions discussed in his original book (Hofstede 1980) consist of Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism versus Collectivism, Masculinity versus Femininity with the data from 40 countries. The fifth dimension Long-term versus Short-term Orientation was added in a joint research with Canadian psychologist Michael Harris Bond based in the Far East in the 1980s. In the 2000s, Hofstede and Bulgarian scholar Michael Minkov added the sixth dimension Indulgence versus Restraint using data from the World Values Survey. Amongst the six dimensions of Hofstede's model, the Uncertainty Avoidance dimension seems to have strong implications for emotional expression. People from uncertainty avoiding culture have the tendency to be more emotional and motivated by inner energy whereas people from uncertainty accepting cultures believe they are not expected to express emotions (Hofstede 2011).

The criticisms against Hofstede's model centre on outdated data, limited generalisability and condensed conceptualisation of culture elsewhere (McSweeney 2002; Ng et al. 2007). Despite these criticisms, Hofstede's study on national culture remains one of the most widely cited as a theoretical framework on work-related

cultural values for cross-cultural studies for its coherence, comprehensiveness, efficiency, and precision of the dimensions (Flynn et al. 1994; Adler and Gunderson 2008; Zhang and Wu 2014).

3.2.3. Hall's cultural dimensions

Another American anthropologist, Edward Hall, looks at culture from the communication-oriented perspective based on his ethnographic research in Germany, France, the United States, and Japan. Hall's theory of culture involves interpersonal communication, personal space, and time (Hall 1976; Hall and Hall 1990). Hall (1976) defines that a high-context communication mainly involves the physical context or the person, which contrasts with low-context cultures where meanings are explicitly stated. Later on, Gudykunst's (1983) conducted an empirical research on initial interactions in low and high-context cultures and his research findings support Hall's (1976) notion of the differences in communication patterns in low and high-context cultures. One of the main findings relevant for the current research is that members of high-context cultures are more likely to make assumptions about strangers based on their cultural background and use this knowledge to increase their attributional confidence compared to their counterparts in low-context cultures (Gudykunst 1983). This finding may have crucial implications for this exploratory study on EI practice of Vietnamese hotel workers during their interactions with customers. However, Vietnam was neither included in Hall's (1976) nor Gudykunst's (1983) study; therefore, the implications made from these studies are inapplicable to this research.

Elaborating on Hall's theory, Fedoruk and Lumley (2015) suggest that empathy and sensitivity to others' emotions are of greater need in high-context cultures than low-context cultures and consequently a higher level of emotional competence is required. In contrast, overt and direct communication is preferred over emotions and relationships in low-context cultures. However, Hall's concepts of high and low-context cultures have become less popular due to flawed country classifications, please see Kittler et al. 2011 for a detailed review. Nevertheless, Dsilva and Whyte's (1998) research on the influence of collectivism and individualism and high and low-context communication frameworks on conflict styles and confirm that Vietnamese refugees have a collectivist, high-context culture which orients them towards avoiding

conflicts. Therefore, implications for a high-context culture may be applicable to the exploration of Vietnamese hotel workers' EI practice.

3.2.4. Trompenaars's cultural dimensions

An equally large-scale study of national culture as Hofstede's seminal work is the one developed by Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner (Trompenaars 1993; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1997) which collected data from 43 countries. There are seven dimensions in their model of national culture comprising Universalism versus Particularism, Individualism versus Collectivism, Specific versus Diffuse, Neutral versus Affective, Achievement versus Ascription, Time perspective, and Relationship with environment. Some dimensions in their model are found to have relationship with those in Hofstede's model apart from Uncertainty Avoidance and Masculinity versus Femininity (Smith et al. 1996). This implies the convergence between these two large-scale studies on national culture and the major divergence stems from the countries sampled.

Amongst the seven dimensions, the neutral and affective dimension addresses the degree to which members of the society express their emotions in public, ranging from little (neutral) to considerable emotion (affective).

3.2.5. Schwartz's dimensions

Taking a different approach, the Israeli psychologist Shalom Schwartz (1992, 1994) conducted a survey on value preferences of individuals from 38 countries with samples of elementary school teachers and college students between 1988 and 1992. Schwartz (1994) suggests human values are desirable goals and the crucial distinction amongst these values is the type of motivation goal they express. The ten values identified at an individual level include power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security.

At a cultural level, there are seven value types which reveal how different cultures solve universal human problems; conservatism, intellectual autonomy, affective autonomy, hierarchy, mastery, egalitarian commitment, and harmony (Schwartz 1994). These cultural values are later on structured into three dimensions;

Conservatism versus Autonomy; Hierarchy versus Egalitarianism; and Mastery versus Harmony (Schwartz 1999).

Considered as *"the most extensive research project on values so far"* (Hofstede 2001, p.8), Schwartz's cultural values are proven to overlap and complement Hofstede's cultural dimensions and may be more appropriate for non-work related contexts (Smith et al. 2002; Ng et al. 2007). Różycka-Tran et al. (2017) suggest Vietnamese traditional and collectivist culture results in differences in value hierarchies between Vietnam and other countries. An outstanding difference reflected in Vietnamese culture compared to others is the emphasis on maintaining cooperative and supportive social relations and following traditions (security-conformity-tradition and benevolence); however, people in Hanoi seem to have significantly higher preference for these values than those in Saigon and Hue, which may reflect the degree of their exposure to the west, the political histories, and the nature of their economies (Różycka-Tran et al. 2017). Truong et al. (2015) find that Vietnamese parents and adolescents share some similarities and differences with respect to values; the similarities such as universalism, benevolence and conformity are believed to represent the national characteristics whereas the differences lie in the openness to change and self-enhancement possessed by adolescents as opposed to their parents. Though these research findings may have some implications for this present research, Schwartz's cultural values may not be relevant for explaining the EI practice of Vietnamese hotel workers because the qualitative approach does not allow for a measurement of values amongst Vietnamese hotel workers. Instead, the current study requires a theory which can explain and enhance the exploration of EI practice.

3.2.6. GLOBE's cultural dimensions

Amongst the leading models of national culture, GLOBE (an acronym for Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness) is another large-scale and influential study to mention. The GLOBE study was conducted in 62 countries by Robert House and his international colleagues who focus on understanding the influence of culture on leadership and its implications for organisational behaviours. The study targeted middle managers in three industries; food processing, financial services, and telecommunication services over a decade of 1993-2003. They identified nine attributes of culture; Future Orientation, Gender Egalitarianism, Assertiveness,

Humane Orientation, In-group Collectivism, Institutional Collectivism, Performance Orientation, Power Distance, and Uncertainty Avoidance. Four of these cultural attributes were previously identified in Hofstede's study and *"owes a great deal to Hofstede's work"* (Jackson 2005, p.1313-1314).

Despite the controversy surrounding the GLOBE study, it is undeniable that GLOBE has contributed to the understanding of two dimensions in Hofstede's model – Individualism versus Collectivism and Power Distance (Minkov and Blagoev 2012). Voss's (2012) study shows it is possible to score countries on their cultural similarity using Hofstede's or GLOBE model but some of the variables in the GLOBE data set may represent motivational domains instead of cultural dimensions. This is to say that there exists a common ground between Hofstede's and GLOBE but GLOBE did not provide scores for Vietnam. So, Hofstede's model is the best suited for the current study.

3.2.7. Divergence and convergence amongst the models of national culture

It is likely that the six models of national cultures complement rather than contradict each other and they all possess their own strengths and weaknesses. Please see Table 3 for a summary of the six cultural models.

Table 3. Summary of six models of cultural dimensions

Models of national culture	Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck	Hofstede	Hall	Trompenaars	Schwartz	GLOBE
Year of publication	1961	1980, 2001	1976, 1990	1993, 1998	1992, 1994	2004
Year of data collection	N/A	1967-1973	N/A	N/A	1988-1992	1993-2003
Sample	Five cultural groups in Southwest USA	IBM employees	N/A	Managers and employees	elementary school teachers and college students between	middle managers in food processing, financial services, and telecommunication services
Number of countries studied	1 country	40 countries	4 countries	43 countries	20 (later an additional 40) countries	62 countries
Cultural dimensions	• Relationship with nature • Relationship with people • Human activities • Relationship with time • Human nature • Space	• Power Distance • Uncertainty Avoidance • Individualism versus Collectivism • Masculinity versus Femininity • Long-term versus Short-term Orientation • Indulgence versus Restraint	• Context • Space • Time	• Universalism versus Particularism • Individualism versus Collectivism • Specific versus Diffuse • Neutral versus Affective • Achievement versus Ascription • Time perspective	• Conservatism versus Autonomy • Hierarchy versus Egalitarianism • Mastery versus Harmony	• Future Orientation, Gender • Egalitarianism • Assertiveness • Humane Orientation • In-group Collectivism • Institutional Collectivism • Performance Orientation • Power Distance • Uncertainty Avoidance

				• Relationship with environment		

Source: Amended from Thomas (2008); Nardon and Steers (2009)

According to Nardon and Steers (2009), the divergence between these models result from a wide range of aspects each model concentrates on such as societal beliefs, norms, or values; which poses difficulties to understanding cultural influences on management practices. Nevertheless, the well-established sets of dimensions and the numeric scores proposed by these models are useful tools for comparing and contrasting one culture with another (Nardon and Steers 2009).

In an attempt to *"navigate this culture theory jungle"*, Nardon and Steers (2009, p.9) suggest five common themes across these six cultural models; relationship with environment, social organisation, power distance, rule orientation, and time orientation. The classification of the cultural dimensions in each theme is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Common themes across six cultural models

Common themes	Cultural models					
	Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck	**Hofstede**	**Hall**	**Trompenaars**	**Schwartz**	**GLOBE**
Relationship with Environment	X	X		X	X	X
Social Organisation	X	X	X	X	X	X
Power Distribution	X	X		X	X	X
Rule Orientation		X		X		X
Time Orientation	X	X	X	X		X
Other themes						
Physical Space			X			
Emotion Displays				X		
Role Integration				X		
Human Nature	X					

Source: Nardon and Steers (2009)

As can be seen from Table 4, three models which are stated to reflect all the five common themes are those developed by Hofstede, Trompenaars and GLOBE. Both Trompenaars's and GLOBE's models are proven to have close relationship with Hofstede's model elsewhere (Smith et al. 1996; Jackson 2005). This may explain why Hofstede's model is the most widely cited and used in cross-cultural research. Furthermore, Hofstede's theory is the only amongst the six that have scores and implications for Vietnam. This is a possible explanation for adopting Hofstede's cultural model as a starting point for research on Vietnamese manufacturing (Nguyen

and Aoyama 2013), Vietnamese enterprise (Nguyen and Truong 2016), or Vietnamese higher education institutions (Phan 2017). Although Trompenaars's work is the only model to have wider implications for displays of emotions, the dimension of neutral versus affective may be relevant to this exploratory study on EI practice of Vietnamese hotel workers. The study employs Hofstede et al.'s (2010) cultural implications to provide a preliminary understanding of Vietnamese culture and its impacts on Vietnamese hotel workers' EI practice. The research findings are then analysed using Hofstede's model as theoretical underpinning.

3.3. The relationship between national culture and EI

In order to reflect the relationship between national culture and EI, a review of cultural influence on the emotional process is carried out since EI involves the recognition and regulation of one's and others' emotions (Spector 2005). There is a substantial body of research highlighting the influence of culture on emotional expression and regulation (Matsumoto 1993; Kitayama and Markus 1994; Schimmack 1996; Elfenbein and Ambady 2002; Davis et al. 2012). A majority of these studies find differences in emotional expression between the East and the West, which highlight advantages of Asian hospitality workers and its associated benefits (Kolesnikov-Jessop 2010; Chin et al. 2016). This may bear some relevance to the Vietnamese workforce for hospitality with respect to their cultural embeddedness and EI practice.

3.3.1. The influence of national culture on EI

From an anthropological perspective, emotional management is influenced by cultural traditions and norms, which in turn makes individual interpretation and response to an event common and predictable (Druskat and Wolff 2001).

The influence of culture on the emotional process can be explained as in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Cultural influence on the emotional process
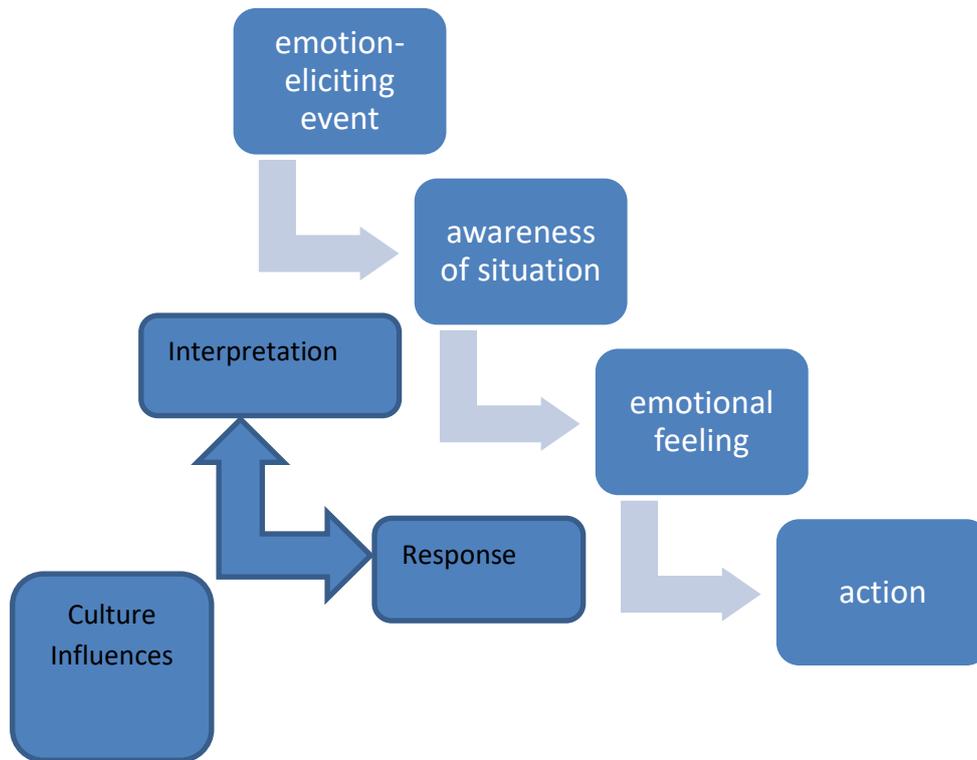
Source: Amended from Druskat and Wolff (2001)

In an attempt to define group EI and how team-level EI influences team effectiveness, Druskat and Wolff (2001) suggest culture influences the emotional process at two stages; first, people interpret an event based on their cultural norms; second, the choice of a response to the event is determined by the display rules adopted in a specific culture. In similar vein, Markus and Kitayama (1991) propose that people from different cultures have radically different interpretation of the self, others and the interdependence of the self with others which lead to their individual experience of cognition, emotion and motivation. It is also proven that those who are capable of understanding and controlling their own emotions are not necessarily skilled at comprehending and adapting to feelings of individuals from other cultures in cross-cultural interactions (Moon 2010).

Culture influences one's experience and expression of emotions; therefore, caution needs to be taken when studying EI in different cultures (Parker et al. 2005). Since EI is in most cases defined as the ability to recognise and regulate one's emotions and

those of others (Spector 2005), it can be argued that culture plays a prominent role in both the recognition and regulation of emotions. Indeed, EI is claimed to simply be a function of national culture elsewhere (Prati et al. 2003; Antonakis 2004).

Nevertheless, there exists a lack of empirical research on the influence of national culture on EI. In an attempt to fill this gap, Gunkel et al. (2014) conducted a large-scale research on 2067 students in nine countries comprising China, Columbia, Germany, India, Italy, Russia, Spain, Turkey and the US. They investigated the relationship between four dimensions of Mayer and Salovey's (1997) EI model and five dimensions of Hofstede's (2001) national culture – Individualism versus Collectivism, Masculinity versus Femininity, Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Short-term versus Long-term Orientation. Findings from this research suggest collectivist societies appear to be more emotionally intelligent and out of the five cultural dimensions, Long-term Orientation is the strongest predictor of EI and Uncertainty Avoidance has positive relationship with EI. In other words, collective cultures value harmony with peers, individual emotions are controlled; uncertainty-avoiding cultures are better at understanding others' emotions and try to adapt their own behaviour to avoid misunderstanding and tension; people from long-term orientation tend to invest more time and effort on understanding their own emotions, emotions of others, regulate and use them (Gunkel et al. 2014). Gunkel et al. (2016) conducted another large-scale study on cultural values, EI and conflict handling styles with 1527 business students from 83 countries and once again they confirmed the influence of national culture on EI, particularly three dimensions including Collectivism, Uncertainty Avoidance and Long-term Orientation.

Nevertheless, contradictory results are found elsewhere (Yeh 2003; Sung 2010) which claim that children's emotional development and EI are prone to hierarchical relationship and authoritarian filial piety with their parents as opposed to those involved in reciprocal relationship. Fedoruk and Lumley's (2015) study on manager-owners of the micro-hospitality sector in the UK shows no difference in EI scores with regard to ethnicity. This highlights the complication facing quantitative research on the relationship between culture and EI. A possible reason behind this challenge is that both culture and EI are multifaceted concepts and difficult to measure.

In a review of literature on culture in the realm of hotel management research, Chen et al. (2012) recognised a substantial body of knowledge of the national culture and its applicability across various disciplines such as communication types, transposition of operational approach, business approach, leadership style, employment pattern, and attitudes and perceptions. National culture is also reported to be a prevalent topic in cross-cultural studies (Chen et al. 2012). One of the early attempts to study national culture is to minimise the cultural gap when communicating with customers in an intercultural context (e.g. Holtzman et al. 1991). Kim et al. (2014) proposed that there exists a cultural discrepancy between native hotel workers who are educated and trained in the host country and foreign travellers holding their own national cultural values. Furthermore, customer-contact workers tend to establish different perceptions towards customers' nationalities (Pizam and Sussmann 1995; Kim et al. 2002). This issue is still under-researched and would warrant more exploration.

3.3.2. Differences between the East and the West in the emotional process

Mesquita (2001) identifies differences in emotional experiences between collectivist and individualist cultures as follows. Members in collectivist cultures tend to experience emotions rooted in the relationship with others and believe there exists only one way of responding to a certain event; in contrast, individualist cultures are less likely to refer to their social environment and accept different responses (Mesquita 2001). Given the fact that the majority of Asian countries are collectivist and Western countries are individualist, communication between Asians and Westerners may fail due to cultural differences in terms of cultural values, rules of behaviours, attitudes, perceptions, relationship patterns, and verbal and nonverbal communication (Kim 2015). Putting together the findings proposed by Gunkel et al. (2014; 2016), it can be interpreted that members of collectivist, uncertainty-avoiding and long-term orientation cultures tend to be better at recognising and regulating their emotions and others' emotions; and Asian countries are likely to fall into this group.

Stated as one of the first cross-cultural studies to investigate the differences between Eastern and Western cultures in emotional intensity and ER strategies as response to emotionally challenging events, Davis et al. (2012) confirm that Chinese men were pushed by cultural and social norms to moderate their emotions and use ER strategies focusing on disengagement more often than their female counterparts and American

males and females. This finding relates to the expression of emotions and feelings of Westerners and Easterners – empathetic versus emotional (Scott-Halsell et al. 2013). Whereas Caucasians view emotional display as appropriate, Asians have an opposite opinion, apart from the expression of happiness (Matsumoto 1993). In a study on EI amongst hospitality undergraduates from Eastern and Western cultural backgrounds in the US, Scott-Halsell et al. (2013) reveal that Eastern students scored considerably lower than their Western counterparts in Overall EI and all subtest EI scores. This can be inferred as the lack of experience in emotional expression leading to low performance of emotional restraint and empathetic behaviours which are traditionally valued in Eastern cultures. In addition to Overall EI, this study adopted a less popular cluster of EI consisting of Emotional Insight into Self, Goal Orientation and Motivation, Ability to Express Emotions, and Social Insight and Empathy. Surprisingly, the Eastern group's highest score fall into the Goal Orientation and Motivation, which refers to their cultural feature of avoiding shame for the family through academic achievement.

In addition to different emotional expression, Asians are strongly influenced by Buddhism, Confucianism, and Zen. This belief influences the way they think and operate, which makes them good employees who respect the authoritative figures and seniors as well as suppress their negative emotions to serve customers with their warm hearts (Chin et al. 2016). Chin et al. (2016) also point out Buddhism orients people towards mercy, forgiveness, empathy, and tolerance whereas Confucianism teaches Asians to follow a decision made by those of higher position, display strong loyalty towards the family and show respect to the elderly. This aligns with Sucher et al.'s (2013) proposition that the cultural characteristics of *'kindness and giving'* creates the uniquely Asian hospitality. Hence, an exploration of Vietnamese culture may yield illuminating insights about Vietnamese hotel workers' characteristics which in turn enhances the understanding of their EI practice.

3.4. Vietnamese culture

Vietnamese culture is formed on the foundation of different cultures throughout the history of the nation. As a tropical monsoon country in Southeast Asia, Vietnam originally established its economy based on paddy-rice agriculture and people lived in

small closed villages as a community, through which five characteristics are defined consisting of community orientation, harmony, yin-oriented essence, synthetic culture and flexibility (Tran 2006 cited by Pham 2015).

Apart from the local culture formation, there exists other cultural roots consisting of the Chinese ideologies and religious beliefs, particularly the Confucian philosophical beliefs under the Han dynasty (between 110 BC and 220 AD); three cultural layers from Southeast Asia, East Asia and South Asia; the French colonisation (1858-1954) and the invasion of the US in southern Vietnam (1945-1975) (Pham 2015; Nguyen and Truong 2016). Together with the colonisation, these nations brought their religious practices to Vietnam which are still followed and in turn influence their thinking and behaviour in social interactions in both daily life and workplace context. Le (2016) recommends studying the common root of three religions, namely Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism for a better understanding of Vietnamese ideology, culture, religions and history.

In addition to the mix of three religions aforementioned, Vietnamese culture is examined through the lens of Hofstede et al.'s (2010) cultural dimensions. Hofstede's original explanation of Vietnamese culture based on numeric scores for each cultural dimension is reviewed in relation to findings from empirical research on Vietnam following Hofstede's theory to provide a more updated insight into Vietnamese culture in different work-based contexts such as manufacturing (Nguyen and Aoyama 2013), enterprise (Nguyen and Truong 2016), and higher education (Pham 2015).

3.4.1. The mixture of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism

As far as Vietnamese culture is concerned, the concept of three religions with common roots *('tam giáo đồng nguyên')* has different interpretations and remains a controversial issue. This phenomenon is interpreted as the unification of three religions, the convergence of the three religions, three religions co-exist in a cultural entity, to name just a few (Hoang 2012; Le 2016). Taking the opposite view, in a recent empirical study on the association between religion and culture in Vietnamese folklore, Vuong et al. (2018) suggest the term *'cultural additivity'* for the blend of the three teachings in Vietnamese culture. In so doing, the authors emphasise how the religious philosophy and practice has been established in Vietnam based on these three

teachings instead of practicing them as a religion because these three religions did not unify, Confucianism and Taoism showed a certain level of additivity but Buddhism did not, and Confucianism seem to dominate other religions (Vuong et al. 2018). Thus, the following section reviews how each of these teaching was brought to Vietnam and its influence on Vietnamese society.

3.4.1.1. Confucianism

Confucianism is an ethical and philosophical system based mainly on teachings and concepts from Confucius (Ryu 2010). For Confucius, the ideal world was one without conflicts and full of harmony. Besides, family is a basic social unit crucial for the formation of self, human relationships and moral consciousness; as a result, duties and obligations amongst family members are stressed in Confucianism. Confucianism also determines the hierarchy attached to the men of the household for the collective good of the family; specifically, the wife is expected to obey her husband, the son and daughter obey their parents, and likewise older siblings have higher status than younger ones (Burr 2014). After marriage, the man is required to be submissive to his mother and suppress the commitment to his wife in front of his mother, which makes the relationship between husband's mother and daughter-in-law an *"always-critical-and-unavoidable problem"* (Do and Brennan 2015, p.285).

Though rooted during the Chinese rule, Confucianism was strongly refracted in accordance with traditional Vietnamese culture (Tho 2016). Tho pointed out several ways in which Confucianism in Vietnam differs from the traditional Confucianism as follows. First, the rural culture makes each village a *"minimised country of Vietnam"* with its own gods or goddesses, its communal house and its own traditions (Tho 2016, p.654). Second, women are treated with more respect in traditional Vietnam than China (Tho 2016). This may result from the distinctiveness of Vietnamese femininity rooted in history, folklore literature, national revolution and contemporary gender practices, which pictures Vietnamese women as *"strong, active, capable, independent, heroic and powerful in both public and domestic domains"* (Do and Brennan 2015, p.285). The French educational policies also liberated Vietnamese women from their kitchens and the low status imposed on them according to Confucian philosophy (Nguyen 2016b). The third difference lie in the innovation processes Chinese

Confucianism has gone through during Ming and Qing Dynasties whereas Vietnamese Confucianism has never experienced any innovative change (Tho 2016).

Indeed, the process of *'Vietnamisation of the Confucianism'* occurred when Confucianism was introduced to the country about 2000 years ago when Vietnamese scholars selectively adopted the concepts from original Confucianism to establish a system different from Chinese Confucianism (Dong 2015). A study on the influence of Confucianism amongst Vietnamese students shows that they inherit Confucian characteristics such as patriotism, reciprocation of greetings, favours, and gifts, loyalty to superiors and adaptability but become more competitive with their peers compared to their ancestors (Nguyen et al. 2010). This characteristic may exert significant influence on Vietnamese hotel workers in their work relationship.

What remains in Confucius practice in Vietnam is the strong respect for education and training people with talent and virtue resulting in three goals of contemporary education including knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Tho 2016). This highlights the impacts of culture on determining the qualities of *'good attitudes'* apart from intelligence. It can be argued that Vietnamese social norms value EQ and IQ equally and Vietnamese people are culturally embedded with expressing good attitudes.

3.4.1.2. Taoism

Despite being less influential than Confucianism, Taoism was brought to Vietnam during the Chinese invasion and practised as a national philosophy in politics and social life, and both of them still influence the social hierarchy of virtues and relations in Vietnam (Nguyen 2016b). Taoism is different from Confucianism and Buddhism and yet complements them. It absorbed shamanistic culture, the beliefs in ghosts and deities, folk tradition, various kinds of alchemical and magical arts (Hu and Yan 2013). Whereas Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism encourage people to pursue an afterlife in heaven, Taoism negates death and believes that time passes by quickly and life is precious (*ibid.*). Taoist teachings are practised on the basis of principles such as charity to living things, simplicity of life, patience, contentment, harmony between human beings and nature, and harmony amongst humans (Rutledge 1992). Thanks to these teachings, Taoism was accepted in Vietnamese society because Vietnamese people tend to avoid conflict and be tolerant in interpersonal relationships, which is expressed

through the proverb *'One thing you endure, nine things you will receive'* (translated from *'một điều nhịn chín điều lành'*) (Nguyen 2016b). Sophana (2006) notes Vietnamese people tend to use proverbs and expressions from Buddhism, integrate these with Confucianism and Taoism, and apply them in their lives harmoniously.

3.4.1.3. Buddhism

Similar to Confucianism, Buddhism and Zen were introduced to Vietnam during the era of Chinese ruling; despite receiving the Chinese legacy regarding culture and religion, Vietnam resisted the assimilation and only inherited the features relevant for the nation (Cleary 1991). Mahayana Buddhism emphasises the principle *"cease all unwholesome conduct, do only what is good, and purify your mind"* (Lyu 2012, p.46), which means to minimise the suffering and pain of self and others and abandon a narrow-minded and egocentric mentality. Karmic retribution is also a basic principle of Buddhism which emphasises one's deeds determine the rewards and punishments received (Cleary 1991). Furthermore, Buddhist practices in Vietnam stay in line instead of contradicting Confucianism, which is shown in the traditions of face-saving and confrontation-avoiding, particularly with those of higher ranking or authority figures (Dinh et al. 2000).

Hofmann (2013) suggests strategies to approach happiness are deeply rooted in Buddhist teachings and collectivist culture. Whereas the first strategy is named *'loving kindness'* which mainly involves unconditional kindness to all people, the second strategy is concerned with compassion meditation which encourages people to cultivate a deep and genuine sympathy for the unfortunate and a wish to alleviate their suffering (Hofmann 2013). In Vietnam, Buddhist monks and meditation are believed to be able to help those suffering from mental health issues through a wide range of practices such as meditation, physical exercises, counselling, chanting sutras, fasting, and retreat (Nguyen 2015a). This belief originates from the sources of human suffering identified in Buddhism including birth, aging, illness, death, greed, hatred, and ignorance (*ibid.*). Hence, these religious practices may be still followed in contemporary Vietnamese society as a remedy for emotional challenges encountered in their life.

3.4.2. Exploring Vietnamese culture based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions

Given that Hofstede's work is the only theory of national culture which provides indicators for Vietnam cultural dimensions, research on Vietnam adopted Hofstede's model as a starting point to provide an understanding of Vietnamese culture or a theoretical underpinning for their research findings. Research findings from the three recent studies on Vietnam in manufacturing (Nguyen and Aoyama 2013), enterprise (Nguyen and Truong 2016), and higher education (Pham 2015) are reviewed in comparison to Hofstede's initial implications for Vietnamese culture. Findings from these studies seem to stay in line and complement each other. Furthermore, these studies were conducted within the last five years and provide insights into Vietnamese culture and its influences on contemporary society in three different settings. Please see Table 5 for more details.

The distinctive high score on Power Distance and low scores on Individualism and Uncertainty Avoidance form an overall picture of Vietnam as a high power distant, strongly community-oriented, and uncertainty-accepting country. It is noteworthy that amongst the six cultural dimensions of Hofstede's 6D model, the sixth dimension has been rarely used in management research since it was recently introduced, conducted on small size of data, ambivalent with happiness research and somewhat similar to the fifth dimension (Phan 2017). The stability of the five dimensions has been supported by research on cultural values elsewhere (see Fedoruk and Lumley 2015).

Table 5. Vietnamese culture through the lens of Hofstede's cultural models

Cultural dimension and Vietnam's score	Definition	Hofstede et al.'s (2010) interpretation	Implications from previous studies on Vietnamese culture following Hofstede's cultural dimensions		
			Vietnamese manufacturing (Nguyen and Aoyama 2013)	Vietnamese enterprise (Nguyen and Truong 2016)	Vietnamese higher education institutions (Phan 2017)
Power Distance (70)	The extent to which people expect and accept inequality of power distribution	Vietnamese culture follows hierarchical order and centralisation. Subordinates expect to be told what to do and are not allowed to challenge or question their leaders who are seen as philanthropic figures.	Vietnamese subordinates submit to the inspection and distribution of power at work. They only express intimacy and mutual support within the group. They emphasise that the success of an organisation lies in individual initiative rooted in the tradition of autonomy. They prefer fixed work in one professional field with its related powers and management.	Vietnamese employees are familiar with being told what to do without questioning and accept the considerable wage gap with their managers.	Formal communication and strict control is maintained through supervision. Subordinates have limited autonomy whereas top leaders exercise absolute power; so guidance, orders and leadership are desired.
Individualism (20)	The extent to which people value individual's or group's benefits	Vietnam is a collectivist country where people consider themselves as members of a group which can be family, extended family or extended relationships to display strong commitment and foster	Vietnamese workers show cooperation and strong solidarity but also encourage individual discretion at work.	Vietnamese enterprise managers are more collectivism-oriented than Chinese and American managers.	The family link is shown in the way people address someone of higher ranking as uncle or aunt. In-group correlation is considered for recruitment, transfer or dismissal; and connections are more important than tasks. New ideas, new

		relationships within the group. Loyalty is highly valued and goes beyond societal rules and regulations. People tend to assume that offence will lead to shame and face loss. The relationship between workers and managers is expected to be a family link, so in-group members are considered for hiring and promotion.			people or newly issued rules are rarely accepted by in-group members. Vietnamese people tend to use 'we' as a personal pronoun to state their personal opinion. In Vietnam, it is likely that people seek others' support, fail to recognise individual efforts, subjectively criticise out-group members' ideas, and strive for belonging to a group and official titles.
Masculinity (40)	The extent to which people assign the roles to the two genders, also involving attitudes towards achievement/ competition or care for others and quality of life	Vietnamese people are characterised as "work to live". In the workplace, people value equality, solidarity and quality whereas leaders strive for consensus and resolve conflicts by compromise and negotiation. Leaders are expected to provide support and make decisions through involvement. Workers are motivated by free time, flexibility and quality of life.	Vietnamese workers value the balance between effort and reward, and work-life balance.	Male executives outnumber their female counterparts in Vietnamese enterprises and employees accept unequal wages between genders.	Vietnam can be a favourable environment for enhancing the interactions between leaders and staff since Vietnamese people tend to be hospitable, modest and submissive. A good relationship is perceived as more important than success. In Vietnam, intuition is preferred over reasoning and leaders are expected to achieve consensus in dealing with work-related matters.
Uncertainty Avoidance (30)	The extent to which people	Vietnamese people tend to be relaxed and value practice more than	Vietnamese people tend to be adventurous, eager to take up new opportunity or	Vietnamese managers can be threatened by ambiguities, so rules and	Harmony and flexibility is highly valued. People are driven by achievement and

		principles. So, people tend not to be obliged by rules and are adaptable. Considerable efforts are made to achieve precision and punctuality.	new work with less care about risks.	plans are established as measures against this threat. In contrast, in daily lives, Vietnamese are flexible and believe their life is determined by fate.	esteem. They are happy when belonging to a particular group. Practice and experience are preferred to rules.
Long term Orientation (57)	The extent to which people value past, present and future	Vietnam is defined as a pragmatic culture where people believe that truth depends on situation, context and time. Typical characteristics are adaptability, thrift and perseverance to achieve their goals.	Little attention is paid to quality practices.	N/A	People value thrift but follow the greetings and gift-giving tradition. Face-saving and status-based hierarchy are also distinctive characteristics of Vietnamese culture. People tend to pursue a lifetime profession, which highlights the connection and loyalty between employees and employers.
Indulgence (35)	The extent to which people control gratification	Characterised as a restrained country, Vietnamese people tend to be sceptical and pessimistic. Leisure and gratification of their desires are not prioritised since they are restrained by social norms, self-indulgence is seen as a wrong behaviour.	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: Amended from Nguyen and Aoyama (2013); Nguyen and Truong (2016); Phan (2017); Hofstede (2018)

3.5. The influences of Vietnamese culture on hotel workers

The last section of the chapter focuses on the potential impacts of culture on Vietnamese hotel workers in three aspects; harmony-oriented culture, respect for the elderly and seniors, and distinction between in-group and out-group members. To some extent, these characteristics may make Vietnamese people good hotel workforce. Nonetheless, these cultural characteristics are likely to be misinterpreted or are barely understood by other cultures and lead to misunderstanding. A few examples from empirical research are discussed as an ending for this chapter.

3.5.1. Harmony-oriented culture

Vietnamese culture is formed on the ground of obedience and over-emphasis on one's duty towards others and the society which focuses on the rights of people as members of a community rather than as individuals with their own rights (Hoang 2012). Thus, Vietnamese people tend to avoid talking about conflict to save *'face'* and maintain group harmony (Dinh et al. 2000). It is likely that they solve conflicts in the workplace by informal contact and personal relationships, and avoid direct clashes (Swierczek 1994).

In addition, it is noteworthy that Vietnamese people say *'yes'* while talking to others no matter if it is a question or a statement, which means *'I'm listening'* to avoid confrontation or please others but it is often mistakenly interpreted as a positive answer or an agreement by foreigners (Borton 2000; Purnell 2008). This characteristic of Vietnamese people is similar to Chinese who also reply *'yes'* in order not to offend or cause inconvenience to others (Joy 1989). As a harmony-oriented culture, Vietnamese people desire to bring peace and joy to others, and attempt to practise a model of national identity as hardworking, patient and determined to survive or be successful (Rutledge 1992). The desire to please others may make Vietnamese people good hospitality workers in a service manner where they attempt to understand and meet customer demands, which is the ultimate aim of hospitality sector, or the *'human touch'* mentioned previously (Martínez-Ros and Orfila-Sintes 2012).

Previous research shows that surface acting increases job burnout while genuine emotion and deep acting reduce it, which highlights the importance of training

employees in understanding and sympathising with customers so that they experience positive emotions whilst at work (Wu and Shie 2017). Vietnamese hotel workers tend to possess these qualities from their harmony-oriented culture, which implies an advantage of Vietnamese hotel workers and less efforts are required to train them in this aspect. In addition, surface acting may lead to emotional exhaustion and turnover intention as well as decrease organisational commitment amongst employees (Shani et al. 2014). In the case of Vietnamese hotel workers, the desire to bring peace and joy to others and to represent the national identity may make them less likely to experience surface acting. In other words, it can be optimistically implied that the positive emotions they experience in the workplace match the desired emotional display and hotel work is not necessarily a high EL job as widely known in previous studies.

3.5.2. Respect for the elderly and seniors

Hoang (2012) also highlights the differences between Western children who learn independence and equality; and traditional Vietnamese children growing up with dependence, nurturance, hierarchy, and rewards for submission to seniors. Respect for seniors is also shown in the way Vietnamese people avoid eye contact when talking to them (Stauffer 1995). This respectful behaviour is one of the difficulties facing nurses and doctors when they deal with Vietnamese patients who rarely mention their concerns to nurses or doctors because it is viewed as a way of avoiding embarrassing confrontation (Lindsay et al. 1998). Although Vietnam was colonised and influenced by the French who spread Catholicism (Fong and Mokuau 1994), the respect and care for the elderly and seniors applies equally to both Catholics and Buddhists (Dinh et al. 2000).

In the workplace, respect for seniors reflects a strong influence of Chinese culture on Vietnam over a thousand years. It is the hierarchical relationship of superior and subordinate, or *'guanxi'*, which enhances joint decision-making and constructive controversy between managers and employees (Chen and Tjosvold 2006). Given the fact that the social hierarchy is determined by different criteria which can be age, social status or education (Hoang 2012); Vietnamese service providers may be sensitive to the need for care and respect to customers which in turn enhances customer experience and satisfaction.

3.5.3. Distinction between in-group and out-group members

The nature of a collectivist culture also leads to the distinction between in-group and out-group members in Vietnamese society (Phan 2008). In-group members refer to those having close relationships, sharing the same values and beliefs and treated as members of the family. In a collectivist culture, individuals consider themselves subordinate to in-group goals, express concern for the integrity of the in-group and form strong emotional attachment to the group (Triandis et al. 1988). For a good and successful social and business relationship in Vietnam, trust and in-group membership are desirable, which is achieved through *'guanxi'* (superior-subordinate hierarchical relationships) as an influence of the deeply rooted Chinese culture (Nguyen et al. 2012).

Although group favouritism is typically associated with in-group members and against out-group members, Tanaka and Camerer (2016) show that Vietnamese people exhibit no disfavouritism toward a lower-status out-group (Khmer) and typical disfavouritism to another out-group (Chinese). On the one hand, Vietnamese and Chinese participants in their study perceive the Khmer as low in status but warm and incompetent; on the other hand, Vietnamese and Chinese groups exhibit negative outgroup treatment toward each other (Tanaka and Camerer 2016).

In a research on family structure in Vietnam, Hirschman and Vu (1996) reveal that Vietnam has incorporated both East Asian Confucian culture and Southeast Asian family structure, which emphasises the role of family as a source of social and emotional support. Thus, family is perceived as a comfort zone for Vietnamese people to express their negative emotions which are likely suppressed in public. This is in line with Pham's (1990) statement about family and filial piety as the basis for Vietnamese morality and ethics, which partially helps Vietnam establish and maintain a strong national identity through periods of hardship and colonisation. Filial piety is also shown in the way students are motivated to gain academic achievement to uphold the family honour in East Asian Confucian-based culture (Hawkins 1994). Brought up with the strong concept of family and filial piety, Vietnamese service providers in Truong and King's (2010a) study consider Obedience as a crucial factor in maintaining harmony, peace, and stability as opposed to American tourists who value

Idealism and Quality of Life, Esteem and Personal Contentment, Sense of Self, Equality and Accomplishment, and Competence.

In Vietnam, self-control is valued and emotional expression is seen as a weakness (Purnell 2008). Similarly, Matsumoto (1993) reveals that Asian people generally consider emotional displays as inappropriate, except happiness. Interestingly, whereas smiling is perceived as an expression of happiness, Purnell (2008) identifies a wide range of meanings of a smile amongst Vietnamese; ranging from joy, stoicism, an apology for a minor social offense, a response to a scolding to show sincere acknowledgement for the wrongdoing, or even ill feelings. This may make Vietnamese good hospitality workers who express positive emotions and smile in most cases.

3.6. Problems arising from misinterpreting Vietnamese culture

The limited understanding of Vietnamese culture has led to failure of early business collaborations where foreign leaders attempt to adopt Western HRM practices in Vietnam (Nguyen 2003; Bartram et al. 2009). In a study on service interactions between Vietnamese hosts and international visitors, Truong and King (2010b) point out the distinctive differences between Vietnamese, Chinese, French, and American people; Vietnamese and Chinese are implicit, suppress their emotions and concern about intra-group social harmony while American and French are explicit, express their emotions publicly and pays less attention to etiquette of social behaviour. The expression or suppression of emotions can be explained by applying Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's (2012) concepts of neutral culture where feelings are controlled and subdued and affective culture where emotions are shown openly.

Besides, social gratification and age grading in Vietnam can be easily understood and practised by Chinese tourists but may cause tension or conflict amongst American and French visitors (Truong and King 2010b). It is also noteworthy that constant attention and substantial assistance to foreign visitors demonstrated by Vietnamese service staff was considered as annoying, pushy, and untrustworthy by American guests (Truong and King 2010a).

As Duong et al. (1975, p.126) stated:

"According to Vietnamese custom, one should remain modest and humble, showing the extent of knowledge or skills only when asked. In Vietnam, there is the motto of saying less than what one actually knows, often and admirable characteristic. Modesty and humility for Vietnamese are very important social graces, and deeply ingrained into their identity."

The modesty and humility embedded in Vietnamese workers may be misinterpreted by foreign employers and leads to cultural clash. According to Truong et al. (1998), the key to success for international joint ventures in Vietnam lies in building relationships, creating a mutual understanding, and fostering shared values. Besides, saving face and trust are particularly important in retaining Vietnamese employees (Kamoche 2001).

Furthermore, Vietnamese managers often avoid confronting general managers or rejecting their proposals for fear of causing emotional problems and frustrations; therefore, meetings tend to last quite long without addressing the important issues because Vietnamese people believe *"the meeting is the place to rest"* (Pham 2015, p.56).

In brief, Vietnamese culture has strong impacts on the way people behave and interact with each other, this considerably relates to the hospitality sector which is labour-intensive and human plays the prominent role in service encounters. It is of crucial importance that special attention be paid to the culture element in Vietnamese hospitality in order to enhance staff capability in interacting with international customers.

3.7. Summary

This literature review chapter offers an overview of previous research on national culture and its impacts on EI, which provides important implications for the current exploratory study into the practice of EI demonstrated by Vietnamese hotel workers. The review of six major theories on national cultures highlights the rationale for adopting Hofstede's cultural dimensions to study Vietnamese culture in relation to others. This is also supported by the adoption of Hofstede's theory by contemporary

studies on Vietnamese context. Besides, this implies the lack of empirical research on Vietnam in terms of national culture.

In addition, the chapter identifies the gap in current research on the influence of national culture on EI and their contradictory results. This highlights the strengths of studying EI qualitatively given the fact that both EI and culture are multifaceted concepts and hard to grasp by numeric scores or measurements.

The chapter also provides an insight into Vietnamese culture through the mixture of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. These philosophies and ideologies have become practices in their daily life, which partially shapes their attitudes and behaviours in the workplace. These cultural values in turn create influences on Vietnamese hotel workers and enhance their EI practice in the labour-intensive hotel sector.

The last part of the chapter acknowledges problems arising from the misinterpretation of Vietnamese culture recorded in previous research. In so doing, it reinforces the importance of understanding Vietnamese culture for better interactions generally and in the hospitality sector particularly.

Chapter 4 - Methodology

4.1. Introduction to chapter 4

Chapter 4 presents four major aspects of the research methodology including the research philosophy, the research strategy, research evaluations and ethics considerations, and the research limitations. Firstly, the research philosophy covers the chosen paradigm and philosophical assumptions; interpretivism and its relevance to the research aim and objectives are presented. The philosophical assumptions include ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology which underpin the research and shape the entire research design and process. Secondly, the research strategy is described in detail regarding rationale for adopting qualitative approach and three research methods consisting of focus group interview, CIT, and semi-structured interview. Sampling technique and data analysis are also covered in this part. The third part of the chapter discusses criteria for evaluating this qualitative research and ethics considerations. Finally, limitations of the research are identified through the downsides of each research method.

4.2. Research philosophy

4.2.1. Paradigm

The predominance of quantitative research into EI has created a gap in contemporary research. This qualitative research explores Vietnamese hotel workers' practice of EI in interactions with customers and colleagues in the hotel workplace in Vietnam. Therefore, the paradigm and the philosophical assumptions are adopted accordingly as follows.

Blaxter et al. (2010) suggest four paradigms in social research including positivism and post-positivism, interpretivism, critical, and postmodern. Considering the aim of the research – exploring how Vietnamese hotel workers practice EI in the workplace, interpretivism was chosen because it looks for "*culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world*" (Crotty 1998, p.67). In other words, it enhances the interpretations of EI from Vietnamese hotel workers' perspective and simultaneously takes culture, religion and history of Vietnam into consideration.

Moreover, the interpretivist approach enhances the exploration of participants' interactions with customers and colleagues.

Interpretivism has its root in philosophy, history and anthropology; and it originates from Max Weber's (1864-1920) thoughts which contrast the interpretive approach in social science with the explicative approach in natural science with the two concepts – Verstehen (understanding) and Erklären (explaining) respectively (Blaxter et al. 2010). The interpretivist approach focuses on sense-making and meaning-attaching to human beings' subjective reality (Holloway and Wheeler 2013). With the aim of exploring EI from Vietnamese hotel workers' perspective, the interpretivist approach assists the researcher in gaining access to their thoughts and feelings and interpreting their opinions on EI in the hotel workplace.

4.2.2. Philosophical assumptions

The adopted paradigm, interpretivism, determines the four philosophical assumptions underlying the entire research including ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology. Figure 5 illustrates the relationship between these four philosophical assumptions.

Figure 5. Research philosophy
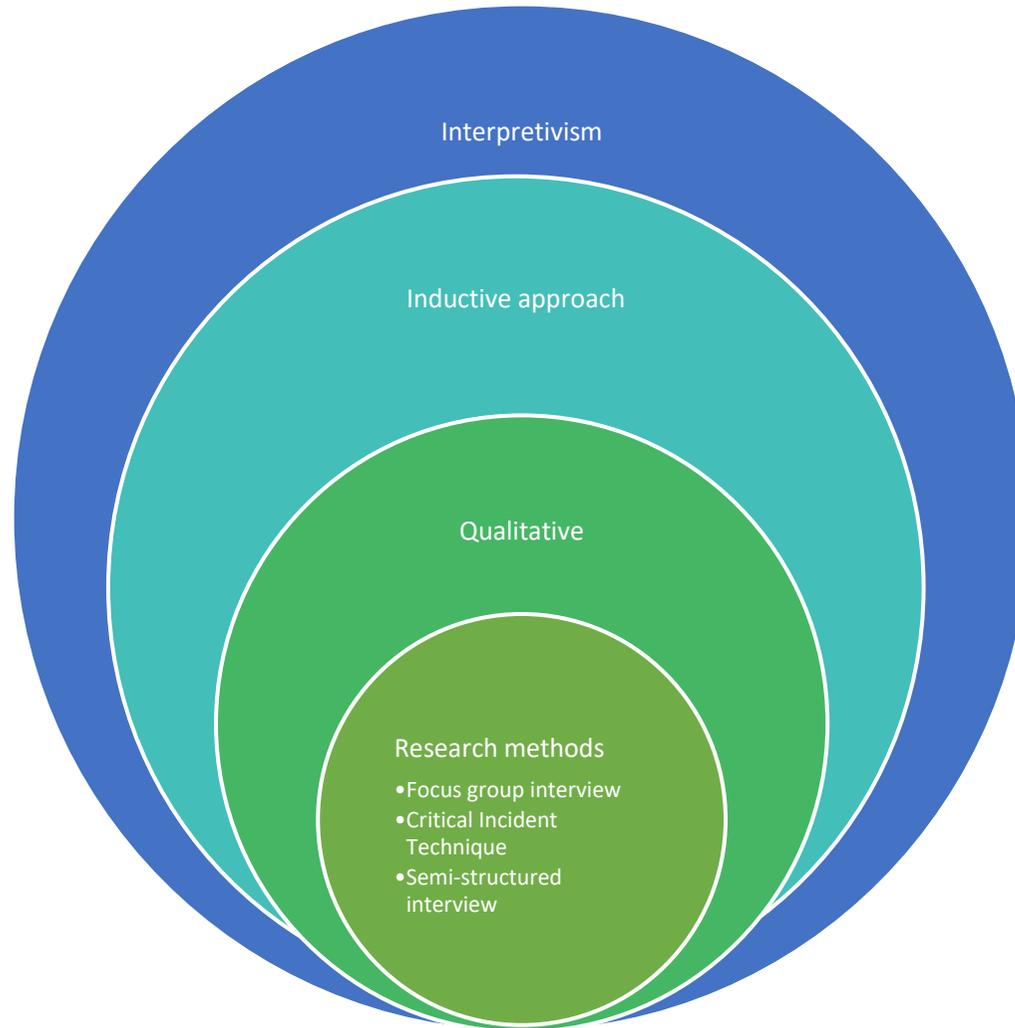
Source: Author

4.2.2.1. Ontological assumption

Ontology is the study of being, or the nature of existence and tries to understand *what is* (Gray 2009). According to Gray (2009), there are two opposing ontological traditions in Western philosophy: Heraclitean ontology of *becoming* and Parmenidean ontology of *being,* and the latter has gradually dominated the Western thought. Based upon the *being* ontology, reality is believed to be formed by entities with identifiable properties which can be represented by symbols, words, and concepts (*ibid.*). In qualitative research, researchers value the fact that there are multiple realities built upon different perceptions and actions of social actors including researchers, individuals being researched and readers (Creswell 2013; Bryman 2015). Creswell (2013) also emphasises using the research participants' words to present their different viewpoints in qualitative research. This fits well with the research aim to explore Vietnamese hotel workers' practice of EI in their workplace and anticipating different opinions from research participants.

4.2.2.2. Epistemological assumption

Epistemology relates to the theory of knowledge, the origins and construction of knowledge (Tribe 2004) and emphasises '*what it means to know'* (Gray 2009). It also raises questions about the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the researched (Guba and Lincoln 1998). According to Lincoln et al. (2011), interpretivist epistemology appreciates lived experiences built upon the knowledge generated by researchers and the data generated by research subjects. This statement reinforces the relationship between the researcher (a Vietnamese) and the researched (Vietnamese hotel workers), which relates to the advantages of the researcher as a Vietnamese local in Nhatrang with academic and practical knowledge of hospitality in Vietnam. In addition, some of the participants are from her personal contacts which helped building rapport between the researcher and the participants in the initial stages of the data collection, which will be discussed in detail in later parts of this chapter. This epistemology also identifies that knowledge is built upon the subjective experiences of the participants being researched (Creswell 2013); as a result, the researcher plays the role of an interpreter to reflect their experiences of EI and comes to terms with the subjectivity.

4.2.2.3. Axiological assumption

The third assumption to take into consideration is axiology. Axiology involves the nature and status of values and questions whether values are *"mere response of man to a value-neutral nature"* or *"results of an ongoing interaction of reality and man"* (Hart 1971, p.30). Qualitative research is value-laden and biased and researchers report this together with the value-laden nature of the information they collected from the field (Creswell 2013). Sharing the same opinion on this, Angen (2000) emphasises that subjectivity is an integral part of our understanding of ourselves, of others and of the world around us given the fact that we cannot separate ourselves from what we know. The researcher believes in the influence of her values and culture on the research; therefore, she is a part of what is being researched and will be subjective. Thus, reflexivity is mainly applied to qualitative research to recognise the fact that the researcher is not a neutral observer and is involved in the construction of knowledge (Gray 2009). Gray (2009) also suggests two forms of reflexivity – epistemological reflexivity and personal reflexivity. While the former reflects on the researcher's assumption about the research question and how the research was conducted, the latter involves how her personal values, attitudes, beliefs, and aims have shaped the entire research. This reflexive element of the research will be presented in 4.4.1.1 as a part of the research evaluation.

4.2.2.4. Methodological assumption

The final assumption to consider in this qualitative study is methodology which Goodson and Phillimore (2004) state as the study of how we obtain knowledge of the reality. The methodology of qualitative research is defined as "*inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher's experience in collecting and analysing the data*" (Creswell 2013, p.22). Previous experience in conducting qualitative research in the form of semi-structured interviews assisted the researcher with approaching potential participants, facilitating interviews, and probing for elaboration. Her working experience and background also influenced and shaped the research, which is further discussed in 4.4.1.1. It is highlighted that the methodology should be employed as a consequence of the chosen philosophical stance and the researched phenomenon (Holden and Lynch 2004). Methodology is determined by the interpretivist paradigm which typically uses qualitative methods such as interview, observation, and analysis

of existing texts; and meanings emerge from the research process (Angen 2000). The research, therefore, takes a qualitative approach with three methods – focus group interview, CIT, and semi-structured interview.

4.3. Research strategy

This part of the chapter discusses rationale for choosing qualitative approach and the three methods; focus group interview, CIT, and semi-structured interview to address the research questions. Furthermore, sampling technique and data analysis are described in greater detail.

4.3.1. Rationale for adopting qualitative approach

The research aims to explore how Vietnamese hotel workers practise EI in interactions with customers and colleagues in their workplace. There is a proliferation of research on EI in hospitality that highlights the importance of EI to hospitality students (Walsh et al. 2015), hotel managers (Wolfe and Kim 2013), or frontline hotel employees (Kim et al. 2012). However, there is a scarcity of qualitative research on EI in other sectors as well as in hospitality, with a few exceptions identified in section 2.5.3. Lincoln (2009) argues the predomination of quantitative research on EI places limitations due to turning observational data into statistics to measure EI. To the researcher's best knowledge, this is amongst the first attempts to explore EI practice of Vietnamese hotel workers. Previous research (Nguyen 2003; Bartram et al. 2009) highlights the importance of culture in interactions between Vietnamese hotel workers and international customers and the limited understanding of Vietnamese culture leading to failure of business collaborations. Therefore, the qualitative approach allows for investigation of aspects of EI which quantitative research barely captures.

The merits of qualitative research are well documented. It facilitates the understanding of certain phenomena in real-life settings, introduces flexibility into the research process, which is sensitive to detailed analysis and allows research findings to emerge from the data (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). It also allows the researcher to interpret and make sense of the experience (Holloway and Wheeler 2013) and to play the role of "*an active learner*" telling the story from the participants' viewpoint (Creswell 1998, p.18). For that reason, qualitative researchers attempt to gain the minimum distance

between them and those being researched (Creswell 2013). In this study, the researcher built rapport with participants through her personal contacts to understand the ways hotel workers act and account for their actions in terms of EI. Furthermore, in qualitative research, the researchers try to obtain a *'holistic'* overview of the study and are open to multiple interpretations (Gray 2009). Last but not least, qualitative research enhances the exploration to gain as much detail as possible, and *'depth'* is much more valued than *'breadth'* (Blaxter et al. 2010). Thus, the research findings yield in-depth insights into the practice of EI from hotel workers' perspectives.

4.3.2. Research methods

This qualitative study has three stages of data collection: focus groups with hotel workers, CIT in the form of incident records, and semi-structured interviews with hotel workers. Table 6 outlines three phases of the data collection and how they fulfil the research objectives (ROs); details of each phase are presented in the following sections.

Table 6. Phases of data collection of the study

Details	Phases of data collection		
	Phase 1 – Focus group interview	**Phase 2 – Critical Incident Technique**	**Phase 3 – Semi-structured interview**
When	October 2015	September 2016	October 2016
Where	Nhatrang, Vietnam	Nhatrang, Vietnam	Nhatrang, Vietnam
Who	20 hotel workers in Front Office (FO) and Food & Beverage (FB) departments in 10 hotels	34 hotel workers in FO, FB, Housekeeping (HK), and Sales departments in 19 hotels	34 hotel workers in FO, FB, HK, and Sales departments in 19 hotels
What	There are four topics for discussion; what they like about their job, how they deal with customers, how they deal with the annoyance at work, and the training they receive in relation to customer service.	Participants were asked to describe extremely favourable and unfavourable incidents of interacting with customers and colleagues.	These interviews were designed to elaborate more on the incidents collected from phase 2, through which participants were asked to share their strategies of emotional management in interactions with customers and colleagues. Besides, the interviews covered cultural factors influencing their emotions in the workplace and their suggestions for improving EI. Further information on their sources of knowledge was also collected in these interviews.

Details	Phases of data collection		
	Phase 1 – Focus group interview	**Phase 2 – Critical Incident Technique**	**Phase 3 – Semi-structured interview**
Why	Investigating what the participants like about their jobs reveals the factors which generate their positive emotions in the workplace (RO1). How the participants deal with customers and their annoyance reflects how they perceive and regulate their own and customers' emotions (RO4). However, participants tended to either mention their strategies of emotional management in a certain encounter or relate it to Vietnamese culture in the workplace. This highlights the need for adopting other methods to further explore the research topic. The training they received indicates the sources of their knowledge of emotional management, which fulfils RO2. Interacting with colleagues emerged as one of the major issues but the data collected was limited due to the confidentiality. This requires further exploration; so, CIT and semi-structured interviews were employed to overcome the limitations of focus group interviews.	This is to achieve RO3 – To explore their EI practice through examples of favourable and unfavourable incidents.	The data collected in terms of emotional management in interactions with customers and colleagues fulfil RO4 – to uncover strategies the workers use to manage their own emotions and the emotions of their customers and colleagues The semi-structured interview provided a good opportunity to gather in-depth insights into cultural factors which influence their emotions (RO1), sources of their knowledge (RO2), and suggestions for improving EI (RO5) based on the data collected from focus group interviews.

Source: Author

4.3.2.1. Focus group interview

Focus group interviews were employed to shed some light on hotel work and the emotion element in hotel workplaces in Vietnam. In late September 2015, potential participants were recruited through the researcher's personal contacts. The recruitment criteria include Vietnamese hotel workers who have face-to-face interaction with customers regardless of age, academic background, working experiences or star-rating of the hotel they worked for. Therefore, the suitable departments are FO and FB in any hotel in Vietnam. The potential participants were contacted via phone, email or Facebook and invited to take part in focus group interviews at three different time slots. Three focus groups were undertaken during October 2015, comprising nine, six and five people respectively. Six to eight participants is considered the ideal size for non-commercial topics (Krueger and Casey 2000). The focus group interviews took place in an office that the researcher had access to. Each lasted between fifty and seventy five minutes. The interviews discussed four main topics – what they like about their job, how they deal with customers, how they deal with the annoyance at work and the training they received in relation to customer service (Please see Appendix 2).

About one third of the participants were male (7 out of 20) and all of the participants were in their 20s and 30s. Participants were working in FO and FB departments in 10 hotels in Nhatrang. They held different positions, ranging from front-line staff, shift leader to supervisor and duty manager. Due to the availability and accessibility of participants; each focus group was a mix of hotel workers working in big hotel chains, small and medium-sized hotels, or family-owned hotels, which enhanced the diversity of working environments.

Focus group interviews assist in gaining a great deal of information in a short period of time and facilitates the observation of participants' interaction around the issue (Schensul et al. 1999). The first impression of the researcher as to these focus group interviews were the enthusiastic participation of those attending and interactions within the group throughout the interviews. Though not probed on the EI concept, they quickly picked up the emotional element in their jobs in respect of both positive and negative sides and how they managed these emotions in the workplace. After each question was raised, the conversation went from one participant to another with little interference from the researcher. As a result, the focus group interviews yielded a great

amount of data relevant to the research topic. In addition, culture emerged as an influential and interesting issue when they shared their experiences in the hotel workplace.

Furthermore, these focus group interviews revealed interesting insights into the varied degree of synergy within a group of acquaintances as opposed to a group of strangers, which is considered a key differentiation between group and individual interviews (Oates 2000). To be specific, the first focus group was organised by one of the researcher's contacts; they were all acquaintances or colleagues, the conversation seemed natural and smooth where the participants actively took turns to answer the question asked. In contrast, the other two groups were a mix of workers from different hotels; therefore, those who are younger or have less working experiences appeared hesitant to raise their voice or waited until given the chance. This may result from the high power distance society where social grading is based upon age and work position. This notion deserves further exploration in the subsequent phases of data collection for a clearer picture of EI practice in Vietnamese hotel workplace. Furthermore, there existed subtle hesitation when the participants talked about their interactions with colleagues in the workplace. This may result from the possibility that their stories are circulated outside of the group. On top of that, Nhatrang is a small town and hotel workers are likely to have mutual friends or acquaintances. This limitation was overcome by employing other methods which ensure confidentiality such as CIT and semi-structured interviews.

In brief, the focus group interviews revealed three main areas for exploring EI practice amongst Vietnamese hotel workers that required further investigation by alternative methods. Firstly, the fact that the participants mentioned both the positive and negative sides of the emotional element in their workplace confirmed the adoption of CIT to investigate both extremely favourable and unfavourable incidents. Secondly, the participants discussed strategies of managing their own emotions; however, due to sensitivity the group discussion was not an ideal setting for exploring this issue. The hesitation when talking about their interactions with colleagues emphasised the need for employing one-to-one interviews to ensure confidentiality and comfort for the participants. The last issue that emerged from the focus group interviews is the participants' tendency to read customers' emotions and deal with them differently

depending on their country or region of origin. These experiences emanated from the focus group interviews and were further explored in semi-structured interviews.

All interviews were recorded by a digital recorder and a laptop as back-up, verbatim transcribed in Vietnamese and translated into English by the researcher. Interview transcriptions were checked for consistency by a Vietnamese teacher of English with an MA (Masters of Arts) in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). In addition, both the researcher and the Vietnamese teacher are qualified translators between English and Vietnamese in their country. The Vietnamese and English versions were also reviewed frequently during data analysis. Most Vietnamese proverbs were cited in the findings chapters alongside an English equivalent or explanation to ensure the authenticity and reliability of the information obtained from the data.

The focus group interviews generated initial information relevant to the research topic and particularly fulfilled the RO4 by reflecting the sources of knowledge of emotional management. Furthermore, the participants tended to refer to the incidents where they practised EI and relate their EI practice to characteristics of Vietnamese people in the workplace. After the focus group interviews, it was confirmed that CIT and semi-structured interviews were effective tools for further exploring the aspects to which focus group interviews had limited access.

4.3.2.2. Critical Incident Technique

The second stage of data collection involves the use of CIT to highlight critical service encounters, or critical incidents, which can be used synonymously (Lundberg 2011). The traditional CIT introduced by Flanagan (1954, p.327) is described as "*a set of procedures for collecting direct observations of human behaviour in such a way as to facilitate their potential usefulness in solving practical problems and developing broad psychological principles*". The technique has taken various forms and become more popular in service quality and management research to record memorable critical incidents from customers' perspective (Edvardsson and Roos 2001). Whereas a service encounter is defined as "*a period of time during which a consumer directly interacts with a service*" (Shostack 1985, p.243), critical incidents are especially satisfying or dissatisfying interactions between customers and service employees

(Bitner et al. 1990). Regardless of whether the technique is used as either direct observation or recalled information, it offers rich insights and the authenticity of personal experience of the activity under study (Nyquist et al. 1985).

In this research, CIT was adopted as recalled information; hotel workers were sent the CIT forms to describe both extremely favourable and unfavourable interactions with customers and colleagues. The biggest advantage of CIT is the participants describe the situation in their own words; so, the researcher has the opportunity to get closer to the situation under study (Edvardsson 1992). In September 2016, previous participants in focus group interviews were contacted and invited to take part in this second stage. They were also asked to recommend friends and colleagues who were working in FO, FB, HK, and Sales departments. These are the departments in hotels which have the highest degree of face-to-face contact with customers. The HR department of three, four or five-star hotels and owners of small-sized hotels were also contacted as gatekeepers to get permission for approaching their employees. The CIT forms were sent via emails or printed and handed to those who agreed to partake, together with the participant information sheet and informed consent form. Please see Appendix 3 for the CIT form which was written in both English and Vietnamese.

In order to ensure the authenticity and precision of the incidents described, participants were instructed to write down what happened, when it happened, what they said or did, what others (who could be their customers or colleagues) said or did, how they felt, and what they did to manage their emotions and the emotions of others. To make it achievable and avoiding overloaded data, they were asked to describe one favourable incident and one unfavourable incident with customers; and one favourable incident and one unfavourable incident of interactions with colleagues. They were encouraged to describe these incidents in detail in the CIT form. These incidents might have happened several years ago but were considered unforgettable memories to the participants; the description, therefore, was completely based on their memory. After three to five days, they were contacted again to arrange an individual face-to-face semi-structured interview. They were encouraged to send their completed CIT forms to the researcher before the interview for a study since some of the emerging issues would be discussed in further detail in the interview with each participant.

It is noteworthy that sending the CIT form to participants acted as a screening tool for the research. In fact, some potential participants contacted the researcher after receiving the CIT form and refused to take part in the research due to their limited face-to-face interactions with customers. The research information sheet and informed consent form were also sent at this stage. Seven participants agreed to partake in the semi-structured interview. Twenty-seven participants agreed to be interviewed but preferred to tell their stories in person because they were not good at writing. Most of them admitted spending some time recalling their memories to prepare for the interviews.

The critical incidents were collected in two different approaches; (a) the participants completed the CIT forms, returned to the researcher and participated in the one-to-one semi-structured interviews as the initial research design; (b) the participants read the CIT forms, recalled the incidents, and talked about them in the one-to-one interviews. The pros and cons of each approach are outlined in Table 7.

Though each approach has its own pros and cons, approach (a) was considered as a more effective sequence for collecting data because both the researcher and the researched came to the interview with preparation and prior knowledge of the discussion topic. In addition, the incidents were based on the participants' recalled memories; so, semi-structured interviews provided chances for reviewing the described incidents and improved the accuracy of the data. However, this approach appeared time-consuming and off-putting to the participants, which may explain for the low participation rate of both CIT and semi-structured interviews. Further research adopting this method may take this into consideration to increase its effectiveness. Although it is difficult to enhance the detailed description of the incidents, follow-up interviews provided good opportunities for overcoming this problem. The second problem associated with approach (a) can be mitigated by arranging one-to-one interviews right after receiving the completed CIT forms in order to reduce the time gap in-between. Initially, approach (a) was the sequence planned for collecting data in phases two and three. Due to the low response rate over the first four weeks, the researcher resorted to approach (b) to ensure sufficient data collected. However, the participants were still provided with the CIT form, informed consent and participant information sheet. Furthermore, the participants were contacted via phone to arrange

the time and venue for one-to-one interviews. These phone calls also served as a brief induction to the research and offered the chance to answer any questions prior to the interviews. In so doing, the participants were fully informed of the discussion topic and prepared for the incidents they would refer to. These steps were made to minimise the problems acknowledged as cons of approach (b). This emphasises brainstorming EI incidents before the interviews although the participants were not obliged to write them down; so, sending out the CIT forms and talking to the participants before the interviews was key to overcoming the problems emerged from both approaches.

Table 7. Pros and cons of two approaches to collecting CIT data

	Pros	**Cons**
Approach (a) Participants described the critical incidents following the CIT form before the interviews	Allow more time for the participants to recall their memory and write it down. Help the researcher grasp a general idea of the incidents and take notes of emerging issues for further discussion in phase 3. Facilitate the record of information. Require less time for one-to-one interviews.	Limit detailed description of the incidents due to basic writing skill of some participants. Disrupt the flow of the incidents resulting from the gap between filling CIT form and the interview.
Approach (b) Participants talked about the critical incidents during the interviews	Enhance emotional expressions from the participants when they talked about these unforgettable experiences. Make it easy to follow the stories. Provide chances for probing or elaborating alongside the process of storytelling.	Lack time and preparation for the participants to remember the incidents in detail. Pose difficulty in referring to the incidents during data analysis.

Source: Author

A total of 114 incidents were collected, amongst which 71 incidents involved interactions with customers with 37 favourable and 34 unfavourable incidents. There

were 43 incidents of interacting with colleagues including 21 favourable and 22 unfavourable incidents. This is consistent with Flanagan's (1954) suggestion concerning the sample size of 50 or 100 incidents for relatively simple activities and several thousand for complex activities.

4.3.2.3. Semi-structured interview

The research adopted individual interviews to encourage participants to share feelings and experiences, which helps reveal important aspects of their social lives (Michell 1999). Interviews are appropriate for exploratory studies where the researcher is interested in *'what'*, *'why'*, and *'how'* people say things (Bryman and Bell 2011; Saunders et al. 2012). Furthermore, qualitative interviewing enhances the exploration of voices and experiences which have been ignored, misrepresented or suppressed (Byrne 2004) as in the case of the unheard voices of the participants who hesitated to talk about their conflicts in the workplace in focus group interviews or were too shy to express their own opinions in front of others.

Semi-structured interviews are used as a mix of structured and unstructured formats in which the interviewer follows a specific agenda and pursues topics and themes chosen beforehand (Arksey and Knight 1999). It also allows the interviewers to ask follow-up questions, probe for more details and make transition between topics (Patton 2015). There were five main topics covered in the interviews: the strategies they use in managing their own emotions and those of customers and colleagues, cultural factors influencing their emotions, incidents where EI was used, sources of their knowledge, and their suggested ways of improving EI. As previously mentioned, EI is typically defined as the abilities to recognise and regulate the emotions in the self and others (Spector 2005) and this definition was communicated to participants throughout the interviews.

The participants who had not completed the CIT forms were asked to talk about the critical incidents during these interviews and follow-up questions were used if needed. After the first few interviews, the researcher noticed that the participants found it easier to talk about the incidents where their EI was employed by referring to something specific (an unforgettable memory) to state their opinion on a particular issue (their strategies of emotion management). This served as the basis for further

discussion on the aforementioned issues. Therefore, the order of the questions was modified by starting with the critical incidents where EI was practised. Please see Appendix 4 for a list of questions designed for semi-structured interviews. This list worked as a general guideline to ensure the research questions were addressed and it was subject to changes to suit individual cases.

In September and October 2016, 34 research participants were invited to individual semi-structured interviews to investigate further details on their practice of EI to fulfil ROs 1, 2, 4, and 5. Those who could not return the completed CIT form were also asked to give examples of incidents where the emotions are intense as stated in RO3. Signed informed consent forms were collected at the interviews. These interviews lasted for thirty to sixty minutes and took place at the participants' workplace or house. All interviews were recorded by an iPhone recorder. The researcher also took notes of her reflections on these individual interviews.

4.3.3. Sampling

Sampling is to select an element of the whole population with the aim of obtaining data relevant to a study and sampling strategies in qualitative research are different from those employed in quantitative research (Jones et al. 2013). This in turn influences the sampling technique adopted and the sample size.

4.3.3.1. Sampling technique

According to Creswell (2007), qualitative researchers choose participants and settings that will help them acquire an understanding of the research question. This exploratory study adopts purposive sampling technique to ensure the research questions are answered and the objectives are met by selecting suitable cases (Saunders et al. 2012). It is the judgement of the researcher that is used to select cases; therefore, this sampling technique is also called judgemental sampling (Jennings 2001).

Nhatrang, the capital city of Khanh Hoa province on the South Central coast of Vietnam is the setting for data collection because of its position as a domestic and international tourist destination. The number of tourists coming to Nhatrang has increased dramatically from 1.5 to 3.5 million during 2009-2014 (Nhatrang travel 2015). Furthermore, Nhatrang is the researcher's hometown, making it more

convenient for data collection through her personal contacts and knowledge of the city.

This study examines Vietnamese hotel workers' practice of EI in the workplace, which focuses on those having face-to-face interactions with customers. The call for participants was posted on Facebook pages of Nhatrang University and the researcher's cohort in September 2015 for the focus group interviews, and in August 2016, for the CIT and semi-structured interviews. Invitations to take part in the research and cover letters were sent to the HR department of some three- to five-star hotels in Nhatrang. These invitation letters were also sent to the researcher's personal contacts with strong emphasis on the recruitment criteria: hotel workers who have a high degree of face-to-face contact with customers regardless of age, academic background, position or the hotel ranking. Facebook was also used as a communication channel because it is widely used in Vietnam, particularly amongst the young generation. The initial recruitment for participants took place one month before the researcher went back to Vietnam, which gave sufficient time to receive responses or confirmation. When the researcher arrived in Nhatrang, phone calls and appointments were made to her personal contacts including friends from university, previous lecturers and owners of small and medium-sized hotels for permission to interview their hotel workers. The overall impression was that these *'gatekeepers'* tended to be more comfortable and open when meeting up with the researcher and granted access to their employees. The sample for focus group interviews included front-line staff working in FO and FB departments. For the second and third phases of data collection, the sample was expanded to HK and sales departments for a good variety of workers and higher response rate.

In addition, snowball sampling (or chain referral sampling) where participants nominate others with knowledge of the research issue was employed because hotel workers are not easy to find or access (Jones et al. 2013). Facebook also facilitates the snowball sampling process for the participants to refer to someone else. It is noteworthy that messages on Facebook received quicker responses than emails. Potential participants seemed more relaxed when contacted informally through Facebook as compared to those referred by their HR managers and HGMs. A possible

explanation is the latter approach was perceived as work-related duty whereas the former was from their own interests and decision.

4.3.3.2. Sample size

Qualitative research allows small sample sizes and uses saturation as a guiding principle, which is still a controversial issue (Mason 2010). Mason's content analysis of PhD qualitative research shows the most common sample sizes were 20 and 30. Mason also states that the number of individual interviews depends on many factors such as the aims of the study and the skill of the interviewer. This common sample size was used as a target when recruiting participants. This sample size is likely to generate around 100 incidents, which may be satisfactory with regard to the adoption of CIT but Flanagan (1954) emphasised that it is not a simple answer as to the number of critical incidents required. In order to make the decision on this, it was necessary to refer back to the RO3 which is to explore their EI practice through examples of favourable and unfavourable incidents. So, 114 incidents collected from 34 hotel workers were considered a satisfactory sample size.

In fact, the researcher encountered some difficulties when recruiting participants for the research in 2016 due to several reasons. First, those who participated in the focus group interviews were not available during that time; only one hotel worker participated in both focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews. This, however, enhances the variety of the data and minimises repetition. The second reason leading to difficulties in participant recruitment is the required amount of time and commitment to completing the CIT forms and attending individual interviews, which demotivated the participants. The third reason lies in the cultural differences between Vietnam and the UK. Talking with potential participants and some hotel owners, the researcher was advised to provide participants with some gifts as incentives for their participation, which was not recommended in terms of research ethics. However, to the researcher's impression, it was the task of describing memorable incidents of interacting with customers and colleagues which put off potential participants because it required them some time to recall their memory and to write them down.

4.3.3.3. Participants' demographics

The demographic information was collected either via the CIT forms or in the interviews for those who did not return the CIT forms. The demographic information consists of age, gender, academic background and their working experience in terms of position and star-rating of the hotels they were working for as well as the number of years working in the sector. All of the research participants are Vietnamese. Please see Table 8 for demographic information of the participants in CIT and semi-structured interviews.

The majority of the participants are male (20 out of 34) and half of the male participants (10) are in the age group of 30-39. More than half (18 out of 34) of the participants are in the age group of 20-29 and there were only three participants aged between 40 and 49, which implies a young group of hotel workers taking part in the research. This is similar to the age structure of the tourism sector in the UK with approximately 29% of tourism workers being between the ages of 20 and 29, 20% aged between 30 to 39, 18% in the age group of 40-49 (White 2016). However, one slight difference is that 10% of the UK workforce is in the age group of 16-19 whereas no research participants are under 20.

The research participants came from four departments in hotels: FO, FB, HK, and Sales which have a high degree of face-to-face contact with customers. The number of participants working in each department is 14, 6, 5, and 2 respectively. The HGMs were invited to partake in the research given that they have gained working experience in managing either the hotel (Vien) or service sector (Thi and Truong). The sample includes fourteen bottom-line employees, four supervisors, two assistants to FB manager, eleven department managers, and three HGMs.

The hotels where the participants were working varied in terms of star-rating. Most of them (16) were working in five-star hotels, nine participants came from four-star hotels, and six were from three-star hotels. There were only three participants working in two-star hotels. Most of the participants graduated from either college (6) or university (24); amongst which nineteen participants (56%) hold a bachelor degree or diploma in tourism and hospitality or related subjects. This proportion of hotel workers with full-time education in hospitality studies is similar to a study on front-office

employees in China (54%) (Kong and Baum 2006). Six out of nineteen participants have obtained a degree in English for Tourism. This is a new specialism in higher education in Vietnam designed to equip the future tourism workforce with both English and basic knowledge related to the tourism sector. Twelve participants (35%) have a degree in other subjects such as pedagogy, graphic design, economics, accounting, commerce, electronics and construction, which is lower than the percentage reported in Kong and Baum's (2006) study – 46%. Vien is the only person who dropped out of university before finishing his degree in economics and is currently the HGM of a four-star hotel. There are three participants having no degree – Truc, Vi and Thuy. Interestingly, all three participants were over 30 and holding managerial positions in the hotels. Amongst the three HGMs, Vien is the youngest (28 years old) without a formal qualification, Truong (39 years old) having a degree in economics and Thi (47 years old) with a degree in graphic design. Though the study does not aim to reflect HGM's profiles, it is interesting to compare and contrast with previous studies on the career path of HGM in other countries. The majority of Korean HGMs in Kim et al.'s (2009) study are in the age range of 51-55 with over 40% (N=34) having a bachelor degree. In Turkey, 89% (N=168) of HGMs are between the ages of 30 and 49 and 56% with a bachelor degree (Okumus et al. 2016). This may imply skills and working experiences are more appreciated than the qualification per se in the context of Vietnam hospitality sector compared to Korea and Turkey.

Table 8. Demographics of participants in CIT and semi-structured interviews

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Position	Hotel star-rating	Highest qualification	Working experience	Completed CIT form
Linh	25	M	FO Supervisor	3	Business administration, major in Tourism, college	FO, 5 years	No
Man	30	M	FB staff	3	Tourism, college	FB, 4 years	No
Nga	26	F	HK Supervisor	3	Pedagogy in French, college	HK, 2 years	No
Thi	47	M	HGM	3	Graphic design, university	HR manager, 8 years	No
Hung	33	M	Sales officer	5	English for tourism, university	Butler & sales, 10 years	No
Huong	23	F	FO staff	3	Business administration, university	FO, 8 months	No
Huy	23	M	Sales officer	4	Hospitality management, college	FO & sales, 5 years	Yes
Khoi	37	M	Laundry Manager	5	Economics, university	Laundry, 14 years	No
Van	37	F	Business Centre Officer, FO	5	English, college	FO, 1.5 years	No
Ngoc	26	F	Sales officer	4	Business administration, university	FO & sales, 4 years	No

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Position	Hotel star-rating	Highest qualification	Working experience	Completed CIT form
Vien	28	M	HGM	4	Business administration (dropout)	FB & sales, 8 years	No
Truong	39	M	HGM	3	Economics, university	Manager, 6 years	No
Lan	30	F	Assitant to FB Manager	5	English for tourism, university	FB, 9 years	No
Truc	38	M	FO Manager	5	Grade 12	FO, 12 years	No
Tran	25	F	Cashier	4	Accounting, university	FB & cashier, 3 years	Yes
Hoan	25	M	FO staff	4	Business administration, major in hospitality, university	FO, 4 years	No
Thinh	33	M	FB Manager	5	Commerce, university	FB, 9 years	No
Hoa	25	F	FO Manager	4	Business administration, major in hospitality, university	FO, 4 years	No
Khoa	40	M	FO Manager	2	Tourism, university	FO, 15 years	No
Ngan	26	F	Trainer	5	English for tourism, university	FB, FO, trainer, 1.5 years	Yes
Thuc	24	M	FO Manager	4	Business administration, major in hospitality, university	FO, 4 years	No

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Position	Hotel star-rating	Highest qualification	Working experience	Completed CIT form
Huong	26	F	FO staff	2	English for tourism, university	FO, 3 years	Yes
Duyen	27	F	FO Manager	4	Tourism management, university	FO, 5 years	No
Lam	26	F	FO staff	5	English for tourism, university	FO, 4 years	Yes
Vy	24	F	FO staff	2	Business administration, English for tourism, university	FO, 1 year	Yes
Vi	47	F	HK Manager	4	Grade 12	HK, 28 years	No
Duc	26	M	FO staff	5	Hospitality, university	FO, 2 years	Yes
Vinh	30	M	HK Supervisor	5	Business administration, major in hospitality, college	HK, 8 years	No
Thanh	24	M	FB staff	5	Hospitality management, university	FB, 3 years	No
Dang	26	M	FB Supervisor	5	Hospitality, university	FB, 5.5 years	No
Thuy	32	F	FO Manager	5	Grade 12	FO, 12 years	No
Hau	31	M	Assitant to FB Manager	5	Hospitality, university	FB, 10 years	No
Vu	30	M	FO Manager	5	Electronics, university	FO, 10 years	No
Dinh	32	M	HK Manager	5	Construction, university	HK, 15 years	No

Source: Author

4.3.4. Data analysis

The data collected from focus group interviews, CIT, and semi-structured interviews were analysed and presented corresponding to methods instead of themes. Presenting the material this way reflects the lack of overlap in theme across the differing methods, with each method highlighting a unique aspect of the research warranting discussion. In general, focus group interviews inform and serve as the foundation for the subsequent methods. Accordingly, the research findings were presented by methods allowing for an exploration from preliminary to in-depth insights into EI practice of Vietnamese hotel workers.

It is noteworthy that data analysis for each method was performed at least twice with a gap of time in-between to minimise chances of misinterpreting or overlooking the data. Please see Appendix 5 for the timeline of data collection and analysis conducted for the research.

4.3.4.1. Focus group interview

Three focus groups were undertaken during October 2015; comprising nine, six, and five people respectively. Each lasted between fifty and seventy-five minutes. Participants were hotel staff working in FO and FB departments in hotels in Nhatrang including big hotel chains as well as family-owned hotels. The interviews covered four topics; what they like about their job, how they deal with customers, how they deal with annoyance at work, and the training they receive in relation to customer service. The English versions of interview transcripts generated 16,962 words. The first analysis of focus group interviews was conducted in December 2015 using NVivo 11. These focus group interviews were then manually analysed for the second time in January 2018 in relation to findings from CIT and semi-structured interviews to ensure coherence and cohesion. Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach to thematic analysis was employed to analyse data with 6 steps as follows.

Familiarising yourself with your data. In this first step, it is recommended to immerse oneself in the data and familiarise with the depth and breadth of the content by reading and re-reading transcripts. Verbatim transcribing and translating interview transcripts were a good chance for the researcher to familiarise herself with the data and understand what the participants meant in Vietnamese. All the translated transcripts

were read and re-read before uploading onto NVivo 11 for analysing whereby meanings and patterns were sought. The researcher also referred to the notes she took during and after each interview and marked ideas to prepare for the coding process.

Generating initial codes. The researcher started coding manually using NVivo 11 with a bottom-up or data-driven approach. In NVivo, codes are called nodes which are extracted from data for potential themes or patterns. After the first coding round, the themes and patterns were reviewed and recoded where necessary.

Searching for themes. In this stage, different codes were sorted into potential overarching themes. For example, 'followed some experienced colleagues to learn' and 'learn from different people and they have different ways of interacting with customers' formed a node called '**colleagues as a source of knowledge**'. Some participants mentioned 'big hotels or resorts do train us, but not small or family-run hotels', 'I myself learn this from training programmes provided at the hotel', 'I enjoy the training programmes which taught me more about international standards'. So, these quotes were sorted into a node named '**Hotel training programmes**'. These two nodes were put under the theme '**Sources of knowledge**'.

Vietnamese tend to use a lot of idioms or sayings passed from generations as metaphors, all these phrases were also put under the theme called '**Vietnamese sayings used in FG'**. Though this emerged unexpectedly and did not fit with the research objectives for focus group interviews, they were saved in a separate theme. Braun and Clarke (2006) recommend keeping everything and deciding what to combine, refine, separate or discard in the next stage.

Reviewing themes. There are two levels of reviewing and refining themes at this stage. The first level involves reading all the extracts of each theme. NVivo made it easier for reviewing the nodes, by clicking the extracts which are linked to the paragraph for a better understanding of the context. For example, though two participants mentioned *'teacher'* and *'lecturer'*; the former one regarded her teacher as a source of reference when she disagreed with her manager's solution whereas the latter pointed out that her lecturers taught tourism-related subjects but they knew nothing about tourism.

If the candidate themes seem to form a coherent pattern, level two of refining themes were taken. Level two is quite similar to level one but with whole data set. At this

level, two main things were considered – the validity of individual themes in relation to the data set and the accuracy of the candidate thematic map regarding meaning reflection. For example, the node on *'happiness from the job itself'* was moved to the parent node of *'perception of EI'* instead of *'Practicing EI in the workplace'*. Additional data coding was also done in this phase. While reviewing themes, sometimes the researcher remembered a participant mentioned something associated with a particular theme, a text search query was run to quickly locate the interview transcript where the text was mentioned. This is also strength of NVivo – facilitating the search of a certain text.

The themes which did not fit such as *'regional differences between northern and southern Vietnamese'* or *'infrastructure-related problems'* were kept in a node called Miscellaneous in case they may be useful for further data analysis.

Defining and naming themes. This phase involves defining and refining themes, or identifying the *'essence'* of each theme. There were 6 main themes generated from focus group interviews including miscellaneous, perception of EI, practicing EI, sources of knowledge, strategies of managing customers and colleagues' emotions, and Vietnamese sayings used in FG.

Producing the report. In order to enhance the consistency and reliability of the analysis process, the second round of data analysis was conducted manually but still followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines. It is noteworthy that some of the themes identified in NVivo remained the same as the manual version. Thus, the data analysis was a process of going back and forth between the manual and NVivo versions. Chapter five presents findings from focus group interviews.

4.3.4.2. Critical Incident Technique

In the second phase of the study, each participant was asked to recall four critical service encounters; including one favourable and one unfavourable incidents of interacting with customers, and one favourable and one unfavourable incidents of interacting with colleagues. The analysis of the CIT forms in this study follows Bitner et al.'s (1990) incident classification scheme and assesses the incidents based on their suggested criteria as follows; (1) it involves an interaction with customers or colleagues, (2) it is either satisfying or dissatisfying from the participants' viewpoint,

(3) it is a discrete episode, and (4) it has sufficient detail to be visualised by the researcher. Amongst 34 participants, seven of them returned the completed CIT forms which generated 31 incidents; one of them was irrelevant since it was a general opinion on interactions with colleagues rather than a discrete episode. 84 incidents were collected from interviews with participants. Therefore, the total number of incidents generated was 114. Please see Appendix 6 for a summary of all the incidents and comments on each of them. The majority of the incidents met the requirements since the study also conducted semi-structured interviews to follow up with each participant. This is an advantage of combining these two methods.

The completed CIT forms were sent to the researcher before the interview with each participant, which gave the researcher sufficient time to take notes of the issues emerging from their description, further questions to explore the incidents were also written. The participants' answers to each question were used as the starting point for sorting the incidents into four columns: favourable incidents and unfavourable incidents of interacting with customers, and favourable and unfavourable incidents of interacting with colleagues.

When analysing these incidents, the researcher referred to both their completed CIT forms and the interview transcripts to summarise each incident. The interpretation of each incident enhanced the classification and highlighted the distinctiveness of each incident. Appendix 7 illustrates the classification of the unfavourable incidents in interactions with customers. These incidents were read one by one, summarised, labelled and put in the same group if they reflected the same patterns. Those which were different from the previous one were kept separately and had its own label. All the incidents in one column were read against the existing categories, these categories were then defined and renamed. The analysis of CIT data following Bitner et al.'s (1990) scheme is summarised in Figure 6. All incidents in the same group reflected the overarching theme, incidents with its own qualities were also discussed in each group. Findings from CIT data are discussed in chapter 6.

Figure 6. The analysis of data from CIT following the incident classification scheme

Repeated and careful reading
- Summarising the incidents from the CIT forms in combination with the notes taken before the interviews and further information obtained during the interviews
- Extracting and summarising the incidents collected during the interviews from interview transcripts
- Numbering and putting all the incidents in a table with four colums - favourable incidents with customers, unfavourable incidents with customers, favourable incidents with colleagues and unfavourable incidents with colleagues

Sorting the incidents into groups according to similarities
- Commenting on each incident
- Generating initial groups while reading one by one incident
- Taking notes of the incidents which did not fit in the existing groups

Identifying the exact nature of the similarity
- Studying each group
- Checking the incidents against the similarity of each group
- Moving the incidents across the groups

Labeling each category
- Labeling each group based on its similarity
- Reading each group with its incidents
- Rephrasing the labels where necessary

Sorting, combining and resorting
- Sorting all the incidents for the first analysis of CIT data in July 2017
- Resorting all the incidents in December 2017
- Finalising the incident classification in January 2018 in relation to findings from the other two methods

Source: Amended from Bitner et al. (1990)

4.3.4.3. Semi-structured interview

Data from semi-structured interviews was first analysed from January to March 2017 using NVivo 11. Amendments of the data analysis were done in June 2017. Afterwards, the data was manually analysed in November 2017. The data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach, so the steps taken are similar to those presented in 4.3.4.1. Several differences are summarised as follows.

Generating initial codes. After coding the first three interviews, the themes and patterns were reviewed and recoded where necessary.

Searching for themes. In this stage, different codes were sorted into potential overarching themes. For example, 'take a deep breath or turn around and go somewhere then come back, to prevent it [emotion] from getting out of control', 'I'll tell the customers to wait for me for a bit, I go inside, burst into tears because I'm too frustrated', 'after serving them, I must leave' formed a theme called '**go somewhere else**'.

The research participants mentioned different behaviours of travellers from different countries such as China, Russia, Japanese, and Vietnam; and they put those from European countries or Australia in one category called '*Westerners*'. So, these nodes were sorted into subtheme named '*Customer behaviours*'. Vietnamese tend to use a lot of idioms or sayings passed from generations as metaphors, all these phrases were also put under the theme called Vietnamese sayings. The diagram and chart function of NVivo was used in this stage to generate mind maps and illustrate the relationship between codes, themes and different levels of themes. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), everything is kept in this stage and any decision on what to combine, refine, separate or discard should be made in the next stage.

Reviewing themes. There are two levels of reviewing and refining themes at this stage; candidate theme and the whole data set levels. The following example illustrates how themes were refined at the candidate level. A participant mentioned *'working experience'* but she kept talking about how she has changed since she started working as a young staff. Thus, this quote was moved to *'age'* instead of the node called *'working experience'*.

At level two of theme refining, two main things were considered; the validity of individual themes in relation to the data set and the accuracy of the candidate thematic map regarding meaning reflection. For example, the node on *'hotel work suits personality'* was moved to the parent node of *'hotel work'*. Additional data coding was also done in this phase which was facilitated by using NVivo through the function of text search.

There were some themes which did not fit such as *'the dark side of the hotel work'* or *'Vietnamese sayings'* were kept in a node called Miscellaneous in case they may be useful for further data analysis.

Defining and naming themes. This phase involves defining and refining themes, or identifying the *'essence'* of each theme. There were ten main themes generated in relation to the research questions; customers, EI components, emotions, factors influencing one's EI, hotel work, human resource, interacting with people, management, Vietnamese culture, and Vietnamese sayings.

Producing the report. In order to enhance the consistency and reliability of the analysis process, the second round of data analysis was conducted manually but still followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines. All the interview transcripts were read and extracted into five topics discussed in semi-structured interviews; cultural factors influencing their emotions, managing their emotions, managing customers' emotions, managing colleagues' emotions, and suggestions for improving EI. The themes identified in NVivo remained the same as the manual version, which improves the consistency of data analysis. Research findings from semi-structured interviews are presented in chapter 7.

4.4. Research evaluation and ethics considerations

4.4.1. Research evaluation

This section firstly evaluates the research against the criteria established for qualitative research. In addition, language played an important part on this research because the majority of participants deliberately chose to use the Vietnamese language in all phases of data collection. It is noteworthy that a considerable number of Vietnamese sayings were also used as metaphors to describe the context or social norms passed

from generations. Hence, the language-related problems and solutions suggested by Smith et al. (2008) are employed to evaluate the rigour of this research. Secondly, ethical principles are examined in order to ensure it followed standards for conduct.

4.4.1.1. Trustworthiness and authenticity

Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose trustworthiness and authenticity as two determining criteria for evaluating qualitative research instead of reliability and validity for quantitative research. On the other hand, Creswell (1998) outlines eight verification procedures which are not presented in any specific order of importance and he suggests any two of them must be employed in any qualitative study. In this study, the following verification techniques were adopted.

The first technique used in this study is triangulation which is the usage of more than one method or source of data in social sciences (Bryman 2015). Triangulation in social research can be used in the form of multiple theories, multiple researchers, multiple data-collection technologies, multiple methodologies, or combinations of these four types (Denzin 1978). Triangulation, therefore, enhances the depth of understanding of the topic under investigation (Berg 2009). This qualitative research adopted theory triangulation and methodological triangulation to ensure trustworthiness and authenticity. Originating from psychology, the early definitions and conceptual frameworks of EI are used as theoretical underpinning for the research. Furthermore, the EI construct is closely related to theories of ER and EL (discussed in section 2.4). Therefore, this study is built upon theories of EI, ER and EL. In addition, Hofstede's theory of culture is employed to underpin the cultural element associated with the EI practice of Vietnamese hotel workers. The methodological triangulation adopted in the research is reflected in the combination of three different methods of data collection; focus group interview, CIT, and semi-structured interview. It is noteworthy that CIT and semi-structured interviews were conducted to further explore and overcome limitations of focus group interviews identified in 4.3.2.1.

Member checking is the second technique used to enhance the quality of this qualitative research. The Vietnamese version of interview transcripts were sent to participants before data analysis started. Research findings were also sent for checking accuracy and credibility of the researcher's interpretations and conclusions. This

technique is considered as "*the most critical technique for establishing credibility*" (Lincoln and Guba 1985, p.314). Some participants (e.g. Hung, Van, Ngoc, Vien, Duc) expressed special interest in the research finding and considered it a good material for their staff and Vietnamese hotel workers in general. Sending initial findings and implications to the participants can also ensure the viability and accuracy of the researcher's interpretation of their experiences.

Thirdly, transferability of the research is enhanced by the likelihood of transferring the research findings to similar settings. Firstly, the context and research methods are described in detail to facilitate readers' interpretation. Secondly, raw data and direct quotes from the participants are used in the finding chapters. The readers can also refer to the participants' demographics alongside the quotes for a better understanding of the participants' academic background and working experience. Finally, the incidents where participants practised their EI were described vividly in their own words, which provides readers with sufficient information regarding the context and enhances the visualisation of each incident.

Finally, the research bias was clarified to show possible impacts of the researcher's position and assumptions about the research. Being a Vietnamese, with little doubt, has exerted several impacts on the entire research. First, it is her sufficient knowledge and deep interest in Vietnamese culture and the potential for tourism development that has inspired her to conduct this study and to contribute to HRM of the hospitality sector in Vietnam. Secondly, living in Nhatrang for over 20 years, the researcher gained the advantage in approaching research participants through personal contacts and building rapport with the group. Graduating from the biggest university in Nhatrang with a major in Tourism and Hospitality is a great opportunity for her to approach the current hospitality workforce graduating from the same university and their colleagues. This is more evident in a collectivist society where establishing a relationship of trust with someone should be done before conducting any business (Hofstede et al. 2010). Thirdly, being a native speaker of Vietnamese enhances the understanding and interpretation of the research participants' ideas and stories. Communicating with the research participants in Vietnamese fosters the in-depth and rich description of their thoughts and experiences, which may result in some difficulties for foreign researchers due to the language barrier. Moreover, the

researcher has previous working experience in FO and FB departments in a five-star chain hotel in Nhatrang, which assisted her considerably in interpreting and making sense of what the participants told her. Her previous working experience also helped her understand the context of hotel workplace although she has left the industry for a few years. The last advantage lies in the fact that the researcher has been away from her homeland for over three years, which to some extent has made her a stranger in a familiar setting. This has considerable benefits in overcoming the tendency to take things for granted amongst most native researchers.

4.4.1.2. Language and rigour

According to Smith et al. (2008), language may influence rigour of qualitative research in four aspects; acquiring depth and detail, selecting language for data collection, managing data collection in Mandarin (as in their research), and interpreting meaning of data. Their suggested solutions include: (1) conducting pilot interviews and taking time to build trust with the participants; (2) using the local language for data collection to minimise misinterpretation and loss of participants' intended meaning; (3) developing the coding framework in the local language and discussing it in a language common to the research team; (4) involving and taking advantage of the research team's expertise in terms of disciplines, language and culture (Smith et al. 2008).

Taking this notion into consideration, the language-related limitation was alleviated in three ways. Firstly, trust with the participants was established through the researcher's personal contacts as mentioned in section 4.4.1. In so doing, the participants were more comfortable and open to share their opinions as to EI practice in the workplace with customers as well as their managers and colleagues. Secondly, participants were encouraged to use the language they were more comfortable with. Schaffer and Riordan (2003) suggest that using the native language assists people in reflecting their cultural values and assumptions. Therefore, using Vietnamese enabled them to express their thoughts and experiences of EI practice through both speaking and writing, which is hard to obtain in a foreign language. Most of the CIT forms were written in Vietnamese except for those from Huong and Lam written in English. Finally, all interviews were transcribed verbatim in Vietnamese and translated into English by the researcher who is a qualified translator between English and Vietnamese with a Bachelor degree in English. These transcripts were then checked by a Vietnamese

teacher of English to ensure accuracy and coherence. As a PhD research, the discussion only involved the researcher and her supervisory team. Therefore, all the data used for analysis were in English but the Vietnamese versions were revisited frequently.

Nevertheless, translating transcripts poses chances of concealing culturally-loaded meanings (Mangen 1999), lacking exact equivalents because some concepts and dialects do not exist across cultures and languages (Tsai et al. 2004), and facing the dilemma of researchers working as translators or relying on translators (Temple and Young 2004). The problems associated with translation were resolved as follows. Firstly, given that the research looks into the influence of Vietnamese culture on the EI practice of Vietnamese hotel workers, a general understanding of Vietnamese culture relevant to the research is presented in chapter three. In so doing, the context and background knowledge is provided to enhance the sense-making of the data to readers who are not Vietnamese. It is noteworthy that Vietnamese tend to use proverbs and parables from anecdotes that seem irrelevant to describe the context and subtly direct towards the issue they are communicating, and Westerners are likely to miss the point (Borton 2000). Therefore, the second measure of overcoming this problem is to use Vietnamese proverbs and idioms together with English translations in brackets for a clear explanation. In some cases, further information was provided for a better understanding of the context. Thirdly, the researcher is a qualified translator and interpreter between Vietnamese and English, which enhances the interpretation of data and ensures a certain degree of transparency and neutrality. The benefits of the researcher as translator are documented by Temple and Young (2004) who identify methodological, epistemological, and ontological consequences associated with language and translation.

4.4.2. Ethics considerations

Based on Blaxter et al.'s (2010) suggestion for ethical issues in research, three aspects were considered in this study: informed consent, confidentiality, and protection of individuals. Participant information sheet and informed consent were sent to the research participants before they took part in the data collection including focus group interviews, CIT, and semi-structured interviews. Further explanation was also provided either via phone or face-to-face conversations. Signed informed consent

forms were collected at the start of each interview and major points of the research were gone through once more before the interviews started.

With respect to confidentiality and protection of participants, pseudonyms were used in interview transcripts before uploading onto NVivo for data analysis. Hotel names were also concealed by using pseudonyms in order to avoid being recognised due to the limited number of hotels in Nhatrang. The Vietnamese teacher of English involved in the transcribing and proof-reading interview transcripts were asked to ensure the confidentiality of the data she worked on as well. All materials collected were stored in the researcher's desktop, drawers, and cloud storage services which only she has access to. These materials were used for this research only and not for any other purposes.

4.5. Limitations of research methods

4.5.1. Focus group interview

Although focus groups are well suited for research on attitudes and experiences around a specific topic, interviewing people who already know each other, especially in the workplace may encounter the pre-established norms as to what they can and cannot say as well as the hierarchies (Kitzinger and Barbour 1999). This poses a big challenge to the research in the context of a high power distant and collectivist country like Vietnam where members highly value hierarchy and are concerned with face-saving (Hofstede et al. 2010). Indeed, bottom-line workers seemed hesitant to put forward their own views, especially when these were different from the dominant view expressed by those of higher positions or having more experience. However, the issues untold in these focus groups can be revealed in one-to-one interviews where people are more comfortable sharing their personal opinion.

4.5.2. Critical Incident Technique

The biggest advantage of using CIT was that the incidents were described in the participants' own words, which also led to the possible downside – participants being unable to write a complete or understandable story to describe the critical incidents (Edvardsson and Roos 2001). This limitation is reflected in the low response rate; only 7 out of 34 participants completed the CIT forms before the interviews, the rest of

them received the CIT forms and recalled their stories but wanted to tell these stories in one-to-one interviews. Some incidents collected from the CIT forms were briefly and insufficiently described. This problem was overcome by one-to-one interviews where the researcher could add follow-up or probing questions after thoroughly reading their CIT forms so as to obtain a richer understanding of the incidents as well as individual hotel workers.

It was noteworthy that some participants completed the CIT form with vivid pictures of their incidents whereas others felt uncomfortable with it and preferred talking, which may result from different capacities to write. As mentioned previously, only 7 out of 34 participants completed the CIT forms before attending interviews, which implies the limited success of combining CIT and semi-structured interviews in this study. They cited insufficient writing skills as the main reason for their refusal. Another possible reason is the time-consuming characteristic of CIT form in relation to more common forms of quantitative research like questionnaires and surveys.

Besides, accuracy is also an aspect to consider when employing this story-telling method. There are two possible scenarios of the participants' forgetting the incidents; the participants may either forget parts of the incidents or deliberately forget parts that they do not want to recover, which is considered a natural phenomenon of human memory (Connerton 2008). However, the accuracy of the information was ensured through the CIT forms, digital record, and note-taking. In addition, CIT was used to ask for extremely favourable or unfavourable incidents; therefore, they tend to be memorable incidents to the participants, which reduces chances of limited or poor memory of the incidents. Some participants (e.g. Van, Ngoc, Truong) still appeared emotional through their voice, facial expressions and the language used (Ngoc: "*It's an unforgettable memory to me*") when describing the unfavourable incidents of interacting with customers. Those who completed the CIT forms before the interviews seemed to better articulate their experiences when answering probing questions, which also made it easier for the researcher to grasp the meaning and process of the incidents. Indeed, the combination of CIT and interview enhanced the achievement of the research aim and objectives, further actions could be made to improve the success rate such as approaching more participants, offering incentives, or giving them more time.

4.5.3. Semi-structured interview

Viewed as a method for obtaining human world of beliefs and meanings, interviews reflect what people claim to think, feel or do which is not at times consistent with what they do due to their fading memory, the reordering of incidents, and the tendency to make themselves socially acceptable (Arksey and Knight 1999). This obstacle can be overcome by triangulating data and assuring the participants of the benefits this research is aiming at and their confidentiality. In fact, building trust with participants is also a way of gaining the information the researcher is looking for (Easterby-Smith et al. 2008). Some participants admitted that they had hesitated to take part in the research for fear of revealing business-related information to competitors but they were reassured by the researcher that this research was intended for a Doctorate and the research findings would be useful for their job performance and shared for their reference.

Interviewing participants in their workplace posed some challenges in terms of their availability and the noise from the surrounding environment. Indeed, some interviews took longer than an hour – the expected duration of time as mentioned in the participant information sheet. Also, some participants appeared more experienced or interested in some questions. Therefore, the researcher had to flexibly change the order of the questions to fit the flow of the conversation. Although the background was not too noisy during the interviews, it affected the quality of the recording in some cases. On the positive side, interviewing the participants in their workplace enhanced the visualisation of the incidents they shared.

The interviews also revealed that some participants could grasp the topic more quickly than others. So, the adoption of semi-structured interviews allowed for rephrasing the questions. Interestingly, mature and experienced participants tended to pick up the questions and respond more comfortably compared to younger ones. This may result from the relationship between EI, age, and working experience. This notion will be discussed in the findings chapters.

4.6. Summary

This chapter presents the methodology-related issues which had been considered in both pros and cons so that the best suited approach was adopted to answer the research questions. Interpretivism and the qualitative approach allow the research to gain in-depth insights into the Vietnamese hotel workers' practice of EI, which is often limited in quantitative research in the positivist paradigm. In addition, the adoption of three research methods: focus group interview, CIT, and semi-structured interview provided the researcher with access to the participants' opinions on the topic under research and encouraged the variety of opinions on the same topic. Details of the entire process of data collection and analysis are presented to obtain the transparency and serve as reference for future research in the same area. The chapter also evaluates the research in accordance with criteria for evaluating qualitative research and its limitations, which may yield improvements for future research. The chapter also highlights the difficulties facing the researcher during the data collection and the degree of subjectivity to take into account. A comprehensive personal reflection will be addressed in section 8.5.

Chapter 5 – Findings from focus group interviews

5.1. Introduction to findings chapters

The findings are presented in three chapters in accordance with each method of data collection: focus group interview, CIT, and semi-structured interview. These findings chapters are presented in the chronological order to highlight the process of thought provocation and the association between the findings. Chapter 5 is the first chapter to discuss findings from focus group interviews and reflects three main themes: the cultural factors influencing Vietnamese hotel workers' emotions, the understanding of customer behaviours and emotional expression based on their country of origin, and the sources of their knowledge of customer service and emotional management. These findings serve as the basis for exploring the EI practice of Vietnamese hotel workers. Chapter 6 reports incidents collected from the self-completed CIT forms and semi-structured interviews. These are true examples of how EI was practised in both favourable and unfavourable incidents. The last findings chapter is chapter 7 which provides in-depth insights into the EI practice of Vietnamese hotel workers, including their strategies of recognition and regulation of their own and others' emotions. Further discussion on the cultural factors influencing their emotions is presented in this chapter. Chapter 7 also reports the participants' suggestions for improving their EI which covers both training and managerial implications. Chapter 7 is the most comprehensive chapter which is built upon the basis and context provided in chapters 5 and 6. The findings are discussed in conjunction with previous research in each chapter.

5.2. Introduction to chapter 5 – Findings from focus group interviews

Chapter 5 reports findings from focus group interviews to fulfil the research objectives 1 and 2 concerning cultural factors influencing Vietnamese hotel workers' emotions and their sources of knowledge of customer service and emotional management. The cultural factors influencing their emotions include the positive sides of hotel work and

interaction in the workplace. The sources of their knowledge of customer service and emotional management include higher education, hotel training, and self-study. In addition to these two themes, the chapter covers the hotel workers' understanding of customer behaviours and emotional expression based on the customers' countries of origin. Though this theme was not expected as a finding from focus group interviews, it offers insights of how Vietnamese hotel workers manage customers' emotions based on their countries of origin. Therefore, it was further explored in semi-structured interviews and presented in detail in chapter 7.

5.3. Cultural factors influencing Vietnamese hotel workers' emotions

This section reveals the factors influencing Vietnamese hotel workers' emotions. From their perspective, hotel work provides them with advantages in three aspects: working hours, working environment, and advancement opportunities. These positive sides were said to generate positive emotions while they were at work. In addition, interaction in the workplace is another factor influencing their emotions which results from Vietnamese culture with regard to emotional expression and regulation, language barriers, handling conflicts and feedback, and a sense of teamwork.

5.3.1. Positive sides of hotel work

Hotel workers' perceptions of their job are an important starting point for exploring their EI practice because it sets the scene for the whole study, offering an understanding of hotel work in the context of the Vietnamese hospitality sector. The aforementioned features of the hotel work can be considered as push factors. Interaction in the workplace is also a major factor influencing their emotions in both positive and negative ways. It is the Vietnamese culture embedded in these workplace behaviours that bring both pros and cons for the hotel workers.

5.3.1.1. Working hours

In terms of job characteristics, several participants in FG1 commented on the flexibility of working hours unlike other office-related jobs.

> *"What makes me happy the most in my job is shift work; I have more time for myself. I used to think that I should get an office job working 8 to 5, and have*

the whole weekend. However, after working in hotels with shift work, together with accrued holiday, I have more days off compared to an office job. For example, if I do an afternoon shift on a day, I can deal with some paper work that I need to do in governmental offices in the morning, if I worked in an office, I wouldn't be able to do it. All my days off can be accrued for a longer holiday. The thing that makes me like my job the most is the time." (FG1)

The above account highlights the flexibility of working hours contributed by shift work and accrued holiday which makes Vietnamese hotel workers happy with their job.

"Working in hotels, I don't have to worry about anything when I go home; I have time to take care of my family." (FG1)

The participants' comments on the benefit of working in hotels is contrary to the majority of previous research which considers long working hours and irregular work schedules as characteristics of hospitality jobs that lead to job stress (Zhao and Ghiselli 2016). Notably, the participant compared hotel work with her previous role as an English teacher which was described as *"stressful"*, *"think about it all the time"* because she *"had to prepare for lessons"*. This indicates the difference in the nature of the jobs, as for teachers, apart from their working hours, a considerable amount of their home time is spent on lesson preparation. The participant expressed a preference for the real time off as a feature of hotel work.

It seems that Vietnamese hotel workers appreciated the flexibility and shift patterns of hotel work as opposed to hotel workers in the UK having no negotiation in working hours and schedules (Lai and Baum 2005); or those in Australia having no control over the hours they work (McNamara et al. 2011). It is noteworthy that these two studies included both permanent and casual workers and particularly Lai and Baum emphasised that most agency housekeeping staff in the UK are non-UK nationals and have limited command of English for other jobs. On the contrary, all of the participants in the current study are full-time workers and the aforementioned participant had a degree in English and Tourism Management and used to be an English teacher. Therefore, Vietnamese hotel workers may have a totally different view of hotel work compared to the negative image noted in previous research, which subsequently creates more positive attitudes and emotions towards their job.

5.3.1.2. Working environment

The working environment of a hotel which involves interactions with customers and colleagues was regarded as a source of happiness for the hotel workers. One of the participants in FG1 stated that:

> *"working in hotels and dealing with customers as well as colleagues makes it like a family where everyone is sociable and happy".*

Some participants agreed upon this idea and contrasted hotel work with occupations in construction and administration. It is the nature of work performances containing the notions of EL and hostessing which differentiates hotel work from other sectors (Ladkin 2011).

The happiness derived from the workplace was also described as *"a chain reaction"* by a participant in FG2. She further explained *"of course I can't be unhappy if people around me are happy".* This can be considered a significant factor which generates positive emotions amongst hotel workers. The science of happiness suggests people tend to be happier when they are with others and especially when they contribute to others, which highlights the importance of happiness to business (Newman 2013). The question raised here is whether these workers were happy in the first place as displayed in their personality characteristics and therefore they were recruited in the hotel sector.

> *"I'd like to introduce Nhatrang culture to international travellers because I like making friends. I enjoy travelling as well, so I understand the interest in local traditions when visiting a place and no one understands it better than local people. So, I'd love to share it with everyone… It's a part of the job and I enjoy it as a concierge." (FG2)*

The participant expressed an understanding of the expectations people have when they travel as a part of his personal experience; therefore, the role as a concierge made him enjoy his job more. The participant is a typical example of tourism workers who possess attributes such as friendly, eager to please and respectful (Edensor 2000). Because the nature of the job fits well with the worker's personality, they develop passion for the job or positive attitudes towards the work role. This aligns with Truong and King's (2010a) finding that Vietnamese service providers valued happiness, love, attachment, and true friendship between people. This is an advantage that hoteliers may take into consideration given that it is not easy to cultivate or change hospitality

workers' attitudes, compared to skills and knowledge, and it is considered a part of professionalism (Cheng and Wong 2015).

Furthermore, the hotel worker stressed that when they interacted with customers in the hotel, it was not merely an interaction between a service provider and receiver.

> *"Interacting with customers makes us representatives of the country… Those tourists coming to Vietnam for the first time, they would consider us typical Vietnamese people." (FG3)*

To a greater extent, the working environment in hotels is not restricted to a building, but it is viewed as a minimised Vietnamese society where hotel workers represent Vietnamese people and they wish to create a positive impression on international customers. The notion of patriotism, together with self-strengthened spirit of nation, was identified as one of the traditional values in Vietnamese society (Nguyen 2016b). This characteristic may have helped the country go through hardship during war time and it also harmonises well with the desired performance of a hotel worker whereby they welcome and enhance customer experience of Vietnam during their stay at the hotel.

5.3.1.3. Advancement opportunities

Another characteristic of the hotel work which contributed to positive emotions for Vietnamese hotel workers is the availability of advancement opportunities.

> *"I like my job mainly because I meet different customers from different countries with different cultures, which widens my knowledge, improve my skills and orient my future." (FG1)*

> *"I can learn about cultures when I meet customers. Secondly, I have learnt a lot from my colleagues, it builds my self-confidence and public speaking which is good for whatever job I do." (FG1)*

> *"I liked it more when I had the chance to widen my knowledge from international customers, which fascinates me a lot." (FG2)*

> *"I think working in a hotel helps improve my communication and problem solving skills. I also have the chance to improve the foreign languages I have learnt [English and Mandarin Chinese]. (FG2)*

> *"I have a passion for my job, I can go to many places; deal with different customers, from different cultures. Sometimes, it can help widen my knowledge because books cannot teach us everything about reality, which is very helpful for those who want to explore different cultures, and for me." (FG3)*

The advancement opportunities are reflected in different areas such as cultural and knowledge exchange; building self-confidence and public speaking; opportunity to travel and meet people; improving communication skills, problem-solving skills, and foreign language. This is in line with previous research which identified the attractiveness of the industry (Szivas et al. 2003; Ladkin 2011).

Opportunities to improve communication skills also attracted another participant in FG3 who chose to take a hotel job as a stepping stone for his career in banking, *"I improve my communication skills with foreigners, which will help me work in a bank later on"*. The idea of taking up jobs in the hospitality sector as a stepping stone to a lifetime career has been recognised elsewhere as a problem facing the industry (e.g. Wood 1997; Zhang and Wu 2004; Devine et al. 2007). The underlying reasons include *"less manual work"*, *"higher income than in others"*, and *"it's easier to make a start in this sector than in other sectors"* because *"it requires neither time nor money"* (FG1). As in the case of the Vietnamese workforce, the opportunity for enhancing their language proficiency is particularly attractive due to the limited education they received regarding foreign language. The issues related to language will be discussed in further detail in the subsequent chapters.

Furthermore, the research participants expressed a strong awareness of their career progression in the hotel sector.

> *"The tourism industry is quite young in Vietnam; it brings more self-development opportunities for each worker than administration jobs. For example, if you work in administration, it's not easy to get promoted to the Head of Personnel Department; but if you work in the tourism sector, there are many steps towards that highest position." (FG1)*

> *"It's easy to get promoted in the tourism sector. An FO staff member can get appointed to Team Leader after 2 or 3 years maximum; then to Shift Manager after 2 or 3 years more. In FB, you can become an assistant to a manager; some people get appointed to this position very quickly. It's down to your ability to adapt to the environment. You can also move from one hotel to another for a higher position." (FG1)*

The participant pointed out that it is the young and dynamic feature of the tourism industry in Vietnam which brings more advancement opportunities for hotel workers. It is noteworthy that business administration is considered one of the service sectors in Vietnam (Hays 2014) and often used in comparison with the tourism sector. In fact,

the tourism sector has experienced a rapid growth of over the past 15 years and potential for tourism development in Vietnam is ranked 24th out of 141 countries; but its tourism competitiveness is ranked 75th (VOV 2017b), which implies considerable potential for the development of the tourism and hospitality sector in Vietnam. Therefore, hotel workers are likely to gain considerable opportunities for jobs and promotion in the sector.

5.3.2. Interaction in the workplace

Vietnamese hotel workers' emotions are also influenced by interactions with customers and colleagues which are reflected in four aspects: emotional expression and regulation, language barrier, handling conflicts and feedback, and a sense of teamwork. These workplace behaviours are rooted in Vietnamese culture and the participants considered these as both advantages and disadvantages for Vietnamese people.

5.3.2.1. Emotional expression and regulation

One of the participants commented on the strength of Asian people with respect to emotional control as follows.

> *"I think Asians are better at controlling their emotions because their culture does not encourage them to express their true feelings and the lack of freedom of speech, which makes them think about others first." (FG2)*

The participant cited culture as the underlying reason for Asians being better at controlling their emotions, which is reflected in the way they are expected to suppress their true feelings and avoid saying things that may violate the community's benefits. To explain for his statement, the participant gave an incident as an example highlighting the extent to which a Vietnamese could control her emotions compared to a Vietnamese American when their emotions were challenged.

> *"A friend of mine was shocked when this happened to her: she was used to being scolded when working in Vietnam. She moved to the States, working with a Vietnamese American girl. There was something about the car park which annoyed a customer. He complained at the front desk and after a while, he said "you're Asian". The staff called the police, taking it as race discrimination. My friend was shocked because she would have just taken it as a matter of course but the difference is that girl is native. I think as Vietnamese people, we are able to control ourselves better. My friend wouldn't behave like that. From*

details like that, we can easily see the role of emotional control in the service industry."(FG2)

The participant emphasised the difference in how his friend and the Vietnamese American colleague reacted to the customer's statement and cited being a native American as the underlying reason for the Vietnamese American worker's emotional expression. Though both hotel workers were Vietnamese in origin, his friend *"was used to being scolded"* and would suppress her emotions when a customer said the same thing. Interestingly, the participant's friend was *"shocked"* by the Vietnamese American colleague's reaction because she believed hotel workers were supposed to show respect to customers and thus suppress their emotions even when receiving hostile comment from them. Indeed, the practice of showing respect to those of higher social status and behaving accordingly by Vietnamese service providers was not understood by American tourists who are more casual and whose behaviours are less likely to be determined by social position and age (Truong and King 2010a).

In addition to the ability to regulate their emotions, Vietnamese people are characterised as *"warm-hearted"* which makes them good tourism workers.

> *"Some guests told me that they had travelled to many countries in the world but they had never met such warm-hearted people as Vietnamese though they have neither international qualifications nor professional training. Particularly local people can't speak English as fluently as those taking English courses but our guests can feel the love from them, which is far more important. I think it's a good thing about Vietnam." (FG3)*

The participant cited the customers' feedback on the Vietnamese hospitality workforce to emphasise that the genuine expression of positive emotions such as warmth and love outweighed the language barrier and professionalism. This is in accordance with Grayson's (1998) proposition that Western customers tend to highly value the authentically felt emotions. Past studies suggest Asian cultures are embedded within their history, religion, ethics, and values which create the uniqueness for hospitality service and the Asian workforce are associated with characteristics such as warm, empathetic, helpful, respectful, kind, sincere, and friendly (Sucher et al. 2013). Therefore, it can be argued that it is culture that generates positive emotions amongst Vietnamese hotel workers and makes them fit for the hospitality sector.

Furthermore, local residents in Nhatrang, Vietnam are encouraged to be hospitable tour guides. This is communicated to Nhatrang citizens through the road signs all over the city (Please see Figure 7). The message is written in Vietnamese to target Vietnamese citizens, which means *"Each Nhatrang citizen is a hospitable tour guide to visitors".* This implies that the human element is considered important not only in the workplace but also in their daily life as locals who are expected to contribute to the tourism industry of the town.

Surprisingly, a participant distinguished the services delivered by northern and southern Vietnamese hotel workers as follows.

> *"I think it's a good thing about Vietnam, esp. in Nhatrang (PARTICIPANTS LAUGHING). I have travelled quite a lot, from the North to the South but in terms of a genuine service, staffs in the South are more genuine than those from the North, who tend to just follow the standards. Regarding standards, I don't know what you guys think; people from Hanoi always try to achieve their standards. For example, they provide exactly what is supposed to be included in breakfast, 10 out of 10, but with Nhatrang people; the love they have for their customers is genuine and touches customers' hearts." (FG3)*

The participant separated the standard and the genuine emotion of the hotel services since he believed the emotional element played an important role in winning customers' hearts. This cultural difference between the north and the south of Vietnam emerged as an interesting finding, which might originate from the influences of the wars in Vietnamese history. A study of the work values of northern and southern Vietnamese managers shows that northern managers appear to be more Western-oriented towards individualism compared to southern managers who are more traditionally Asian collectivist (Ralston et al. 1999). This notion deserves further exploration and will be discussed in greater detail in section 7.3.1.2 with more data collected from semi-structured interviews.

It can be said that hotel workers seemed to identify and adhere to the central principle of treating customers with respect and kindness. These two qualities are also what American tourists seek from Vietnamese service providers instead of politeness as an expression of etiquette as noted in Truong and King's (2010a) research. Thus, the positive emotions came from the recognition of their work roles and their enthusiasm for delivering good services with warm hearts.

Figure 7. The road sign to promote the hospitality in Nhatrang

Source: Author (taken by the researcher on the 15th October 2016)

5.3.2.2. Language barrier

In Vietnam, Vietnamese is the only official language and English is used as a foreign language when communicating with people from other countries. Though Chinese and Russian customers account for a large proportion of international tourists to Nhatrang, English is still used as the main language in interactions with customers from these countries. Nevertheless, inadequate English competence was mentioned as one of the major hindrances to their interactions in the hotel context.

> *"Most Vietnamese people don't have the chance to study English at schools, which causes some communication problems for them in the workplace." (FG1)*

The root reason for Vietnamese people's difficulty in communicating in English is the shortage of English lessons in their curriculum. This is considered as one of the main reasons leading to a high unemployment rate amongst young Vietnamese since their communication skill is relatively weak compared to grammar; therefore, they are unable to meet the employer's English requirements (Hoa and Mai 2016).

> *"... language is a big barrier. Some Vietnamese customers ring our office, if they hear a foreign voice, they will just hang up, which is really bad and annoys my colleagues a lot... What annoys me lots is Vietnamese people's bad English. For instance, a problem can be solved within 5 minutes if Vietnamese and foreign staff understand each other. In fact, it takes an hour because of the language barrier, which keeps customers waiting and makes everyone frustrated." (FG1)*

In the extract above, the language barrier was encountered in two ways. First, the foreign colleague felt annoyed by the way Vietnamese customers abruptly terminated the phone call when they heard a foreign voice. Second, in her opinion, it was the Vietnamese hotel workers' poor English in interactions with foreign colleagues that led to the misunderstanding and inefficiency in solving customer problems. The comment shows the language barrier caused annoyance to the hotel workers in both interactions with customers and colleagues.

Interestingly, though the participant pointed out interactions with foreign customers and colleagues were challenged by Vietnamese hotel workers' poor English, other participants in the same FG interview stated that the language barrier also came from foreign customers and colleagues.

> *"As you all know about working in hotels and dealing with customers, some are more difficult to deal with than others, no matter where they are from, Europe or Asia. There are language problems as well. For example, Russian customers are often annoyed because they can't speak or understand English very well." (FG1)*

> *"Foreign colleagues doing the same job as us get paid more than us… though their English is supposed to be better than ours, their speaking is just the same as ours when they communicate with customers." (FG1)*

Due to the limited command of English to communicate with Russian customers, some hotels recruited native speakers from Russia and Ukraine to make up for this gap in their services. It is inevitable that non-native speakers of English such as Vietnamese and Russians are challenged when they interact with each other in English. Drawing up on how a young child uses language for communicating needs, understanding situations, and regulating frustration; Cole et al. (2010) propose the mutual influences between language and emotional development. This problem seems more complicated in the hotel context since both the hotel workers and customers are likely to rely on a foreign language rather than their mother tongue. Thus, the exploration of EI practice needs to take language into consideration, particularly in a country where English is not a mother tongue like Vietnam and their main markets are also from non-English speaking countries.

Another implication from the aforementioned statement is the unfair treatment perceived by the participant towards her foreign colleagues. As a result of the language barrier between Vietnamese hotel workers and their Russian market, hoteliers may have favourable offers to attract Russian-speaking hotel workers to Vietnam.

> *"They can't deal with customers' payment; they always ask us for help. Then we have to do their work as well, and it doubles the work for us. However, whatever it is, they always get compliments. I have no idea why." (FG1)*

As foreigners, they were not familiar with the currency and needed assistance from Vietnamese workers. The unfair treatment was highlighted in the way Vietnamese hotel workers had to support their foreign colleagues but received neither equal pay nor proper recognition from the management. This led to the negative emotions experienced by the Vietnamese hotel workers. Hoteliers are recommended to take this with caution as more negative impacts may result from these growing conflicts.

In addition, the extent to which the language barrier impacted Vietnamese hotel workers' interactions is determined by the customers' countries of origin.

> *"[language barrier] it's a problem but at different levels which can be solved but still, very important. It depends on their nationalities. For example, English isn't important when interacting with Chinese or Japanese customers, we can speak as much as we know and the same for them. Korean customers are a bit better. It is really important to English or American customers."* (FG2)

The requirement for English proficiency when interacting with customers varies depending on where the customers are from and it places Vietnamese hotel workers under pressure. This issue became more problematic when neither the customer nor the hotel worker could communicate in a language in which they were competent.

> *"Whatever they say, we just stand still, listen, and keep quiet… no one here can communicate with them. When they come to say anything, we can't help and they just leave due to the language barrier."* (FG2)

The fact that hotel workers were unable to communicate with the Russian customers in Russian prevented them from recognising and regulating the customers' emotions and in fact no efforts were made. The participant was aware of the need to offer help but it was beyond their ability. It is noteworthy that two participants expressed contradictory opinions towards speaking English to customers from different countries. While the previous participant commented on how important it was when interacting with native English speakers compared to Chinese and Japanese who also spoke English as a foreign language like Vietnamese hotel workers, the latter participant revealed little hope and efforts in communicating with Russian customers. The influence of language on hotel workers' EI practice and how this influence varies depending on the customers' countries of origin will be further explored in chapter 6.

5.3.2.3. Handling conflicts and feedback

In addition to the language barrier, Vietnamese people were characterised as handling conflicts and criticism indirectly, which was considered as a major weakness in the workplace.

> *"Cultural differences can cause quite serious conflicts at work… The second source of annoyance is the way we give feedback. For foreigners, if you are uncomfortable or frustrated with someone, you can speak to that person and he/she will correct their mistake. Or they will tell you what they think.*

However, Vietnamese people tend not to say what they think, they just keep quiet and walk away, which makes my foreign colleague feel that he is not respected. He also asked me why they don't tell him in person so that he can correct his mistake, but instead walk away and spread it to everyone." (FG1)

Interestingly, another participant reported the conflicts with her Russian colleagues from another perspective in which she cited Vietnamese people's indirect communication as the underlying reason for these conflicts. The foreign colleague in the example above was challenged by the tendency of Vietnamese people to avoid direct clashes in respect of conflict management style as a characteristic of a high context collectivist culture (Swierczek 1994). However, the theory of high context collectivist culture can barely explain problems with Russia on this aspect since empirical research shows that Russia is a collectivist culture (Naumov and Puffer 2000); but it remains controversial whether Russian culture is a low or high context (Kittler et al. 2011). A possible explanation for this is that national cultural dimensions can be used to compare one culture with another whereas personality gives a better identity with which to distinguish one person from another (Hofstede 1984). It is noteworthy that these two participants expressed opposite opinions towards conflicts between Vietnamese hotel workers and foreign colleagues. While the former participant expressed negative emotions regarding the favouritism towards foreign colleagues in her hotel, the latter spoke up for her foreign colleagues who experienced negative emotions resulting from the indirect communication of Vietnamese people.

Nevertheless, the indirect communication practised by most Vietnamese people challenges not only foreign but also Vietnamese colleagues.

"Taking working styles of Vietnamese people into consideration, when we disagree with someone or something, we tend to keep it in our mind. If we decide to speak out about it, which means the conflict has reached a certain level" (FG3)

There exists a subtle meaning of handling conflicts in the workplace described by the participant. In her opinion, Vietnamese people tend to neither express their disagreement nor communicate it but once it is communicated, it *"has reached a certain level"*. The statement was based on an incident she had at work when a colleague kept an electric car to serve her assigned customers during peak hours regardless of the fact that others also needed the car to take their customers to the restaurant.

> *"We talked to each other about her actions and we understood that she just wants to deliver the best service to her customers; she wants to be the first and the best to serve them. But this damages the solidarity amongst colleagues. We each talked to her but after a while we still couldn't understand or empathise with her. If it happens once, we can ignore it, we don't want to mention it the second time. But it has happened many times, we started staying away from her and weren't willing to help her if needed…when it can't be solved, everyone just automatically stays away from her, excludes her in teamwork activities or destroys the solidarity, or makes her feel isolated without directly talking about the problem." (FG3)*

When the problem arose, the participant talked to other colleagues instead of directly speaking to the colleague who caused the problem. They were not pleased but empathetic with the colleague. However, it was a constant problem which made them talk to her about it. In the end, nothing was changed and no verbal communication was involved apart from behaviours such as *"stay away from her"*, *"exclude her"* and *"make her feel isolated"*. It can be said that the colleagues were fully aware of her feelings and deliberately influenced her emotions by their reactions. This is in accordance with Nguyen et al.'s (2012) research findings that Vietnamese people highly value the workplace relationship built upon mutual trust, honesty, and long-term cooperation but they are task-oriented just as relationship-oriented. Nguyen et al. (2012) also note that employees are likely to have defensive behaviours such as minimal communication, expression of hard feelings and mistrust, isolation from the group, and non-cooperation as a response to a high stress environment. In this incident, it was not the language barrier that hindered their communication but instead it was how Vietnamese people dealt with unresolved conflicts.

To a greater degree, the participant described the process of the conflict, how it was handled and what the ending was, which emphasised the importance of context in understanding culture-related practices. Without the details of the incident, the participant's statement about Vietnamese conflict handling would be hard to understand. Therefore, this raises the need to further explore their EI practice by adopting the CIT and semi-structured interviews.

The interaction in the workplace is also challenged by the way Vietnamese people receive feedback.

> *"Sometimes they say something is not right and we think they are criticising us instead of taking it as constructive feedback, and take it to heart, which is*

the difference between us and foreigners. In a meeting, foreigners can solve many problems but Vietnamese people will just keep quiet and bring it out of the meeting room, which causes problems." (FG3)

Through the misperception of feedback, the participant explained why meetings in Vietnam are not as effective as in other countries where things could be openly discussed. Vietnamese people can feel a loss of face from minor to serious occurrences (Pham 2014), which is heavily influenced by the refraction of Confucianism in Vietnam (Tho 2016) and the characteristics of a low individualist culture (Hofstede 2001). The sense of shame is relatively strong amongst Vietnamese people; consequently, it is inevitable that Vietnamese people struggle when receiving feedback on their performance. Likewise, they tend to avoid giving direct feedback to others, which causes misunderstanding for the foreign colleagues mentioned in the incident above. The way the participant described the phenomena also deserves attention. Though he considered it a weakness, the consciousness between in-group and out-group members is reflected in the way he used *"we"* and *"they"*. In other words, the participant subconsciously included himself when describing how Vietnamese people generally reacted to feedback from their out-group members.

Nevertheless, this style of dealing with conflicts was not the same in every hotel workplace.

"Speak out about the conflicts, apologise if it's my fault. In my workplace, everyone supports each other very well because they all are experienced and value teamwork, so it's easy to deal with my colleagues. In terms of communication, everyone is experienced and we are willing to say if it's right or wrong..." (FG3)

The participant highlighted conflict resolution was determined by her colleagues who were *"experienced and value teamwork"* and *"willing to say if it's right or wrong"* and she reacted accordingly. It is undeniable that organisational culture does exist apart from the national culture. Furthermore, she described how she would react to conflicts, and then used *"we"* to refer to the community including herself and her colleagues no matter who provided the feedback. The participant's comment on how conflicts are dealt with in her workplace indicates a strong sense of in-group membership, particularly the way she used *"we"* to express her personal opinion, which is a common phenomenon in collectivist cultures like Vietnam (Phan 2017) and Taiwan (Min et al. 2011). However, a slight difference is recorded between the current

research and Min et al.'s (2011) study; Vietnamese hotel workers use *"we"* to indicate in-group membership as opposed to out-group whereas Min et al. recommend Taiwanese tourism undergraduates to use *"I"* instead of *"we"* as a way of assertive communication to strengthen their EI.

5.3.2.4. Sense of teamwork

Another factor which triggers emotions in the Vietnamese workplace is the poor sense of teamwork which is recognised as another weakness of Vietnamese people.

> *"Vietnamese people tend to be jealous and competitive with their peers. For instance, a Japanese worker and a Vietnamese worker do the same job; the Japanese can complete 70% whereas the Vietnamese can do up to 90%. But if it's teamwork, three Japanese workers can get 100% done whilst 3 Vietnamese workers can do only 30%! I think we should consider the efficacy of our teamwork."* (FG1)

The participant revealed that Vietnamese people are not good at working in teams due to the jealousy and competitiveness but they can excel at individual work. This results from the fact that Vietnamese culture encompasses two contradictory characteristics; community spirit (low Individualism) and autonomy (high Power Distance), which makes them pursue wide latitude and room for individual discretion in the workplace but strive for cooperation and strong solidarity (Nguyen and Aoyama 2013).

It is interesting that the participant compared Vietnamese people's ability to work individually with Japanese people who are claimed to come from a more individualist culture. Scores for the individualism dimension for Vietnam and Japan are 20 and 46 respectively (Hofstede et al. 2010). A likely explanation for this is that *"Vietnamese people tend to over-value the community"* as noted by a participant in FG3.

> *"Vietnamese people tend to over-value the community; we only work in groups with those we like, which isn't good."* (FG3)

They only work well in groups with their favourite partners. In other words, they may appear uncooperative when assigned into groups randomly, which limits the effectiveness of the overall work. This reflects the characteristic of particularistic thinking in collectivist cultures where people treat their friends better than others and believe that practice is sound and ethical, even in business (Hofstede et al. 2010a). Indeed, a study on skills development in higher education in Vietnam shows that

graduates lack interpersonal skills for effective teamwork, which presents a gap between employers' needs and university curriculum objectives (Tran and Swierczek 2009). This will be further discussed in the next section.

Furthermore, the competitive and destructive behaviour towards colleagues was also identified from the hotel worker's perspective.

> *"Regarding relationship with colleagues, as T just said, it's the Vietnamese culture. I think it's good to compete but it should be constructive and we should learn from our peers." (FG1)*

The participant recognised the weakness of Vietnamese people in competing against each other and the tendency to refuse to learn from others. To some extent, it is not only the favouritism towards their own group, but also the disapproval of good things from other groups. Indeed, Tanaka and Camerer (2016) found that Vietnamese people offered a handout but not a handshake to the low-status Khmer group whereas they exhibited negative treatment to the high-status Chinese group. To some extent, the system of social grading based on age and social position is deeply embedded in Vietnamese people which influences their behaviours and treatment towards others.

5.4. Sources of knowledge of customer service and emotional management

This part of chapter 5 reports information on sources of knowledge that Vietnamese hotel workers refer to in terms of customer service and emotional management. The three main sources identified are higher education, hotel training, and self-study.

5.4.1. Higher education

Most participants expressed the limited knowledge and skills acquired from higher education which include *"a bit of soft skills"*, *"basic foreign languages and general knowledge about the industry"* (FG2). The gap between education and corporation demands is highlighted in the following comment.

> *"I wasn't interested in studying, it's just for exams. I've forgotten everything though it was quite recent. When I started working, I didn't find it useful much, this is common not only in this industry but also in other sectors. Studying is for a qualification, working is totally different from studying." (FG2)*

The above comment on higher education and qualification reveals interesting findings in relation to a characteristic of Vietnamese culture which highly values one's academic achievement. Under the pressure from the society and family, Vietnamese people are likely to undertake higher education and make great efforts to obtain a qualification as an evidence of academic achievement. Sadly, this leads to the obstacles facing them when making a transition from school to the workplace. Tran (2013b) found that the limitations on skills development in higher education in Vietnam result from the centrally-controlled curriculum, the traditional teaching methods, the prevalence of passiveness amongst students, and cultural features. This finding opens up an area for hoteliers and educators to consider by introducing practice-based training for Vietnamese hotel workers. The shortage of practical knowledge from higher education is vividly illustrated by a participant as follows.

> *"...my lecturers teach tourism subjects but they know nothing about tourism, how can they teach me? They don't even know about complaint cards, or room keys. I remember my teacher told me that we use a key to open rooms but actually they have been replaced by key cards."(FG1)*

The participant blamed the teacher for the outdated knowledge gained from higher education, which made her ill-prepared for the workplace. Indeed, the fact that Vietnamese teachers are incapable of equipping students with important skills to keep pace with the competitive environment has been addressed elsewhere (Tran and Swierczek 2009; Cao 2018). The comment above also highlights the interest in practical knowledge from the hotel worker who was a tourism graduate in higher education in Vietnam.

Nevertheless, one of the participants who was a hospitality graduate raised the usefulness of a subject on communication skills taught throughout the course.

> *"If your major is hospitality management, you probably had a subject called communication skills which is quite important and taught throughout the course." (FG3)*

Talking about the knowledge and skills acquired from college or university is a chance for the participants to reflect upon the practicality and applicability of their education to work performance. As a graduate with a major in hospitality, the participant highlighted the effectiveness of the module on communication skills. To some extent, this notion indicates the need for training in communication skills for hospitality

workers because the previous section pointed out how the language barrier could be problematic to Vietnamese hotel workers. The skills development in higher education varies from one to another institution but the inadequate skills development of higher education in Vietnam becomes more serious when more graduates are facing unemployment whilst employers encounter problems hiring workers with the required knowledge and skills (Tran 2013b). The current research contributes to this gap by identifying other sources of knowledge of customer service and emotional management that hotel workers can employ for self-advancement and meet hoteliers' needs. Hoteliers can also use this as a reference to enhance their workers' competencies.

5.4.2. Hotel training

Compared to higher education, the training received from hotels was considered as a major source of Vietnamese hotel workers' knowledge of customer service and emotional management. Due to the shortage of workers with background knowledge and working experience in tourism and hospitality, hotels in Nhatrang expanded their recruitment criteria and provided induction courses to fill this gap.

> *"In some new hotels, they recruit graduates whose major is not related to tourism or hospitality. So, the hotel will offer some induction courses for those who have never worked in or learnt about the industry"* (FG1)

One of the participants in FG1 said the hotel provided them with guidelines for *"grooming, posture, and gestures"*. In addition, training is tailor-made to fit with each department's function such as *"serving and taking orders"* for FB staff, *"greeting and answering phone calls"* for FO staff. The participant was also trained on *"dealing with guest complaints at different levels such as front-line staff, supervisors or managers"*.

However, the availability and variety of training varies from one hotel to another. One participant described *"the 5 and 10 feel rule"* which requires the hotel workers to greet customers at 10 feet distance and talk to them when they are 5 feet away. In contrast, another participant noted:

> *"In my hotel, if a staff member is happy, he will open the door for customers; if not, the customer has to open the door himself [participants laughing], it depends on each hotel. For example, in Palace receptionists are not allowed to sit down, we can here. We can even sleep on the sofa during night shifts"* (FG1).

The ironic contrast that the participant described to some extent reflects the big gap regarding hotel policies, regulation, and training programmes in a big versus a small-scale hotel. According to the participants in FG1 and FG3, in big chain hotels, workers are provided with a wide range of training topics comprising foreign languages, soft skills, communication skills, handling guest complaints or even leadership for managerial positions.

It is noteworthy that language plays an important part in the hotel training agenda. Due to the high intensity of interaction with customers, hoteliers pay great attention to training communication skills to their workers, which was reported in all the three FG interviews.

> *"Apart from English courses, the hotel I'm working at organizes short courses for learning another foreign language depending on the target market. For instance, our hotel targets Chinese and Russian tourists; so they have classes teaching basic Chinese and Russian so that staff can communicate with customers from these countries." (FG1)*

It can be seen that hoteliers in Vietnam, particularly in Nhatrang recognise foreign languages as one of the crucial elements for training. Apart from English which is used worldwide to communicate with international tourists, language courses for basic communication in Russian and Chinese are also provided. Hoteliers in Nhatrang are perhaps driven to equip their employers with basic Chinese and Russian because a recent report shows that 80% of visitors to Nhatrang are from China and Russia (VOV 2017a).

Furthermore, big chain hotels tend to provide their workers with the training which is relevant to their vision and target market.

> *"In Rivera, they aim to connect people, which involves customers' emotional expression, all kinds of customers, how to take care of customers, how to connect with them, each culture and so on. In Lotus, when customers come to Nhatrang, we are supposed to work as tourist guides. We took a course called "In The Know Concierge" which covers all tourist attractions, and phone numbers of places such as restaurants and shops. We were also taught about Vietnamese culture, the Cham ethnic minority, and Ponagar." (FG1)*

The comment above highlights the differences in the hotel visions which in turn determines the areas of skills and knowledge the hotel workers are equipped with. Whereas the former focuses on connecting people from different cultures, the latter

promotes its workers as local tour guides who can serve as a reliable resource for tourists. The focus on culture was also found in FG2 where the participants were taught Chinese culture in order to serve this market better.

> *"I think most of the training programmes are organised by the hotel. I'm lucky to work for one of the hotels with the strongest training programme and I've learnt a lot. In terms of dealing with customers, there's a good training course. What I remember the most is recognising different types of customers. To be specific, there are 5 kinds of bird representing 5 different kinds of customers. For example, some represent an eagle who always show their claws, some are associated with the image of a peacock who pay a great deal of attention to their appearance, we can smell Channel No. 5 even when they're 5m away. Some are like doves pursuing peace and whatever is fine. The programme focused on techniques dealing with these different kinds of customers, which is very helpful for my job." (FG2)*

The above account highlights the participant's opinion towards which training component works best for their work performance, which is of crucial importance to hoteliers wishing to tailor their training programmes for the best results. However, the majority of participants agreed upon the fact that training is heavily theory-driven (FG2) and it is unlikely that they apply what they learn from these training courses into their interactions in the workplace. One of the participants in FG2 emphasised that *"The reality is different from theory, so basically it's all about experience"*.

Moreover, the training provided focuses on generic aspects of customer service and little is done regarding training hotel workers on performing EL and EI. Cox and Patrick (2012) note a scarcity of empirical research on training and other interventions supporting workers performing EL or emotional work. Based on the research findings, it is suggested that training courses be well-designed and suitable for their job so that hotel workers could remember and apply them in their interactions with customers. Sigmar et al. (2012) posit that on-the-job training is the most effective form of training to develop EI in organisational context. EI training is believed to be as important as selecting the right employees (Wong and Law 2002). Apart from the content, the form of training plays an important role on the effectiveness of these training sessions, which will be presented in section 7.7.1.2 by drawing upon the Vietnamese hotel workers' recommendations. In this research, training was suggested to play an important role in improving EI, which is addressed in objective 5 as one of the major contributions of the research.

5.4.3. Self-study

When the hotel workers were not fully equipped with the skills and knowledge needed for their job, they had to gain their own experience.

> *"I just use my own experience in my job… Most of the training programmes are designed to provide us with information about the hotel we are working at and some basic skills. If I meet a difficult customer to deal with, I'll seek out our supervisor or manager. I just deal with everything else on my own." (FG1)*

> *"This industry is characterised as "the profession teaches itself" because the hotel where we start working will teach us, the fastest way is to learn from hands-on experience. Some of the skills taught are not applicable right away but we must experience them from reality." (FG3)*

> *"Of course, training courses can't cover everything; we need experience and time as well as unforgettable experience as B said. We build ourselves up from hands-on experience, together with warning notices." (FG3)*

The overall impression is that the hotel workers received basic training from their hotels and resorted to their hands-on experience for its applicability. Interestingly, the participants defined the hotel work as "*the profession teaches itself*" (translated from *"nghề dạy nghề"*), which in turn determines their approach to obtaining skills and working experience. In so doing, they emphasised the importance of first-hand experience built up over time through their real interactions with customers and their practice of the skills taught in training courses. In other words, it is believed that one's EI practice can be improved upon time and with exposure to the industry. This finding supports previous research (Ashkanasy and Daus 2002; Wolfe 2017) which suggests one's EI can be enhanced over time and training.

Despite hotel training outweighing the theory-driven education in terms of effectiveness for their emotional management in the workplace, the participants stressed the important role of self-study and exposure to the industry setting. A participant in FG3 recommended that lay workers take initiative in following a role model who is inspiring to them even if they are not assigned one by the management team. They also accepted the likelihood of making mistakes and their consequences through *"warning notices"*. The openness for exposure to industrial experience was recorded in all three FG interviews, which indicates the appreciation of practical knowledge.

"As for me, I can't remember much from books. When I was a student, I attended about 5 out of 10 classes but I can absorb practical experience very quickly. It depends on each personality. Some really enjoy learning from training programmes, books or orators. To me, it just goes in one ear and out from the other. Experiences from practice are unforgettable. Actually I've had lots of chances to learn from training programmes because I have worked for quite a lot of hotel chains. But what I have learnt is 0." (FG2)

Though the participant cited personality as the reason for her preferred approach to gaining experience, similar opinions were found in other FG interviews. When the education received from higher education institutions and the training from hotels seem inapplicable for the hotel workers, they resort to gaining their own experience through real-life interactions with customers. It is noteworthy that the participant stressed that *"experiences from practice are unforgettable"*.

These first-hand experiences later on became their *"unforgettable lessons"* which serve as their source of reference when a similar incident occurs.

"What I have gone through are my unforgettable lessons. After working in the hotel for a while, everything is predictable. To be specific, I can guess what they want and my reactions are based on my experiences." (FG2).

The participant then explained it is the spontaneity of the interactions with customers which makes it impossible to relate to the theories she was trained on.

"When I was working in Monsoon, there were similar lessons, categorising 4 tendencies of customer reaction when something happens. I can't learn much from those. I can try to think what type this guest belongs to only when I talk about them with my colleagues. When I face them, I don't have enough time to do it… Maybe when I have time later on, I can think more about it." (FG2)

This account highlights the adoptability of personal experience compared to the theories from higher education and training courses. Similarly, a participant in FG3 stated that he based action on his instinct to solve customer problems because *"following regulations makes me inflexible and passive"*. It can be suggested that trainers may collect hands-on experiences to attract and inspire hotel workers and increase the effectiveness of these training programmes.

 The open attitude for unpleasant experience, as well as self-exposure to the industry setting, reflects the characteristics of Vietnamese people as an uncertainty-accepting culture where members are tolerant of ambiguity and chaos but motivated by

achievement (Hofstede et al. 2010). This is consistent with previous research that shows Vietnamese workers tend to be adventurous and eager to take up new opportunities with little care about their associated risk (Nguyen and Aoyama 2013) and prefer practice and experience over rules (Phan 2017) as presented in section 3.4.2.

Nevertheless, the accountability of personal experience is questioned given the fact that Vietnam, and particularly Nhatrang, is suffering from a severe shortage of a competent workforce highlighted in the following accounts.

> *"My hotel hasn't trained me in anything; I have gained my own experience. The hotel I'm working at has a very inconsistent structure. There is no team leader, it's very chaotic, there is no standard, let alone training." (FG1)*

> *"Due to the lack of time, we weren't trained to use software or hardware but asked to do all kinds of cleaning. At the moment, most staff are quite young in my hotel, born in 1990 – 1994, or even 1995 and have no experience in working in FO, we must learn day by day. We weren't trained thoroughly, so it was very chaotic when the guests came. We had to learn by improving ourselves. The assistant was supposed to have some working experience in FO but her experience was limited too, so she just told us what she knew. In fact, she wasn't as good as us; she was quite arrogant, which made customers complain about her." (FG2)*

As the development of infrastructure and human resources cannot keep pace with the increasing number of visitors, the hospitality sector in Nhatrang is prone to inadequate preparation for receiving guests. Furthermore, even the assistant to FO manager, who was expected to be the main source of knowledge for lay hotel workers, seemed incompetent with insufficient experience and an unfit personality. The participant's viewpoint of her leader implies the subordinates' expectations towards their leaders, which echoes the characteristics of a high power distant country where subordinates picture their ideal boss as the one they are most comfortable with and respect the most (Hofstede et al. 2010). Consequently, when these expectations are not met, the participant expressed unfavourable views of her boss such as *"she wasn't as good as us", "arrogant",* and *"customers complain about her"*. Consequently, the hotel worker had to rely on herself and learn from her first-hand experience. This calls for attention to training for both managerial and bottom-line positions to ensure adequate work performance.

Furthermore, a big challenge facing the hotel workers is the *"hidden competition"* where their colleagues avoid sharing their knowledge for the sake of tips.

> *"I think customer service involves tips, so there is hidden competition amongst employees. Though it's not directly related, they are not willing to share everything they know. I had to learn by myself and make mistakes during self-learning". (FG3)*

The hotel worker accepted that she had to learn from her own mistakes when colleague support was unavailable. Though little was revealed from the participant's account in terms of her feelings towards tipping and its consequence, Mkono's (2011) research on tipping in Zimbabwean hotels reveals tipping may build or damage the relationships among hotel workers and those who demonstrate exceptional job skills and good relation with guests are envied by their peers. This phenomenon may happen in the same way to Vietnamese hotel workers and explains why the knowledge and skills are sometimes disclosed from others.

Vietnamese hotel workers appear to face the scarcity of sources of knowledge of customer service in general and emotional management in particular. The exploration of sources of knowledge from the Vietnamese hotel workers' perspective reflects a limited source of reference, which calls for further attention to training. Given that higher education is heavily theoretical and the impracticality of hotel training, the majority of participants rely on their first-hand experience which is described as *"unforgettable"* but *"practical".* However, there exists several hindrances to their self-study through personal experience including the unavailability of a role model and the competition driven by tips amongst colleagues. These findings from the FG interviews led to the expansion of the training aspect of the research by further investigating the assistance from hoteliers that the hotel workers are seeking and this was asked in the semi-structured interviews. In so doing, the research serves as a bridge linking the hoteliers to their workers. In other words, researching from the workers' perspective enhances the communication of their needs and desires to the management board who are capable of assisting them, which in turn improves their work performance and service quality.

5.5. The understanding of customer behaviours and their emotional expressions based on their countries of origin

This part of the chapter presents an unexpected finding that emerged from the focus group interviews. The research participants revealed how they perceived customer

behaviours and their emotional expressions based on the customers' countries of origin. Notably, this knowledge assisted them in perceiving customers' emotions before they had a face-to-face encounter with them. Categorising customers based on their countries of origin made it easier to understand their facial expressions and emotions, which served as guidelines for hotel workers to monitor their thoughts and action during service encounters. For instance, "*Russian customers are a bit different, very friendly but may become very angry when problems arise. But after complaining and showing their anger, they will soon forget it*" (FG3); "*Asian or domestic customers are a bit more easy-going and calmer*" (FG1). They gathered this knowledge from their supervisors, managers and their own experiences. Please see Table 9 for a summary of customers' behaviours and emotional expressions collected from the focus group interviews.

Table 9. Summary of customers' behaviours and emotional expressions based on their countries of origin

	FG1	FG2	FG3
Asia	Tend not to get angry Easy to deal with Don't have very high requirements		
Singapore, Hong Kong			Quite nice Heavily influenced by Western culture Have extremely high requirements regarding hygiene, will be as annoyed as Westerners if hygiene is not ensured
Russia	Often annoyed because they can't speak or understand English very well but after they complain, it's all ok.	Quite rude If something goes wrong, they completely change their attitudes Well-known for their rudeness	A bit different, very friendly but may become very angry when problems arise After complaining and showing their anger, they will soon forget it Seem to come from another planet Very nice but can be very frustrated, will soon forget Not as calm as others, shout and act as if they want a fight but in fact once we can calm them down, they are soon back to normal
China	Often talk quite loudly while eating	Quite similar to Vietnamese, they mark excellent for everything, then post their complaints online	

	FG1	FG2	FG3
Germany			Nice at first

When something goes wrong, they completely change their attitudes and become really strict |
| **Caucasian countries (Australia, the UK or the US)** | | | Pretend to be nice but when they are back home, the company image can be negatively affected

Often post comments on websites to share their negative experience with other travellers |
| **Europe** | Have higher demands

Could be very angry if their demands are not met; if we could solve the problem, they would be very happy | | |
| **France, Australia or Dubai** | Have high expectations | | |
| **Europe or Japan** | Tend to be quiet during meals | | |

Source: Author

Australian, English and American customers are often called *"khách tây"* in Vietnamese which can be translated as Westerners or customers from the West. This name may cause confusion sometimes when hotel workers also use it for customers from other European countries in the contrary to Asian customers. Customers from these regions are also used as a benchmark for comparing and contrasting with those from other regions. Furthermore, customers from Russia and China were described in greater detail than those from other countries. This can be explained by the significant number of Russian and Chinese visitors to Nhatrang which accounts for 80% of total international arrivals (VOV 2017a).

According to Pizam and Sussmann (1995), customer-contact employees tend to establish different perceptions towards customer nationalities, which influences customer experience in service interactions and reveals certain stereotypes (Prayag and Ryan 2012). Compared to Korean Airlines employees who showed different emotions and service behaviours according to passenger nationalities (Kim and Lee 2009), Vietnamese hotel workers, on the other hand, used national stereotyping as a source of reference for a better understanding of customers' emotions and behaviours. In so doing, they established their own strategies to deal with customers from different countries, which is of utmost importance because tourism and hospitality is dramatically expanding across national borders.

The focus groups shed some light on the understanding of customers' emotional expressions based on customers' countries of origin, which is an unexpected finding. Therefore, further exploration of this notion will be presented in chapter 7 together with findings from semi-structured interviews. Apart from the emotional aspect, participants provided valuable insights into customers' preferences for some aspects of service interactions such as customer's eating habits, pursued form of entertainment or the communication of feedback. Similar cultural preferences are also investigated elsewhere (Furrer et al. 2000; Laroche et al. 2004; Kim et al. 2014). Although these results are beyond the scope of this research, they raise the call for more empirical research on national stereotypes from hotel workers' perspective to avoid misunderstanding and improve interactions between host and guests.

5.6. Summary

The chapter presents findings from focus group interviews which were conducted as the first stage of data collection with the aim of fulfilling research objectives 1 and 2; cultural factors influencing Vietnamese hotel workers' emotions and the sources of knowledge of customer service and emotional management. In addition to the aforementioned objectives, an important finding that emerged from the focus group interviews is the understanding of customer behaviours and their emotional expressions based upon the customers' countries of origin.

Firstly, the research findings highlight that cultural factors influencing their emotions are reflected in the positive sides of hotel work in terms of flexible working hours, friendly and happy working environment, and the availability of advancement opportunities. The cultural factors are also illustrated in their interaction in the workplace regarding emotional expression and regulation, language barriers, handling conflicts and feedback, and a sense of teamwork. These factors are embedded in Vietnamese culture which has been established on the ground of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism and can be explained by these philosophies and teachings. Investigating the cultural factors influencing hotel workers is necessary because Tsang (2011) suggests that these cultural values determine the workers' attitudes or behaviours as in the case of Chinese hospitality employees and the adoption of Western management practices that requires critical assessment in Chinese organisations.

Secondly, three main sources of their knowledge of customer service and emotional management are identified; higher education, hotel training, and self-study. Whereas higher education offered limited knowledge and skills for hotel workers, the training provided by hotels was likely to fill the gap between higher education and professional practice. However, there were cases when these two sources were limited or unavailable, and the hotel workers resorted to their own experiences which have been built upon their self-exposure to the industrial setting or those of senior supervisors or managers.

The last part of this findings chapter presents the understanding of customer behaviours and their emotional expressions based on their countries of origin. This

was an unexpected finding when participants talked about their interactions with international customers. Therefore, the semi-structured interviews conducted as the third phase of the research aimed to further explore this issue. Discussion on this issue will be presented in chapter 7.

Chapter 6 – Findings from CIT

6.1. Introduction to chapter 6 – Findings from CIT

Chapter 6 is an inventory of critical incidents where emotional response was required through which Vietnamese hotel workers' EI practice is reflected. These incidents were collected from CIT forms and interviews with the research participants to achieve research objective 3 – exploring EI practice through examples of favourable and unfavourable incidents. Both favourable and unfavourable incidents of interactions with customers and colleagues are investigated to highlight hands-on experiences from real-life situations. The chapter comprises two main sections; interactions with customers and interactions with colleagues. Each section covers the classification of the incidents into themes and the implications associated with each theme.

There are a total of 114 critical incidents collected from the CIT self-completed forms and interviews, in which there are 37 favourable incidents of interactions with customers, 34 unfavourable incidents of interactions with customers, 21 favourable incidents of interactions with colleagues and 22 unfavourable incidents of interactions with colleagues. These incidents are investigated to reflect how Vietnamese hotel workers practised EI in both favourable and unfavourable interactions with customers and colleagues. For that reason, findings from these critical incidents fill the gap in EI research by putting context into consideration as recommended elsewhere (Lincoln 2009; Cherniss 2010). It is noteworthy that the chapter focuses on conveying how they recognised and regulated their own and others' emotions; therefore, some incidents were described and investigated in greater detail than others, particularly those which were emotionally challenging.

This study explores the emotional element of these service encounters; hence, service failure and service recovery are not the focal points of the research findings collected from the CIT. Whereas the favourable incidents of interactions with customers mainly engaged the customers and the hotel workers, there were more people involved in unfavourable incidents such as managers, colleagues from other departments, and particularly the travel agency that worked as an intermediary between the hotel and the customers (in incident 5 of interactions with customers). A likely explanation for

this is that the situation became more complicated when it involved more people and the hotel workers had little chance to practise EI. Furthermore, it highlights the need to investigate hotel workers' practice of EI in interactions with both customers and colleagues for a better insight into this triadic relationship. In so doing, interpersonal EI is further explored to fill the gap in current research on EI (e.g. Delcourt et al. 2016).

This finding aligns with previous research which shows Vietnamese culture highly values individual strength and coping, and the need of support indicates a sense of failure (Stuchbery et al. 1998). Furthermore, emotions are viewed as weaknesses of the mind and complaining is uncommon amongst Vietnamese people who are taught to suppress personal difficulties (Stuchbery et al. 1998). As a result, this has led to underreporting of psychiatric symptoms and psychological distress, and Vietnamese are unlikely to discuss confidential and personal information outside of the family (McKelvey et al. 1996).

6.2. Interactions with customers

6.2.1. Favourable incidents of interactions with customers

37 favourable incidents of interactions with customers are categorised into four groups as follows.

Table 100. Favourable incidents of interactions with customers

Theme	Incident number
Group A – Understanding and meeting customers' needs	1, 2, 7, 8, 15, 17, 19, 21
Group B – Building relationship with customers	3, 4, 6, 18, 24, 25, 34, 35, 36
Group C – Regulating customers' emotions	5, 9, 12, 13, 14, 16, 22, 23, 27, 30
Group D – Going an extra mile	10, 11, 20, 26, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 37

Source: Author

Group A – Understanding and meeting customers' needs

In this group, the emotion element plays a minor role in the hotel workers' interactions with customers. It mainly involves their observation and sensitivity to recognise customer needs and make them pleased with the services.

In incident 1, Linh recommended the entertainment activities the customers might enjoy based on the conversations they had. After trying these activities, the customers *"were happy and appreciated"* his help.

Man (incident 2) served a couple that were staying in another hotel but *"were satisfied with the swimming pool"* in the hotel where he was working. With Man's assistance and recommendation, they tried other services in the hotel he was working for and they were pleased.

Huong in incident 7 said that she tended to recommend the local activities to first-time visitors before they asked and highlighted that:

> *"Customers are quite easy-going when I talk to them, as long as we can understand what they say, what they need and solve their problems".*

In contrast to the aforementioned hotel workers, Lan (incident 15) could barely remember any particular incidents of interacting with an old French-Vietnamese couple but her overall impression of them was *"they enjoy talking to me and other young staff while we serve them, they like it"*.

The aforementioned accounts show that the hotel workers displayed not only an understanding of customer needs but also their efforts to meet these needs through personal interactions. This refers to the early definition of hospitality proffered by Cassee and Reuland (1983, p. 144) as *"a harmonious mixture of food, beverage, and/or shelter, a physical environment, and the behaviour and attitude of people"*. This definition is different from those proposed elsewhere (Brotherton 1999; Barrows and Powers 2011) because it emphasises the behaviour and attitude of the people which creates harmony in the hotel setting. Lynch et al. (2011) documented that the majority of publications on hospitality has limited to the essence of cultures and societies where hospitality is practised. The research findings illustrate how customer experience was enhanced by interactions with hotel workers.

When Huy (incident 8) noticed that the customer was the difficult-to-please type which was showed in the way she made requirements for a banquet service, Huy was *"annoyed"*. Huy revealed that he managed to hide his emotions thanks to good knowledge of the services and customers' psychology. Bearing in mind that *"different customers have different needs"*, Huy explained to her the reasons why he could not meet some of her demands in order to establish an *"empathy"* between him and the customer. Therefore, they arrived at a *"compromise"* which made both parties *"happy"*.

Although little was known about the customer's emotions, Huy believed that customers were different in relation to their needs, which helped him modify the situation by explaining to the customer the reasons why their needs could not be met. In so doing, the customer was empathetic and happy with the compromise. Indeed, Huy employed the situation modification strategy recommended in Gross's (1998) theory of ER, which enabled him to modify the situation in a positive way.

Tran (incident 17) offered a helping hand by informing a group of Chinese customers with her limited Mandarin Chinese that the restaurant was busy though she was a cashier at that time. To Tran, their body language and facial expression helped her understand their emotions.

> *"They're happy when we could understand their language. Their facial expression was smiling; they also nodded a lot, which implies they agreed… When they understood, they nodded and smiled at me, which made me happy".*

In this incident, the universal body language of smiling and nodding helped Tran confirm that the customers were *"happy"* and understood her. This incident stresses the ability to understand and meet customer needs is likely to generate their positive emotions. The hotel worker also described her emotions as *"happy"* for being able to communicate with the customers despite her limited Chinese. The incident serves as an example of overcoming the language barrier and meeting customer needs. A study on the UK-based garment sourcing company shows that language barriers pose stronger challenges than personnel relationship and business practice when dealing with their Chinese suppliers (Towers and Song 2010). However, Palmer (2005) criticises that the language barrier even exists in London where service providers

speak worse English than tourists. This highlights the need to take language into consideration in customer service settings.

Incident 19 is a good example of making customers satisfied and managing conflicts in customer needs. Thinh demonstrated the ability to meet the difficult demands of a customer and successfully raised the empathy for the sick child amongst other customers so that his arrangement would not negatively affect others' experiences. Therefore, at the beginning of the interaction, the customer *"looked annoyed"* but after his request was granted, the customer *"thanked me a lot, wrote me a thank-you letter and gave me a tip at the restaurant"*. This echoes Wu's (2007) proposition that mixing incompatible customers such as couples and families with young children or smoking and non-smoking customers may pose conflicts and service workers exert the greatest impact on customer interactions.

In incident 21, Hoa acknowledged and apologised for the lack of knowledge of Australian's habit of drinking black tea. She also expressed enthusiasm and willingness to learn more about their culture, which made the customers *"excited"* to tell her more about Australians. Hoa added *"our attempt to understand their needs made them happy"*.

The language and cultural knowledge seems to play a significant role in delivering service in the hotel sector in Vietnam. The incidents in group A highlight the role of the language and culture knowledge apart from problem-solving skill required for Vietnamese hotel workers to practice their EI. This is consistent with a previous study in Jordan (Alhelalat 2015) that stresses problem-solving skills, language, and cultural knowledge deserve more attention from hospitality educators. Nevertheless, despite the negative impression and emotion expressed by the customers in some incidents, the workers' effort and enthusiasm in meeting customer needs made these incidents favourable experiences to customers in the end. This implies the chances of improving their interactions with customers through the enthusiasm and eagerness to exchange language and culture, which is reflected in the discussion of group B.

Group B – Building relationship with customers

This group highlights the proactive role of the participants in approaching and building relationships with customers which has gone beyond the border between the hotel

workers and customers. Amongst these incidents, four incidents (4, 18, 24 and 36) involved language and cultural exchange. Thi (incident 4) described exchanging food as a way of fostering cultural knowledge between the hotel workers and the customers. The good experience the customer had whilst staying at his hotel was evidenced by her positive word of mouth to other customers and particularly she described that *"she was treated like home"*.

While language played an important role in understanding customers' needs presented in the previous section, the language exchange became a means of building the relationship with customers and was illustrated in different ways in the other three incidents. Hoan (incident 18) created a positive impression on the Japanese customers by greeting them in Japanese.

> *"He's just like other customers but I think he paid more attention to me when I greeted him in his language… he was surprised because I normally say hi in English." (Hoan)*

Hoan considered greeting in the customer's language as the first step to create positive impression and start a conversation with customers. Interestingly, speaking the customers' language became an activity between the hotel worker and the customer as in incident 24.

> *"When I talked to them, they asked if I wanted to learn Russian and taught me 3 phrases each day like good morning/afternoon/evening in Russian. They really liked it when I greeted them in Russian the following day. So, they taught me 3 phrases each day and checked them the following day." (Ngan)*

The customers taught Ngan Russian and both the customers and the hotel worker enjoyed the language exchange. To a greater extent, the language exchange became an important component in their interaction over a few weeks during their stay at the hotel. It can be said that the language exchange reinforced their relationship and went beyond the relationship between a service provider and receiver. This is in line with past research which shows that tourists from the Continental Europe and Pacific Rim would love to be greeted and have basic exchanges in their mother tongue (Blue and Harun 2003). Furthermore, Yoneoka (2011) observes that the service workers may attempt to accommodate to the customer's chosen language to preserve the customer's positive face and to acknowledge the unequal relationship whereby the customer is always right.

Due to their limited English, the customers (incident 36) spent their last night at the resort translating a thank-you letter from Japanese into English to express their gratitude to Vu.

> *"We downloaded an app on the phone and spent the night writing this letter for you. We appreciated your service. Coming to Vietnam, I can't speak English but you're very good, you gave me an unforgettable experience." (Vu)*

Both the customers and the hotel workers attempted to overcome the language barrier and build up their relationship. It can be argued that language is no longer a hindrance to the interactions between the hotel workers and the customers but it serves as a tool to get to know each other and enhance the relationship. Vu's incident also suggests using customer feedback as inspiring and convincing examples to train hotel workers from real-life situations instead of pure theory. Previous research on EI seems to neglect this transition between the two main processes of EI, or this process may only exist in the hotel context in Vietnam. A probable answer to this is the association between the desirability and frequency of positive emotions may determine ER suggested by previous research (Eid and Diener 2001); that is, those who think a positive emotion is desirable may be more likely to seek that emotion than others. Therefore, Vietnamese hotel workers tend to make efforts to create positive emotions for customers in the first place through the cultural and linguistic exchange. It is proposed that hoteliers add the cultural and linguistic knowledge to training to strengthen their human resource and build up a good relationship with customers, which in turn has a great impact on regulating customers' emotions.

To a wider extent, there seems to be a relationship between language and ER in literature on psychology and business studies. Based on their research findings that young children can use language to regulate emotion and those having behaviour problems experience difficulty in regulating emotion, Cole et al. (2010) argue that language and emotional development should be studied with respect to their mutual influences. Though prior research finds that children with greater verbal capacities demonstrate a better understanding of emotions, discussing their feelings, interpreting others' emotions, and solving interpersonal problems compared to their peers; Monopoli and Kingston (2012) did not find any evidence for the predictive role of ER for language skills. Regardless of contradictory findings from past studies on the relationship between ER and language, Hinds et al. (2014) suggest language

asymmetries and reliance on a lingua franca requires workers to perform EL in an international workplace. This may explain the reason why the role of language became more evident in the present study compared to prior research on EI.

Man in incident 3 also described how he built up the relationship with the customer through their conversations on different topics and interestingly there existed a difference in what Man tended to talk to this customer compared to others.

> *"When he met me, he talked to me and enjoyed it, my communication skill is just ok. With other customers, I talked about some basic things; I talked more to him about his family, his job and some personal topics. He thinks he's old, his children are successful, and he's alone and needs some company." (Man)*

The above account reflects the likelihood that customers were seeking not only food or accommodation in a hotel but also *"company"* during their stay. The understanding of customer needs helped Man express empathy and possibly he attempted to be good company to the customer while he was on duty. The question raised here is how to understand and make the customers express their needs. Hung (incident 6) suggested *"It's a long process of obtaining experiences. When I served the customers, being given tips can be one of the signs of their satisfaction when they check out. The most impressive and memorable situation is when I got about $AUS400 as a tip"*. Hung interpreted the large tip from the customers as a way of expressing their appreciation for his care and enthusiasm when they were sick during their stay. Previous studies seem to have contradictory views on the impact of tipping on workers; Lynn and Graves (1996) show that tips are a reward for service but may not be an incentive for the delivery of good service in restaurant contexts whereas Lynn and Gregor (2001) prove that tipping serves as a strong incentive/reward for bellman to provide good service. Hung's comments reveal that customer tipping can be considered as an indicator of their satisfaction and particularly a large amount of tip made it an *"impressive and memorable"* incident, which confirms Lynn and Gregor's (2001) proposition of the role of tipping in the hotel context.

In incident 25, Thuc received positive feedback from a customer who was much older than him. Thuc called him *"uncle"* as a way of showing respect whereas the customer complimented the hotel staff on their performance as *"well-mannered"* (translated from *"ngoan"*) which is often used for complimenting children on doing a good job and the relationship between them was more like senior and junior citizens.

In addition to tips, customer compliments after service were also considered as an indicator for the good service delivered. Upon receiving a compliment from the senior and VIP customer, Thuc described his feelings as *"excited"*, *"comfortable and relieved"*. Thuc added:

> *"Sometimes, they love us so much that they open their suitcase and give us chocolate even when the car is out waiting for them. It's the customer's reaction when we deliver good services".*

This notion aligns with a recent research (Nasr et al. 2018) showing that communicating and receiving personal positive customer feedback has an uplifting impact on both customers and front-line employees.

Apart from a good understanding of customers' emotions, Hau (incident 34) also attempted to build relationship with customers as if they were family members.

> *"When receiving a complaint, I often speak to them and put myself in their shoes to understand their emotions. Customers are often frustrated when the flights are delayed or the food isn't good… Because they're unhappy, I'll have to keep the buffet and wait for them. They came here at 9 and asked me to join them. "I'll drink a bit, I don't often drink." The following day, they enjoyed talking to me because I considered them family members. (Hau)*

The above account shows that Hau demonstrated the ability to recognise the customers' emotions, the reasons triggering their unhappiness and what could be done to regulate their emotions. His reaction to their negative emotions was to *"keep the buffet and wait for them"* and *"consider them as family members"*. Furthermore, the emotional facilitation of thinking is shown in his comment as follows.

> *"Whatever they complain about, they don't travel from a faraway country to here to cause trouble for me, they come here for relaxing." (Hau)*

This line of thought reflects Hau's adopting one of the strategies in Gross's (1998) ER theory, the cognitive change in which Hau reappraised and changed his thinking about the situation. It is possibly this thinking that motivated Hau to do something to compensate for the unfavourable experience they had with the food. Notably, Hau's emotions seemed not to be influenced by the customers' negative experience and emotions. In other words, the ability to facilitate thinking enhances the bond between the hotel worker and the customer.

Hau shared another incident (incident 35) whereby he expressed empathy with customers and *"talked to them as family members"* about raising children, which in turn made everyone happy *"I was very happy and so were they"*.

It can be said that Vietnamese hotel workers had different ways of building relationships with customers, which were enhanced through the language and cultural exchange, understanding customer needs, and treating customers as their family members. Furthermore, the incidents in this group reveal that customer tipping and complimenting were seen as indicators of customer satisfaction, which subsequently led to the positive emotions experienced by both the customers and hotel workers. Grandey (2000) posits that in customer service settings, feeling positive means less EL is needed, and therefore EI practice is unnecessary.

Group C – Regulating customers' emotions

Group C comprises incidents where the customers were dissatisfied or annoyed at the services in the first place but these negative emotions were regulated and for this reason these incidents were considered as favourable. In the realm of customer service, these incidents can serve as examples of service failures and are expected to report the procedures of handling customer complaints. Instead, this study focuses on Vietnamese hotel workers' EI practice in interactions with customers; so, these incidents focus on the emotional element and how the hotel workers regulated customers' emotions. The similarity of these incidents lies in the participants' ability to regulate the customers' emotions through their sincere attitude, calmness, empathy, and problem-solving skill.

In incident 16, the customers complained about the noise from a room connected to theirs. Truc was considering either asking the other guest to turn down the volume or moving the customers to another room. Truc decided to go ahead with the first option because it was *"easier and it makes the customers happy"*. Truc added:

> *"We change their emotions from dissatisfied to satisfied because I understand their behaviour, I don't ask them to pack the luggage but ask the other guest to turn down the volume"*.

Apart from an understanding of the customers' emotions, Truc also put himself in the customer's shoes to decide which option would be best for them. This understanding helped him regulate the customer's emotions from *"dissatisfied"* to *"satisfied"*.

In incident 22, a drunken Danish exchange student staying at the hotel blamed the security guard for hitting him when escorting him to his room because he had some bruises the following morning. Khoa reassured the student and his teacher and showed them the camera recording.

> *"The first thing to do is to apologise though I knew it wasn't our fault. My apology is to make them less frustrated at that tense moment and calm them down, then I'd deal with the problem"*

Using this as a guideline, Khoa apologised to the teacher upon receiving the complaint, promised to investigate the problem and returned to her quickly. He showed the extracts taken from CCTV cameras in three different locations, which showed no sign of violence when the security guard took the student to his room. The incident highlights the importance of an appropriate attitude when receiving customer complaints and of problem-solving skills. Furthermore, Khoa demonstrated a good understanding of his customers.

> *"They are quite young and as foreigners, they are very polite but when they get drunk, they can't control or remember much"*.

This knowledge of the customer behaviour may guide his thinking towards a possible scenario, *"maybe the customer was too drunk, he must have fallen but he couldn't remember"*.

In incident 23, the customer was angry because he suspected someone stole his stuff, he shouted in front of other customers. Khoa took him to a quiet place to talk to avoid disturbing others. After investigation, the customer found out the item was still in his room; so he apologised and expressed appreciation for the assistance from the hotel staff.

In incident 30, Duc kept calm when dealing with the customer complaint by controlling his breath and thinking, and taking the initiative in apologising to the customer who *"seemed annoyed"*. Duc apologised and offered some fruit, which made them pleased in the end.

Incident 5 reflects the feature of face-saving in Vietnamese culture in dealing with sexual harassment in the hotel workplace.

> *"That customer was very aggressive. Partly because he had alcohol, also he's lost face; so his complaints were quite bitter… At first, he insisted on checking out at midnight, probably he felt ashamed. If we had clarified what happened like him touching the staff, it wouldn't be good. We had to compromise, accepting that nothing happened… He lost his face when trying to use money to buy what he wanted but he failed." (Thi)*

Thi exhibited the ability to recognise the customer's emotions and rationalise the reasons underlying these emotions. Furthermore, Thi also reappraised the situation by considering possible scenarios and decided to *"compromise"* and *"accept that nothing happened"* to save face for the customer and avoid confrontation.

In incident 9, the hotel worker compensated for damaging a customer's jacket by offering the customer two options, either his jacket or a colleague's. The participant stressed that he was asking himself if he should admit his fault when giving the damaged jacket back to the customer and in the end he decided to admit it for fear of being found out by the company. Khoi tried to read the customer's facial expression when admitting that but he noticed *"he [the customer] didn't show any anger, he looked normal"*. When the customer received the jacket as a compensation, Khoi described his own and the customer's emotions as follows.

> *"… he looked happy, so did his child. I could see the satisfaction on his face. I showed that I was sorry and felt guilty about it."*

Despite the language barrier *("they had a chat in Chinese, I couldn't understand what they were talking about")*, Khoi demonstrated the ability to recognise the customer's as well as his son's emotions. He also managed to display the necessary emotions to please the customer. Khoi commented that he had built up this skill over time by *"dealing with customer problems no matter if it's his fault or others"*.

Though a loss of the water supply during Chinese New Year made customers come to the reception desk to *"complain"* and *"scold severely"*, Vien (incident 12) *"just smiled, not because I was pleased but to make the situation less bad"*. He also *"apologised to every single customer"* and sent staff to buy water to meet customers' basic needs. On top of that, he offered 100% refund on the room rate and a voucher for their free stay, which made the customers extremely pleased and become their loyal

customers. It can be said that in addition to the right attitude and proper emotional expression when receiving complaints, Vien managed to regulate customers' emotions through his solution to the problem.

In incident 13, an argument occurred between a customer and the security guard in the hotel because two mirrors of the customer's car were stolen and the security guard could not afford to compensate for them.

> *"I talked to them, simply, I apologised to him no matter whose fault it is. Those who can afford that type of car have insurance to take care of that. They just make a fuss over it, they need to see our attitude, not the money… First, say sorry; second, ask for help by contacting someone who knows the black market to look for those mirrors, try to show that we're willing to help. This helps me avoid the tension because I'm trying to help him. If I just sat still, I'd be very anxious." (Truong)*

There are a few implications from the above incident. First, Truong showed a good understanding of the customer behaviour and the desired reaction from the hotel *"they need to see our attitude"* and his advice is *"try to show that we're willing to help"*. Besides, the attempt to help the customer solve the problem also helped him avoid tension and anxiety. His ability to recognise and regulate his own and others' emotions was evidenced by the fact that the customer gave the refund to the security guard and the receptionist as tips for the willingness to help. Truong concluded that:

> *"When we take the initiative to apologise, they change their attitude and notice we're stressed and exhausted, they apologise too"*.

What can be learned from the aforementioned incidents is (a) the understanding of customers' emotions and behaviours demonstrated by the hotel workers, (b) the attitude when receiving customer complaints and the willingness/enthusiasm to solve the problems, and (c) the regulation of customer emotions. In other words, handling their complaints engages a high degree of recognising and regulating emotions. Interestingly, literature on handling guest complaints suggests allowing hotel guests to experience the feeling of *"catharsis"* when handling their complaints makes them spend more and become loyal customers in the long term (Tantawy and Losekoot 2001, p.30). This may be a sound reason for the fact that participants were able to describe vividly the incidents that involve dealing with customer complaints compared to smooth interactions with customers whereby the emotion element played a minor role.

Another issue that emerged from this group is the different reactions between Vietnamese and foreign customers. Vietnamese customers tend to become more frustrated by a power cut during their stay at the hotel (incident 14) but more relaxed or understanding when finding a cockroach in their hotel room (incident 27) as opposed to their foreign counterparts.

In incident 14, Truong offered customers a discount for the power cut occurring during their stay. The apology and the solution made the customers pleased and in turn they gave the money to hotel workers as tips and *"everyone was happy"*. It is noteworthy that Truong stressed the different reactions between Vietnamese customers and the couple involved in the incident (the husband is American and the wife is Vietnamese).

> *"With Vietnamese, they went mad and scolded us severely, they weren't happy with the discount either… They wanted comfort. It's their egos." (Truong)*

In incident 27, Duyen also noted the different reactions between Vietnamese and foreign customers when finding an insect or cockroach in their room.

> *"… to foreigners, if there's any insect in the room, for example a cockroach, they will call the room service to eliminate it immediately and consider it as a serious mistake. Unlike foreigners, Vietnamese customers won't take that problem seriously." (Duyen)*

This difference in their reaction to the same problem may result from the cultural differences between Vietnamese and Americans. Truong and King (2010a) show that Vietnamese people tend to associate social recognition and accomplishment with group effort, rank, obedience; and exercise political power and wealth. This characteristic may make Vietnamese customers consider themselves of higher ranking than hotel workers and want the best service during their stay. However, the familiarity with cockroaches and insects may make them more tolerant and understanding than their American counterparts. This implies the impact of culture on customers' perceptions and expectations towards service quality, which has been substantially proven by empirical research (e.g. Weiermair 2000; Hsieh and Tsai 2009; Karami et al. 2016). This is to emphasise Vietnamese hotel workers' strong awareness of the emotions expressed by customers from different cultures in different circumstances and the underlying reasons for these emotional expressions. This is consistent with the findings on reading customers' emotional expressions based on their countries of origin presented in chapters 5 and 7.

However, Duyen talked about an opportunistic customer who made a fuss over the insects for special offers. Notably, Duyen observed the interaction between him and the receptionist and found that the receptionist was unable to deal with him, so Duyen stepped out. She was firm and calm with her explanation and offer, which made the customer give up his unreasonable request and accept the offer.

> *"I kept saying "sorry" but not to apologize. I was sorry for what happened… I was standing behind a wall watching the whole scene. And eventually, I couldn't stand the way that customer over-reacted and bullied the poor receptionist… She was very confused. What an awkward situation. She kept repeating that it was just an accident but they didn't seem to care. After a while I realized that those customers were opportunistic and they would never give up without a good deal, so... I stepped in and solved it… I felt ridiculous... Such trivial matter was merely an excuse for them to get a discount." (Duyen)*

The finding answers the call from Ro and Wong (2012) who point out the shortage of research on how guest contact employees can manage their stress and burnout from dealing with unjust customers. Needless to say, the manager is the first to provide a buffer against their job stress, which will be further discussed in the subsequent sections.

Group D – Going an extra mile

This group showcases incidents where the participants customised the services and generated positive emotions amongst the customers such as *"moved"*, *"surprised"*, *"amazed",* or *"appreciated"* on their special occasions such as birthday (incidents 10 and 11) and honeymoon (incidents 28 and 33).

> *"I wish to bring a small change to their awareness of travelling in Vietnam and Vietnamese people. Take it simply, when I see a foreigner on the street, they don't even need to ask, if I see them stand there with a map and look lost, I will just actively come and ask if I can help them… I feel very happy to do that though I don't get anything in return. What I gain is their impression of Vietnam, they could tell others "when I went to Vietnam, a Vietnamese girl was very enthusiastic to help me though I hadn't asked". That's all. It's very nice to be in their thoughts." (Van)*

The above account highlights Van's desire to help travellers and create positive impressions and experiences of travelling in Vietnam (incident 10). Van also emphasised that she was not pursuing any benefits in return, she just wished to create a positive experience of Vietnam and Vietnamese people to tourists. Van brought this hospitality into the workplace by being attentive to customers. The incident recorded

the example of Van finding out the customer's birthday when talking to him, she informed the FO department and they made him surprised with their birthday gifts.

Similarly, in incident 11, Ngoc put forward the idea of a surprise birthday celebration and organised it for the customers, which made them *"surprised"* and *"moved"*.

> *"They said it's the first time they had been to a hotel and were surprised by our act though it's not a big hotel. They were really moved. I thought that's it but they left comments on the website and gave us a high score. It's not only about the score but I could feel the love they had for us, it's very touching… I felt really happy, it's not about me doing the job with customers but I consider them my friends, I felt really happy to see how happy they were because of what I did."*

In addition to tips, customers' leaving positive comments and high scores is also an important signal for hotel workers, which made them feel recognised for the good service and experience delivered to customers. To a wider extent, Ngoc interpreted that as love between the customers and the hotel. The relationship between her and the customers had gone beyond that of a service provider and a receiver, it was instead a friendship. Moreover, the positive emotions expressed by the customers in turn made Ngoc *"really happy".* It can be said that Ngoc stepped out of her role to do something for the customers and make them happy; this is the expression of genuine emotions from both the customers and the hotel worker.

In incident 28, Lam accidentally found out the couple were newly-weds when talking to them. Lam informed the hotel and offered them with wine, flowers and bed decoration, which made them *"surprised"*, *"astonished"* and *"happy"*.

In incident 33, Thuy noticed that the customers mentioned their preference for a room on high floor and they were on honeymoon. She arranged everything in accord with their booking preference, which made them *"very happy"*. She said:

> *"These are quite common in hotels but if you don't think about customers' emotions, you can't figure it out. Also we were a bit flexible by setting up a nice room for them because they're on honeymoon. Though some rooms have sea view, others don't but in cases like that we can pay more attention to details and put our heart in the job we do by arranging the room with sea view for them. They were so happy that they forgot my name. When they left, they wrote a note, "Thank you to the hotel, we enjoyed it a lot, especially the FOM"… It's one of the experiences which made me very happy to work in this sector."*

Commenting on the incident, Thuy stressed the importance of *"thinking about customers' emotions"* and *"putting the heart in the job"* as key to bringing these memorable moments to customers. In so doing, she created the favourable experience to the honeymooners, which also made her happy. More importantly, these experiences serve as emotional impetus for her to get through the tough days and remind her of the reasons why she started in the hotel sector.

In incident 20, Thinh had to run down 200 stairs and rang the restaurant which was 1.6km away to bring more bread for the customers as the restaurant had stopped serving bread. He noted that the customers were very surprised and they said they would not have asked for it if they had known how troublesome it was for him.

In incident 26, a Chinese couple came back to the hotel with *"worried faces"* because they had lost their ATM card. Huong helped them contact the bank and get it back. The incident highlights Huong's ability to recognise the customers' emotions through their facial expressions. She also demonstrated the ability to calm them down and help them solve the problem, which in turn made them all *"happy"*. Huong added that the customers invited her for a coffee and send her a friend request on WeChat, which indicates the desire to keep in touch and build up a friendship. It is noteworthy that Huong actively helped the customers communicate with the bank and also took them to the bank though this was not a problem associated with their stay in the hotel, and so she had no responsibility to assist them.

In incident 29, the customer could not find her money and blamed HK staff for stealing it. Vy described how she tried to be calm, listen and express empathy to the customer though the customer was angry with her. She also built trust, paid attention to the customer and avoided favouritism towards her colleagues. Vy noted it was tricky because she did not know why the money disappeared, whether it was the customer's mistake or her colleague's dishonesty. With a calm manner, Vy was thinking of the conversation they had the previous day about the customer's plan to a theme park with her daughter. It turned out to be the daughter took the money to buy the tickets. This indicates the importance of interacting with customers because the information gained from these conversations may be helpful for solving customers' problems.

In incident 31, the first time Vinh served a customer a certain type of tea and noted it as the customer's favourite. Two years later he served the customer again and offered him his favourite tea, which made the customer surprised and the customer commented *"actually I've stayed at many hotels but no staff remembers that I like this tea"*. Through the incident, Vinh felt *"happy"* and *"satisfied with the little thing"* he did for the customer. A few years later, they met again in the hotel lobby, the customer remembered and called his name, which again made him *"surprised"* and *"happy"*. Vinh commented on the incident as follows.

> *"The customer remembered my name, which means he cares about me. It's the happiness from doing a little thing which makes the customer satisfied."*

This notion reflects the source of happiness for hotel workers is indeed customer satisfaction and to them being remembered and recognised is an indicator for their good service like tips and positive comments. Explaining for the good relationship between Vinh and the customer, Vinh said:

> *"… the customer was Vietnamese… which makes it easier for us to communicate. Most HK employees like me have basic English, so we can't talk much to foreigners. But with Vietnamese, we can be more confident to communicate".*

In similar light, Vinh demonstrated a good understanding of customer preferences, which subsequently helped him deliver customised services to another customer in incident 32. The customer has now become their loyal guest and stays in the same room every time he comes back to the hotel because he *"considered it his second home"*. Vinh added *"when we serve customers who understand us and vice versa, we both feel very happy"*.

Another outstanding example is that of Vu (incident 37) who displayed a strong commitment and passion for the job when he went skiing and fishing with the customers at unique spots of the area in his own time to make the customers change their emotions from *"disappointed"* to *"satisfied"*. The customers complained about the quality of the resort which was more local than they expected, they wanted to cancel the booking and stay somewhere else. Vu persuaded them to spend more time in the resort by taking them to explore the local sights and activities. The customers were *"satisfied, happy and gave very good comments"* in the end. This is to say that Vu's efforts in bringing unique experiences to the customers during their stay was

beyond his work responsibilities, particularly he had to wake up at 5am to go fishing with them and work overtime to make up for the hours spent with them.

Apparently, the hotel workers were driven to step out of their comfort zone to go an extra mile in different ways. These are good practices that hoteliers can communicate to their workers to enhance their services and EI practice because the fact that customers expressed these positive emotions made the participants happy and contented with their performance in these interactions. In fact, leading hotel chains have promoted their recognition systems to motivate the workers who go an extra mile (e.g. LH-Editors 1996; Pollitt 2014; BusinessToday 2017). Researchers label these superior efforts as OCB which is found to bring tangible benefits for organisations in different industries (Bolino and Turnley 2003). It can be said that the four-branch model of ability EI (Mayer and Salovey 1997) is unlikely to accommodate this feature of the EI practice. However, Valentin (2014, p.486) names these efforts as employee engagement which is *"an extension of the emotional labour of smiles and 'have a good day' required of customer service staff"*. This seems to be a suitable definition for these extra mile examples because in the present study these incidents reflect the efforts to create positive emotions and exceed customer expectations apart from the ability to recognise one's and customers' emotions, which in turn made these incidents favourable and memorable to both customers and hotel workers. And the word *"extension"* can accommodate a wide range of practice that hotel workers can bring to their customers.

6.2.2. Unfavourable incidents of interactions with customers

34 unfavourable incidents of interactions with customers are classified into six groups. The first three groups reflect limited efforts made in terms of EI practice compared to the last three groups, through which factors leading to unfavourable incidents are highlighted.

Table 11. Unfavourable incidents of interactions with customers

Theme	Incident number
Group A – Lack of communication	2, 3, 4, 18, 19, 20, 21, 25, 26, 29, 30
Group B – Lack of experience	6, 10, 15, 16, 27

Group C – Conflict between EI practice and hotel revenue	5
Group D – Ineffective emotion regulation	1, 9, 12, 13, 23, 24, 28, 31
Group E – Support needed from managers	8, 14, 33, 34
Group F – Follow-up after service failures	7, 17, 22, 32, 35

Source: Author

Group A – Lack of communication

Group A comprises all the incidents where the hotel workers failed to communicate with customers. The underlying reasons were the language barrier (Chinese in incident 2 or Russian in incident 20), nonverbal communication (incidents 4 and 19), communication through some channel (incidents 18 and 21) or no communication with the workers involved (incidents 3 and 25); as a result, the problems were not solved. This prevents them from understanding and regulating the customers' emotions.

In incident 2, when the customers asked for fried rice, Man did not communicate with the kitchen staff, so he was unaware of the technical issue in the kitchen. Therefore, the customers *"showed how annoyed they were after waiting for it"*. Man admitted his fault and apologised for it but he was not sure if they understood everything he said.

The lack of communication between Man and the customers also led to an unfavourable incident as in incident 3. The customers were not directed to a table when they arrived at the restaurant and given the wrong dish, which made them annoyed and they went straight to the reception to complain. Though restaurant staff accompanied a customer service staff to bring the fruit to the customers' room as an apology, little interaction was involved because the worker who directly interacted with the customers was not given the chance to speak to the customers.

In incident 4, the customers were sick or tired but they did not use the DND (Do Not Disturb) sign, so HK staff did not know and entered the room to tidy it, which made the customers annoyed. Nga noted that she had to solve the problem *"tenderly"*,

offered them with a plate of fruit and apologised for that trouble. She also explained to the customers about using the sign as they did not want their room to be made.

In incident 18, the hotel receptionist informed the customer about the room rate for one or two people without mentioning the surcharge for extra people. Unfortunately, the customer was not the consumer; when they showed up, they were unhappy and refused to pay the surcharge. The interaction was facilitated via the third party, which led to misunderstanding and limited the chance for explanation as well as ER.

In incident 19, Ngan did not ask the customers before clearing their dishes at the buffet. They stood up and wrote on the comment card that she disturbed them while they were eating. Apparently, there was insufficient time from the start of the interaction till the end for the hotel worker to react or regulate the customers' emotions in this incident.

In incident 20, Thuc described the incident in an ironic way as follows.

> *"A Russian mother and her child, for some reason, always looked so grumpy that the whole team knew it. "Look, there they come", just whispering to each other, "Miss friendly is coming down". It's the way we talked to each other but when we interacted with them, of course we had to be cheerful. I don't understand, they got frustrated with this and that, I sold the same room to other customers, they're comfortable but these customers reacted angrily. They're moved to another room, for this or that reason, they weren't still satisfied though we tried our best to deliver good services. Due to the language barrier, I couldn't find out the reason. I couldn't sit with them to ask why they kept complaining. Of course they had their own reasons to complain but I really wanted to know what her expectations were but I couldn't due to the language barrier and workload… I knew she's reacting strongly to us, she raised her voice though we couldn't understand, which made me tired. I tried to understand so that I could solve it for her but she talked as if she wanted to release all her stress to the receptionists. First, I felt helpless because I couldn't understand her and what she wanted. It's the feeling of helplessness. Second, I found it ridiculous, "why does she have to troll us? What does she want?" She just kept talking and then walked away. It's ridiculous."*

The language barrier emerged from the incident as the main factor triggering the communication problem between the hotel worker and customers. Though some basic emotional expressions were recognised, little was known about the reasons why the customers were not satisfied however hard the workers tried. Interestingly, at some point, Thuc desired to provide the customers with the best service by talking to her but he failed, which made him *"tired"* and eventually *"helpless"*.

In incident 21, the customer made their booking online and requested an early check-in. However, no one answered the phone when the hotel receptionist contacted them to confirm it. Upon arrival, they were asked to leave the luggage and wait for the room to be cleaned, Huong was the one that interacted with them at that time, and she described their reaction as follows.

> *"They were angry with me and said bad words… I got upset with their attitude. They were very unknowledgeable and rude although I tried to explain with them."* [The participant responded in English, no alteration was made]

Due to the initial lack of communication, it was difficult for Huong to explain the situation. Huong was given little chance to explain and clarify, together with the rude language and attitude from the customers, Huong was *"upset"* and cited the lack of knowledge of hotel booking policies as the main reason leading to their anger.

Incident 25 is another example of the lack of communication between the hotel worker and the customer. The customer ordered balloons and a cake for her birthday party. It was all prepared but there was a big group checking in that night and no one remembered the balloons were supposed to be delivered. The customer complained to their manager *"harshly"* and all the workers involved were fined. The incident reveals that the customer did not actually communicate with the participant and thus EI was not practised.

In incident 26, a customer booked 4 rooms with Vy's colleague who provided her with the room numbers. When they arrived, one of the rooms was unavailable and Vy was unaware of the fact that the customers already knew the room numbers. The customer was angry and did not give Vy a chance to explain. Vy said she felt frustrated because it was her colleague's fault for informing the customer of the room numbers which was against the hotel regulation. However, Vy remained calm and talked to the customer in a gentle and respectful manner. Vy also emphasised that she could not explain to the customer that she was not the one dealing with this booking. Moreover, Vy managed not to mention to the customer that it was the colleague's fault for informing the customer of the room numbers.

Incidents 29 and 30 described by Thanh reveal that Thanh seemed confident when dealing with the Vietnamese customers but had difficulty in understanding and reading the Indian customer's facial expression. Though partially informed of the situation, he

knew what and when to say things that could calm down a Vietnamese customer. In contrast, he failed to satisfy an Indian customer and concluded that Indians were "*the most irritable, picky and difficult to please*". This comment on Indian customers may be true but it is interesting to look at the way Thanh produced the stereotypes of Indian customers.

The stereotypes of customers may result from two scenarios; (a) the participants derive these emotional expressions through extensive experiences of interacting with a certain group of customers; or (b) the participants experience an extremely unfavourable incident with a certain customer, which tends to influence what they think about customers coming from the same country. This issue needs further investigation from future research since it may be detrimental to the services provided to customers due to these national stereotypes. In addition, the negative perceptions towards a certain group of customers may provoke negative emotions amongst hotel workers before their actual interactions with them since stereotypes tend to be based on personal judgements and generalise perceptions (March 1997; Ball 2003). Though national stereotypes have been studied extensively in the realm of tourism research (e.g. Truong and King 2010b; Bender et al. 2013; Liu and Tung 2017), this study emphasises how customers' countries of origin inform and guide Vietnamese hotel workers in reading and regulating customers' emotions. A more detailed record of the research participants' perceptions of customers' emotional expressions based on their countries of origin is presented in chapter 7.

Group B – Lack of experience

The incidents in this group illustrate various difficulties a new hotel worker may encounter in their early days working in the hotel. Tran (incident 15) and Thinh (incident 16) were clumsy and stressed when serving customers.

> *"I was afraid of looking at him, I didn't know [how he felt]. He was hurt and… was having fun but I hurt him. I also did what they didn't like – put the ice on his leg. He was hurt and annoyed, he didn't like it but I was afraid of him complaining." (Tran)*

Though Tran was stressed and scared by different factors – annoying the customer, being told off by the senior colleague, getting customer complaints, losing her job,

being disciplined or ruining the hotel image, she admitted she could forget it all when she returned home as a part of her personality.

Thinh was negatively influenced by the customer's complaint and believed that his personality did not fit with the hospitality sector.

> *"When I heard "You are stupid", I was shocked because I didn't think they'd call me "stupid", then "I never come back". I still said "I am sorry. Thank you for coming. I hope you will come back and I hope to see you again". Then she said "I will never come back". I thought I said sorry, I'd have felt better if she had said "I am not sure" but she said "I will never come back" as if she's splashed cold water onto my face ("dội gáo nước lạnh vào mặt mình")... I could see the dissatisfaction from her facial expression, she looked grumpy and annoyed." (Thinh)*

Interestingly, both Tran and Thinh were not hospitality graduates, which may put them under more pressure compared to those who graduated with a major in tourism and hospitality. However, Thinh became an FBM with perseverance and self-study despite a lack of academic background in hospitality.

Hung (incident 6) and Ngoc (incident 10) considered themselves inexperienced and ignorant in their first encounters with gay and drunken customers respectively.

> *"I was too enthusiastic and they didn't like it. They hesitated to communicate with me. I couldn't guess their personalities... I wanted to ask about their villa or if they wanted to have some special experiences for their holiday, I'd be happy to help. I felt like I missed something because I couldn't make them satisfied. I think they weren't happy, they didn't show it but their faces looked cold, they ate quickly and left, had a shorter sunbath than planned." (Hung)*

The limited exposure or experience with this group of customers prevented Hung from understanding their behaviours and preference. Little interaction also made it difficult for him to build a relationship with them. It was instead more about his personal feelings and prediction based on their facial expressions. To some extent, this incident reflects the lack of prior knowledge and communication leading to barriers between the hotel worker and the customers, which in turn prevented him from understanding and regulating their emotions. This may be associated with the lack of diversity management practice in Vietnamese hospitality industry noted by Yap and Ineson (2016). After the incidents, Hung became more sensitive and confident in dealing with this market segment.

In incident 10, Ngoc said the customer was quite drunk and asked for *"happy service"*, she did not know what it meant, so she recommended some entertainment activities. When the customer explicitly told her what he wanted, she refused, which made him *"frustrated"*.

> *"He looked so scary, as if he would have eaten me. He jumped towards me, took my hand and dragged me out "Let's go to my room." I was so scared, I just screamed, and then the security guard came…"* (Ngoc)

Ngoc also pointed out that the customer could have been sent out if it had happened in a five-star hotel. But she was working in a two-star hotel at that time, so nothing was done in relation to the customer's sexual harassment. She added:

> *"… the manager consoled me, so it's ok. When I saw him the following day, I didn't dare to look at him".*

Ngoc's comment implies the role of the comfort and empathy from managers in such emotionally challenging situations. To a wider extent, Ngoc did not expect any measures to be taken from the management side and she was pleased with the comfort from her manager. The confrontation-avoiding characteristic was also shown in the way Ngoc avoided eye contact with the customer the following day though he sexually harassed her.

Duc (incident 27) believed he was not flexible enough to suggest an alternative to the customer, which made the customer *"disappointed"*. Duc *"felt sorry for her"* and *"regretted"* that he was unable to come up with the solution at that time. Duc cited the heavy workload and stress as the reason for him being too emotionally exhausted to come up with a better solution for the customers. An implication for this is the possibility that the job-related stress triggered the hotel worker's problem-solving skills, which in turn influences the ability to regulate his own emotions.

These incidents pose the need for training or shadowing for new and inexperienced workers to enhance their customer service. Emotional support is also needed after unpleasant incidents to retain competent personnel as in the case of Thinh and Ngoc. This is in line previous research which identified the problems associated with poor training, through which Poulston (2008) points out that the hospitality sector is largely comprised of young and female workers who are likely to contribute to the workplace if provided with appropriate training and pastoral care.

Group C – Conflict between EI practice and hotel revenue

There is only one incident (5) which does not share any similarities with other incidents since it reveals the situation whereby positive impressions or customers' emotions are not prioritised. The conflict happened when the travel agency failed to transfer the payment for the tour group. As a result, the HGM decided to keep the customers in the hotel lobby, which caused tension between the customers and the hotel workers and created bad image to the new customers that were waiting for check-in. Thi admitted:

> *"The good relationship between the group and staff built over their stay was destroyed in the end".*

Neither the HGM nor hotel staff attempted to calm down the customers or put themselves in the customers' shoes as they were likely to miss their flight home. This is a vivid example of the utmost importance of profits over service-related issues or customer relationship because it is difficult to accommodate both (Wang 2012); therefore, EI practice is not a priority under these circumstances.

Group D – Ineffective emotion regulation

This group consists of incidents where the customers' complaints were solved but the emotional tension and stress was still strongly sensed by the customers, the workers or both parties.

In incident 1, some customers made a fuss over everything during their stay in order to receive offers. Linh named them as *"opportunistic customers"* but he still tried his best and followed the procedures when serving them.

In incident 23, Lam made a mistake when writing the name of the honeymooners on the card. She emphasised:

> *"He was not the 'complaint maker' type so everything went well. Otherwise it would have become another story… I could have done better. I felt disappointed at myself".*

The customers actually did not express any negative emotions and Lam recognised he was not the type of complaint-maker. Nevertheless, Lam failed to regulate her emotions because of the mistake.

In incident 24, the customers booked rooms on different floors. Upon check-in, they wanted to stay close to each other. Their initial room was available from 12pm but the new one was not. When they saw their family checked in early but they could not, they became *"angry and shouted"*. Despite Lam's attempts to explain, they did not understand and kept shouting. Lam was unable to control her emotions and *"almost bursting into tears"*.

In incident 28, a customer was frustrated because there was no tooth paste in his room. As soon as Vinh came to his room, the customer started shouting and *"made a fuss over it"*. Vinh admitted *"to be honest, I lost my control a bit but I managed to keep calm and apologise to him"*. Vinh explained that the hotel tried to protect the environment by limiting the amount of tooth paste but they would provide it if required. And the response he received was:

> *"I don't want to know how you protect the environment, I know that I spend a huge amount of money and what kind of service I expect to get."*

Vinh talked to himself *"luckily you're in the hotel, otherwise I'd punch you in the face"* and he still felt *"annoyed"* and *"suffered from the pent-up frustrations"*. Interestingly, it seemed that Vinh attempted to adopt the cognitive change strategy to regulate his emotions.

> *"I wondered why I had to get these insults. They can be polite, but when they use rude words, I feel disrespected and frustrated"*.

However, it did not work and he chose to leave as a way of modifying the situation.

Incident 12, the customers had someone book the room for them and expected not to pay for their 14-year-old child. They were *"very frustrated"* and *"scolding"* the hotel staff. Truong described it as follows.

> *"They showed off by saying they have travelled a lot, they even insulted us "You want money, don't you?" (chúng mày muốn tiền đúng không?) They gave us 200k right at the reception desk. "You're just paid to work here, do you want money? Here's the money." They thought money could solve the problem."*

It is noteworthy that the intricate system of terms of address and reference used in Vietnam is noted as one of the core elements of Vietnamese culture even when the language diminishes as in the case of Polish-Vietnamese (Szymańska-Matusiewicz

2014). The personal pronouns used by the customers were rather rude in Vietnamese; therefore, Truong felt *"insulted"*.

> *"I was so angry that my body was almost shaking. They thought they could give us 200k and talk like that to us."*

Truong revealed that at some point he decided to give up explaining to them because they were not their target market. In the end, they agreed to pay but *"they weren't happy at all"*. Neither was Truong. However, he said *"in business they're willing to pay so it's ok"*.

In incident 31, the customer enjoyed the first two crabs but complained that the last one stank and was of bad quality. Despite Dang's explanation that different habitats made them have different colours and smells, the customer seemed not to be convinced and expressed negative emotions.

> *"He was very angry, upset and disappointed then. I was annoyed too because he didn't want to believe that we didn't serve bad quality food, it's all fresh… he was very disappointed. I just stood there, apologised and explained but he was insistent, which made me really frustrated." (Dang)*

These incidents were similar in the way the hotel workers attempted to provide the customers with explanation for the problems emerged and they were able to recognise their own and the customers' emotions. However, there were some differences between these incidents. Lam cited pregnancy as the main reason for her being emotional. Truong attempted to suppress his anger because he was fully aware of his role model as the HGM for his subordinates and the customers agreed to pay. In contrast, Dang was frustrated but the frustration did not last very long because it was not his fault. Both Truong and Dang demonstrated the ability to regulate their emotions in accordance with their thoughts, which has a strong implication for deep acting strategies of EL; these two incidents also indicate the practice of EI where they were able to recognise customers' emotions but failed to regulate them. In line with previous research (Cruz 2008), this finding reinforces the idea that EL is a part of EI and confirms the theoretical link between these two concepts. Moreover, the finding confirms that EI follows a hierarchy from basic to more complex processes and ER is the highest branch of the model as proposed by Mayer and Salovey (1997).

It is noteworthy that in incident 13, Truong insisted on rejecting the customers' request for prostitution since it was against the law. He explained:

> "*If they have some problems and need help, we must support them; if it's not something listed as our services, we can't help them, let alone it's illegal*".

He also described how quickly the customers changed their attitudes when their requests were turned down. Though the tension remained after the encounter, Truong fulfilled his diplomatic role by politely refusing them and staying within the law. Truong said *"we must be smiley but clever in the way we talk to them",* which once again confirms the role of language in ER. Truong also emphasised:

> "*It's not true if I said I wasn't angry. But as a manager, I had to be a good example for staff so that they don't let their emotions influence themselves. It's our job, we can't just shout out. If it had happened outside on the street, I'd say 'go away', there's no need to make a fuss.*"

In other words, Truong was fully aware of his experienced emotions and those required in the workplace, which resulted in emotional dissonance. The incident indicates the performance of deep acting, which was driven by Truong's awareness of his position and his influence on his subordinates.

A stronger case of the EI practice was found in incident 9 when Van interacted with a customer from the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Van was shocked by his aggression and cited two main reasons for this; the low status of hotel work and the high power distance between men and women due to his cultural background. Van's understanding is to some extent in line with previous research (e.g. Hofstede et al. 2010). Also, polygamous marriages together with conservative social values and cultural beliefs are likely to exert emotional pressure on women (Khayata et al. 2003). In addition, Islam religion determines gender roles, individual duties and responsibilities in the family between Muslim men and women in the UAE (Schwaighofer 2014), which may result in customer treating Van in a way that made her uncomfortable.

Van managed to control her emotions and fulfil her job role but burst into tears when the customer gave her a tip for her assistance. She refused to take the tip though it doubled her monthly salary at that time. In her own words:

> *"I burst into tears because I was so frustrated, it's to release the pent-up frustrations. When he threatened me, I didn't cry because if I had cried, it means I had lost, why did I have to cry? But now, after saying what I thought and criticizing him for his rude behaviour... I just wanted to tell him how offended I felt... I managed to release my emotions after talking to them for a few minutes. It's an unforgettable experience in my life." (Van)*

Interestingly, she deliberately communicated that to the customer and thus bursting into tears was not considered an out-of-control behaviour. Similar to Thanh (incident 30) in group A, Van was very negative towards customers from UAE and the incident had such a strong impact on her that she still appeared emotional when talking about it during the interview. Van also highlighted how a lack of empathy and cultural understanding from her foreign manager contributed to her pent-up frustration, which makes the incident also fit in Group E.

Group E – Support needed from managers

This group highlights the role of managers when their employees failed to deal with customer complaints at the time, which led to the inability to regulate their own emotions and those of their customers.

In incident 8, the customer's scarf which was valuable and important to them was washed in the wrong way and damaged. The customer was *"very angry, it's shown on their face"*. Though Khoi was not the one who made the mistake, he dealt with the customer and noted:

> *"I've worked here for a while, when solving problems like that, I had to wear a concerned face mask"*.

Regarding the customer's emotional expression, Khoi described as follows.

> *"They showed the anger but there's still some politeness in their anger. It's not like Vietnamese, shouting and swearing, and many things like that. When I apologised, they didn't say anything else."*

Khoi stressed that *"putting on the concerned face mask"* was *"one of the tricks that staff use to avoid making customers angrier"* (*"putting more oil on the fire"*). On the one hand, Khoi was able to recognise the customer's emotions and see how to resolve it. It is difficult to decide whether surface acting or deep acting was adopted because Khoi only mentioned the reason behind this being "to avoid making customer angrier". To some extent, Khoi's comments on this incident clarify the overlap between EL and

EI; whereas EL is performed for a wage, EI is more concerned with regulating others' emotions. Furthermore, EI becomes evident in EL context as noted by Joseph and Newman (2010). However, the only solution to the problem was compensation that the customer wanted was beyond his authority and had to be passed to the manager.

In incident 14, when a Chinese customer wanted to take the pot away, Lan tried to explain to him that it belonged to the restaurant and was not for sale. The customer wrongly thought she had accused him of stealing it. They were *"frustrated"* and wanted Lan to apologise. After the apology, the customer was still dissatisfied and *"made a fuss over it"*, which resulted in Lan being *"angry"* and wanting to leave. The language barrier partially prevented her from communicating with the customer and regulating his emotions. Consequently, Lan was negatively influenced by the customer's emotions and referred it to her manager. Lan also emphasised that she was confused about what to do in this situation which resulted in new guidelines for other workers facing similar situations. Ro and Wong (2012) also recommend this as a way of preventing future incidents, particularly when dealing with opportunistic complaints. In addition, the fact that Lan was unsure about what she was supposed to do highlights the two-sided problem facing front-line workers of trying to please both managers and customers. This is proven by substantial empirical research that shows the positive impacts of supervisor and manager support on front-line hotel workers (Kang et al. 2015; Choo and Nasurdin 2016; Han et al. 2017). With sufficient support from the management, it is likely that front-line workers can handle customer complaints better and enhance customer relations.

In incident 33, a Vietnamese doctor stayed at a hotel for a conference and the organiser asked Thuy to take him to the doctor's room to leave some flowers as an apology to him. When the doctor returned, he came to the reception and *"scolded"* the staff for entering his room and stealing some important documents. Despite how hard Thuy tried to explain, he *"used very rude words with unacceptable attitude"*, which made Thuy *"annoyed"* and ultimately she said:

> *"If you don't believe me, let's report this to the police to check the finger print on your bag"*.

Thuy failed to regulate her emotions when accused of stealing the customer's confidential documents, which pushed too far to prove her innocence. Luckily the

manager spoke to the customer and calmed him down. The manager also said Thuy was *"over-reacting"* and indeed Thuy admitted it was her mistake.

> *"I should have let my manager handle it before mentioning the police… so now I think I do as much as I can; if I can't, I'll still control myself to solve it."* (Thuy)

In this incident, the manager intervened and moderated the negative emotions expressed by both Thuy and the customer. Thuy considered it as a valuable lesson in managing her emotions.

In incident 34, the customer was drunk and asked for a BBQ at 1am which was totally unreasonable. Vu tried to persuade him to have one the following day. The customer was *"very frustrated"*, stood up and was about to hit him. Vu described his emotions as follows.

> *"I was scared, not of getting hit but if I don't solve it well, it may lead to serious consequences."*

The fight was avoided by the customer's friends restraining him. He said:

> *"I was too depressed to serve those who can't control their emotions… I thought working in the tourism sector was so boring, the money I got from customers wasn't worth the efforts made on serving them"*.

After the incident, Vu spoke to his manager and was sufficiently encouraged to make him *"confident"* and *"love"* his job again.

Whereas incidents 8 and 14 show the manager as an authority figure, incidents 33 and 34 reflect the role of a mentor and a source of emotional support. Their timely support impacted not only the services provided but also the hotel workers' emotions. The combination of high power distance and collectivism of Vietnam possibly makes the role of managers more important compared to other countries. This is in line with how Hofstede and Bond (1988, p.14) visualise an ideal leader, *"a good father"* who respects and encourages employees' group loyalties. Furthermore, these memories became life experiences which the hotel workers could refer to when encountering similar situations – a valuable finding with respect to training and HRM.

Group F – Follow-up after service failures

Four incidents in group E show how hotel workers followed up their customers' emotions and attitudes after something went wrong. These incidents illustrate the way the participants regulated their emotions in response to the negative emotions expressed by the customers. They also regulated customers' emotions by paying attention to them during the stay as the problem did not occur until the end of their stay and by aiming to offer the best in compensation.

In incident 7, a group of Viet kieu[1] could not remember the hotel address and telephone number and spent half an hour on searching for it. When they arrived, they were *"exhausted"*, *"dissatisfied"*, and *"frustrated"* with the staff. Huong said the only thing she could do was to apologise to them. She apologised that the hotel was partly at fault because the address was not sufficiently visible and managed to minimise the emotional significance of the situation. This demonstrates cognitive change, one of the strategies of EI proposed by Gross (1998). In particular, Huong was not influenced by their negative emotions and provided them extra care about local services, she believed it would alleviate their anger.

In incident 32, the customers booked a limousine from the airport to the hotel but hotel staff picked up another customer with the same surname by mistake. Upon being informed of the incident, Thuy sent a taxi to pick them up instead and anticipated their anger.

> *"To be honest with you, my emotions are always ready, I'm not influenced by anyone, and I know what it will be like. At first, they would be very angry, of course… The first thing is to apologise to them, just stand and listen so that they could release their anger. Afterwards, I told them about another customer having the same surname. I also admitted it's our fault for not confirming all the information, both surname and first name… I just took them to their room for a rest because it's too late. The following morning I saw them once more. Before that I had sent an apology letter. It depends on the customers and their booking reference, we could send them wine or fruits or just greet them at breakfast. When they're cool down, I continue apologizing." (Thuy)*

Thuy was psychologically ready for listening to the customer complaints and apologising for the mistake to dissipate their anger. Thuy also emphasised that she

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[1] Literally translated as "Vietnamese sojourner" referring to ethnic Vietnamese living outside the country, another commonly used phrase is Overseas Vietnamese

"took them to their room for a rest" because she knew it was too late and they were tired after the flight and the problem. Thuy mentioned she tended to pay attention to people and put herself in their shoes. In so doing, she let the customers rest and calm down until the next day when further actions were taken to compensate for the mistake made.

A more complicated process of emotional regulation was illustrated in incident 35. A customer encountered some problem with the hotel staff at the airport, she was angry, rang Vu to complain, and *"even swore on the phone"*.

> *"I didn't expect her to scold me that severely. I knew she's frustrated and I was upset. Then she hung up. I tried to ring her but she didn't answer. I texted her "Can I see you for a few minutes? I'd like to talk to you." I was ready to be straightforward to her and quit the job. I wanted to say "First, I'm sorry for the mistake; second, I'd like to share with you that you shouldn't have said that to me. I agreed that it was our fault but you're supposed to respect others. I agree that you pay for staying here and I'm responsible for that but you shouldn't have said that to me." Then I'd be ready to hand in the resignation. She's quite close to me, she's stayed here for more than 10 times, I don't know what happened that made her talk to me like that. But she didn't reply my message." (Vu)*

The above account revealed that Vu had planned what he would have said and done if the customer had agreed to talk to him. In his mind, he was also trying to think of the reasons for her over-reaction on that day. The *"close relationship"* between Vu and the customer over the years influenced his thinking towards the incident, which somehow made him more upset and intend to leave. He admitted it was fortunate that the customer refused to meet him; otherwise, neither of them could have calmed down and the situation could have become worse.

Interestingly, he described his feelings when he accidentally met them the next morning.

> *"I was prepared psychologically for two things. First, apologise to her because no matter what happened, I must admit my mistake; second, I paid attention to her attitude to see how I should talk to her. I tried to be normal, smile and talk to her."*

Vu's EI practice was different between the day he received the phone call and the following morning when they met. It may be that at the time of the abusive phone call, Vu was unable to regulate his negative emotions but over the night they were diluted.

Vu also said he started the day by greeting the happy customers, which he considered an enjoyable part of his job. Another reason for his varied EI is the possibility of reading customers' facial expressions in face-to-face interactions, which enhances his ability to recognise their emotions. This highlights the importance of reading customers' emotional expressions through their face, voice, postures, gestures or body language, which can be added to training programmes for hotel workers as strategies of ER.

Through her observation, Hoa (incident 17) noticed the supervisor's over-reaction towards a Chinese customer who was angry after being accused of stealing a hotel towel. Hoa noticed that the supervisor had some prejudice against Chinese, she stepped in and apologised to the customer in Chinese as required.

> *"The customer was so angry that he almost burst into tears, which means we offended his self-respect for accusing him of stealing things".*

The ability to read the customer's facial expressions helped Hoa understand the situation and intervene to solve the problem. Moreover, the recognition of the customer's emotions made Hoa feel more certain about the possibility that he was not actually taking the towels. Therefore, Hoa did not hesitate to do whatever the customer wanted to please him because he deserved an apology. Later on, Hoa also asked an HK staff who was in charge of that room to come and apologise to the customer with her.

After the incident, Hoa also explained to the supervisor how she put her self-respect aside to apologise to the customer though she was a department manager and expected him to do the same thing. Hoa demonstrated the ability to regulate her own emotions, the customer's and also the supervisor's emotions by reminding him of their work duties. Furthermore, she commented:

> *"The staff didn't like the customer much, that's why he solved it that way. If it had been Russian, German, European or Vietnamese customers, the supervisor would have had a different attitude".*

This notion implies that one's EI or how they regulate their own and others' emotions varies depending on who they interact with and confirms that hotel workers tend to have different perceptions and attitudes towards groups of customers from different cultures as suggested by previous studies (Yeung and Leung 2007; Moufakkir and

Alnajem 2017). Indeed, the preference or prejudice towards customers from a certain culture may impact the overall experience; as a result, these perceptions and preferences deserve further investigation.

Another aspect of cultural difference was highlighted in incident 22 where Duyen described how angry a customer was because he could not check in as soon as he arrived and his anger was exacerbated by the heat in the room. Although the fan was fixed, the customer still complained and asked to speak to the FOM.

> *"... because it was high season, we had to wait until one customer checked out. The rooms were all full. Fortunately, there was one customer that checked out early at 12.00 p.m, then, at 12.30 p.m the new customer could check in. If that was a foreign customer, he could understand the situation, hardly could any Vietnamese customers understand that." (Duyen)*

Duyen cited the limited travel experience as the main reason for the impatience amongst Vietnamese customers compared to their Western counterparts. This incident reinforces the influence of culture on customers' perceptions and expectations of service quality (Karami et al. 2016), through which it highlights Duyen's ability to recognise the root reason for the customer's impatience and annoyance.

To make it worse, the customer threatened to take photos of the industrial fan offered to him and post it online. Duyen described that he was *"really mad"* and she was *"really worried"* but she was also aware *"if I was influenced by the customer's mood, things could get worse"*. However, Duyen demonstrated the ability to understand and regulate the customer's emotions as follows.

> *"When the customers are angry, they always ask us to stay with them. At this time we need to talk and analyse the reasons for them to understand. When they understand and agree with the solutions, they will let us go. If not, we can't go anywhere. After they could move to the new room, when they checked out, they came to the receptionists and thanked us. It is not easy at all to deal with the situations in which they were so frustrated but in the end they were happy and thanked us."*

In contrast to Thuy, Duyen stressed the need to stay with the customers until the problem was solved as urgent resolution was required. This is to say that apart from handling customer complaints, ER exerted significant impact on the service encounter from both the customers and the workers' perspectives. The follow-up after these unfavourable incidents also helped improve the ultimate impression of these

interactions. Indeed, Ro and Wong (2012) found there was no follow-up after customer complaints and encourage more to be conducted.

Amongst these incidents, there are two emerging issues which deserve further investigation. Whereas the hotel workers' perception and regulation of their own emotions played a significant role in the procedures of dealing with customer complaints in incidents 32 and 35, the customers' countries of origin were considered the root reason for the tension and conflict between the customers and hotel workers involved in incidents 17 and 22.

6.2.3. Summary of interactions with customers

In brief, the incidents collected from the CIT show that favourable incidents tend to follow a hierarchy of four processes; perceiving customer needs, building relationship with customers, regulating customers' emotions, and going an extra mile. Notably, on the surface it seems that Vietnamese hotel workers' EI practice follows the four-branch model proposed by Mayer and Salovey (1997). However, a closer look at these processes suggests the second branch, emotion facilitation, was barely practised in these incidents, which is in line with Joseph and Newman's (2010) proposal of the cascading EI model by excluding this branch. Instead, the participants attempted to spend more time building relationship with customers. In so doing, they were likely to become the first point of contact to customers when any issues arose. On a higher level, some participants stepped out of their roles and provided customers with extra mile services, which was driven by their own interests.

Unfavourable incidents are put in order from A to F to highlight the extent to which efforts were made to regulate their own and others' emotions. Little EI practice was involved in the first three groups; A, B, and C. In order words, the communication-related problems and lack of experience prevented the hotel workers from doing things differently to regulate their own and the customers' emotions. Group C reveals the fact that sometimes EI practice was not prioritised for the sake of the business. In groups D, E, and F, a higher degree of effort was made to recognise and regulate their own and others' emotions. Group D reflects the participants' success in solving customer problems but the tension remained which indicates the need for better ER. Group E collects all the incidents of service failures, some of which took place before the hotel

workers had face-to-face interactions with the customers. The participants demonstrated how they regulate their own and the customers' emotions through different ways of following up. The ultimate result was customer satisfaction but these incidents were categorised as unfavourable from the participants' perspective. A possible explanation for this is the wrong impression that participants formed about these incidents for these real-life examples provide valuable information for training programmes.

Please see Figure 8 for a summary of findings on interactions with customers.

Figure 8. Summary of findings on interactions with customers
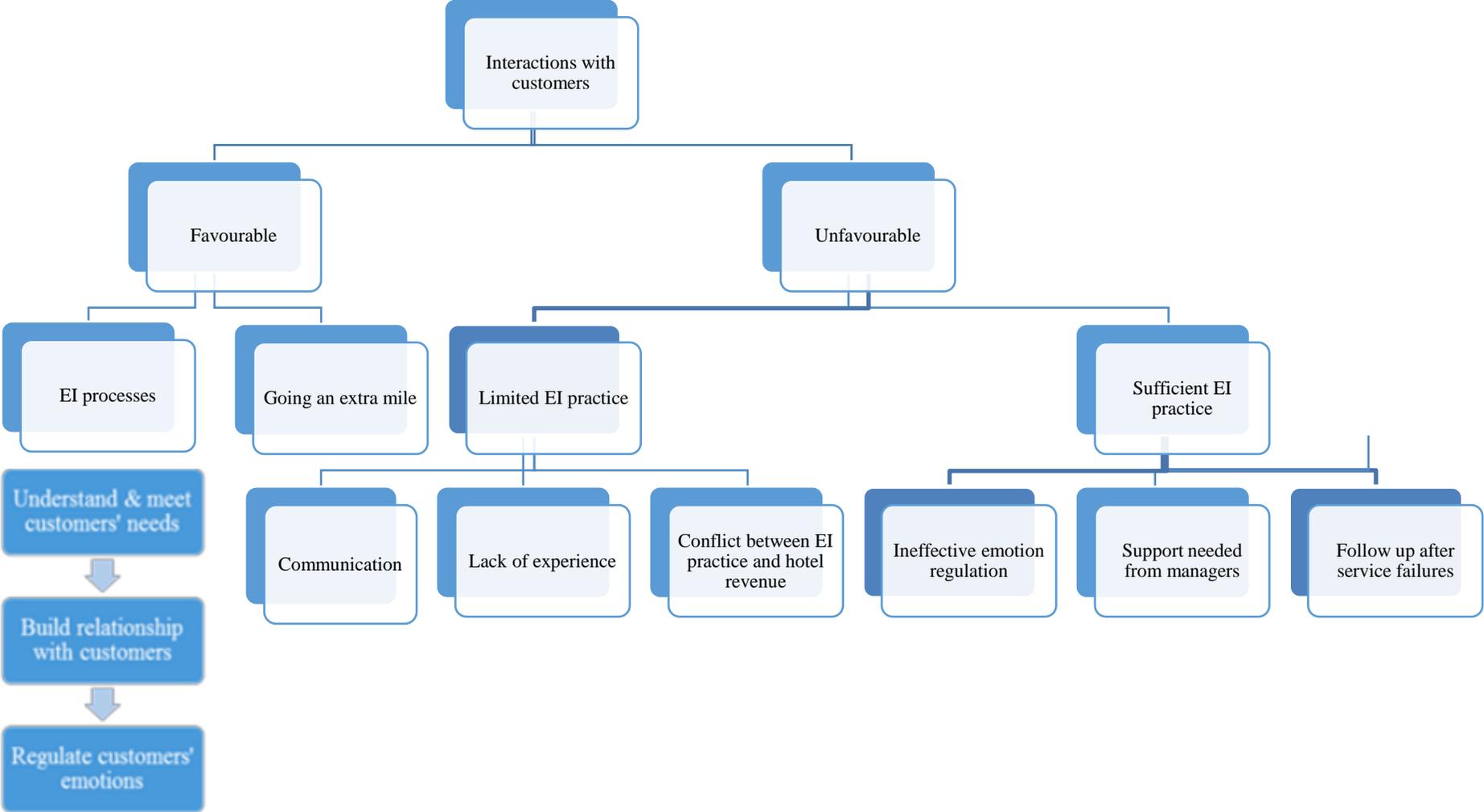
Source: Author

6.3. Interactions with colleagues

These incidents show specific contexts where participants interacted with their colleagues. Four attributes of favourable interactions with colleagues were identified: emotional support and empathy, support with work-related tasks, a sense of commitment, and consultation or guidance. The research findings show that support and empathy are highly valued by Vietnamese hotel workers whereas their sense of commitment can be enhanced through such activities as birthday celebration and cultural traditions. Above all, the consultation or guidance offered by managers or senior colleagues plays an important role in regulating their subordinates' emotions and fosters a positive working environment.

In addition, unfavourable incidents where Vietnamese hotel workers failed to regulate their and colleagues' emotions were recorded, and underlying reasons for these emotional outbursts are discussed. It is noteworthy that these outbursts are not indicators of a low EI since in other cases they demonstrated excellent ability to manage their own and others' emotions. Instead, these incidents clarify when negative emotions are too strong to suppress and how to minimise the impacts of these emotional outbursts. Interestingly, some participants described these incidents as *'unfavourable'* though the problems were successfully resolved, which implies the long lasting effect on their memory.

6.3.1. Favourable incidents of interactions with colleagues

There are four groups from 23 favourable incidents of interactions with colleagues.

Table 12. Favourable incidents of interactions with colleagues

Theme	Incident number
Group A – Emotional support and empathy	1, 5, 6, 9
Group B – Support with work-related tasks	2, 4, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17
Group C – Sense of commitment	3, 7, 18, 19, 20
Group D – Consultation or guidance	8, 10, 14, 16, 21

Source: Author

Group A – Emotional support and empathy

This group highlights the incidents where the participants received or provided emotional support to their colleagues.

In incident 1, a staff member was sexually harassed by a drunk customer which was discussed in group C section 6.2.1[2]. This incident was used to explore interactions with customers and colleagues from two perspectives.

> *"The staff didn't want to retrace but I knew she felt hurt…. She cried, not because of the act of sexually harassment. As you know, working in hotels, staff has to suffer from bad reputation. She cried because of the customer's being unreasonable, we call it 'robbing and shouting aloud at the same time' (vừa ăn cướp vừa la làng) [he carries fire in one hand and water in the other] … It was full of pent-up frustrations, she cried a lot but it's over. I felt sorry for her but she's supposed to accept that when she's working in hotels." (Thi)*

On the one hand, Thi recognised that the colleague cried as a way of releasing the pent-up frustrations from the *"unreasonable"* customer. He also expressed empathy and comforted her. On the other hand, Thi emphasised the fact that hotel workers had to come to terms with the dark side of hotel work, particularly for female colleagues.

In incident 6, Ngoc spoke up for her HK colleagues who were bullied and treated with limited respect by the HGM. Her colleagues turned to her after being criticised or scolded by the HGM as a way of releasing disappointment and upset. Despite her efforts to give constructive feedback to the HGM regarding the language and attitude she used when interacting with the HK colleagues, Ngoc felt she had to resign immediately.

> *"I quit the job and returned the uniform but some HK staff and an FO girl quit the job with me. I didn't know that. It's a negative situation and it relates to the positive situation." (Ngoc)*

Though no improvement was made and they resigned, Ngoc and her colleagues were pleased with their decision. Ngoc did not intend to influence others but the fact that they resigned proved that she had fought for the right thing. She also demonstrated the

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[2] The same situation as incident 5 in group C but explored from the perspective of an interaction with colleagues

strong belief in the age grading rather than the power distance between the hotel owner and bottom-line staff.

In incident 9, a bartender colleague complimented Tran on her willingness to help others, which made her happy. Interestingly, Tran emphasised that she *"was not proud of it"* because it was her responsibility. Instead, she would feel proud when she could speak and help Chinese customers. This implies her ability to distinguish between different emotions and the reasons for experiencing these emotions. To a wider extent, the incident highlights the importance of positive feedback from colleagues and a supportive working environment, which subsequently generates positive emotions amongst colleagues.

Thi (incident 1), Ngoc (incident 6), and Tran (incident 9) expressed empathy and provided support to their colleagues in cases of sexual harassment, unfair treatment, and over workload. Though the extent of emotions involved differs, these incidents emphasise the need to share the problems at work, express their empathy and pay attention to colleagues' emotions. Moreover, this implies that employees are encouraged to express their negative emotions to their colleagues as opposed to interactions with customers.

It is noteworthy that Van (incident 5) highly appreciated the empathy and support from her supervisor who allowed her to go home early when Van's mom was sick. Her supervisor also approved her leaving for a work assignment so that she could take the canoe instead of waiting for the ferry. This resulted in her supervisor being disciplined by the resort manager. Van said:

> *"I explained that my mom got sick suddenly and refused to go to hospital, he wasn't there either, so we couldn't do anything else. She [Van's supervisor] offered to do it as an act of love between humans. "If you think we deserve the discipline, then I'd take it for leaving work suddenly, not Loan". He said Loan was wrong for allowing me to use 'getting the tickets for customers' as an excuse for going home. It's the responsibility of the one who signed the proposal. I cried "I think no matter which cultural background you're from, there must be love between people"… He's British… It's a memory which made me sad because it reminds me of a supervisor trying to help me despite the discipline she would get. Though our relationship wasn't good afterwards, I really appreciated her act, she submitted to the discipline without any complaints or explanation."*

Van pointed out that it was the cultural differences that resulted in the lack of understanding and empathy from her British resort manager. In contrast, she expressed appreciation and respect towards her supervisor because she perceived it as human empathy which allowed for rules to be flexible at times. In fact, there is no research to compare British and Vietnamese management styles. However, a comparative study on French and British hospitality management found that British managers are likely to focus more on communication skills and the human side of the business including employee relationships and personal issues as compared to their French counterparts (Gröschl and Barrows 2003). Thang et al. (2007) note that Vietnamese people highly value a trusting, open and frank working environment and the lack of respect and understanding from managers (mainly from South Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan) led to the surge of strikes in southern Vietnam in 2006 though these countries share cultural similarities with Vietnam. This emphasises the need for foreign enterprises and managers to consider local cultural differences.

Generally, the research participants highlighted the need for emotional support and empathy with regard to issues related to both work and personal relationships. Nevertheless, from an HGM's perspective, Thi emphasised that female workers are supposed to accept sexual harassment as a dark side of the hotel work and protect themselves since there is not much the management could do for them. This finding echoes Kensbock et al.'s (2015) statement on the continual and frequent threat of sexual harassment facing workers in occupations characterised as female-dominated, low-paid and unskilled where customers are given much attention, recognition and power. A study on the hotel industry in Zimbabwe reveals that managers tend to *'turn a blind eye'* to sexual harassment (Mkono 2010b). It can be argued that though preventing sexual harassment is beyond the manager's control, their emotional support was crucial to their female staff who suffered from it. Furthermore, Thi stressed that these encounters serve as lessons for all staff members but confidentiality of those involved was ensured.

Group B – Support with work-related tasks

The incidents in group B show the support that participants provided their colleagues in terms of work-related tasks on a daily basis. Compared to group A, this group

focuses more on support with their tasks and expresses subtle meanings in respect of EI practice.

In incident 2, Hung had to hand over the customers assigned to him due to personal problems, which was unusual especially for butlers. However, the relationship built between them made it easy for the handover. Hung noted he introduced his colleague to the customers and let them get to know each other to assure it would work well for both the colleague and the customers.

In incident 4, Huy described the challenges he had when he started working in the sales department as follows.

> *"A dynamic person meeting someone like-minded would become a powerful source of energy and push each other away. I felt they hesitated to interact with me a bit, so I tried to balance it by talking less and doing more. I used my genuine feelings to send the message to them and make them understand my emotions… I don't have to show it through flowery and sweet words, but by very normal acts... I want to show them that I can be very active at work but I'm sincere in interactions with friends and colleagues."*

The acts Huy mentioned were doing the manual work and covering their holidays. Huy also stressed that their relationship was fostered in a subtle way. For instance, they sent messages to comfort Huy when Huy was told off by the manager and expressed empathy with him. This incident indicates the interactions with colleagues are likely to be built up over time, which then enhances their understanding and empathy with each other.

In incident 11, the FO staff made a booking for a walk-in customer which was overlapping with a room assigned for a tour group by a colleague in the Sales department, which led to a dispute. Khoa explained that everyone in the hotel was open and dynamic in understanding and supporting each other in order to offer the best service; as a result, the incident was resolved smoothly.

In incident 12, a colleague asked Ngan to carry the umbrellas but did not tell her exactly how to do it. Ngan broke all the glass on the table accidentally. Her manager ran towards her asking if she was alright and who asked her to do it. He also told her to make up for it but she noticed he did not look angry at all. Ngan was *"scared"* and *"sad"* because she knew everything was expensive in the five-star resort. She found

out he was just teasing her and someone would always come to help her every time she carried the umbrellas because she was tiny and weak. This emphasises the role of support from the manager and colleagues in the workplace.

The importance of a supportive working environment is also highlighted in incident 13 when Ngan voluntarily worked throughout lunch break to help out when the restaurant was busy. Afterwards, Ngan and her colleagues had lunch together, which helped them build up the relationship and understand each other better.

In incident 15, Huong's colleague forgot to book a boat tour for the customers who expected to be picked up the morning Huong was on duty. She rang the tour operator and nothing was booked. Huong asked the tour operator to wait for the customers at the harbour while arranging a taxi to take them there. In fact, Huong solved the problem without mentioning anything to the customers. She only informed the colleague after solving the problem for the customers and her colleague kept thanking her for preventing a lot more serious consequences associated with her mistake. It is noteworthy that Huong rang the colleague to inform instead of complaining about the mistake she made. Because she did not even reveal that to the customers, it made the colleague really appreciate her help.

In incident 17, a colleague covering Vy's day off and made some mistakes with the room booking, this made their manager blame Vy for the shortage of rooms. Upon receiving the phone call from the manager, Vy had no idea what had happened but admitted it was her fault. She found out when she was back to work, so she had a private conversation with the colleague to inform her about it. Vy also mentioned she admitted it was her fault and everything had been done to solve the problem for the customers. She told the colleague to be careful and help each other in work matters, which made the colleague smile and thank her.

Huy (incident 4) and Ngan (incident 13) showed willingness to offer support to colleagues in order to enhance the relationship in the workplace. Khoa (incident 11) also emphasised the significance of understanding and empathy amongst colleagues, which made it easy to resolve conflicts. However, this may differ from one hotel to another where individualism is more valued as in Hung's case (incident 2). In his workplace, people were driven to show initiatives in taking good care of the customers

assigned to them and thus handover was restricted. Hung also emphasised he only hand over his customers to a *"close buddy"* – a colleague with whom he had a good relationship. This highlights the need to take organisational culture into account in addition to national culture when investigating hotel workers' interactions with colleagues in the workplace.

Incidents 15 and 17 are quite similar in the way the participants apologised to the customers though it was their colleagues' mistake. Huong and Vy described how annoyed they were when blamed for their colleagues' faults but managed to direct their attention towards delivering good services which was considered more important. Thus, they decided to admit it was their mistake and solved the problem instead of denying their responsibilities. They both spoke to the colleagues privately afterwards but in an informative manner. This may result from the characteristic of a harmony-oriented culture where people prefer personal conversation over confrontation in public to give or save face for each other as suggested by previous research (e.g. Dinh et al. 2000; Phan 2008). In some cases, Vietnamese are even unwilling to acknowledge conflicts (Dsilva and Whyte 1998), which may be employed as a strategy for resolving conflicts (Leung 1988). Onishi and Bliss (2006) found that Vietnamese employees are more likely to avoid dealing with conflict than Japanese but express a greater preference for competition than Thais and Hong Kong Chinese, which emphasises the cultural divergence amongst Asian countries. Therefore, hoteliers from other cultures may take this into consideration when dealing with their Vietnamese subordinates and this practice may be transferred to other sectors.

Group C – Sense of commitment

Group C reflects the sense of commitment expressed or enhanced by the participants. The sense of commitment was generated from activities such as celebrating birthdays or traditional holidays. The overall impression is the happiness experienced by both the receivers and givers.

In incident 3, Huong was new and did not know it was a colleague's birthday. All staff members including Huong were invited to a luxurious restaurant but she did not prepare a present for him. However, she felt that *"the working environment was very friendly"* and *"everyone seemed to care about each other, which was very*

memorable". It is noteworthy that Huong did not experience the feelings of being new or deserted by the existing staff members, instead she thought it could be *"a good opportunity and a good position"* for her to work there for a long time.

In incident 7, the way Vien solved the problem resulting from the water supply failure[3] made staff *"pleased"* and willing to give all the tips to the hotel owner to compensate for the loss to the company, which in turn made the hotel owner *"pleased"* and *"talked about it happily to many people"*.

In incident 18, Vinh celebrated the birthday of a colleague who had worked there for just two days, which made the colleague cry. The colleague expressed her gratitude as follows.

> *"I've never remembered or done anything to celebrate my birthday. This is my first workplace. As a graduate starting to work here, I'm very happy and grateful for your celebrating my birthday." (The colleague's statement in Vinh's words)*

The fact that the colleague was moved and what he said also influenced Vinh's emotions.

> *"I felt happy, I was almost crying because her emotions then impacted a lot of people, she was talking and burst into tears, the emotion then was … happiness. The emotions spread all over the room. Everyone was happy, felt committed and cared more about others. It's hard to describe the emotions then. It's just a small thing we did for her but she felt as if it's a massive thing, just a small cake. Then she thanked everyone for organizing the party. I felt happy for doing something for my staff." (Vinh)*

Apart from celebrating birthdays for colleagues, at Mid-autumn festival[4], Vinh and other supervisors distributed gifts and sweets for the staff's children, which made them feel *"respected and recognised by the department"* and *"more committed to work and willing to support each other"*.

In incident 20, Hau organised a fishing day for his team because it was the birthday of two staff members. One or two days before the trip, one of them came to thank Hau

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[3] Incident 12, group C, 6.2.1 but this is investigated from the aspect of interactions with colleagues
[4] In Vietnam, Mid-autumn festival is celebrated especially for children

for organising it. Hau noticed that his colleague was so *"moved"* that he could not even speak.

> *"I didn't remember it's my birthday, I thought you just wanted to have a day to gather everyone." (The colleague's statement in Hau's words)*

In a calm manner, Hau responded to his colleague.

> *"Everyone would do the same, it's your birthday, and there should be something special. If you want, I can let you have a day off. I've worked with you for a while, I must know when your birthday is."*

Most of the incidents involve celebrating birthdays for colleagues (incidents 3, 18 and 20), which makes them feel recognised and valued by the managers or the company and in turn generates their positive emotions. In incident 3, the invitation to join a colleague's birthday celebration made Huong feel a part of the community though she was a newcomer. It is noteworthy that incidents 18 and 20 reflect two opposite viewpoints towards expressing positive emotions in the workplace. Both Vinh and Hau were holding managerial positions and in charge of birthday celebrations for their colleagues; whereas Vinh described how touched his colleague was and it almost made him cry, Hau noticed that his colleague was so touched that he could not speak clearly but considered it unprofessional to be emotional in the workplace. This may result from differences in their personal traits. Vinh also talked about his delivering sweets to colleagues' children at the mid-autumn festival as a tradition in Vietnam, which was highly appreciated by his colleagues. This emphasises the importance of understanding Vietnamese culture and tradition for foreign hoteliers since the adoption of these cultural activities makes hotel workers feel respected and recognised, which enhances their commitment and uplifts their emotions in the workplace. This finding supports Langhorn's (2004) notion of creating a positive working environment as a component of the leader's EI in the hospitality sector.

Group D – Consultation or guidance

Most of the incidents in group D refer to the consultation or guidance the participants offered to their colleagues.

In incident 8, Vien moderated the conflict between the two colleagues by talking and listening to them, one of them was *"so annoyed that he handed in the resignation"*.

Vien explained that *"he's very good, I wanted to retain him"*. Vinh spoke to both of the colleagues separately, he also talked to the department head. He emphasised:

> *"I was straightforward to them, a civil denial is better than a rude grant (mất lòng trước được lòng sau). We're all paid to work here, there's no need to be complaisant."*

Vien attempted to minimise the power distance between him and his subordinates and encouraged them to speak up, which is quite unusual for a hierarchical culture like Vietnam. Vien also made his colleagues *"sing"*, *"shake hands, hug and kiss each other"* after each argument and made them buy some food for the whole department, which subsequently made them *"comfortable and happy"*. In addition to the incidents required for the CIT data, Vien also gave examples of organising team building activities to enhance relationships at his hotel. Vien can be regarded an interesting case of a young HGM with successful strategies for creating a supportive working environment.

In incident 10, Hoa observed the conflicts between an FO supervisor and a Chinese customer and intervened when she noticed the emotions became intense. She was also aware of the colleague's over-reaction to the customer due to his prejudices against China[5].

> *"The supervisor refused to apologise in Chinese…, he can speak Chinese but he told the Vietnamese guide that he couldn't speak Chinese… I think he seems to hate China… Working in this sector, we're not supposed to discriminate against customers. I explained this to him and he said he'd do it better next time. He said the customer told him to apologise in Chinese, which made him angry and he couldn't control his temper. He's quite good at controlling himself, he's worked here for about a year but he couldn't control himself in that situation."* (Hoa)

In this incident, Hoa was able to recognise the emotions from both the customer and the colleague; she also understood her colleague's personality. This knowledge helped her identify the right time to intervene by apologising to the customer. In so doing, she managed to detach the customer from the frustration and directed the colleague towards his work role. Her apology to the customer shows that she was willing to apologise for someone else's fault; therefore, he was expected to do the same thing.

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[5] The same as incident 17, group F, 6.2.2 but investigated from the perspective of an interaction with colleagues

In incident 14, a staff member made a mistake but he did not admit it. Thanh described his colleague's emotional expression as follows.

> "I noticed he's a bit awkward. He made excuses for self-defence which are unacceptable. I could feel that he regretted it but his ego didn't let him admit because he wasn't caught red-handed. He's afraid of losing the job, I knew it."

Thanh also noticed his colleague "regretted" and the "embarrassment" was shown on his face, Thanh decided to speak to his colleague to make him "comfortable". Thanh emphasised:

> "I showed that I was empathetic to him, I wasn't annoyed because the mistake was obvious and everyone knew it. It wouldn't have made the situation better if I was frustrated or told him off."

After the conversation, Thanh noticed his colleague changed a bit but it was not obvious, "he looked embarrassed facing me". Apparently, Thanh aimed to talk to the colleague to moderate his negative emotions resulting from the wrongdoing. He was also aware of the influence of his reaction on the situation and emphasised the need to express empathy with the colleague.

In incident 16, Lam's colleague often forgot to hand over pending jobs to other colleagues, Lam talked to her "privately" about her "weakness and its effects". The colleague improved afterwards, which made others "happier". Having a personal conversation seems to be preferred in the hotel workplace in Vietnam and it was chosen even for constructive feedback when Lam suggested note-taking for a colleague, which worked well for everyone in the team and also saved face for the colleague.

In incident 21, a colleague was "very careless" and did not follow the procedures, which made Hau "angry and scolded him". Hau stressed that "I tried to explain to him, I didn't impose on him as a boss" but only in conversations between them both. After the conversation with Hau, the colleague "smiled".

Apart from Lam, the rest of the participants (Vien, Hoa, Thuc, and Hau) held managerial positions in their hotels. They demonstrated the ability to recognise their colleagues' emotions and conflicts in the workplace and stepped in to solve problems. Group D may be similar to group B in terms of support for colleagues but it has taken

support to a higher level where the participants demonstrated the ability to recognise their colleagues' emotions and facilitate their thoughts, which helped moderate their negative emotions and solve the conflicts in the workplace. It can be argued that those in managerial positions seem to perform EI in a higher level as a result of their accumulated hands-on working experience compared to the bottom-line workers. This finding confirms previous research (Whitelaw and Morda 2003) which indicates maturity and exposure to the industrial setting leads to the development of EI level. Another possible scenario is that their EI skills led to their promotion, which deserves further investigation in future research.

6.3.2. Unfavourable incidents of interactions with colleagues

Four groups are formed from 21 unfavourable incidents of interactions with colleagues.

Table 13. Unfavourable incidents of interactions with colleagues

Theme	Incident number
Group A – Lack of cooperation and communication	1, 2, 3, 11, 13, 18
Group B – The role of personality	4, 5, 14, 15, 16, 20
Group C – The role of managers	6, 7, 25
Group D – Expression of negative emotions	8, 9, 17, 19, 21, 23, 24

Source: Author

Group A – Lack of cooperation and communication

The incidents in group A reflect a shortage of cooperation and communication with their colleagues, which triggered their emotions. These unfavourable incidents appear to result from conflicts in the workplace but a closer look at each incident reveals that the root reasons lying in the social grading system (incidents 1, 2, 11, and 13), individual communication skills (incident 3), and the influence of personal problems (incident 18).

In incident 1, staff refused to separate bedding though Nga found some blood on it.

> *"At that time everyone was tired, I knew it. My colleagues refused to do it, saying they had done that. I insisted on separating those and still kept it at a low voice… I wasn't happy with that so I did it in the end… The problem is they didn't listen to me… They're annoyed, extremely annoyed. But I didn't lose my temper, I used a gentle voice… I understand their emotions and their mentality. I control and calm myself down a lot, it's not simple." (Nga)*

Similar to incident 1, incident 2 revealed that Nga had attempted several times to remind her staff of cleaning a room for guest check-in in good time but they still had not done it. In the end, she had to do it on her own. As a young supervisor, Nga experienced difficulties in working with subordinates who are much older than her.

> *"Extremely hard [to be a young supervisor]… I have encountered many problems. It adds up my feelings, it doesn't go smoothly. But I must make it clear, it's just work. I can't lose my temper. Control it as much as I can… I have helped them a lot. I also ignore minor mistakes and solve them myself. I know it's hard to work here. Sometimes, I offer them food or drink to encourage them. It's difficult to deal with their mentality too. They keep*

complaining without being aware of how hard my job is. I can't take care of all the tiny issues which they don't understand. But I've helped them and made it easier for them." (Nga)

In both incidents, Nga clearly identified their emotions and emphasised that she controlled her emotions and spoke to them in *"a gentle voice"*. In other words, Nga suppressed her negative emotions and concealed the burden of her responsibilities, which made it even harder for her colleagues to understand her situation. At times, Nga looked *"strict"* and did not *"smile at all"*, which made her colleagues *"stressed"*. These two incidents highlight that the lack of cooperation and understanding from her colleagues posed several difficulties to Nga. The situation became more problematic when Nga avoided communicating her problems with colleagues; hence, the conflict remained unsolved. The root reason for this may lie in the age gap between Nga and her subordinates. The aforementioned system of address and reference used in Vietnam together with the high power distance made it difficult for a young supervisor like Nga to assign jobs to her older subordinates.

In incident 3, Hung's supervisor reported to the manager that Hung did not support him with the tour groups.

> *"He didn't even talk to me about it but reported it to my manager. The manager asked me to go to the mainland and see him in his office. He didn't really know what happened, so he was beating around the bush, which is a communication problem. He could have told me what the problem was and I could have explained… I think he didn't understand but when he had an idea of what happened, he showed empathy with me." (Hung)*

The lack of communication between Hung and his supervisor led to conflict at work and the manager had to intervene to solve the problem between them. Interestingly, Hung noted that his supervisor quit the job three months later and in his opinion, the lack of communication skills seemed to be one of the underlying reasons.

> *"His replacement seemed to communicate better… The supervisor who had the conflict with me seemed to handle the job well but didn't communicate well." (Hung)*

A stronger case of non-cooperation is reflected in incident 11 where Hoa was transferred to another hotel in the chain as an FOM. Hoa encountered a lack of cooperation from her subordinates, which may have resulted from her being a

"newbie". From the extract below, it appears that Hoa felt her colleagues thought she brought about a change to the way things were done in the workplace.

> *"When I started, all the staff were against me. There had been a certain way of doing things there and I changed everything, which made some staff shocked as people normally don't like newbies." (Hoa)*

On top of that, Hoa stopped a colleague from watching a movie behind the reception desk, which made him influence other staff and they all went against Hoa.

> *"I felt dispirited and frustrated, sometimes I wanted to cry but I wasn't supposed to cry in front of staff. They know that I'm quite young. It's two years ago, so I was 23, 24. They didn't listen to me... I felt partly sad, partly normal... He acted as if he looked down on me because I was as old as him but I'm his manager. I think if we hadn't been in the hotel, we would have said "tao" to me, which I took as disrespectful." (Hoa)*

The root reason for their non-cooperation may be her young age, which negatively influenced Hoa's emotions. Thang et al. (2007) point out that traditionally Vietnamese people are expected to show due respect and deference to older or higher ranking people *("kính lão đắc thọ"*, literally translated as *"respect for seniority"*). This cultural tradition appears to be a conflict in Hoa and Ngan's case since they were younger but held higher ranking in the workplace. This conflict implies the stronger influence of social grading system over the position ranking in the workplace.

When coping with conflict in the workplace, Hoa admitted the likelihood of crying out as a way of releasing the frustration but she managed to suppress it because the work role as an FOM was deeply embedded in her. As a result, she adopted the surface acting strategy of EL while at work and her family was the emotional support outside of work. In fact, the conflict between her age and position in the workplace caused more serious problems than it seemed. Hoa resorted to dismissing all her subordinates since she failed to change their attitude or encourage their cooperation.

> *"I was too frustrated to stand it any longer... They showed their attitude towards me, which drove me crazy, so I fired them all". (Hoa)*

Fortunately, Hoa received great support from her HGM with regard to recruiting a new team. When she cried out *"Nobody respects me"*, she noticed that:

> *"He wasn't angry, which I found quite impressive. He's really good at controlling his emotions. I learn from him too".*

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Once again, crying out was an expression of the frustration bottled up for months. This may imply Hoa's ability to regulate her emotions by deciding to whom she could cry and talk about her problem. Interestingly, her HGM was regarded as her role model on emotional regulation and observed how he reacted and dealt with different situations. To Hoa, his family and particularly his mom was *"very kind and good at controlling their emotions"*. It can be said that the knowledge of EI can be obtained from either the workplace or the family. This account reveals that the participant observed and noticed those people who were good at controlling their emotions, Hoa chose her manager as a role model and learnt from him. The fact that Vietnamese hotel workers proactively chose their role model in the workplace has significant implications for EI practice. An empirical study based on social learning theory reveals that role models impact individual aggression which was previously believed to be attributed to predispositions or individual characteristics (Robinson and O'Leary-Kelly 1996). That is, if one is against aggressive behaviour, aggressive tendencies are unlikely to spread to others.

In incident 13, Ngan's colleagues were unhappy when she was promoted as a trainer. The FO supervisor booked their on-the-job training session at peak hours for guest check-in. Consequently, Ngan gave her a written warning for failing to deliver the training session as planned, which made her *"very angry"*. Ngan noticed her colleagues were unhappy when she was promoted to the position of trainers which required her to supervise their on-the-job training. To some extent, this role is associated with quality control; as a result, they believed she was no longer in the same boat as them. She was supposed to work with department managers who were much older and had more experience than her. This implies the conflicts between social grading based on age and the work-related hierarchy in Vietnam, which has been described by several participants. However, Ngan recognised that older colleagues tended to be more understanding and empathetic as opposed to young ones. Notably, empathy is one of the dimensions proposed in trait-based EI (Petrides and Furnham 2000b), mixed EI (Goleman 1995) and even the early version of ability-based EI (Kim and Agrusa 2011). Research (Salovey et al. 2002; Slaski and Cartwright 2003; Jung and Yoon 2016a) shows that one's EI can be improved through training and practice, which may make mature hotel workers appeared more understanding and empathetic.

In incident 18, Lam asked her colleague to do something because Lam was busy. The colleague *"got angry"* and *"interrupted"* Lam *"with tears in her eyes"*, which made Lam feel *"angry"* and *"unrespected"*. Through another colleague, Lam found out that the colleague had some problems with her family and boyfriend and that made her *"so sensitive"*. Lam asked to speak to her privately and apologised for not paying attention to her feelings. Lam noted that she had learnt to care more about her colleagues after the incident. It seems that Lam did not recognise her colleague's emotions in the first place but her apology partially regulated her colleague's negative emotions and reassured her colleague through emotional support. This incident reflects the influence of personal problems as one of the factors influencing hotel workers' emotions which is further discussed in 5.3 and 7.5.

Group B – The role of personality

Group B illustrates the role of understanding one's own and others' personalities in the workplace, which helps explain their emotional expressions or behaviour in a certain situation.

In incident 15, Huong provided the customer with some washing powder from the HK department when the customer asked. Her colleagues disagreed with her given that washing powder was not included in the list of complimentary items.

In incident 16, Huong noticed that some money went missing after taking over from a colleague. She felt *"frustrated"* because she did not know why it went missing and she had to compensate half of it, which made the relationship between them *"tense"* for a while. However, she attempted to have a frank conversation with the colleague as she understood that her colleague had a big ego and would never admit that it was her fault. The tension remained between them.

> *"It was quite tense, which made me uncomfortable when going to work. The work would go smoothly if we were happy with each other." (Huong)*

Over time, the tension faded away, which Huong described as how she reacted to tension and therefore it was a characteristic of her personality. She also emphasised the incident happened when they did not know each other very well; after a while, they got on better. Furthermore, Huong facilitated her emotions by directing her attention towards something more important and worthwhile for her.

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"It would be best not to hate or get annoyed with anyone because it would make me uncomfortable and do more harm to me than anyone else". (Huong)

Huy (incident 4) was *"upset"* and *"frustrated"* when scolded for something he did not do by his manager but his good understanding of her personality helped him recognise a subtle apology from her.

"I understand her personality, she's quite hot-tempered but loving. I've gradually got to be familiar with her personality… though she didn't apologise directly, she had some gestures of easing my upset". Huy added her shouting at him was also to release the frustration she experienced from the conversation with the customer. The ability to regulate his own emotions was illustrated by the way he facilitated his thoughts towards the positive side of the incident; the manager was apologetic and actually frustrated at the customer. *(Huy)*

Understanding colleagues' personalities is also important to hotel workers' regulation of their own and others' emotions as reported in incidents 14 and 20.

In incident 14, when a colleague blamed another colleague for something, Thuc asked him to clarify it before blaming someone. Thuc also stressed the need for training courses on interactions amongst colleagues to enhance workplace relations.

"I don't think the hotels I've worked for have those training courses, they train staff on improving customer service, there's nothing on interactions between staff… I think it is [important] because a strong community can make the corporation strong, which starts from individuals first and then spread to the community." (Thuc)

Similarly, in incident 20, a colleague was reported for not doing her job properly, which made everyone in the team *"a bit annoyed"* and *"ostracise"* her. When the cleaning team had a vacant position that no one wanted, this colleague volunteered for a transfer. Others were mocking the colleague behind Vi's back *"Oh, has N taken it? I'm about to volunteer so that I would be voted as the best employee"*. Somehow Vi realised it and transferred the colleague who said that to the cleaning team.

"I know her feelings, she didn't like it but she had put her foot in her mouth (hà miệng mắc quai), she couldn't take it back. Regardless of the capitalist or socialist society, as leaders, we need to listen to the labourers but we don't need to make the decision right away… In this case I had to show them that they can't say whatever they like, they are supposed to bend their tongue seven times before saying something (uốn lưỡi 7 lần trước khi nói). I don't like those who talk behind others' back like that." (Vi)

Thanks to the good understanding of their colleagues, Thuc and Vi managed to facilitate their thoughts and regulate their emotions towards reasoning instead of letting their emotions be influenced by rumours. As department managers, their ER skills helped minimise the tension and conflict amongst the team. Vi also emphasised that she strongly disapproved of talking behind someone's back or favouritism.

> *"I don't like creating factions, I just listen and select the information justly, treat them all in the same way." (Vi)*

In the same light, Thuc commented:

> *"I reacted right away when he showed the attitude and emotions against a colleague, I intervened then and made him see why that colleague did that, it's too soon to blame someone. As a manager, I can't solve all these problems for them but try to minimize those issues."*

This implies the degree to which culture, particularly conflict handling, is established in accordance with the leader's personality and management style. This finding aligns with the proposition that personality determines how individuals engage in and handle conflicts (Ayub et al. 2017). To a wider extent, Whitelaw (2005) suggests hospitality leaders' models of leadership vary depending on their level of emotional self-awareness and the desired outcome which can be group achievement, member satisfaction or member extra-effort. In this case, the style of leadership employed could be group achievement which is obtained by minimising conflicts and establishing the solidarity amongst colleagues in the department.

While criticising someone in public was considered a taboo as stated by several participants, Khoi (incident 5) deliberately criticised a colleague in front of others. His criticism was to warn others of the consequence of failure to fulfil their tasks.

> *"That's my purpose in criticising someone in front of others; soft reminders don't work here… In this competitive and stressful working environment, I have to put empathy aside, work is more important". (Khoi)*

Khoi was aware of his colleagues' negative emotions and face-loss resulting from his criticism. However, in his workplace, the top priority is work, which he has experienced over 14 years working in the same department of the resort. It is noteworthy that later in the interview, Khoi admitted that being strict was his personality and his management style was consistent with the *"competitive and*

stressful working environment" in his workplace. It can be argued that ER is not always preferred or prioritised since it depends on the organisational culture and individual's personality.

The research finding shows the recognition and regulation of colleagues' emotions is partially determined by the understanding of their personalities, which explains the tendency that the research participants reported spending extra time after work on socialising, to get to know and build up the relationship with their colleagues. In so doing, they could come up with appropriate solutions to the conflicts arising and enhance harmony in the workplace. The practice of EI also depends on the managers' personalities, their management styles and the working environment. This opens a new area for future research by examining EI in relation to these factors for a comprehensive picture of EI practice in the workplace, which is beyond the scope of this qualitative research.

Group C – The role of managers

Amongst the three incidents in this group, incidents 6 and 7 show the role of managers from the bottom-line hotel workers' perspective whereas incident 25 was shared from a department manager's point of view.

In incident 6[6], after dealing with the *"aggressive"* customer, Van was *"told off"* by her manager. She experienced the lack of understanding, trust and respect from her manager.

> *"Actually I could control myself with such a maniac like the customer; I had no problems dealing with the manager… The following day when I started the shift, my manager had an unsightly smile "Well done"… I was quite stubborn, so I told him "You're working in Vietnam and your staffs are Vietnamese, it's not about the managers being always right, you need to respect Vietnamese. If you were me who had been offended by the manager yesterday without any confirmation, how would you feel? You just listened to the customer and scolded your staff like that, it's a serious offense. I hope from now on, when you work with Vietnamese staff, you should respect us. You should understand our culture". He was ashamed because I was very certain. He likes showing off but doesn't respect staff as much as the previous manager, so he has had several clashes with Vietnamese staff. In the same manner – blaming us without any investigation and being uppish, many of us have criticized him.*

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[6] The same situation as incident 9 in group D, section 6.2.2 but explored from the perspective of the interaction with her manager

Actually, Vietnamese tend to forbear very well, once we need to, we'll be very straightforward, even to managers, as long as we don't offend them. We must make them respect us, if he wants to be respected, he must respect us, and we're workers, not housemaids. When I said that, he pretended to be friendly "Oh, I've got too much to do, it's a mistake, sorry." That's it." (Van)

Once again, incident 6 reinforces previous research finding that shows Vietnamese employees highly value respect and understanding from their managers, particularly with foreign managers (Thang et al. 2007). Indeed, empirical research on Vietnamese and foreign managers in manufacturing and service companies in Vietnam shows that foreign expatriate managers lack an understanding of the local culture and expectations while Vietnamese managers lack an understanding of the international marketplace (Neupert et al. 2005). The lesson learnt from expatriate managers working for Taiwanese companies in Vietnam is that expatriate training mostly focuses on technical skills and exclude skills on cultural barriers and other living information (Chung and Ho 2012).

Quang and Vuong (2002) found that familial management style was widely accepted in the private sector in Vietnam where businesses were developed from family workshops and managers expressed a parental concern for their employees, which seems compatible with Vietnamese culture and effective in small-scale organisations. Nevertheless, participative management style was mainly practised in the joint venture sector where modern principles of management were employed (Quang and Vuong 2002). Vietnamese employees are more likely to seek self-control and self-dependence than Chinese, which originates from a historical feature of *"phép vua thua lệ làng"* (translated as *"King's rule is transcended by village's regulation"*) (Thang et al. 2007, p.121; Warner 2013). In overall, Vietnamese cultural values are a mixture of Chinese, Western, and Socialist values, which are reflected in management practices such as grassroots democracy, delegation (American), egalitarianism, and collective decisions and responsibility (socialism) (Nguyen et al. 2018a). This calls for empirical studies on management practices that are relevant to Vietnamese cultural values, norms, and beliefs held by Vietnamese workers.

In incident 7[7], the hotel owner treated HK staff badly and used very rude words when talking to them, which Ngoc considered bad behaviour. She tried to give constructive feedback but the situation became worse and Ngoc resigned in the end.

> *"I think everyone is the same, we all work for money but I didn't share the same thinking with my hotel owner. I can't blame her because she doesn't specialise in hotels, she doesn't understand it much. After working for 3 or 4 months, I gave her some constructive feedback "You shouldn't be too strict to staff, especially HK staff because they don't have a good education, their job involves a lot of manual work." Though they make mistakes, we should show some respect to them and care about what we say to them… The more I talked to her about it, the harsher she became to HK staff as if I caused trouble for HK staff… That afternoon, I said to her "If you continue, I'm not working here anymore." "Others can replace you if you don't want to work here." After that day, I quit the job, I was so frustrated… [The manager sounded] strict, like she's threatening me "You have no rights to interfere with my job, mind your own business." I knew it's not my business but working in the same company, we should help each other, I didn't raise a petition, I just gave suggestion to make things good for both but she's so stubborn that I can't work with her." (Ngoc)*

Unlike Van, Ngoc cited her manager's specialism in another area as the reason for her shortage of understanding, empathy and respect towards HK staff. Notably, another reason mentioned by Ngoc is that her manager is a northerner. Further discussion on the participants' perception of Northern Vietnamese is presented in section 7.3.1.2. She believed it was bad behaviour because HK workers were as old as her mom whereas the hotel owner was a few years older than Ngoc. It is the strong belief in the culturally defined respect for seniority which led to Ngoc's reaction and speaking up for the HK colleagues.

Surprisingly, neither Van nor Ngoc suppressed these negative emotions; instead they conveyed their messages explicitly and their conversations with the managers were under control, which highlights their determination to express these negative emotions and make their voices heard. However, Ngoc quit her job as a consequence of the unresolved conflict since she was aware of her action and prepared for the result. To Ngoc, the defence of her colleagues was possibly more important than the job;

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[7] The same situation as incident 6, group A, section 6.3.1 but explored from the perspective of the interaction with her hotel owner

consequently, she showed no efforts in practicing EI in the conversation with her manager.

In incident 25, a colleague often posted her pent-up frustrations from work on Facebook, Dinh thought it was improper and spoke to her several times.

> *"I had to fire her. It's the first time in my life that I had to fire someone because of what she did on FB. It's an unforgettable memory. I had to do it… I empathized with her because I considered her as a sister to guide and share what to do and what not to do. However, I wasn't persuasive enough to change her. I felt lost and empty… At that time, she didn't regret it, she hated me for not protecting her because she's my staff but I cooperated with HR department to fire her… At first, I was very firm but my voice gradually got softer and I meant to give her advice. I was firm because I was the one who made the decision, I was supposed to be strict. In fact, I'm a sentiment-oriented person…"*

In contrast, Dinh (incident 25) expressed his point of view on the role of managers from a department manager's perspective. He felt *"lost and empty"* when firing a colleague for her posts of negative work-related comments on Facebook. Vinh believed that his insufficient support to her upset her even more than losing the job because he considered her a young sister who needed life orientation. Vinh also stated that his young subordinates tended to have poor ER skills. This statement is in accord with other participants and previous research regarding the development of EI and age (Ashkanasy and Daus 2002). Furthermore, in this incident, Vinh demonstrated his role as a mentor guiding the colleague rather than the mere relationship between a manager and a bottom-line worker. This is in line with previous research that shows Vietnamese managers follow paternalistic orientation in the way they are interested and sometimes involved in their employees' family life to provide social support (Quang and Vuong 2002).

It can be seen that participants perceived the role of managers as someone with authority and expected other qualities associated with the role such as respect, empathy, and guidance. The shortage of these qualities may negatively influence their emotions and cause dissatisfaction, which is likely to lead to more serious consequences for the environment in the workplace.

Group D – Expression of negative emotions

Group D describes situations when the participants failed to regulate their emotions and expressed their anger or frustration to their colleagues. The main reasons cited for their inability to regulate their emotions were heavy workload, stress and tension from the customers. Seven incidents in this group were collected from seven participants, five of whom were in managerial positions (Vien – incident 8, Lan – incident 9, Vi – incident 21, Vu – incident 23 and Dinh – incident 24). This may imply why they let their anger arise and expressed it to colleagues.

In incident 8, the receptionist accidentally revealed to the customer that they paid higher room rate to the tour company compared to the hotel room rate, which resulted in losing partnership with that company. Vien was *"extremely angry"*, he rushed back from a café *"with the terrible anger"* on his face and asked the receptionist to go up to the terrace where he could shout and release his anger.

> *"I controlled my emotions until I got to the terrace, I scolded severely, shouted loudly, slammed the door and hit other stuff, but only two people knew it instead of letting 12 people know." (Vien)*

Surprisingly, Vien blamed the department head for her subordinate's fault since he believed "when the son is unwise, it is the mother who is to blame" ("con hư tại mẹ") and "a fish stinks from the head down" ("nhà dột từ nóc" literally translated as "the house leaks from the ceiling"). However, Vien emphasised that:

> *"Before shouting at someone, I always spend 3 seconds to take a deep breath. Just a deep breath can help me regulate my emotions to some extent… At that time, I was very frustrated, I intended to scold them at level 10; after the deep breath for 3 seconds, it came down to level 6 or 7".*

After shouting, he said to them:

> *"I've finished, you have anything to say? I'm listening. I've released my anger".*

In incident 9, Lan trained her staff on the same thing many times but they did not do it, which *"annoyed"* her. She ended up shouting at them or giving them a disciplinary reprimand.

> *"They [the customer] show the reaction, which I hate but I have to put up with it… With my subordinates, I'll express my emotions a bit more." (Lan)*

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Interestingly, Lan distinguished the degree to which she would suppress or express her negative emotions depending on the people she was dealing with and this was under control.

In incident 17, when Lam was a newcomer, she was *"starving"* but her senior colleagues asked her to continue with the job she was doing at that time.

> *"I couldn't control my emotions. I shouted at my colleagues "Why didn't you do that? Why is it always me?" After that, I was told off by my seniors. They told me that I was young, how dare I did that to them. They also taught me a lesson." [laughing] (Lam)*

After the emotional outburst, Lam could still recognise her emotions and the emotions of her senior colleagues.

> *"I was sad. Sadly, it was my fault. I should have talked to them in another way… They were a little bit angry and disappointed because they were older than me." (Lam)*

The cultural feature of respect for seniority again emerged from the participant's interactions with colleagues. It was evident to all the people involved in the incident that Lam was wrong because she was a newcomer and younger than her colleagues.

In incident 19, there was a group checking out at 12pm and another group checking in at 1:30pm. After a long journey, the customers were tired and annoyed by having to wait for the rooms. Though she did not mean to be rude to her Hk colleagues, Vy said on the phone *"What have you been doing? Why are the rooms not ready yet?"*

Her colleague shouted back at her, Vy replied *"I got it"* and hung up. Vy knew her colleague was *"dissatisfied"* with her. She *"regretted"* saying that to her colleague and not apologising. Vy revealed that the pressure from the crowd and customer complaints made her fail to control her emotions. Wu (2007, p.1526) addresses this as the *"domino effect"* where a customer spreads dysfunctional behaviour to those in close proximity. It became a more serious case when Vy was affected by the customers and released her anger to her colleagues. As a consequence, she failed to prevent this *"domino affect"*.

In incident 21, Vi was told that her staff stole customer's money, which made her *"frustrated"*. She said to her colleague:

> *"Why did you do that? Don't you have any money? Tell me, I'll give you some money."*

Vi also emphasised that she regretted saying that to her colleague because she noticed the colleague was *"frustrated"*, *"sad"*, and *"ashamed"* in front of other colleagues and Vi.

When asked if she would deal with the situation differently, Vi said:

> *"I'd criticise them again but I'd try to control myself more and ask them to have a meeting with me. No matter how angry I am, I wouldn't let the supervisor see it and try to make them understand that it's very shameful."*

Upon reflecting on the situation, Vi recognised what she could have done to improve the unfavourable interaction with the colleague, which suggests the facilitation of thinking may occur after the incidents. This thinking may then become their source of reference on how to deal with the problem when facing similar situations.

In incident 24, Dinh was in charge of the staff dormitory. When he came over to check, the staff did not keep a record of their check-in and check-out time according to the regulations, which made Dinh *"very annoyed"* and *"very angry"*. The staff also blamed each other and argued with Dinh, and they were about to have a fight. Dinh believed that young people tended to be *"aggressive and can't stand pent-up frustrations"* which led to the emotional outburst and the quarrel. On his side, he commented that *"I felt that I was wrong too… After that incident, I tried to control myself more"*.

In incident 23, it was a busy day, the customer wanted to change rooms. Vu rang the HK manager to let him know. Vu noticed that his colleague was *"very upset and tired due to the heavy workload"*.

Upon receiving the response from his colleague *"No more room changes, why do they want to change? Tell them not to change"*, Vu felt *"annoyed"*. Therefore, he rang the colleague again and said:

> *"Why did you hang up? We haven't finished the conversation. Do you want to do it or I will report to GM?"* [and his colleague's response was] *"Report to him if you want"*.

It is noteworthy that Vu was the only participant who attempted to solve the conflict after releasing his frustration. There are several reasons behind this; firstly, the conflict happened between Vu and the HK manager who was considered of equal position with him in the resort; secondly, Vu got on well with the HK manager; thirdly, Vu has gained substantial working experience for over ten years. It is suggested that the hierarchy, the understanding of the colleague's personality and Vu's intensive experience made it easier for him to approach the colleague after the argument via the phone and to offer help. Furthermore, the main reason for their conflict was the desire to meet customer demand; once this was solved, their emotional tension was also relieved.

In addition, these incidents differ in the degree to which their expression of frustration was under control. Vien was extremely angry and rushed back to the hotel but he was aware of the negative impact his frustration might cause to the hotel image and customers in the lobby. Thus, he asked the receptionist who made the mistake and her supervisor to go to the terrace where he could release the frustration by shouting at them. In so doing, he could release the frustration, expressed it to the people involved but at the same time saved face for them. In incident 9, Lan shouted at the colleagues who made mistakes and disciplined them but she knew that most of her subordinates are *"quite nice"* and *"don't show negative attitudes"*. This indicates how well she understood her subordinates' personalities and to which extent she could criticise them.

Contrary to Vien and Lan, Vi and Dinh admitted that they lost their temper in the interactions with their subordinates and considered it was their mistake. Vi shouted at the colleague in front of others because she was so angry with their attitude towards tips which is considered a sensitive issue in hotels, particularly in the HK department. She was under pressure being a department manager but failed to train her staff. In other words, losing face in front of the FO supervisor was the underlying reason for her anger. She regretted not apologising to the staff in the end. Dinh admitted he lost his temper for two reasons; first, it was his fault for not checking the male dormitory properly; second, *"young people tend to be aggressive and cannot stand pent-up frustrations"*. However, he considered it was a lesson for managing conflicts with colleagues, particularly with young subordinates.

These findings align with Lindebaum and Fielden's (2011) argument that the expression of anger does not necessarily imply a lack of ER or leadership ineffectiveness. This supports Lewis's (2000) notion that expressing appropriate emotions in a certain situation reflects a leader's ability to respond effectively. In Vy's case, she expressed her frustration to the colleague after receiving the customer complaint, which is contradictory to McCance et al.'s (2013) suggestion that those who express the customer-induced frustration in front of others are likely to spread their anger to those members under the influence of social sharing. Interestingly, it was the way Vy communicated to her colleague that made the colleague dissatisfied with her, instead of them both sharing the frustration from the customers. Apparently, the literature on EI, EL and ER barely touches upon the expression of negative emotions and in particular the thinking and emotions after an emotional outburst, which deserves further consideration since they may become their source of reference after these incidents.

6.3.3. Summary of interactions with colleagues

Examples of both favourable and unfavourable incidents show that the interactions with colleagues were determined by such attributes as communication, support, empathy and personality. The lack of these attributes led to the experience of negative emotions amongst the workers. In other words, the provision of these attributes facilitated the relationship between Vietnamese hotel workers and their colleagues, through which they were able to recognise positive or negative emotions expressed by their colleagues and orient their thoughts and behaviour towards a harmonious environment in the workplace.

There were also activities outside of the workplace to enhance the sense of commitment and generate positive emotions amongst hotel workers. The role of managers emerged as a deciding factor towards the interactions with colleagues. In a wider sense, the working environment is determined by the manager's background, personality and management style. Nevertheless, the study focuses more on the national culture than the organisational culture and takes into account what enhances Vietnamese hotel workers' EI practice in the workplace and what does not. Indeed, there were incidents whereby the participants failed to regulate their own and colleagues' emotions and it was beyond their control. It is noteworthy that the

participants tended to express negative emotions in interactions with colleagues more clearly than with customers. The majority of these cases resulted from the desire to make customers satisfied; hence, once customer complaints were properly handled, these conflicts faded away or were moderated by the people involved.

Please see Figure 9 for a summary of findings on interactions with colleagues.

Figure 9. Summary of findings from interactions with colleagues
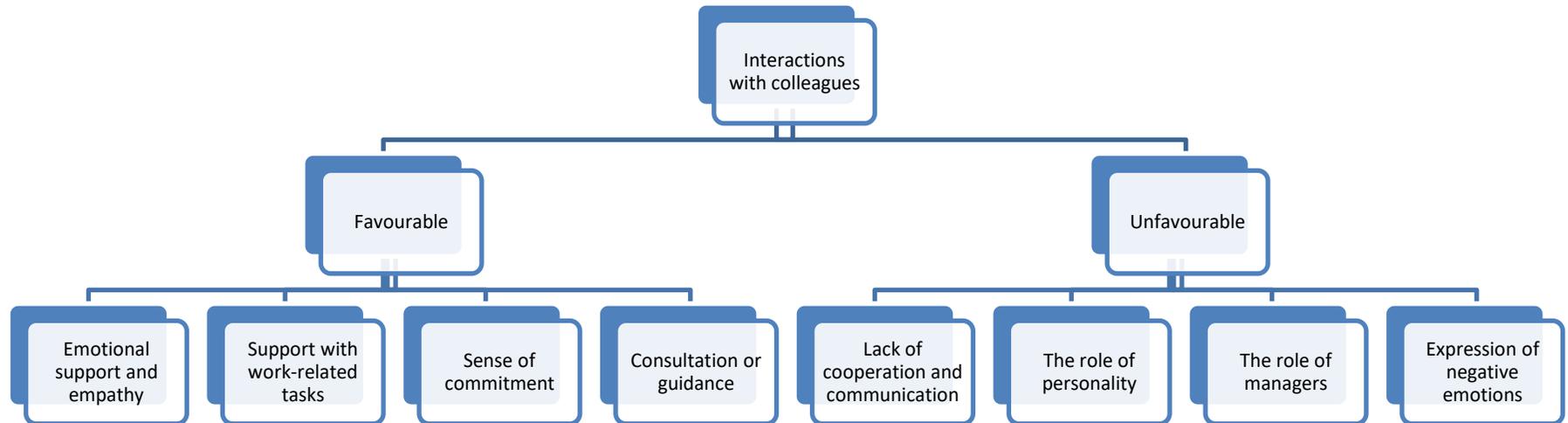
Source: Author

6.4. Summary

The chapter provides an overview of all the incidents and the classification of these incidents. The findings illustrate the role of context in EI practice performed by Vietnamese hotel workers. Regarding interactions with customers, the favourable incidents follow sequential and hierarchical processes of understanding and meeting customers' needs, building relationship with customers and regulating customers' emotions. Participants reflected the practice of EI following the hierarchical process but it does not mean that their EI is low or high since the EI practice depends on the circumstances and the people they interacted with. Others described how they took the services offered to a customer an extra mile further, which was determined by their own interests.

In contrast, the investigation of unfavourable incidents of interacting with customers reveals limited EI practice was demonstrated in situations involving the lack of communication, lack of experience and the conflict between EI practice and hotel revenue. More interactions with customers were involved in incidents that reflect ineffective ER, support needed from managers, and follow-up after service failures.

The interactions with colleagues show favourable incidents were attributed by emotional support, empathy, cooperation and communication. The lack of these attributes led to unfavourable interactions. There are also activities suggested to enhance a sense of commitment amongst colleagues to generate positive emotions. Above all, managers played an important role in facilitating their interactions with colleagues and determining the working environment. Incidents where the research participants failed to regulate their own emotions and the emotions of their colleagues were also investigated. However, the extent to which they controlled their expression of negative emotions varied. These favourable and unfavourable examples of EI practice are valuable for training hotel workers and providing hoteliers a closer look at how, why and when EI is practised, which is hard to capture in quantitative studies.

The records of CIT incidents were to achieve the research objective three – exploring EI practice through examples of favourable and unfavourable incidents. The classification of incidents follows Bitner et al.'s (1990) incident classification scheme

allowing the analysis of each theme as well as the collection of emerging issues. There are three main issues emerging from these incidents; language and culture knowledge, Vietnamese work-based culture and the role of managers. Though language and culture knowledge appeared to be a barrier for Vietnamese hotel workers to interact with foreign customers in some incidents, it turned out to be an effective tool to build up their relationship elsewhere. Indeed, languages and culture knowledge and problem-solving skills are amongst the employability skills required for hospitality graduates in the context of Jordan (Alhelalat 2015). Given the fact that customers from continental Europe and the Pacific Rim prefer to be greeted and have basic exchange in their native language (Blue and Harun 2003). This highlights the need for reconsidering the components of the hospitality curricular to strengthen the hospitality graduates in Vietnam.

Confucianism also impacted the manner Vietnamese hotel workers behave in their workplace through the practice of protecting or saving one's face and being sensitive to social contacts as a sense of shame (Hofstede and Bond 1988). Therefore, the participants tended to have private conversations for both work-related and personal matters. Hoteliers may take this into consideration in order to avoid violating social etiquettes. The managers played a decisive role in interactions with both customers and colleagues in hotel in Vietnam, which may result from the combination of a high power distance and collectivist culture. These two issues deserve further investigation and will be discussed in more detail in chapter 7.

Chapter 7 – Findings from semi-structured interviews

7.1. Introduction to chapter 7 – Findings from semi-structured interviews

Chapter 7 is the last chapter to present findings from semi-structured interviews. Firstly, findings from this chapter fulfil research objective 4 – reflecting the strategies that Vietnamese hotel workers used to manage their own emotions and the emotions of customers and colleagues. Research findings show that the emotional management of their own emotions differ from those of customers' and colleagues' emotions, which highlights the influence of culture on their EI practice. Secondly, the chapter discusses cultural factors influencing their emotions to contribute to the information collected in focus group interviews; therefore, objective 1 is achieved by combining the findings from both focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews. Similarly, their sources of knowledge are further explored in chapter 7 and this fulfils objective 2. The last part of the chapter covers the participants' suggestions for improving EI as stated in research objective 5. Please see Appendix 8 for a summary of findings in chapter 7.

7.2. Vietnamese hotel workers' management of their own emotions

When asked how they recognised and regulated their own emotions in the workplace, the research participants described the strategies adopted during and after the interactions with others. Nevertheless, little was recorded regarding how they recognised their own emotions.

> *"The first thing to mention is personal issues, I myself must put everything aside, leave it at home no matter how upsetting it is. At work, I must show that I'm a professional worker in the way I speak and behave and the attitude I show." (Linh)*

> *"When I start work, I put them aside and bring the "publicly displayed emotions" ("cảm xúc chung") which are the emotions between me and customers and between me and colleagues. Of course, sometimes I give way to my personal emotions because no one is good enough to suppress all the negative emotions such as frustration and annoyance… In brief, I think we should prioritise the public emotions at work which brings one benefit – the comfort for customers and colleagues. To me, it's acceptable to feel annoyed with colleagues, but definitely not with customers. It's possible to get annoyed with colleagues as long as its consequence doesn't do harm to work." (Thuc)*

> *"My emotions are closely related to my job. If I don't control my emotions when I serve customers, I can't serve them well. My emotions at home are different. On the way to work, I may get annoyed. When I arrive at work, if I don't put that emotion aside, I can't serve the customers well. Sometimes, I can't even work effectively because of that annoyance. I'm more productive when I don't feel annoyed." (Vinh)*

It seems that the participants placed a strong focus on how they regulated their inner feelings to match with the required emotional display whilst at work and little was revealed with respect to the mechanisms to recognise their own emotions. Like other East Asian cultures where individuals attempt to adjust to the needs of others, Vietnamese people tend to dampen their emotional expressions to maintain group harmony (Tsai et al. 2002). However, most participants demonstrated the ability to identify their emotions and distinguish between the positive and negative emotions. This is a possible explanation for the fact that the hotel workers tended to describe their positive emotions and how they regulated their negative emotions instead of naming the negative ones.

This may result from the characteristic of a collectivist culture where Vietnamese people tend to consider themselves subordinate to the community and committed to fostering the group relationships (Hofstede et al. 2010); they assume that they are expected to express the emotions beneficial to the organisation. While some participants deliberately suppressed their negative emotions and wore a mask, others were able to rationalise and prioritise their thinking towards the work roles. This illustrates the adoption of EL strategies through surface-acting and deep-acting coined by Hochschild (1983). A strong element of EL performance emerged in the finding of EI practice of Vietnamese hotel workers which confirms the overlapping and close association between the EI and EL concepts (Yin et al. 2013). However, the EI practice complements the EL performance in the way Vietnamese hotel workers described their emotion management skill growing over time through working experience and becoming a daily practice outside of the workplace context.

7.2.1. Strategies adopted in the workplace

The participants emphasised that the strategies for regulating their emotions were employed when their negative emotions were aroused during the interactions with others. It is noteworthy that most of the interactions that resulted in emotions becoming intense were related to customers. The strategies adopted during the interactions with customers included wearing a concerned mask, deep breathing, and leaving the work floor. In some cases, when the participants recognised they were still suffering from the pent-up frustrations after the interactions with customers ended, they would leave the work floor, talk to themselves about the consequences of holding these negative emotions, and do something they enjoyed.

7.2.1.1. During the interactions

The regulation of their emotions focused on situations when customers were dissatisfied, complained and even scolded them. The word *"scold"* was used quite frequently to imply the higher degree of intensity and anger expressed by customers as opposed to *"complain"*. Therefore, the Vietnamese hotel workers came up with their own ways of managing their emotions in these emotionally challenging situations such as wearing a concerned mask, taking a deep breath, and leaving the work floor.

The first technique proposed by Khoi was to *"wear a concerned mask"* when apologising to customers.

> *"When they scold me, I'll have to unrumple my face (vuốt mặt) and listen. Most of the time, I must wear a concerned mask and apologise, hoping to get away with it… Many customers want to speak to GM about staff's attitudes; so after all these years, I've learnt to wear a concerned mask." (Khoi)*

Nguyen (2016a) identifies *"vuốt mặt không nể mũi"* ("*unrumple the face and ignore the nose*") as one of the metaphors implying power and respect in Vietnamese and is interpreted as follows. The nose is the highest part on the face; so when the face is unrumpled, the nose will definitely be touched. The act of unrumpling the face regardless of the nose implies the inappropriate behaviour towards those of higher ranking, which is likely to cause trouble to the offender. In this account, Khoi used the first part of the metaphor to illustrate the fact that he had to put up with the disrespectful complaint made by the customer. Khoi was aware of his work responsibility but required a certain degree of respect from the customer. This notion has its roots in the concept of face in Vietnamese and loss of face is regarded as a sensitive phenomenon which can be caused by minor to serious occurrences (Pham 2014).

However, Khoi came to terms with the fact that he was supposed to make a sincere apology to fulfil his work role in order to avoid customer complaints. *"Wearing a concerned mask"* indicates the fake expression of guilt and empathy towards the customer complaint which has been adopted by Khoi over the years. This strategy of ER bears some similarities to past studies on hospitality or service workers. Grandey (2000, p.99) relates to it as response-focused ER and suggests that it reflects the process of surface acting as in Hochschild's (1983) concept of EL. In another study on ER of hospitality leaders, *"putting the mask on"* was used to conceal fear, challenges or uncertainties (Haver et al. 2014). Taking a different approach, Khoi adopted that strategy as a lesson from the lack of sincerity reported by customers when employees apologised to them. Instead of facilitating his thinking, the research participant chose to display the desired facial expression to solve the problem efficiently in order to avoid the emotional burden.

Deep breathing was also considered a strategy for regulating one's own emotions.

> *"I always take a deep breath, lower my tone and then go straight to the main point… I always try to be calm and avoid any arguments if possible." (Huong)*

In Huong's opinion, taking a deep breath is helpful in calming herself down before starting the conversation. Similar comments on calming oneself down with a deep breath were also found in interviews with Vien, Thanh and Thuy. The act of taking a deep breath involves the facilitation of thinking and the transition amongst the emotions.

> *"I find it really important and effective. When you take a deep breath, you can feel that your heart beat is slowing down and you start relaxing." (Thuy)*

In addition, leaving the work floor was considered a good way to moderate the negative emotions.

> *"Take a deep breath or turn around and go somewhere then come back, to prevent it [the anger] from getting out of my control. I can go out for a drink or somewhere else and come back later." (Truong)*

Truong was able to identify his emotions and appraise the extent to which he could control the negative emotions. By doing so, he autonomously left the work floor before losing control of his anger. In the same light, due recognition and regulation of their own emotions was found in Hoa's interview.

> *"Sometimes I find myself imperfect, I can't control myself in some cases; then I'll tell the customers to wait for me for a bit, I go inside, bursting into tears because I'm too frustrated." (Hoa)*

Backstage is also a place where Hoa could "*burst into tears*" due to the extreme frustration. Hoa demonstrated the ability to recognise her negative emotions bottling up and left the work floor befor the emotional outburst. Though Hoa admitted she failed to control her temper and considered it as her imperfection, her due recognition of the negative emotions was reflected in the way she fulfilled her work role and communicated to the customers before she failed to suppress it in front of them. In other words, when the participant failed to adopt either surface acting or deep acting strategies proposed by Hochschild (1983), leaving the work floor and crying was the last resort. Once these emotions were released, they were ready to continue with their job roles. This suggests another strategy to deal with EL which Hochschild's theory of EL has neglected. In an attempt to explain the two strategies of EL, Grandey (2000), based on Gross's (1998) model of ER, explains the act of leaving the work floor as

one of the employees' strategies to modify the precursor of the situation triggering their emotions, and in the worst scenario employees may choose to leave the organisation. Nevertheless, in this incident, leaving the work floor was employed as a way of modifying emotions rather than the situation per se since the participant informed the customers of her leaving and reassured them that she would return to handle their problems.

7.2.1.2. After the interactions

The participants said they still suffered from the pent-up frustrations or bottled-up negative emotions after the interactions with difficult customers. In these situations, several strategies were employed comprising leaving the work floor, self-talking, and doing something they enjoyed so as to divert their attention towards something more important.

Leaving the work floor was mentioned as one of the strategies employed by the participants during and after the interactions.

> *"I sometimes think that he would get a punch if we were outside. It's the negative emotion I had while serving customers but I must calm it down to serve them. After serving them I was still annoyed and suffered from the pent-up frustrations, wondered why I had to get these insults. They can be polite but when they use rude words, I feel disrespected and frustrated. After serving them, I must leave…" (Vinh)*

Different from Hoa in the previous section, Vinh considered leaving the work floor as an effective way of detaching himself from the negative emotions bottled up during the interaction with the customers. Although Vinh identified the arousal of negative emotions when dealing with the customers, he adopted surface acting strategy to suppress these emotions. Those emotions remained after the interactions, which triggered his ability to regulate these negative emotions. First, he facilitated his thinking and analysed the reasons for the impolite manner. When the first step failed to regulate his emotions, Vinh resorted to leaving the work floor which was reported as one of the common ways to deal with difficult customers in Bailey's (1996 cited by Grandey 2000) qualitative study on service workers.

An interesting finding is the way Vinh distinguished the locations and the roles associated with these locations. *"He would get a punch if we were outside",* this

indicates the awareness of his role as a hotel worker in the workplace as opposed to a member in the society. Vinh identified his equality with the customer as members of the society and he would *"punch"* the customer for his *"rude words"*. The comparison was made to imply the unequal roles between Vinh and the customer in the hotel workplace. Whereas the former self requires his ER to serve the customers, the latter allows him to act as a defence against insults and rude behaviours. This may result from the cultural values embedded in the education and upbringing, which Sucher et al. (2013) propose as the uniquely Asian characteristic in the hospitality sector. Vinh's account also refers to the negligence of context in studying one's EI (Lincoln 2009). In interactions amongst members of the society, Vinh could punch someone who was impolite and make no efforts to regulate his frustration so the fight could happen. In contrast, the hotel workers are bounded by the organisational regulations and required to perform EL in emotionally challenging situations. Therefore, it can be argued that one's EI is not a consistent indicator since in different contexts of interaction with different people; individuals determine the extent to which they regulate their emotions.

In addition, self-talking was used to shift attention towards the negative impacts of anger. When Dang identified the arousal of his negative emotions, he reminded himself of the negative effects of the anger on his appearance *("my face will look ugly")*, health *("it'll be harmful for my kidney, liver and so on")* and face (*"others will look at me and judge me")*. These self-talks distracted Dang from the negative emotions and, more importantly, Dang identified the first person to suffer from the anger is himself, which motivated him to detach himself from these negative emotions.

The pressure of demonstrating good regulation of their emotions seems to play an important role in the ER performed by those in supervisory or managerial positions. Similar experience was also described by Hoa.

> *"Sometimes, I can't regulate my emotions and I'm afraid my staff will copy me… I felt dispirited and frustrated, sometimes I wanted to cry but I wasn't supposed to cry in front of staff." (Hoa)*

The underlying reason for this pressure could be the awareness of their managerial positions in a high power distance country like Vietnam. This aligns with Warner's (2013) finding that Vietnam inherited a paternalistic management style from its past;

that is, workers expect to be told what to do. Nevertheless, Vietnam is experiencing reforms in its management system which is a mix of old and new practices (Zhu and Verstraeten 2013). These changes may impose both power and pressure on a young manager like Hoa.

One of the participants also exhibited the ability to distract herself from negative emotions by doing something she enjoyed.

> *"When I'm annoyed at the customer at that table, I'll go to another one where there's a Chinese kid and talk to them." (Lan)*

In the hotel workplace, there was little to do apart from interacting with customers and colleagues. When she felt *"annoyed"* at the customer, Lan identified who she could approach to have a positive interaction with. In the aforementioned comment, Lan expressed the interest in interacting with children and thus the family with the children was selected as a new situation on which to focus her emotions. In so doing, the participant expressed a good understanding of her emotions and the autonomy to distract her attention before she lost control of her negative emotions. This is consistent with Gross's (1998) suggestion that distraction is as one of the strategies of the attentional deployment in the theory of ER.

7.2.2. Emotional growth

Several participants explained their emotional growth by recalling the time when they entered the hotel sector and experienced difficulties in regulating their own emotions. However, the regulation of their own emotions could be enhanced over time through working experience and to some participants; it has become a habit that they could adopt not only in the workplace but also in their daily life.

7.2.2.1. Working experience

The participants described changes in their emotions and thoughts over the years working in the hotel sector and in overall the experience and expression of negative emotions were perceived as weaknesses and failure. In their early days, they *"were hot-tempered"* and *"got angry easily"* (Duyen), *"so annoyed"* (Vy) or *"did not think about what others say"* (Dang). These characteristics were regarded as weaknesses that were inappropriate for their work roles. Nevertheless, it is emphasised that over

the years with more working experience, more interactions and promotion, they noticed the downsides of these negative emotions and thoughts.

> *"When I started working, I was hot-tempered and got angry easily; however, I noticed when I behaved like that, it couldn't help anything and I felt like I was a loser in my job". (Duyen)*

Duyen recognised her negative emotions experienced in the workplace and considered these as a failure in her work role. To some extent, the above participants were driven to regulate their negative emotions by their belief and culture rather than the organisational regulation of emotional display. Purnell (2008) notes that expressing emotions is considered a weakness and self-control is highly valued in Vietnam.

In addition, talking to colleagues was used as a way of releasing the stress and annoyance from interactions with customers. After a while, Vy and her colleagues *"think differently"* and come to the conclusion that

> *"We will talk about it only once and it passes over because we contact with different customers every day. These customers come and stay, others go back home. If we just keep these things in mind, we are always under pressure". (Vy)*

Vy's statement implies the ability to reflectively detach from the negative emotions which may do harm to her well-being – *"always under pressure"*. Moreover, it indicates the ability to rationalise the underlying reason for their annoyance. The participant acknowledged that customers made her annoyed but they came and went away; it was just the emotional exhaustion which remained and influenced their moods. Interestingly, Vy used *"we"* instead of *"I"* to describe the emotional growth, which may refer to the discussion and experience-sharing between her and other colleagues as a way of passing on useful techniques and strategies to overcome obstacles in the workplace.

This practice can be a form of the training that hoteliers may consider in order to assist hotel workers with work-related issues in addition to conventional training on improving EI. Hau's advice is to:

> *"Listen, observe and think about it [emotional control]. It requires the whole process of learning and experiencing, it can't be obtained within one or two days".*

Given the importance of emotional control in the hotel context, supervisors' or managers' practice of emotional control can be shared through real-life stories to young or new staff, which may make greater impacts compared to theoretical lessons.

The participants also established their own strategies of releasing the job-related stress by seeking support from family and friends.

> *"I go home, eat, sleep and go out with my friends, even fight with them, I'll forget that [upset]." (Ngan)*

> *"I know how to let out that feeling as I don't want to keep it in my mind. If I'm angry at work, I can share my stories with my husband… I need to forget it because it is not worth keeping all things in mind." (Duyen)*

Seeking support from family and friends emerged as a common way of distracting the participants from the negative emotions aroused at work. Whereas those who are single tend to turn to their friends for social activities, married hotel workers are likely to share their problems with their spouses. As in Duyen's interview, she stated the fact that her husband also worked in the hotel sector was an advantage because he could understand her emotional burdens. Talking about these problems is considered as a remedy for releasing things from her mind. Talking to other people is indeed suggested as a way of coping with difficult customers (Bailey 1996 cited by Grandey 2000).

7.2.2.2. From workplace to daily practice

Several participants confirmed that the regulation of one's own emotions can be obtained through not only working experience but also other practices over a long period of time. Once achieved, it is believed to benefit one in both the workplace and daily life. The strategies include taking a deep breath when encountering an emotionally charged situation, practising Buddhist meditation, and switching off by spending time on hobbies.

According to Vien, taking a deep breath for three seconds when facing emotionally challenging situations has become a practice in his daily life.

> *"I do the same [take a deep breath for three seconds] in interacting with people in society. If I get annoyed with a friend or a family member, I am so angry that I can swear but I stare at them and take a deep breath for three seconds which is enough for me to think about it once more." (Vien)*

Taking a more formal approach to the emotional control, Duc employed Buddhist meditation to regulate his breath, mind and thoughts.

> *"Whenever we are in a difficult situation, we need to keep calm and control our breath. At this time, we can inhale and exhale in a short or long breath, which becomes meditation. In addition, we need to observe our mind, attitude and reaction in order to know which thinking is positive… I learn it [managing emotions by controlling breath] from the monk Thich Nhat Hanh through Youtube. I also go to Linh Quang Pagoda to meditate with others every week. I practise to observe my breath, my mind, and my thoughts. Consequently, it becomes a habit and helps me become a calm person." (Duc)*

To Duc, deep breathing helped calm him down and allowed more time for *"observing"* and facilitating his thoughts towards the positive and it has turned him into a calm person. The practice has become a reaction whenever his emotion was challenged. In Duc's case, it is the religious background which exerted some influence on his ER and he adopted Buddhist teachings as life and work practices. The influence of Buddhism on Vietnamese people has been well documented in previous research. Buddhism was brought to Vietnam during the Chinese control; Vietnam resisted the assimilation and received the Chinese legacy to make it their own national identity (Cleary 1991). Vietnamese Buddhists consider Quan Am as representative of the transcendent Buddha and highly appreciate the power to bring happiness and show compassion to human beings, which creates a humble attitude amongst Buddhist followers (Thao 2017). Duc is possibly a dedicated Buddhist follower, which gives him an advantage over other hotel workers in terms of ER and makes him a good hotel worker in this aspect.

On the contrary, Dang admitted meditating or deep breathing seemed ineffective for him.

> *"Meditating or deep breathing can't help either, or maybe I haven't reached that level. Whenever I try to practise, I fall asleep. It doesn't help much because my brain keeps thinking about it… Sometimes I get really angry and suffer from pent-up frustrations. I just try to work till the end of the day and go home; it's over the following day… When I go home, I rarely talk to my parents, I have my own room, so I just stay there playing computer games. Generally, when I escape to home, I'm very happy, I play games, read books, surf the internet and watch movies. That helps to some extent. I bear in mind that "Ok, I'll possibly get scolded tomorrow, I'll deal with that then. I'm home now, just chill"." (Dang)*

Meditation or deep breathing is not applicable for every Vietnamese hotel worker as in Dang's case. It seems that Dang was able to detach himself temporarily from the negative emotions in the workplace and moved on till he finished his role there for that day. He also managed to switch off his work mode on arrival at home with his hobbies, though he was aware of the possibility of getting in trouble the following day. Indeed, separating work-life conflict remains a vital issue for hotel workers as recognised in previous research (Wong and Ko 2009).

This suggests that hotel workers' religious background determines how they regulate their emotions and the extent to which ER becomes their daily practice. This finding supports previous research which shows those involved in religious activities tend to experience less difficulty in regulating emotions over time (Semplonius et al. 2015). The impact of religion on one's EI practice is little known in contemporary research on EI, which calls for further research, particularly in the cultures where religion plays a major role in daily life like Vietnam.

In contrast, it is likely that one manages to regulate their emotions to comply with the emotional display required in the workplace but express his negative emotions at home as in Thanh's case, which may pose harm to his own well-being and work-life balance.

> *"I still brought problems from work to home. I couldn't show that I was annoyed when dealing with customers, I must try to serve them in accordance with the standards. When I came home, I showed that emotion. Afterwards, I thought "Ah I was wrong, I shouldn't have behaved like that." Gradually, I learned that when I am annoyed or influenced by someone, I should keep quiet." (Thanh)*

However, he realised that practice was *"wrong"* and came up with the solution that he would *"keep quiet"* when *"annoyed or influenced by someone"*. To some extent, this solution may not be as effective in the long run. Though Thanh focused more on the understanding and analysis of his emotions, he was likely to be prone to the pent-up frustrations due to the suppression of negative emotions. The fact that Thanh left the hotel industry may be the case for the lack of a long-term solution to his ER.

It is interesting that Dinh called ER *"the poetry in the service industry"*.

> *"It's the poetry in the service industry to see that no matter how angry or dissatisfied we are with anything, we must suppress it in front of customers. I must admit that it's my fault or my department's fault to make them satisfied.*

It's like a play and we must play that role… In order to manage others' emotions, we must be able to manage our own emotions. Once we can manage our emotions, we know what we're supposed to say and do." (Dinh)

Dinh used the metaphors of the *"play"* and *"poetry"* to emphasise the fact that hotel workers are supposed to be on the stage and fulfil their job roles as if they were actors in a play. His comment refers to two elements – suppressing his negative emotions and admitting his fault, though it was not in order to make customers satisfied. The former element has been discussed in this chapter regarding the recognition and regulation of one's emotions. The latter will be presented in the next chapter for further exploration of the recognition and regulation of customers' and colleagues' emotions.

The study reveals that participants managed their emotions both in the workplace and in their social life, which has gone beyond the *"management of emotions for a wage"* defined by Hochschild (1983 cited by Grandey 2000, p.95). They were motivated to become calmer and better people in both the workplace and daily life. There is little doubt that one's EI can be enhanced over time as suggested in previous research on EI (Cherniss and Adler 2000). Furthermore, the research findings are in line with Bailey's (1996 cited by Grandey 2000) qualitative study in terms of employees' responses to difficult customers comprising leaving the work floor as in the case of Hoa (situation modification); thinking of something funny (attention deployment) – in this study, Lan and Vu directed their attention to other customers; Thanh's realising some people are never happy no matter what (cognitive change); and trying to stay calm and taking a deep breath like Vien and Duc (response modulation). These findings are closely associated with literature on ER and its antecedent-focused and response-focused tactics (see Gross 1998). The underlying reason may be its relevance to employees' ER for organisational goals (Grandey 2000). This also explains the proliferation of research on EI and EL as well as how they inform each other (e.g. Othman et al. 2008; Kim et al. 2012; Lee and Ok 2012).

7.3. Vietnamese hotel workers' management of customers' emotions

When asked about managing customers' emotions, the research participants distinguished the recognition and the regulation of customers' emotions as two separate but closely related stages. In respect of recognition of customers' emotions,

customers' country of origin was used as the first and reliable source of reference to understand their emotional expressions. The research findings reflect participants' perceptions of emotions expressed by international and domestic customers. This knowledge was obtained from their own experiences or passed on from senior staff, supervisors and managers. However, there was a wide range of opinions as to creating positive emotions during initial encounters with customers, which was believed to minimise emotionally charged situations and assisted hotel workers with regulating customers' emotions. The regulation of customers' emotions is presented in the procedural sequence agreed by most participants including calming down the customers, analysing customers' emotions, and detaching or engaging customers' emotions.

7.3.1. Recognition of customers' emotions

With regard to the recognition of customers' emotions, the participants adopted different strategies to understand customers' emotional expressions. They distinguished international customers from domestic Vietnamese customers. Whereas international customers were categorised based on their countries of origin, Vietnamese customers were differentiated between northern and southern Vietnamese.

According to the latest national report on tourist arrivals in the first half of 2017, the largest group of customers to Nhatrang came from China and Russia and rose by approximately 250 percent, whereas tourists from Japan, the US, the UK, Canada, France and Germany dropped (VNAT 2017b). Vietnamese customers account for a significant proportion of the market (VNAT 2017a). This may explain for the reasons why most participants talked about Chinese and Russian customers more than customers from other countries.

7.3.1.1. Differences in customers' emotional expressions based on their country of origin

An unexpected finding that emerged from the focus group interviews is how Vietnamese hotel workers perceived and dealt with customers from different countries based on customers' countries of origin. This knowledge was obtained from their own experiences or those from their colleagues, supervisors and managers, which served

as guidelines for hotel workers to recognise customers' emotions in general and particularly in situations when the emotions became intense. For that reason, this topic was further explored in semi-structured interviews and the findings on this topic from focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews complement rather than contradict with each other. Please see Table 14 for the data extracted from semi-structured interviews.

Table 14. Emotional expression of customers based on their countries of origin

Country of origin	Emotional expression
China	shout when angry, aggressive, express their emotions more often
Russia	they say they like it and express it, can't calm down their emotions, get angry easily and mad at staff, easy-going, easy to please, bad-tempered, show it on their faces when angry, straightforward, look unfriendly with their facial expressions
Japan	hesitate to show if they are genuinely satisfied, hard to guest their emotions because they're calm and polite
Vietnam	shout and swear when angry, reserved, straightforward, do not get frustrated right away
UK	control their emotions and do not express them, only show their emotions when satisfied
The US	speak gently and be happy
Australia	friendly and civilised, decorous
Germany	control their emotions and do not express them, quiet
France	show emotions obviously, easy to recognise on French faces, raise their eyebrows if they don't like something
South Korea	reserved, look happy and smile but they don't actually like us
Hong Kong	the most dangerous, straightforward, hard to get close to them and change their emotions
India	the most irritable, really picky and difficult to please them

Source: Nguyen (2017)

The majority of participants described Russian customers in a relatively negative way, which may result from the fact that Russian customers tend to have limited command of English and are unable to communicate with local hotel workers. There is a shortage of Russian speaking Vietnamese hotel workers and few hotels could afford to hire Russian hotel workers. Hence, the language barrier seems to be a major hindrance to the interactions between Vietnamese hotel workers and Russian customers. When problems arise, it is difficult for both the service providers and customers to communicate. In addition, smiling is not a part of Russian culture, which is reflected

in a classic evidence of the clashes in societal norms across cultures through McDonald's adoption of the Western norms of good service in Russia (Ashforth and Humphrey 1993). The McDonald staff members were required to smile at customers, which made Russian customers feel that they were being laughed at. In contrast, smiling is a common social norm in Vietnam with different meanings ranging from joy, stoicism, an apology for a minor social offense, a response to a scolding to show sincere acknowledgement for the wrongdoing, or even ill feelings (Purnell 2008). This is to say that Vietnamese people tend to demonstrate a smile on their face in most social interactions and apparently a smile is not always an indicator of happiness, which is opposite to Russian culture and may cause cultural clashes between Russian customers and Vietnamese hotel workers.

The second largest group of international customers to Nhatrang is Chinese who shared some similarities with Vietnamese customers but had their own characteristics. Though Chinese customers tend not to speak much English, some participants or their colleagues (Tran, Hoa) could communicate with them in Mandarin Chinese, which minimised the distance and enhanced the understanding between hotel workers and the customers. Furthermore, there is substantial evidence showing significant similarities between Vietnamese and Chinese cultures. China is claimed to exert the greatest influence on Vietnamese culture during the period of BCE 111 to the eighteenth and nineteenth century; and Vietnam imported the features of Confucianism into its traditional culture (Tho 2016). A comparison in Hofstede's national cultural dimensions between China and Vietnam shows considerable similarities. Please see Figure 10 for more information.

Figure 10. Comparison on Hofstede's national cultural dimensions between China and Vietnam
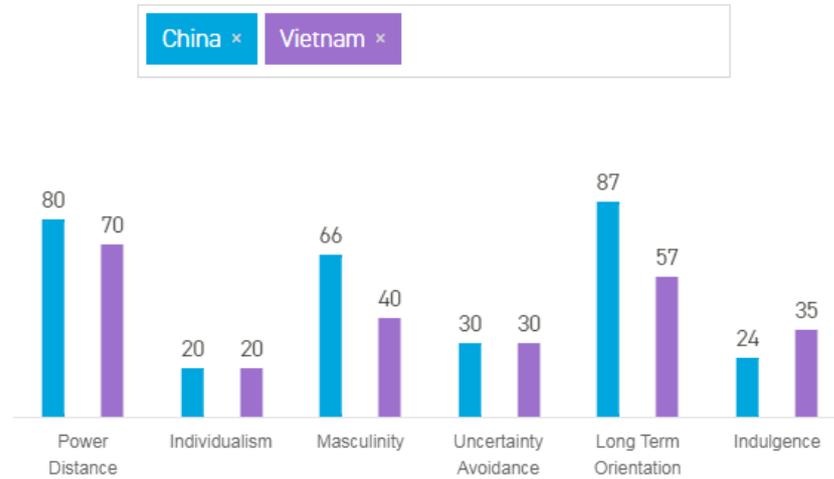
Source: Hofstede et al. (2010)

The figure above shows the same scores in Individualism and Uncertainty Avoidance for China and Vietnam. These two dimensions are proven to have a positive influence on the dimensions of EI (Gunkel et al. 2014). Thus, these similarities may foster the recognition of others' emotions between Chinese and Vietnamese people.

It is noteworthy that Vietnamese hotel workers made clear distinctions between different groups of Chinese origin including Mainland Chinese and Hongkongese. This difference can be explained by another participant's comment in the focus group interview who believed that Hongkongese are *"heavily influenced by Western culture"* and *"have extremely high requirements regarding hygiene"*; as a result, they *"will be as annoyed as Westerners if hygiene is not ensured"* (FG3). This is consistent with Park et al.'s (2015) proposition that people from mainland China and Hong Kong reflect cultural differences due to political and economic separation and therefore behave differently when they travel.

The participants admitted they struggled with guessing how Japanese customers felt since they appeared *"calm and polite"* most of the time (Van). This echoes the opinion

recorded in focus group interviews which stated that Japanese customers tend to be as *"quiet during meals"* as Westerners (FG1). A similar view of Japanese emotional expressions was stated by Argyle (2001 cited by Fischbach 2009); the Japanese have embedded a strong display rule of suppressing the self in public. Another Asian group of customers is Indian who were said to be *"irritable, picky and difficult to please"* (Thanh). Previous research on Indian shows that India is a high-context and collectivist culture (Sharma 2012) and shares the root of Confucianism with Vietnam (Tho 2016), which may imply considerable similarities between the two cultures. However, this comment was made by a participant and was not mentioned elsewhere in other interviews or focus groups, so it may be biased and cannot reflect the characteristics of Indian customers. This urges caution since this may create a negative impression of customers from India to Vietnamese hotel workers.

In addition to customers from Russia, China and other Asian countries, there is a significant group of customers originating from the UK, the US, Australia, France and Germany. From the participants' point of view, customers from these countries are all white and they named this group as Westerners (or *"khách tây"*). Amongst these countries, Australian customers were considered as the favourite group for their friendliness and decorousness. The American customers seemed *"happy"* whereas British and German customers tended to be quiet and rarely express their emotions. In contrast, the French market appeared *to "show their emotions obviously"*, particularly when they were dissatisfied. This may result from the likelihood that people from individualist cultures highly value positive emotions as opposed to their collectivist counterparts as in the case of the United States and Australia versus China (Fischbach 2009). Leclerc and Martin's (2004) research shows that American tourists value verbal and nonverbal communications more than their French and German counterparts because of the stronger emphasis on informality and expressiveness.

These different emotional expressions can be explained by how the customers perceive and expect the service quality. Prayag and Ryan's (2012, p.179) found that German and Indian customers used words such as *"professional"* and *"efficient"* to describe the service interactions they had with Mauritian hotel employees compared to their British counterparts who used *"courteous"*, *"polite"*, *"good"* and *"attentive to their needs"*. French customers used a wide range of words to describe their service

experiences. This suggests that different perceptions towards the customer service may result in how satisfied the customers are with the hotel workers. In other words, people from different cultures value different aspects of the service and their emotional expressions towards hotel workers are determined by these cultural values. In a wider sense, it can be argued that Vietnamese hotel workers' perceptions of customers' emotional expressions and the underlying meanings are to some extent consistent with previous research and their knowledge is not merely built upon biases and prejudices.

Furthermore, the data shows participants' perceptions of customers determine their attitudes towards customers.

> *"I feel more comfortable when interacting with foreigners than with Vietnamese" (Huy)*

> *"I tend to be more open to Westerners. It's not about racism. As I mentioned I love speaking English, it is much easier to communicate or chat with them… To be honest, Chinese customers are not very welcomed in Vietnam. They are prejudiced and I actually feel distant from them." (Huong)*

> *"I prefer to serve Westerners than Vietnamese, first to learn about their culture and customers which are helpful for us if later on we serve customers from the same cultural background, like England. It's not the language barrier that makes me prefer to serve Vietnamese customers." (Vinh)*

The quotes above show Vietnamese hotel workers preferred international customers to resident Vietnamese; the preference may come from personal feelings as in Huy's case whereas others were seeking opportunities for practising English and cultural exchange. Similarly, previous research (Yeung and Leung 2007) on hotel employees in Hong Kong reveals that international customers are preferred over their mainland Chinese counterparts. Unlike those reported in the Hong Kong study, Vietnamese hotel workers prefer serving international customers because it is an opportunity for them to practise their English and widen their knowledge about the customers' home culture, which in turn enhances the services delivered to future patrons from the same country.

To some extent, Vietnamese hotel workers' perceptions of international customers buttress a previous study on hostel employees in London which indicates Western customers are perceived as nicer but complain more and are more demanding compared to their eastern counterparts (Moufakkir and Alnajem 2017). The research

findings on Vietnamese hotel workers' reading of customers' emotions based on their countries of origin answers the call from Tombs et al.'s (2014) lab-based study which reveals service providers were prone to misreading how customers from the same or different cultures express anger, happiness, and shame. However, this should be taken into consideration with caution because Gruber et al. (2013) argue that customer sophistication and expectations vary across countries depending on their different stages of service economy development instead of cultural differences. Future research is needed to investigate this area to provide international hoteliers with a clearer insight into local companies and their target markets.

7.3.1.2. Differences between northern and southern Vietnamese customers

The participants had varied opinions towards their domestic customers compared to international customers; for instance, *"reserved"* and *"straightforward"* seem to be two opposite characteristics in terms of semantics. This can be explained by the differences between northern and southern Vietnamese. Interestingly, northerners appear to create negative impressions on hotel workers compared to southerners with respect to their behaviours, language (though Vietnamese is the mother tongue used throughout the country) and emotional expressions.

As opposed to their southern counterparts, northern Vietnamese were described as *"very noisy and have high requirements"*, *"very stressful [to serve them]"* and *"use more offensive language" (Truong)*; or *"tough and don't hesitate to say whatever they think" (Truc)*. Similar comments were also found in the interview with Thuc.

> *"… when they are dissatisfied with something, southerners tend to suppress their emotions, then talk to the hotel about their problems and leave. Northerners release it immediately "I'm not pleased with you about this, check it out", they show it right away." (Thuc)*

These comments highlight the participants preferring to serve southerners for their suppression of negative emotions and thoughts towards the hotel services. This may result from the fact that the study was conducted in a town in the south-central coast of Vietnam with the majority of the participants being local residents in Nhatrang. It is noteworthy that those who expressed negative opinions towards northern Vietnamese (e.g. Van, Ngoc, Vien, Truc, Thuc) originally came from the south apart

from Truong; so, these may originate from their biases or prejudices against northern Vietnamese.

> *"Customers here are well-off but impolite… I couldn't understand that she could ask receptionists to bring food for her… they even asked us to do tiny things like taking the kids to the swimming pool, which isn't our job. The receptionist replied politely but especially northerners, they started getting angry and shouting "You behave like that in such a five-star hotel?" They scolded us in front of so many people."* (Van)

Apparently, Van was upset when asked to do unimportant and irrelevant duties such as *"bringing food"* or *"taking the kids to the swimming pool"*. She pointed out the difference in the reactions between southerners and northerners when they received responses from the receptionist. The northerners tend to *"get angry"*, *"shout"* and *"scold"* staff in public. Indeed, in a culture like Vietnam where face-saving gestures are valued, scolding someone in front of others is considered a taboo. However, there exists a contradiction in this notion since northern and southern Vietnamese share the same national cultural values. A likely explanation for northerners' unpleasant behaviours from the perspective of most southern hotel workers is that northern Vietnamese tend to be Western-oriented or individualist compared to their southern counterparts as revealed by Ralston et al. (1999) in a study on work values comparing northern and southern Vietnamese managers. Another plausible explanation lies in the division between the north and the south of Vietnam until the 19th century when the unification of the Nguyen Dynasty took place. McCann et al. (2004) found that respondents from northern Vietnam showed less respect to older people than their southern counterparts. They suggested the underlying reason could be the north changing many traditions due to strong liberal movements associated with gender and equality whereas the south is better known for its diluted patrilocal patterns, higher standards of living, greater degree of privatised businesses and urbanisation. Furthermore, Catholicism has made significant contribution to the history of elites in southern Vietnam by sending the first generation of Catholics to study abroad in the 1960s and support the defence of southern Vietnam (Tran 2013a). Though differences between the north and the south of Vietnam are beyond the scope of this study, this notion emerged from interviews with the Vietnamese hotel workers in Nhatrang and provided insights into dealing with domestic customers. It is also vital for hoteliers in Nhatrang to take it into consideration since two thirds of tourist arrivals to the area are

Vietnamese (VNAT 2017a). Given that the country has been unified for decades, these subtle cultural differences may trigger the relationships between northern hoteliers, workers and customers with their southern counterparts, which in turn negatively influences the tourism products and services.

7.3.2. Regulation of customers' emotions

When asked about regulating customers' emotions, the majority of participants took the initiative and attempted to generate positive emotions in their initial interactions with customers in order to avoid dissatisfaction and emotionally challenging incidents. The strategies adopted were talking to customers about culture and language and greeting customers by names. On the one hand, when the problems arose, the participants attempted to regulate customers' emotions. Though the participants tended to describe the procedures of dealing with customer complaints, the emotional element was brought into the central focus. The overall procedure comprises of calming down customers, appraising and analysing their emotions, and detaching or engaging their emotions. On the other hand, the participants stayed open to positive emotions in accordance with customers' emotions such as being happy and touched.

7.3.2.1. Generating positive emotions

In order to generate positive emotions amongst customers, the participants emphasised the need to talk about the topics customers may be interested such as culture, language and entertainment activities.

> *"I focus on their language, I greet them in their language first, then take orders. When a person stays in a foreign country and hears a greeting in their language, or a thank-you, they'll be satisfied; then I'll continue with other topics." (Tran)*

> *"… talk to them about their country first. They come from another country and on their first visit to our country, if we know and talk about their country, they'll be surprised… that means we're open to customers first, then they start talking to me between the courses… which makes them happy." (Thinh)*

In Tran and Thinh's cases, customers' language and culture became the ice-breaking tool to start a conversation between the hotel workers and customers. Whereas Tran pointed out the likelihood that foreign customers would be happy when greeted in their native language, Thinh attempted to express his knowledge and interest in the

customers' countries, which Thinh believed would impress the customers and give a good start to their interactions.

Thinh added:

> *"So accidentally I build up the relationship between us, then next time they'll remember me and find it easy to talk to me and I'll have the chance to talk to them too. If there are any difficulties, they'll let me know… once we build up the relationship with customers, they'll look for us".*

The underlying reason for building the relationship with customers is possibly to:

> *"… establish empathy, talk about what people want, and learn about it… Emotions are explored over time" (Truong).*

As Truong suggested, understanding and regulating others' emotions requires a certain amount of time. It is indeed a process of interacting, seeking the interest in common and building empathy with each other, which quantitative studies may find it hard to detect. This strategy is reinforced by Vu's comment that:

> *"Once it's difficult to be close to them, it's difficult to solve the problem and change their emotions".*

The inability to approach and reduce the distance with someone was claimed to be one of the hindrances to managing their emotions in highly charged situations.

Given the duration and frequency of interacting with customers, hotel workers actually interact with customers more than other service workers such as cashiers or salesclerks and they are expected to express integrative emotions such as happiness and sympathy (Grandey 2000). The hotel workers illustrated the great efforts made to recognise and regulate customers' emotions. It can be argued that Vietnamese hotel workers went beyond the requirement of emotional display as a part of their paid work roles, defined as EL by Hochschild (1983). Instead, they demonstrated great effort in making customers happy and satisfied as well as building relationships with customers in order to assist them when things go wrong. In so doing, the hotel workers established trust and made themselves the first point of contact for the customers. Furthermore, this strategy was described as an effective way to get to know and create positive impressions to the customers instead of an emotional burden for the participants. This finding also suggests one's EI is determined by the degree of contact they have with a

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certain person and casts doubt on the likelihood of representing one's EI with a particular number.

The participants also noted entertainment activities as another topics about which they could talk to customers. Ngan described her experience as follows.

> *"If they look extremely happy, I may ask "Did you enjoy the amusement park?" or if I see them come from the beach, I will ask some questions related to that topic, which makes them feel that I care about them and I will share with them information about entertainment activities in the hotel. I also tell them about Vietnamese culture and ask them about theirs, which makes them happy too." (Ngan)*

The sensitivity and observing skills were demonstrated in the way the participant guessed and asked about the activities the customers undertook, which Ngan believed would express the care she had for the customers. Similar to other participants, Ngan emphasised the important role of culture as an intermediary connecting the local hotel workers and foreign customers. This finding, to some extent, reflects the strategy adopted by Vietnamese hotel workers in order to generate positive emotions amongst foreign customers. The question raised is what they would do with domestic customers. It is interesting to see the initiative and autonomy demonstrated by the participants to enhance their understanding and relationship with foreign customers. Nevertheless, this strategy seems irrelevant to domestic customers and interactions with domestic customers might be neglected. This may result from the preference to serve foreign customers revealed in the previous section.

Apart from talking about the topics that might be interesting to customers, she revealed her strategy to create a positive impression towards customers is to:

> *"... greet them by their names, they'll naturally feel happy because they're remembered, respected and cared for." (Ngan)*

In order to remember customers' names, Van shared that she always tried to read through customers' information in her own time while at work. The participant highlighted the important role of customised services, respect and care. The autonomy to go beyond her work role may come from her personality or the cultural values embedded in Asians which make them good hospitality workers suggested by (Chin et al. 2016). These characteristics, however, vary from one to another and are partially

reflected in the perceptions of their job and their strategies of interacting with customers.

7.3.2.2. Calming down customers

The first thing the hotel workers would do when dealing with angry or dissatisfied customers was apologise to calm them down.

> *"I always apologise which doesn't cost anything. I always teach my staff in a funny way "Words don't cost money, choose the right one to get money from their pocket"." (Vien)*

Second, choosing appropriate words to talk to customers in these situations plays an important role. The saying the participant used was changed from a well-known folklore proverb passed from generations in Vietnam *"lời nói không mất tiền mua lựa lời mà nói cho vừa lòng nhau"* which is close to the English proverb *"courtesy costs nothing but buys everything"* but the Vietnamese version replaces *"courtesy"* with *"speech* in order to emphasise the importance of using appropriate words when communicating with people to please them. This is particularly of vital importance in a culture where social hierarchy is highly valued like Vietnam. In this case, he changed the second part of the saying but still kept the rhythm. Moreover, he showed the creativity in bringing a new semantic content which was more applicable in hotel workplace – pleasing customers with words to get their money, which focuses on the practical benefits for hotel workers.

In addition to choosing the proper words, volume of the voice was considered effective for calming down the customers as described by Thanh *"I asked in a soft voice, she replied in a soft voice too"*. The participants also paid attention to their facial expressions either by *"showing the sincerity"* (Vy) or *"wearing a concerned mask"* (Khoi). These are added to make the apology an effective means of calming down the customers.

7.3.2.3. Understanding and analysing customers' emotions

The regulation of customers' emotions is also reflected in the way hotel workers understood and analysed customers' emotions. The participants expressed a proper understanding of their customers' emotions and their behaviours when things went wrong.

"We must find out what influences them… Whatever they are annoyed at, they look for someone to release their anger." (Truong)

"When customers are angry, they always ask us to stay with them. At this point, we need to talk and analyse the reasons for them to understand." (Duyen)

Truong and Duyen said customers tended to seek the hotel staff when they were angry with some service and these two participants were also aware of their roles of being there physically and emotionally ready to listen to customers' complaints as a way of releasing their anger. Moreover, they emphasised the need to rationalise reasons for the customers' anger and then explain to them.

Nevertheless, Vinh pointed out the fact that some staff members failed to control their emotions when dealing with angry customers since they neither understood nor put themselves in customers' shoes.

"If I were them [the customers], I'd of course behave like that because they pay a certain amount of money and they expect to get good services. In general, when we explain, they will understand and calm down." (Vinh)

Vinh facilitated his thinking towards customer expectation in the experience economy; that is, customers pay money for good experiences. Vinh's account highlights not only the ability to prioritise his thinking towards important information – the nature of the service sector and customer expectation but also the ability to recognise the transition of customers' emotions from anger to calm. In contrast, his colleagues seemed to recognise anger and dissatisfaction but were unable to shift their attention; hence, they were unable to regulate customers' emotions. This reinforces the hierarchical and sequential organisation of the ability EI model proposed by Mayer and Salovey (1997), those who are aware of others' emotions may not be able to regulate them and ER is located as the highest branch of the model. This suggestion is contradictory to Lindebaum's (2015) argument that the emotional processes prior to ER do not reflect the hierarchical and sequential logic of the ability EI model. A possible explanation for the difference between these qualitative studies is the context of the Vietnamese hotel workplace and the UK public sector as in Lindebaum's study which leads to different focuses and insights on EI.

7.3.2.4. Detaching or engaging customers' emotions depending on the situations

When things go wrong, evaluating customers' emotions was also considered important so as to either detach or engage their negative emotions depending on the context. For instance, Vu described his experience as follows.

> *"The most important thing when interacting with them in all cases is to evaluate their emotions… When customers are upset or angry, the first thing is to listen to them and ask them so that they can share with me and release their emotions. I must listen and apologise to them. After that, I must suggest solution and make them believe in my solution and promise. I must do what I promise." (Vu)*

As an HGM, Vu approached the dissatisfied customers and encouraged them to tell him what made them upset or angry. He demonstrated the ability to not only recognise their negative emotions but also engage and make them release these emotions. While listening and apologising is believed to calm down the customers, suggesting solutions and ensuring that the problem is being resolved helps enhance pleasant emotions amongst customers.

In contrast, Khoi took another approach – separating the customers from the crowd and taking them to someone of higher ranking. This possibly results from Khoi being a HK supervisor and believing that FO is the department mainly responsible for dealing with customer complaints.

> *"The common approach is not to let their anger rise in the crowd, try to separate angry customers from the crowd, it's not good to solve it when there're many people around… their shouting may influence others, so we ask them to go to another area, like the coffee area… We let the FO staff take the customers there and introduce them to someone of higher position to deal with the problem so that they see we care about what they said… try to make them release their anger and let them finish what they're saying. This makes them release all the frustration, listen to them and find the solution." (Khoa)*

When the customers are surrounded by others, it is advisable to separate them from the crowd to detach their anger and prevent it from increasing due to the crowd effect. Introducing them to someone of a higher position distracted them from their anger and reassured them that their opinions are highly valued. Afterwards, the hotel worker attempted to engage their frustration by encouraging them to talk about what annoyed them. Khoi was also ready to listen to them and rationalised the situation in order to come up with an appropriate solution. There are a few issues emerging from Khoi's

statement. Firstly, it was the crowd effect which might make the situation more intense. Secondly, the fact that social hierarchy is highly valued in Vietnam somehow influenced the way hotel workers deal with customer complaints. Indeed, referring to someone of a higher position aims to make the customer feel respected and cared for. They also believed that an authority was more reliable and capable than a front-line worker with respect to solving the problem, which consequently makes the customer calmer and reassured. Seeking a manager's advice or support also emerged in interviews with other participants (e.g. Hoan, Linh, Huy, Vinh).

> *"… the manager should be understanding… because they should trust those who directly solve the problems like me. In situations when I have no way to deal with it, the manager must know that I have tried my best, I don't hide away from my responsibilities. In an attempt to solve the problem, I need support from my managers." (Linh)*

> *"… managers should be the one to share and show empathy with staff. This is to avoid situations when customers complain, some managers are in favour of the customers, they must put themselves in staff's shoes to understand why he/she did that. I think a good manager knows how to balance customers and colleagues; he shouldn't defend the customers and blame the staff." (Huy)*

Coming from different positions in the hotel context, managers, supervisors or bottom-line workers may come up with different approaches to regulating customers' emotions when problems arise, which poses chances of conflicts in their problem-solving. Linh and Huy highlighted the need for the manager's support when dealing with difficult customers. Though the vital role of supervisor and co-workers support in the hotel sector has been studied elsewhere (e.g. Guchait et al. 2014; Choo and Nasurdin 2016), the manager's support is particularly emphasised by the participants. This may result from the fact that managers in international hotel chains mainly come from other countries rather than Vietnamese nationals. Indeed, most Vietnamese graduates possess limited capacity in English and other areas (Kazmin 2008), which restrict them from advancing their career in the sector. The picture does not seem brighter for Vietnamese hotel workers to strive for managerial positions when Vietnam has become the second most popular in ASEAN for expats after Singapore and expats are driven for three reasons; for a new challenge, a posting by their employer, and for improved quality of life (Tuyet 2016). Hence, Vietnam becomes a fascinating destination that attracts foreign skilled workers to take up managerial positions in many sectors, and particularly the tourism and hospitality sector.

Notwithstanding the advantages in skills and capacity over their Vietnamese counterparts, the insufficient knowledge of Vietnamese culture amongst expatriates has led to clashes in interactions with Vietnamese subordinates, which has been discussed in Group C section 6.3.2.

7.4. Vietnamese hotel workers' management of colleagues' emotions

Regarding the management of colleagues' emotions, there were three main themes that emerged from the interviews with Vietnamese hotel workers: their interactions with colleagues in the workplace, their socialisation after work, and the influence of culture and religion on their management of colleagues' emotions.

7.4.1. Interactions at work

There are two main streams of opinion collected from the research participants when talking about their interactions with colleagues in the workplace – from the bottom-line workers and those in managerial positions. This division may result from the varied sample including bottom-line hotel workers, supervisors, department managers, and HGMs.

7.4.1.1. From the perspective of bottom-line workers

With regard to interactions with their colleagues, the general impression was the participants who were at the bottom line seemed to consider them simpler compared to interactions with customers. Three strategies of identifying colleagues' emotions include *"putting themselves in others' shoes"* (Huy), *"paying attention to others' emotions"* (Tran) and *"listening honestly and frankly"* (Duc).

In terms of interactions with managers, the participants voiced a common opinion that they had no choice towards who their managers would be; therefore, they tended to behave in accordance with their managers' preferences and little was revealed regarding the recognition and regulation of their managers' emotions (e.g. Huy). Nevertheless, there were two accounts of Van and Ngoc who expressed the disagreement over their managers' behaviours. The conflict between Van and her manager resulted from an incident with a rude customer when her manager was

standing on the customer's ground and criticised her (Please see Group C in 6.3.2). Although Van managed to prove to her manager and the customer that she was right, she burst into tears when talking to them. Van cited her manager lacking a proper understanding of Vietnamese culture and respect towards Vietnamese hotel workers. Similarly, Ngoc raised her voice when she witnessed how disrespectfully her manager treated the HK workers. In her opinion, though the HK workers did not get a good education or qualification, they were much older and deserved more respect. Van and Ngoc's accounts imply the desire to be treated with respect from the bottom-line workers. It is noteworthy that afterwards both of them quit the job, which may result from their desire not being met. The issues of culture and age-grading hierarchy will be discussed in greater detail in the next section.

7.4.1.2. From the perspective of supervisors and managers

The characteristics of a high power distant country like Vietnam are illustrated vividly through the participants' practice of EI in interactions with their subordinates. Some supervisors and managers described their expressions of anger and frustration as a way of establishing authority and power over their staff. Others attempted to enhance the working environment by offering emotional support. There are also cases whereby the participants combined both strategies (e.g. Vien, Dinh).

Vien and Khoi released their anger to staff by shouting loudly or scolding them, which indicates little control over their negative emotions.

> *"I shouted loudly to show that I was extremely dissatisfied with their mistake and released the frustration."* (Vien)

> *"I'm quite hot-tempered. If they do something wrong, I'll scold them immediately, so they're afraid of me. I just follow the company regulations in terms of workload, so they can't complain anything about me… To me, discipline is the top priority."* (Khoi)

It is interesting to refer back to what Khoi and Vien said about regulating customers' emotions; *"put his pride in the pocket"* and *"wore a concerned mask"* (Khoi) and *"apologising doesn't cost anything"* (Vien) to express empathy and sincerity when apologising to customers. Nevertheless, they expressed the anger to acknowledge their power and authority when their subordinates made mistakes. In this situation, their emotional expressions served as a warning towards staff for their mistakes. This

implies a distinct difference in the way they interacted with customers as opposed to colleagues. Moreover, these accounts revealed the fact that a hot-tempered person would be able to control his own emotions to please customers but expressed his anger deliberately when interacting with colleagues. It relates to his ability to regulate not only his own emotions but also others' emotions, which varies depending on who it was; he wanted to calm and please customers but make his colleagues *"afraid of"* him. It can be argued that one's EI is not utterly determined by his personality and it changes depending on the context.

Most of the participants who held managerial positions revealed that they started their career in hotels as bottom-line workers (e.g. Vien, Thinh, Hoa, Vi, Thuy, Dinh). Therefore, they had similar experiences and fully understood the emotions or difficulties that a bottom-line worker may have. Dinh, an FB manager, described the negative experiences he had had with his previous manager who adopted the disciplinary approach.

> *"I'm now a manager. When my subordinates makes mistakes, I always put myself in their shoes because I used to be a bottom-line staff like them. I tell them how I will solve the problem because discipline is a good thing but making them aware of the problem is another thing… My previous manager used to scold me when I made mistakes. I knew I was wrong but I felt offended. I was quite young then as well, so I just ignored what she said. When I got a bit older, as a manager, I've learned that I should put myself in their shoes to understand their emotions, guide them and offer them a better option." (Dinh)*

Dinh demonstrated the deep empathy with his colleagues because he went through similar situations and remembered how bad he felt. He also pointed out the side effect of the disciplinary approach adopted by his manager, *"I just ignored what she said"*. To Dinh, the support approach would work better for his colleagues. Interestingly, Dinh embraced his own philosophy of the hotel work as follows.

> *"I always try to make them work with passion… Though working in this sector sounds like manual work, working with passion is like arts. Artists always appear young, love their lives and think life is beautiful though it's tiring and not-very-well-paid. At least, every day we have very interesting experiences." (Dinh)*

The above comment focuses on the emotional element of hotel work as opposed to its downsides such as physically hard work and low pay. His philosophy to some extent helped orient his emotions towards the positive side of the work and consequently

enhanced more positive emotions. Dinh also transmitted his philosophy to his subordinates with the aim of *"making them work with passion"*.

In Vu's account, respect and support is the approach he adopted in managing his colleagues.

> *"With colleagues, I consider them of equal ranking to me, I'm not their boss and they're my workers because everyone has his own responsibility. My principle is to respect each other, I respect them and expect them to respect me... I also tell my staff and keep an eye on their emotions, whether they're happy or sad. If I notice there's something wrong with a colleague because he or she doesn't serve customers enthusiastically, I'll speak to that colleague and ask about his or her problem. I often arrange a few days off for them to solve their personal problems, then they can come back to work and focus on their job happily." (Vu)*

Vu paid attention to his colleagues' emotions and behaviours towards customers so that he could notice if they encountered any difficulties and have timely resolution. This highlights the importance of the manager's recognition and regulation of colleagues' emotions, which in turn enhances the working environment for better customer services. One of the behaviours which would catch his attention is their lack of enthusiasm in serving customers. Talking and giving them some days off work were employed as ways of regulating colleagues' emotions. The ultimate aim was for them to come back to work with fresher minds and higher productivity.

Other managers (e.g. Truc, Thinh) also mentioned the fact that colleagues may bear some negative thoughts and emotions resulting from their personal life. In order to moderate these negative emotions and enhance positive ones, they employed different strategies such as creating a cheerful atmosphere at the beginning of the shift or in the briefing (Truc) or keeping an eye on them and providing encouragement throughout the difficult times (Thinh). Truc added he also regulated his emotions accordingly by being gentle to them since he believed the workers tended to be vulnerable during this time and they might quit if the manager was too harsh and pushy. This finding aligns with previous research which emphasises the significance of leaders' support on workers' job satisfaction and commitment and thus leads to improved service performance (Tian et al. 2014; Han et al. 2017). Furthermore, the leaders who have worked up from the bottom-line positions are likely to know how to gain the best results in interacting with customers and subordinates (Scott-Halsell et al. 2008).

Hence, their strategies and experiences of EI practice may serve as a valuable and practical source of knowledge for training lay workers.

7.4.2. Socialisation after work to enhance the recognition and regulation of colleagues' emotions

In comparison to interactions with customers, Vietnamese hotel workers tended to expand their interactions with colleagues outside of work with the aim of understanding their colleagues' personal problems, expressing empathy, and solving conflicts. These activities were to enhance their recognition and regulation of colleagues' emotions.

It is a common activity for colleagues to go out for a beer or a coffee after work in Vietnam.

> *"Go out for a beer after work, as a Vietnamese saying 'Alcohol in, words out' (rượu vào lời ra). They may cry when they get drunk and share the problem, which makes it easier for me to understand them." (Thinh)*

> *"I can show empathy with them by taking them out for a coffee and tell them that it [late pay] happens to everyone and they will get it sooner or later. Or I'll give them some hope like "Let's go out for a meal and chat" to minimise the negative side of late pay." (Truong)*

Thinh believed that when his colleagues were drunk, it was very likely that they would talk about the problems facing them so that he could understand their situation. Making them cry was also considered a good way of releasing negative emotions they had been suppressing. Indeed, going out for a beer, or *"nhậu"* (binge drinking), is considered one of the few social institutions that allows Vietnamese men to offer and receive emotional support from other men (Nghe et al. 2003).

In contrast, Truong went out for a coffee with his colleagues to express his empathy towards the fact that the late pay triggered their negative emotions. Though he was the HGM, that problem was out of his control and the only thing he could do was to express empathy and give them some hope. He also admitted what he did was only to minimise the negative effects, which implies the fact that managers do not need to be the one who could solve all their colleagues' problems but they were expected to offer support and empathy. This expectation was mentioned by several bottom-line workers, particularly when they suffered from the emotional exhaustion due to coping with

difficult customers as discussed in chapter 5. This is consistent with empirical research elsewhere (Tews et al. 2013; Kang et al. 2015) which emphasises the importance of colleagues' and supervisors' support for hospitality workers to recharge due to the performance of EL.

> *"We don't have a lot of conflicts in my team. We're all boys, so it's easy. If there's anything we're not happy with each other, we can go out for a coffee or a beer after work. Chatting can solve the conflicts." (Thanh)*

It is noteworthy that Thanh emphasised the fact that the majority of his team was male, which made it easy for them to solve any conflicts by having a beer together after work. Nghe et al. (2003) observe that Vietnamese men are socialised to fulfil the roles of family and refrain from emotional expressivity. Unlike Thanh, Truc's department mainly consisted of female and well-educated colleagues; hence, he avoided shouting at them since it may hurt their feelings, make them lose face and create a false perception of him as being unsubtle, disrespecting or hating them. Furthermore, he emphasised:

> *"… going out for a drink or a chat after work to create a personal environment, especially to support those who encounter difficulties or are emotional when they need a shoulder to lean on". (Truc)*

Though the gender issue in the workplace was not the study focus, it was interesting that this distinct difference emerged as a part of hotel workers' interactions and socialisation with colleagues in the workplace. One of the pull factors preventing Vietnamese hotel workers from having a beer after work is the family responsibility. A study of Vietnamese female university leaders shows that they resort to female paid assistance to balance family and work responsibilities if they want to advance their career (Do and Brennan 2015). Vietnamese women have stronger ties to family responsibility compared to their male counterparts because they are expected to obey the three masters in their life – father, husband and son (Duong 2001). A report on human development shows the labour force in Vietnamese comprises of approximately 74% of females and 80% of males but at least 50% of the female workers are suffering from unequal treatment (Klugman 2010). This opens up an area for future research on the Vietnamese workforce.

Thuc was one of the managers who encountered difficulties in approaching colleagues in his department. He directed his emotions towards minimising the distance from

them instead of letting his emotions be influenced by their uncooperative behaviours. Interestingly, he emphasised that at the beginning, he *"tried to be comfortable with them, unnaturally though"* by eating out or having some activities outside of work, then talking more about personal problems or even about someone else. Indeed, he confirmed that it worked well in terms of getting close to someone. In Thuc' situation, he used the word *"unnaturally"* possibly to describe his efforts in pretending to comfortably hang out; or EL in order to build up the relationship with his colleagues after work, which later on resulted in good impacts on their interactions in the workplace. In this case, it was not very clear whether surface acting or deep acting was adopted but he was driven by the desire to get close to his subordinates and get to know them better. This is in line with previous research that notes an asymmetrical relationship whereby Vietnamese managers use *"tình cảm"* (translated as *"sentiment"*) to develop a positive organisational culture and manage employees (Edwards and Phan 2013).

7.4.3. The influence of culture and religion on their interactions with colleagues

Three main issues associated with culture and religion which influenced the interactions amongst Vietnamese hotel workers comprised the social hierarchy versus the work hierarchy, the Golden Rule *"Do unto others"* and Vietnamese culture in the workplace from the participants' points of view.

The contradiction between social hierarchy based on age and the work hierarchy emerged in the interviews with the participants as an influence of Vietnamese culture on their interactions with colleagues in the workplace. In Vien's account, he was challenged by the social hierarchy as a young HGM (28 years old) whilst some of his employees are in their middle age.

> *"I'm the youngest HGM in Nhatrang for now. I worked as an HGM in Saigon when I was 23. Staff can be 40 or 50. At first, I had a lot of difficulties talking to them because it's about work and they're my junior staff. It's hard to assign jobs to them too. In order to balance it, first I make friends with them; second I only work with department heads… I use my name when talking to those of the same age or older than me. If they're much older than me, I'll call them 'sister' or 'brother'."* (Vien)

As Vien stated, he was the youngest HGM in Nhatrang at the time of the interview (October 2016). Vien is rather young compared to the age range of Korean HGMs as 51-55 (Kim et al. 2009) or Turkish HGMs as 30-49 (Okumus et al. 2016). Vietnamese society is heavily influenced by the age grading hierarchy, which poses obstacles for Vien or other managers (e.g. Hoa) when they had to deal with employees who are much older than them. Vien noted he had difficulties giving them assignments as well and his solution was to make friends with them and work with department managers. His solution possibly met both the work-related and social expectations as the employees fulfilled their job roles under the department management and the way he addressed their titles was consistent with the social hierarchy. It is noteworthy that Vietnamese people use different personal pronouns when talking to others, which depends on their social status and misusing these may cause major offences. This system of address and reference based on sex, age, and social position is one of the distinctive characteristics of Vietnamese culture (Szymańska-Matusiewicz 2014). Ho (1997) emphasises that the complicated system of personal pronouns in Vietnamese has no equivalences in English and the switching of personal pronouns signals a change in the relationship between the addressor and the addressee. Therefore, this characteristic of Vietnamese culture makes it more complex for a young hotel manager like Vu to choose the appropriate way to address his older subordinates. The philosophy Vu adopted to approach his employees was to socialise after work and consider them *"brothers and sisters"*, which helps reduce the power distance associated with his position in the workplace.

The conflict over the social hierarchy was also found in the interview with Ngoc who expressed extreme disappointment at her manager for the disrespectful attitudes towards the HK workers as mentioned in Group C in 6.3.1. She insisted on treating the HK staff with respect because they are much older than the manager despite their poor education and low ranking in the workplace.

Looking at the issue from another perspective, Thinh, an FBM, considered his young age as an advantage in sharing personal problems with his colleagues and understanding their emotions.

> *"The good thing is I'm quite young, not too old to understand the young staff.*
> *So we talk as brothers and sisters to share our emotions while we have some*

drinks or coffee… Now the advantage is the age difference isn't big, we can call 'bro' or 'sis', we don't call 'boss' or anything like that, which makes it easier to share our problems. It's easier if I understand their problems. The more they share, the easier it is." (Thinh)

He emphasised that they did not call him as *'boss'*, which made them all comfortable and minimised the distance between him and his colleagues. The conflicting opinions between Vien's and Thinh's experiences may lie in the fact that the majority of Vien's colleagues are much older and Vien is an HGM who is considered more important as opposed to an FBM.

The second issue explored in the interactions amongst Vietnamese hotel workers was the practice of the Golden Rule, *"treat others how you want to be treated"* or *"do unto others"*. The Golden Rule, a core precept emphasising the importance of treating others fairly and considerately, is taught in many religions such as Christianity, Hinduism, Confucianism and Buddhism (Wattles 1987). There is little doubt that in a country where Buddhism is predominant, its practice exerts a certain influence on the way people interact with each other. Regarding the recognition and regulation of others' emotions, this practice is to some extent associated with the practice of *"putting yourself in others' shoes"* mentioned by most participants. This implies the participants' attempt to understand their colleagues' emotions by looking at the situation from their colleagues' side and imagining how they would feel. For instance, Linh would feel offended or discouraged if his idea was rejected; therefore, he avoided doing that to his colleagues. Huy took over his colleagues' duties while they were on holiday with full responsibility because he would need similar support. Ngan pointed out:

> *"I follow Buddhism which teaches me to treat people as someone else would treat me the same way I do to others. So, I'm quite affable and I don't want to upset others".*

The participants tended to do their best to generate positive emotions amongst their colleagues instead of creating unfavourable incidents and regulating their colleagues' emotions. Hence, the regulation of colleagues' emotions was regarded as the last resort. It is, therefore, interesting to see which factors influence Vietnamese hotel workers' emotions and whether the work relationship has a major impact. This will be discovered in the next section.

In addition, it is noteworthy that the research participants reflected varied opinions towards what they named as Vietnamese culture in the workplace. They revealed both positive and negative sides of Vietnamese hotel workers in general. Some participants described good characteristics of Vietnamese people such as *"friendly, sociable and cheerful"* (Vi) or *"friendly, cheerful and smiley"* (Vu).

More detailed description of Vietnamese hotel workers was also found in the interview with Van as follows.

> *"Our emotional control is quite good for working in service sector and hospitality sector because we're quite tolerant. Vietnamese people aren't arrogant and aggressive, which makes us control our emotions better than people from other countries… Vietnamese tend to forbear very well." (Van)*

It can be seen that Van focused on the ability to tolerate and control their emotions, which makes them suitable workers for the hotel sector. This statement not only highlighted the high demand of EL perceived from the hotel worker's perspective but also referred to the tendency to suppress negative emotions among Vietnamese people. This may result from the emphasis on harmony and benevolence that were inherited from Confucianism and have become central parts of Vietnam's belief system (Edwards and Phan 2013)

Similar comment was also found in Thi's account regarding the suppression of negative emotions and thoughts.

> *"Vietnamese people must say they like it though they don't. It has become a habit in the workplace… You don't like it but you're lying, not telling what you really think and it has been used as a working style… It's not good about Vietnamese people." (Thi)*

> *"Vietnamese are afraid of upsetting others, so they don't dare to say it out. It's emotional control but a weakness." (Hoa)*

Both Thi and Hoa stated a weakness of Vietnamese people lay in their prioritising others and supressing their negative emotions and thoughts. There is little doubt that in a collectivist culture like Vietnam, people tend to care about others, prioritise the harmony and avoid confrontation. This also has its roots in the Confucius teachings shared by most East Asian countries including Vietnam and it remains a central and powerful system determining their daily life (Ryu 2010); thus, it has wider implications for the workplace. Findings from chapters 5 and 6 highlight that most

participants agreed upon the need to talk about the problems as a way of regulating their own and others' emotions. Hence, hiding one's true feelings and thoughts may pose obstacles to their interactions in the workplace.

Furthermore, Thi contrasted the difference in hotel management between Vietnam and other countries as follows. Whereas in other countries, those who have money hire and train their CEO to manage the hotel, the Vietnamese hotel sector is predominated by small and medium-sized enterprises which are run and owned by someone who won a lot of money from a lottery but lacks management skills. Thi stated that:

> *"In the environment where managers control themselves and stay calm in interacting with staff, staff will do the same to each other".*

Thi's comment implies the likelihood that hotel workers are influenced by their managers' approach to EI practice. This echoes Han et al.'s (2017) proposition that managers' behavioural components of EI, self-management and relationship management, have strong impacts on their subordinates' job satisfaction.

7.5. Cultural factors influencing Vietnamese hotel workers' emotions

On the surface, it seems that Vietnamese hotel workers' emotions are influenced by generic factors such as customers, work-related and family-related issues. However, a closer look at the core elements underlying these factors reveals strong influences of Vietnamese culture on their emotions.

7.5.1. Their perceptions of hotel work and customers

When talking about factors influencing their emotions, the participants revealed that their job was not as routine as was commonly thought. Indeed, it varies each day depending on the number of customers they had, the incidents they encountered and whether the customers were satisfied or not (e.g. Huy, Ngoc, Truong, Hoan, Hoa, Khoa, Thuc, Vy, Duc). Overall, they tended to start the shift with positive energy; as the day went by, dealing with customer complaints made them physically and emotionally drained (*"annoyed", "stressed", "the day feels longer", "tired and hungry"*). This is a common phenomenon as even in the case of housekeeping and

room service work, customers considerably influence their next to no interactive work in non-interactive ways (Sherman 2011), let alone the customer-contact positions.

One of the main findings from this study is the tendency that Vietnamese hotel workers (e.g. Duyen) described their hotel work as a *"daughter-in-law"* job. This opinion was collected from both focus group and semi-structured interviews. The participants used the metaphor to emphasise the fact that hotel workers had to please everyone including managers, supervisors, colleagues and customers. In Vietnamese culture, a daughter-in-law is required to be a self-sacrificing mother, devoted daughter-in-law and dedicated wife under the supervision of the husband's mother who plays the roles of a carrier and a maintainer of Confucianism (Binh 2004; Do and Brennan 2015). These are the standards and responsibilities set by the Vietnamese society for a woman to take on once she is married, which has its root in Confucianism. The saying has described and exaggerated, to some extent, the requirements and pressure a hotel employee has to cope with. This is consistent with Guerrier and Adib's (2000, p.257) comment on hospitality employment which is often perceived as female roles with a lower status and makes hospitality workers *"cope with the psychological pressures of smiling and keeping their tempers in response to verbal provocation"*. It is the cultural values embedded in Vietnamese hotel workers that made them come to terms with customers' behaviours which people from other cultures may consider rude and unbearable. To some extent, hotel work which originated from the West has been modified and associated with a common concept of *"daughter-in-law"* in Vietnamese culture. Werner (2004) points out the meaning of *"in-law"* in Vietnamese society is different from the English terminology which defines the mother as a lateral relative. In Vietnam, the mother is the parent and has higher status and seniority and accordingly daughters-in-law are confined by the family norms to serve and submit to their parents-in-law (Werner 2004). Therefore, this relationship is always critical and unavoidable as noted by Do and Brennan (2015). This cultural feature is embedded in hotel workers' perception of their job and it directs their thinking towards duty and responsibility rather than perceiving it as a mere income-generating occupation.

Further to this, some participants were motivated by the passion for the job and considered customers as their source of positive energy.

> *"I get the energy from customers when I talk to them and smile at them." (Hau)*

"If I meet the customers who are happy in the morning, I feel very happy and work fast and the day goes fast too. In some cases, the customers are really nice, they give me some gifts or ask me if I am tired or not. If I am tired, they can go and buy me some drinks. These acts made me realise that I love my job." (Vy)

Indeed, seeing happy customers created positive emotions which motivated Vy to work faster and at the end of the day it had been a good and fast day to her. Though working in the hotel sector for just over a year, Vy had met several customers who expressed their care for her through gifts and drinks, which enhanced her love and passion for the job. Different from Vy, Hau is an assistant to the restaurant manager with over ten years of working experience and still maintains the passion from interacting with customers. Dinh, an HKM with over 15 years of working experience also emphasised the importance of passion for hotel work.

"Though working in this sector sounds like manual work, working with passion is like arts. Artists always appear young, love their lives and think life is beautiful though it's tiring and not-very-good pay. At least, every day we have very interesting experiences… It's necessary to have passion in hospitality industry. At the beginning it's just an entertaining job but with my passion, I've gained worthwhile achievements… it is the passion which supports me in making customers satisfied… Our passion is the most necessary catalyst that makes us adapt with all incidents and people from different countries. No matter where they are from, they're our customers, our god." (Dinh)

Passion for the job was identified as the catalyst for Dinh to provide consistent service to customers from different cultural backgrounds, which in turn helped him climb up the ladder from a bottom-line worker to the managerial position. However, it contrasts with Koc and Bozkurt's (2017) finding that Turkish hotel employees who are in higher levels of hierarchy and with more experience tend to be more dissatisfied with their jobs. Dinh visualised himself as an artist creating work from love and beauty despite such downsides as physical demand and low pay. A possible explanation for this difference is that Vietnamese hotel workers are less likely to perceive their jobs as sources of stress and burnout. This is in line with previous research which reports that EI is a significant moderator of the relationship between job stress and customer orientation behaviour (Chih et al. 2009). Furthermore, Kusluvan et al. (2010) suggest those possessing high EI tend to form positive attitudes and perceptions towards hospitality work. This statement may be applicable to Vietnamese hotel workers based on their positive perceptions of hotel work but a question raised is what makes

Vietnamese hotel workers more emotionally intelligent than others. The subsequent sections will provide possible answers to this question.

Similarly, the love and passion for the job was recognised as a driver for changing from negative to positive emotions experienced by other participants.

> *"The important thing is to see other customers when I'm not in the good mood. Talking to customers helps me reduce stress and makes me love my job... With customers, as long as I love my job, I try my best to make them happy, which in turn makes me happy." (Vu)*

> *"I don't have anything called strategy but the most important thing is the passion…" (Ha)*

Vu and Hau expressed a strong ability to identify their feelings and to generate positive emotions by talking to customers. Interestingly, Vu considered talking to customers as a way of releasing stress. Furthermore, Vu proactively chose to approach customers when he was not in a good mood because he was fully aware of what can enhance his mood. His source of happiness comes from customers and the passion for his job.

> *"It's mainly from my experiences and the love for my job. It's hard to work in tourism and hospitality if you don't love your job. If you just think about money and income, you will have discrimination in treating customers from different countries because you don't set it in your mind that you want to make customers happy. Or you take care of Westerners better than Asians; you don't put your passion in the job, which will lead to customer complaints. Then you can't regulate your emotions and solve the problems properly." (Vu)*

Talking to customers made them happy and it became a remedy for them when they needed to recharge as in the case of Vu. Vu's account describes how his love and passion for the job has developed into a personal philosophy towards his hotel work. To explain his philosophy, Vu revealed that those pursuing financial benefits tend to treat customers differently according to customers' home countries. He also pointed out the existing discrimination towards Asian customers as opposed to their Western counterparts. The quote above illustrates how Vu directed his attention to the important role of a hotel worker who makes customers happy no matter where they are from; his thinking was prioritised over his emotions. In so doing, he could focus on serving and solving problems for the customers no matter if they are Asian or Western. This finding echoes Jung and Yoon's (2016a) proposition that hospitality workers who perceive their work as meaningful or have positive mental attitudes

towards work are likely to have higher job engagement, which improves their job experience, productivity and motivation through psychological stability. This may explain for the substantial interest in studying EL and EI in relation to customer orientation and service orientation (Chih et al. 2009; Chang and Tse 2011; Lee and Ok 2015; Walsh et al. 2015; Wu and Shie 2017). To some extent, Vietnamese hotel workers may have positive attitudes towards hotel work and customers, which helps minimise the likelihood of them being negatively influenced by the intensive customer contact of hotel work.

7.5.2. Their perceptions of the workplace

Colleagues were also considered a significant factor influencing hotel workers' emotions due to the intensity and frequency of interaction in the workplace (e.g. Thanh).

> *"Many people think customers are important but I think it's the other way round. They aren't that important because they may shout, scold and get angry at us but if we let it go, we'll feel better. Even when they [customers] complement us, which makes us happy but other colleagues in the department say "chó táp phải ruồi" ("the devil looks after his own"). We can feel really bad immediately." (Vien)*

It is the colleagues with whom they work on a daily basis who are likely to exert greater impacts on their emotions. Vien described the situation when someone receives compliments from customers for a good job; instead of encouragement, the denial of one's hard work can be detrimental to his emotions. Tews et al.'s (2013) study suggests emotional support from co-workers is vital since it allows workers to recharge after intense EL interactions with customers. Previous research also reveals that co-worker support is more valued and a harmonious environment is more desirable in the Thai context as opposed to the American context, which may result from a more collectivist national culture in Thailand (Limpanitgul et al. 2014).

The research participants believed that the working environment was an important factor that influenced their emotions. Notably, they believed that a good working environment generates positive emotions to hotel workers and vice versa, which raises the questions of what makes a working environment good or bad from the perspective of Vietnamese hotel workers.

> *"When we work in one environment where most colleagues hate us, we cannot work very well. Therefore, the friendly working environment in which the colleagues are supportive is one of the driving forces for me to work in the hotel."* (Vy)

> *"People won't argue, which makes the environment perfect... there won't be jealousy and criticism... when it's not good, people talk behind their back, get annoyed and fight against each other."* (Hau)

While colleague support was considered an impetus for generating positive emotions at the workplace, *"jealousy"* and *"criticism"* are, interestingly, regarded as negative conduct from their perspective. This is consistent with the findings from the focus group interviews which reveal several characteristics of Vietnamese people such as *"jealousy"* and *"competitiveness"* that negatively influence teamwork as discussed in 5.3.2.4. Criticising or being criticised is likely to be avoided in the Vietnamese workplace as a consequence of face-saving practice adopted from both Buddhism and Confucianism (Dinh et al. 2000).

However, it is interesting that in collectivist culture like Vietnam, people can be jealous and competitive, which exerts negative impacts on the working environment. Furthermore, this is recognised by the research participants as one of the factors that they dislike to experience in the workplace. These negative characteristics may originate from the culture of closed villages where people used to live in small villages with their own god or goddess, communal house and tradition (Tho 2016); thus, they distinguished in-group and out-group members, and tended to value their community's benefits. This practice may be characterised as jealousy and competitiveness by their out-group members.

7.5.3. The characteristics of a hierarchy-based culture
7.5.3.1. The hierarchy of the prestige associated with each department

In the Vietnamese hotel workplace, the interaction amongst colleagues was affected by their perceptions of the prestige associated with each department. Distinct differences in the roles and prestige of each department were vividly reflected by the research participants.

Truc claimed that *"FO is the hotel image, the first and the last image"*, which can be interpreted as FO being the first department where customers are welcomed and greeted. It is also where customers have the last interaction before they leave. Hence,

their impressions and feelings are greatly influenced by FO staff. Some participants (e.g. Lan, Vi) suggested that the researcher should interview FO staff because they believed FO is the department with highest extent of customer contact, is more skilful in dealing with customers than staff in other departments and therefore would have more relevant experiences to share.

An FB staff member (Man) drew attention to the unpleasant fact that most interns only wanted to work in FO department.

> *"... They want to work as a receptionist, a bellman or some similar positions but they don't know that there're also good things about working in the restaurant." (Man)*

The preference for FO over other customer-contact departments such as FB and HK amongst interns implies their perception of an appealing position in the hotel. Though the role of FO varies from hotel to hotel depending on the size, location and market target of the property (Kong and Baum 2006), FO is defined as the main contact point for hotel guests irrespective of the hotel type elsewhere (Vallen and Vallen 2014). The overall better image of FO department in relation to other departments in Vietnam is similar to other contexts. This may result from the fact that in small and medium-sized hotel enterprises, FO and marketing departments are often merged, which requires FO staff to gain more experience and qualifications in human relations, communication, foreign languages, marketing and selling (Okumus et al. 2016).

In fact, Hoa shared that FO staff receive higher pay than staff in other departments; they are also trained to deal with customer complaints and be patient with customers though customers may be wrong. It is possibly the reason why FO staff work under high pressure, which is likely to influence their emotions. FO staff were said to *"have big egos"*, which made Huong reticent to talk to them. The Sales department, on the other hand, was believed to be a form of promotion for outstanding FO employees as in the case of Hung, Huy and Ngoc. They are assigned to contact customers for marketing and selling, which requires a high degree of customer contact but they do office hours instead of shift work and do not have to be on their feet. This is why the Sales department is perceived as white collar work and superior compared to other departments.

Amongst the departments involved in the research (FO, FB, HK and sales), HK is considered the least skilled job because it involves a high degree of manual work and staff have limited skills and capability to communicate in English. Hoa expressed the disagreement with her FO staff in the way they behaved towards HK staff – *"they talked to HK staff as if they're scolding and they're better than HK staff"*. This finding is in line with Reichel et al.'s (2014) study; whereas HK is regarded as the least skilled job, FO staff members are considered as having higher skills and undertaking non-monotonous tasks with social skills, computer skills and reacting under pressure. It is noteworthy that the hierarchy amongst the hotel departments was also identified in a research conducted by Robinson et al. (2016) in the USA which reports FO workers associate their job with a managerial identity and consider themselves as white-collar workers whereas HK workers perceive their work as unskilled and dirty and feel disconnected from other departments in the hotel. Overall, Vietnamese hotel workers' perceptions of their jobs are barely different from those in other countries but the characteristics of a hierarchical society makes the situation more complicated and subsequently influences their emotions and relationships with their colleagues in other departments.

7.5.3.2. The conflicts between age-grading and position-grading hierarchy

The characteristic of a high power-distance culture is reflected in the position-grading hierarchy in the Vietnamese workplace, which determines how hotel workers interact with their managers and subordinates.

> *"Managers play an important role in deciding staff's emotions, no matter what layer it is. I'm subordinate to my boss, my staffs are subordinate to me, and we influence each other that way." (Dang)*

It can be seen that in a Vietnamese workplace, bottom-line workers are vulnerable to pressure from the managerial layers above them and their emotions are likely to be influenced by many factors. Previous research suggests leaders are bound by duties and responsibilities and prone to stress and burnout (Haver et al. 2014); it can be argued that in a hierarchical society, bottom-line workers who have direct contact with customers are even more vulnerable to stress and this needs further research on their emotions and how they deal with these stressors.

The Vietnamese culture in the workplace was also revealed through the notion of unfair treatment in a hotel where the salary was not determined by how long the workers stayed in the organisation.

> *"… they don't value those working here for a long time. There're things that I can't understand in respect of the company policy. I find it a bit unreasonable about staff retention. They have policies for welfare but not for staff retention in a heart-winning way (đắc nhân tâm) [the Vietnamese phrase originates from the book called How to win friends and influence people]. They don't have policies to keep people work for them for a long time. Those who started working later get paid more than previous employees in all departments, which causes dissatisfaction and jealousy at work. "You do the same thing to me, the same position, but you get paid more, then you do it all." That's what they think. I'm in the middle, at the managerial level but I can't interfere the company policies." (Khoi)*

Khoi recognised this as a major problem which *"upset"* workers and made them quit the job in his hotel; since organisations are expected to value those who work for it for a longer duration of time than new workers and this practice of the hotel caused negative emotions towards their workers. Khoi cited the unfair pay as one of the causes for staff's dissatisfaction and jealousy amongst long-term workers against new workers, which in turn leads to a high turnover rate in his department. The participant was fully aware of the situation and his subordinates' negative emotions but he emphasised it went beyond his capacity to moderate these intense emotions in the workplace.

Interestingly, the criterion on which the hierarchy is based may also lead to conflicts in the workplace. The aforementioned low prestige associated with HK department compared to other departments is likely to generate negative emotions amongst HK staff and influence how workers from other departments behave towards them. The issue becomes more problematic when the HK workers are older than most of them. One of the participants (Ngoc) witnessed her hotel manager's bad behaviour and attitude towards the HK colleagues, which led to her resignation because her constructive feedback to the hotel manager was neglected and even caused more trouble for her HK colleagues.

> *"Most HK staff are quite old, one of them is almost as old as my mom. They don't have a degree or certificate, just work based on their experiences. The hotel owner is young, just a few years older than me but she didn't show respect to those HK staff." (Ngoc)*

This conflict originates from the social ranking determined by age in Vietnam, which tends to create some difficulties and challenges in the workplace where the manager is younger than the bottom-line staff. Moreover, the Vietnamese language has a complicated system of terms of address and reference based on gender, age, and social position of the interlocutors (Szymańska-Matusiewicz 2014). One of the basic social behaviours in Vietnam is to show respect to older people; therefore, using informal personal pronouns *("mày", "tao")* in the workplace is a taboo. Traditional filial piety is a moral norm across the East Asian Pacific Rim which considers older adults as a source of wisdom, magical power and various types of resources for younger generations; thus, young people are expected to respect and be attentive to the older generations, and provide care and support when needed (Kim and Yamaguchi 1995; Sung 2001). These cultural characteristics may offer the best explanation for the conflicts arising in Khoi and Ngoc's workplace. This notion contrasts with Reichel et al.'s (2014, p.639) findings on the association between age and self-perception of Israeli hotel workers: the younger the employee is, the more *"respectable"* and *"socially acceptable"* his job is. In the Vietnamese workplace, young workers are expected to be submissive and show a certain degree of respect to their older colleagues. Hence, this cultural practice presents difficulties to several young participants (e.g. Nga, Vien, Truc) holding managerial positions when interacting with subordinates who are much older than them.

7.5.4. The role of family and academic achievement

The role of family was highlighted in Vu's account which determined how attentive he was to his staff's emotions and his solution to their emotional problems.

> *"... what influences my emotional regulation are family problems. For example, during high season, my wife was sick and asked me to take her to the doctor. "It's very busy here, I can't go home." So, she's upset. I wasn't in a good mood then and I couldn't serve very well. I could easily get annoyed with my staff and make customers unhappy because I couldn't manage my emotions well or solve the problem." (Vu)*

In order to manage his work-family conflict, Vu came up with his own solutions.

> *"If it's something not very serious about my wife, my children or parents, I just try not to think about it. If it's really serious and takes much space in my mind, I often speak to my manager and ask for a few days off to deal with my personal problems." (Vu)*

There are a few implications emerging from Vu's account. First, it was the worker who decided how important the family issue was to him for appropriate solutions. Second, *"trying not to think about it"* demonstrates both the recognition and the regulation of his own emotions. He identified and appraised negative emotions resulting from his family issue and proactively oriented his attention towards the work role. The third implication lies in the fact that he recognised how these negative feelings distracted him from performing the desired work responsibilities but he was unable to direct his mood towards the positive end of the spectrum. This is when the support from managers is needed, which indicates the important role of managers in the Vietnamese hotel workplace.

In Vu's case, he faced the dilemma that his wife was not feeling well and she needed him and at the same time he could not leave work due to the peak time. Vu was fully aware of his emotional changes towards the negative side, which in turn influenced the customers and his colleagues, *"get annoyed with my staff and make customers unhappy"*. In addition to analysing his emotions, Vu emphasised the inability to regulate his emotions. Vu's example highlighted the impacts of family problems on his emotions at work and illustrated how he perceived, appraised and analysed his emotions but failed to facilitate thinking towards his work role. However, Vu expressed the courage and honesty about his own emotions and thoughts which Lindebaum (2015) identifies as two factors initiating emotional processes in his phenomenological study on the processes underlying the ability-based EI.

Though work-life conflict is beyond the scope of this study, it is noteworthy that those who are married and have greater roles in the family (e.g. Vu, Vien, Van) tend to experience more emotional conflicts between work and family roles than young and single participants. Similar findings are reported from a quantitative study of hotel employees in Macau, those with greater role interferences from family exhibited higher levels of job-related exhaustion which can turn into negative attitudes toward the workplace (Zhao et al. 2014). However, the participants who experienced the emotional exhaustion from family and brought it to work admitted they expressed negative emotions instead of faking positive emotions to meet the required emotional display of their work roles.

Though family emerged as one of the main factors influencing hotel workers' emotions, academic achievement seems to be a critical element underlying Vietnamese's workers' responsibility towards their family.

> *"That day before work, I argue with my husband or someone else in the family, or my children are naughty, they don't study well or get bad marks. All those things influence me and of course I'll bring those negative emotions to work." (Van)*

> *"It is said that we can excel at work only when the family is settled. For example, if we argue with our partners or the children are sick or fail an exam, we can't be in the good mood to complete the tasks at work." (Vien)*

These two accounts indicate that common family-related issues which negatively influenced the participants' emotions include arguments with their partners or their children's problems with academic achievement. This supports previous research (Chen and Stevenson 1995) which shows the belief that studying leads to academic success is stronger amongst Asian-American students compared to their Caucasian-American counterparts, but less than East Asian students as a consequence of cultural modification; likewise, Asian-American parents have higher standards for academic achievement than Caucasian-American parents but lower than that held by East Asian parents. To a wider extent, Asianness refers to high achievement, hard work and success whereas whiteness represents low achievement, laziness and academic mediocrity (Jiménez and Horowitz 2013). It is without doubt that the pressure for academic achievement faces both parents and children in Asian families and this is illustrated in the Vietnamese hotel workers' accounts.

> *"When I started working for Star, my dad said "I didn't support you to go to university to become a waiting staff"… our family don't consider it a job though we work in hotels." (Thinh)*

> *"Sometimes I think that I graduated from the university but do the serving job, which makes me feel sad… Vietnamese people have such big egos. Sometimes we are not scolded by our parents but we are scolded a lot by the customers, they are not our relatives but they hail curses on us. As a result, we feel sad and self-pity, then we quit our job." (Duc)*

The lack of recognition and support from the family for taking up hotel jobs is one of the challenges facing Vietnamese hotel workers and this challenge arises when their emotions are triggered at work. The importance of family in their perception is reflected in the way they distinguish family members versus customers, which implies

the likelihood of granting the rude behaviour if it were a family member. Customers' scolding provoked their sadness and self-pity, which intensifies their intention to quit the job. The notion that hospitality workers are indeed well-educated or even overqualified for their job has been identified elsewhere (Janta et al. 2011a). There exists a contradiction between their belief in study and academic success with taking up hotel jobs and this becomes a serious problem when they receive little support from the family which makes them more vulnerable to customers' anger. Consequently, they experienced negative emotions and were pushed towards quitting the job.

7.6. Sources of knowledge of recognition and regulation of others' emotions

Whereas the knowledge of managing their own emotions was collected from different sources, the research participants revealed that the management of others' emotions was mainly obtained from work-related experiences.

7.6.1. Work-related experiences

A common answer received from the participants (e.g. Ngoc, Truong, Huong, Thuc, Hoa, Vinh) was that they obtained their knowledge of EI from the working environment comprising customers, colleagues, and managers.

The availability of training programmes on EI varied from one hotel to another, depending on their size, vision or policy.

> *"The hotel I'm working at pays attention to interactions between staff and customers, so they organise these courses to help staff understand what they need and lack as well as how to interact with managers and other colleagues."* *(Tran)*

> *"I think there's a shortage of training programmes for hotel staff in terms of customers' emotions at the moment. I just gain it from my experiences or from senior staff, and make it my own source of knowledge. Nobody teaches me this."* *(Huy)*

Although both Tran and Huy worked in four-star hotels, they had different experiences towards the availability of training programmes in their hotels. On the other hand, Duyen believed that working in big resorts or hotels is likely to provide her with more chances of interacting with customers and practising EI.

Some participants (e.g. Hung) confirmed the possibility of improving hotel workers' EI *"through courses on communication skill, cultures and learning from those who are more experienced"*. This notion provides practical implications for hoteliers in terms of designing training programmes which combine both theory and practical experiences shared by senior hotel workers in order to increase their practicality and relevance. In so doing, it will boost the productivity of these programmes.

Interestingly, several participants emphasised the importance of learning from their senior colleagues and managers over the training programmes. Vi highlighted the need to have *"good managers to orient"* hotel workers. The participants tended to actively observe how their senior colleagues dealt with emotionally challenging situations.

> *"Looking at the surrounding environment, I notice some people are quite good at dealing with people. They know how to manage their emotions, as if getting scolded is a minor problem to them… I learn from him. Another colleague takes revenge as soon as he's shouted at and 'shoots' right away… He's great too. I learn different things from different people."* (Dang)

Dang's account was interesting regarding the way he picked things up from his colleagues' behaviours and interactions with others. He learned from both positive and negative examples of his colleagues' emotional management.

7.6.2. Personal experiences

Apart from work-related experiences, other participants (e.g. Vien, Hoan) learned from people in their personal network and self-studied in their own time.

> *"… from a teacher and brother of mine, Minh Nghi. He's a training manager of Talent Links and PQC Group. He specialises in training human resource and managers… I self-study and enjoy reading topics like Rich Dad or 'How to win friends and influence people'. At the moment, I'm reading 'Morning Tony'. I like these kinds of books, I read one per month. I read and learn from them."* (Vien)

> *"I haven't been trained on those but I learn from others… from those working in the same sector with me and others as well."* (Hoan)

> *"… when I have free time, I usually watch orators' talks. In addition, I also read some books about personal development. I just read but it's gradually absorbed."* (Vy)

The above accounts illustrate the great efforts and interests that participants exhibited regarding personal development and its related aspects to become better workers and

individuals in their social life. The emotional challenge they encountered in the workplace was not considered as a stressor but as motivation for them to pursue self-improvement.

Amongst those who combined both work-related and personal experiences, Lam said that she became able to deal with *"unexpected situations"* and control her emotions. This is to confirm the likelihood that one's EI can be improved over time through practising and training (Wolfe 2017).

However, Thuy is amongst the minority who posited that it is personality which determines the ability to regulate one's emotions. *"Do you care about others? If you do, you'll listen, which helps you control your emotions to understand the problem"*. It is noteworthy to look into Thuy's background; she was one of the department managers who worked in the hotel sector for over 12 years without a degree. Starting with higher proficiency in English compared to her peers at that time, Thuy believed that it was her personality as *"caring"* which made her an outstanding bottom-line worker and brought her fast career progress. This can be an exceptional case of someone with the trait closely associated with EI. However, with the qualitative approach, this study is limited to reflecting participants' diverse viewpoints rather than confirming or denying theories of ability or trait-based EI.

7.6.3. Teachings from Buddhism and Vietnamese culture

Amongst the common sources of knowledge of EI, Buddhism and Vietnamese culture were mentioned by Hau, Duc and Vy, which deserves further exploration. Hau said that apart from his manager, another source of knowledge of emotional management is Buddhist teachings.

> *"I learn and read more from books, experienced and talked to those who read the same kinds of books… Books about Buddhism mention it a bit. Most of the monks can regulate their emotions very well… After reading, I must spend some time thinking about it."* (Hau)

> *"I learn about meditation from some of the monks."* (Duc)

Hau expressed the great interests in learning and mastering ER through reading, thinking, discussing and practising. He also observed that monks could regulate their

emotions as good examples to follow. Similarly, Duc learnt how to meditate from the monks.

On the other hand, Vietnamese culture serves as a crucial source of knowledge to Vy. It is interesting that Vy supposed that if she was working as a receptionist in another country, she would not have the culture as a reliable source of knowledge as how Vietnamese culture has oriented her.

> *"... if I were a receptionist in a foreign country, I would not know what to do. I use what I was taught in Vietnamese culture to treat my customers." (Vy)*

The two qualities that Vy learned from Vietnamese culture for serving customers were respect and empathy. This is not the first time the participants emphasised the importance of respect and empathy in hotel work (e.g. Van). This may come from the practice of treating customers as God and the Golden Rule *"Do unto others"* which has been embedded in their education, social interactions and religious teachings and become their guidelines for the interactions in the workplace. Indeed, Van pointed out that her foreign manager lacked an understanding of Vietnamese culture; therefore, he expressed little respect and empathy towards his bottom-line workers. This was also the main reason for her conflict with her manager in the workplace as discussed in Group C, section 6.3.2.

7.7. Suggested ways to improve EI

Talking about sources of their knowledge of emotional management served as a basis for Vietnamese hotel workers to suggest how hoteliers could assist them in improving their EI. A mix of managerial and bottom-line hotel workers allows for the reflection of their opinions on training as both trainers and trainees. Three main areas are suggested, including training issues, working environment, and the role of managers.

7.7.1. Training issues

The participants pointed out that both topics and forms of training could work best for them in terms of emotional management. There are four topics of training identified as crucial for their EI practice comprising psychology, communication skills, interaction with customers, and regional and national cultures. Moreover, how training is delivered matters to the workers and thus their preferred forms of training are on-

the-job training, pen-and-paper exercise, incentive trips, and talks delivered by experienced hotel workers.

7.7.1.1. Topics for training

One of the participants highlighted the importance of training hotel workers on psychology so that they could understand their customers and colleagues better and provide better service.

> *"I think hotels should organise training in psychology. It's very necessary. Those who haven't had those courses don't know how the understanding of people's psychology can help them improve their work performance. I think they should have training programmes on that to guide everyone little by little, they will absorb it. Not everyone is aware of it." (Nga)*

Nga suggested the psychological element because she was trained in that in the pedagogical vocational college and found it helpful for her current position as an HK supervisor. The psychology aspect mentioned in Nga's account can be interpreted as people's behaviours, their experience and expression of emotions. A lack of HR practices and training in emotional content has also been addressed elsewhere such as Nigeria (Igbojekwe 2015) and Scotland (Bratton and Waton 2018). This may explain for the growing interest in encompassing EI and EL in hotel training programmes as discussed in 2.5.2.2.

When invited to be an examiner for assessing hospitality undergraduates, Huy criticised their shortage of communication skills leading to the passiveness in following a certain procedure. Communication skills were also suggested by other participants (e.g. Hung, Ngoc). This finding is consistent with Ineson's (2011) suggestion that communication is amongst the key fields that can be applied effectively in hospitality. Notably, when Vietnamese hotel workers mentioned communication, they also included communicating with foreign customers in a foreign language.

> *"The solution is to provide them with training and give them some real-life situations to deal with. For example, how will you react when customers get angry? They're supposed to control their emotions first and calm down the customers. We're still building the program. It's hard. For now, we mainly have Chinese and Russian, so we can't communicate much." (Ngoc)*

Ngoc's statement brings forward the association between emotional management and foreign language proficiency as in the case of Chinese and Russian customers. Indeed, the language barrier prevents Vietnamese hotel workers from understanding and regulating the emotions of customers from these countries, which has been discussed in sections 6.2.2 and 7.3.

The third area suggested for training is interactions between staff and customers.

> *"The hotel I'm working at pays attention to interaction between staff and customers, so they organize these courses to help staff understand what they need and lack as well as how to interact with managers and other colleagues… It helped me understand my type and how to behave towards different people. I gained more knowledge of that, not 100% but 50%." (Tran)*

The above account indicates the need to understand oneself and others and match their own qualities with the required ones for better interactions in the workplace. This finding is in line with Wolfe's (2017) longitudinal study of hospitality students' EI which reveals that lessons in the Intrapersonal and Adaptability realms are the most effective in helping students who had low EI scores improve their EI competencies. In other words, one's EI can be improved by helping them understand their own emotions and adapt to others in the organisation. Again, it depends on the hotel policy but the training provided can be considered successful because it has benefited the worker and assisted them in fulfilling their job role.

In some hotels, training in interactions between hotel workers and customers was designed in a more specific way and named as handling problems (Thuy) or handling guest complaints (Vu). These training courses focus on procedures of dealing with customer complaints and involve emotional management. This is a possible explanation for the tendency that participants referred to incidents of dealing with customer complaints when talking about EI practice. Indeed, the EI practice is needed in these emotionally charged incidents, particularly in Vietnamese society where people value self-control and consider the expression of one's emotion as a weakness (Purnell 2008). However, the research findings allow for an emphasis on Purnell's comment that only expression of negative emotions was not encouraged, which may make Vietnamese people generally suitable for the hospitality workforce.

Finally, regional and national culture was added as an important component for training. Explaining for his suggestion, Vinh said:

> *"By collecting customers' email and information, staff members know what an English or French customer needs to serve them better".*

To some extent, the emphasis on cultural training is consistent with Alshaibani and Bakir's (2017) argument that cultural intelligence is more important than EI in cross-cultural service interactions.

7.7.1.2. Forms of training

Apart from recommending components for training, the participants suggested the form of training which would work best for them. The suggested forms include on-the-job training, pen-and-paper exercise, case study, role play, incentive trips, and talks delivered by senior colleagues or managers.

Duyen combined both on-the-job training and pen-and-paper exercise for her FO subordinates.

> *"At present, I am talking to them and showing them the real situations in the job… For instance, in this situation, I show my staff that he/ she should understand what customers want at that time. I just show them some skills then I need to show my staff the practice as I interact with the customers. There are many employees, not only one in the resort; therefore, when things happen, there aren't those employees who are with me as they work in different shifts… I don't only tell them all the theories but also ask them to practise by doing exercises on the paper. For example, with the old employees, they can understand what I say and can apply it to the job. However, with the new ones, they don't understand and can't apply, I ask them to do exercises on the paper, finish them in a given time and email me back. When they give answers to the questions, if they lack something in the answer, I will add it up… At the beginning I can do like this, later I allow them to interact with the customers and apply what they learn to deal with customers." (Duyen)*

As an FOM, Duyen was in charge of training both new and existing workers. The difficulties facing her include the availability of staff when a particular incident occurred and their comprehension. It can be suggested that the incidents collected using CIT may serve as a comprehensive record of interactions with customers and colleagues which can be disseminated to hotel workers. Furthermore, these incidents can be used as real-life situations for testing workers' comprehension and their problem-solving skills, which echoes a suggestion made by one of the participants.

"To me, they should create the situations in which the staffs are exposed to different types of emotional problems. Then we must give them the solutions. In so doing, I think the staffs are well-prepared for any sudden cases." (Lam)

Lam highlights the adoption of real-life situations in training to enhance problem-solving skills for lay workers. It is suggested that this is combined with on-the-job training or shadowing to ensure the quality of the service provided. Previous research also suggests case studies and role play to enhance problem-solving abilities for hospitality students as one of the components in EI training (Scott-Halsell et al. 2011; Wolfe et al. 2014). Interestingly, Min et al. (2011) recommended encouraging students to practise communicating in an assertive but respectful manner through role play and problem-solving activities, particularly making them practise using the first person pronoun *"I"* instead of *"we"* for more assertive communication. Similar cultural practice is also found in Vietnam where people tend to use *"we"* as a personal pronoun to express a personal idea because it makes them more comfortable saying that as a group member (Phan 2017). Therefore, this practice can be applied in Vietnam given the cultural similarities between Vietnam and Taiwan and the fact that the majority of the participants used *"we"* frequently in their interviews to express personal opinion.

In addition to the conventional training courses, the participants raised the idea of organising incentive trips for workers because they believed these trips helped connect them and thus work performance would be improved (e.g. Tran, Huong, Hoan). Making staff committed to the organisation is also recommended.

"… showing their care to staff on national holidays or Lunar New Year, which makes staff more committed to the hotel. It's the way to maintain a good relationship, which hasn't been done very well in Vietnam… Taking care of staff personal life is not done very well in Vietnam generally… Because basically when they go to work with a good spirit, greeting and smiling at everyone, which makes us happy to serve customers." (Hoan)

Several implications emerge from Hoan's account. First, commitment is highly value from his viewpoint which can be achieved through cultural activities such as national holidays or Lunar New Year. Second, taking good care of workers to some extent fosters the relationship between the workers and the organisation. Indeed, building relationships was long ago recognised as one of the factors contributing to success for international joint ventures in Vietnam (Truong et al. 1998). Therefore, foreign hoteliers may need to consider this for successful HRM practice in Vietnam because

previous research shows the adoption of Western HRM practices has led to failures of business collaborations in Vietnam (Nguyen 2003; Bartram et al. 2009). The third point made by Hoan is the likelihood that satisfied workers go to work with positive emotions and their genuine emotions meet the desired emotional display. This is in line with Ashforth and Humphrey's (1993) proposition that the expression of genuine emotion is a means of accomplishing EL since it requires little effort compared to surface acting and deep acting.

In addition, most participants stated that practical knowledge is valued over theory; therefore, training can also be undertaken in the form of talks where senior colleagues or managers share their real-life experiences.

> *"I think apart from lessons from the experts or hotel managers, I think they should invite those who have worked or managed in hotels for a long time to help staff. Because the practical advice is always easier to absorb than theory which is beautiful and bright like steps you should take are step 1, step 2, step 3 and 4… Talk to someone who has worked in hotels for 10 years and experienced those emotions, when they share how they control their emotions and mitigate the hot-tempered self can help a lot. I think listening to one' own experiences goes to the listener's heart easily and influences them more than theory." (Van)*

A similar approach was recorded in the interview with Ngan, a hotel trainer.

> *"I think managers and staff can remind each other. Some are really good at regulating their emotions, hoteliers can make others learn from these people." (Ngan)*

Sharing the same view, Hau emphasised that the person delivering these sessions should be *"knowledgeable"* because *"even those with experiences, they can't control their emotions when delivering a speech"*.

It seems that Vietnamese hotel workers have their own evaluation criteria which serve as a basis for them to identify who is emotionally intelligent and can become a role model in this regard. Interestingly, learning from a real person who is believed to be good at regulating their emotions appears to be a popular measure for enhancing one's EI. This finding supports the finding on sources of knowledge and explains why Vietnamese hotel workers tend to appreciate and follow those having more experience than them to learn instead of qualifications. This is contradictory to Chang and Chien's (2012) research findings which show a trainer's educational degree and major are the

main factors determining the effectiveness of training courses, and employees who have higher degrees were more likely to be unsatisfied with the training courses. The preference for experience over qualification amongst Vietnamese hotel workers may come from the perception of hotel work as *"the profession teaches itself"* reported in 5.4.3, and thus exposure to the industrial setting is more valued.

7.7.2. Working environment

When asked to suggest ways for improving their EI, Vietnamese hotel workers emphasised the importance of having a fair working environment. This implies the great impacts of the working environment on hotel workers' EI practice, which is an unexpected finding on this issue. In other words, training is neither a primal concern nor buffer for hotel workers' EI practice; it is more about the working environment.

> *"... build up a friendly working environment for staff. If there's no emotional barrier amongst staff or between staff and managers, it will enhance staff's attitudes towards customers, which makes the job go smoothly." (Huong)*

This finding is in line with those of previous research which reveal that co-worker and supervisor support helps workers recharge and less effort is made regarding EL (Tews et al. 2013; Kang et al. 2015); consequently, EI practice is less needed.

A similar opinion was found in the interviews with Truc, an FOM, and Dang, an FB supervisor.

> *"As a manager, no matter if it's high or low ranking, I must create an open atmosphere for staff to make their voice, feelings and wishes heard. It doesn't matter if it's right or wrong, I don't reject them because they'd feel they're losing face." (Truc)*

> *"In general, try to build up a fair working environment; it will help a lot regarding EQ… A manager should make staff agree with what he says; the staff will also feel comfortable and think he's empathetic." (Dang)*

The above comments imply the need for an open and fair working environment reported from interviews with participants who were in supervisory and managerial positions. It is believed that the working environment has a great impact on workers' emotions. As discussed previously, face-saving is a distinctive characteristic of Vietnamese culture (Phan 2017); hence, a sense of support and encouragement is important for hotel workers to speak up and rejection should be avoided. Despite being

a high power distance society, Vietnam inherits a mixture of Chinese, Western, and Socialist values which determines management practices including grassroots democracy, delegation (American), egalitarianism, and collective decisions and responsibility (socialism) (Nguyen et al. 2018a). This cultural characteristic may explain why Vietnamese hotel workers expect to be told what to do but highly value a fair working environment.

7.7.3. Desired qualities of managers

In addition to training and enhancing the working environment, the hotel workers described an ideal manager who could help them improve their EI practice. This view was reflected from both managerial and bottom-line workers' perspectives. Thi, a GM with 8 years of working experience as an HRM stated as follows.

> *"In terms of emotions, I think it's the same everywhere, we must make employees place trust in us. For example, in the incident I mentioned earlier, the female staff needed consolation and empathy from colleagues in the same department and managers. It's easier for them to overcome these problems and not to suffer from pent-up frustrations if they can get consolation… The empathy from managers, not only the department managers, helps staff reduce the frustrations they suffer from." (Thi)*

Thi's account suggests trust, consolation and empathy are the qualities required for managers in order to help hotel workers manage their emotions and overcome the stress and burnout resulting from interactions in the workplace.

Similarly, Vien, a young GM demonstrated the role of managers as moderators in different situations.

> *"So, how can we love and take care of customers the same way as we do to our lovers? I'm sure that everyone can do that because small rains absorb better ("mưa dầm thấm lâu"). I often share with staff and remind them. I even do it myself to show them… Theoretically they don't work on the same shifts but they will talk to each other gradually, possibly when we go out for a beer. When they start getting a bit drunk, they'll release it, I listen and explain it to them, and they'll absorb it better." (Vien)*

From Vien's point of view, in order to improve services, he encouraged his subordinates to consider customers as their lovers. Furthermore, he reminded them and practised it as a role model for them to follow. With regard to interactions amongst colleagues, when conflict arose, he would ask them to go out for a beer after work and

it was the time when they released the annoyance which bothered them. Again, the manager played the role of a moderator who listened and resolved the conflict between the colleagues. This may result from the characteristic of a collectivist culture where the relationship between workers and managers is expected to be a family link as suggested by Hofstede et al. (2010).

It can be suggested that when talking about suggestions for improving EI, participants tended to think about mechanisms and factors which could help them reduce EL effort. Hence, managers can provide a buffer against stress and burnout in the workplace.

> *"To solve [customers'] problems, we need support from our managers, that's it. It's unreasonable to ignore our efforts and criticise us though we tried our best. That means we don't want to work under pressure from both customers and managers." (Linh)*

In other words, once one of the layers posing stress to hotel workers is eliminated, their emotions can be considerably improved and thus less EI practice is needed.

It is suggested that from the Vietnamese hotel workers' perspective, work relationships tend to be more troublesome and difficult to handle than interactions with customers. The following account is a good example to illustrate this complication.

> *"I think it's easier to deal with the interactions between staff and customers than amongst colleagues. In a team, different people have different personalities; of course they will have conflicts and prejudice against each other… As a manager, I can't solve all these problems for them but try to minimize those issues." (Thuc)*

This finding reinforces the proposition made in chapter 6 which indicates interactions with customers tend to follow the sequential and hierarchical EI processes, whereas interactions with colleagues involve different attributes and managers play an important role in moderating these interactions. In order to improve EI practice, participants outweigh the significance of the working environment and managers' role compared to training. This finding supports Nguyen's (2015a) proposition that Vietnamese workers with collectivist orientation tend to highly value the relationship with co-workers and supervisors and have higher EI and job satisfaction. To a wider extent, this finding is in line with Bratton and Waton's (2018) suggestion that good communication skills and support from top management is important for managing talents in the hospitality industry. It is suggested that manager support is crucial in the

hospitality industry due to its distinctive features compared to other sectors and the context of a collectivist society like Vietnam makes the picture even clearer.

7.8. Summary

This chapter covers the strategies of EI practice demonstrated by Vietnamese hotel workers in their interactions with customers and colleagues. There are considerable differences in the way they manage their own and others' emotions, which provides an understanding of intrapersonal and interpersonal EI from their perspectives. With respect to intrapersonal EI, they tended to distinguish the positive and negative emotions, and described the strategies of regulating the negative ones but little was mentioned in terms of the mechanism for recognising their own emotions.

In contrast, the management of others' emotions, or interpersonal EI, reflected a separation between recognising and regulating those emotions. The hotel workers demonstrated the ability to read customers' emotional expressions based on their countries or regions of origin. The regulation of customers' emotions mainly involved dealing with dissatisfied customers because positive emotions expressed by the customers were encouraged and exerted positive influences on hotel workers' emotions. There was also a procedure of calming down, analysing, and detaching or engaging customers' emotions to ensure the problem would be solved to the best of their ability. The interactions with colleagues were considered informal and could be enhanced through socialisation after work. This is a common practice of the Vietnamese workplace culture which helped hotel workers understand their colleagues' personal problems, express empathy, and solve conflicts. In addition, the issues emerging from their interactions with customers and colleagues reflect a strong impact of culture and religion on their practice of EI.

Findings on cultural factors influencing their emotions and sources of knowledge of emotional management support the findings reported in focus group interviews. The adoption of semi-structured interviews allows for more in-depth insights into these issues compared to the focus group interviews.

Notably, suggestions for improving EI involve not only training issues but also the working environment and the role of managers which is an unexpected finding. To

some extent, this finding is consistent with Langhorn's (2004) research which highlights that the creation of a positive working environment and the manager's empathy and emotional control can reduce team turnover and enhance profit performance.

Chapter 8 – Conclusions and Implications

8.1. Introduction to chapter 8

This chapter starts with a discussion of the research contributions from three perspectives: theory, methodology, and practice and management for the hospitality industry. The second part of the chapter presents suggestions for further research, followed by the limitations of the whole study. The next part of the chapter is a personal reflection on the research, and the emotions and thoughts evoked. The chapter ends with a final conclusion.

8.2. Contributions of the research

Drawn upon the research findings, there are implications for theory, methodology, and practice and management. The following section discusses each aspect.

8.2.1. Theoretical implications

The findings generated from the study offer in-depth insights into the EI practices of Vietnamese hotel workers. This is similar in the essence to findings gained from qualitative research on EI experience in other sectors, such as follower perceptions of their change leaders' EI (Smollan and Parry 2011), mental health nurses' EI experience in talk based intervention (Hurley 2013), or the impacts of EI training programmes on school teachers (Dolev and Leshem 2017). Qualitative research on EI is rare and findings from these qualitative studies are different from each other due to the context and characteristics of each occupation.

Exploring how Vietnamese hotel workers practise EI in interactions with customers and colleagues allows for an understanding of both intrapersonal and interpersonal EI, filling the gap in current EI research which tends to neglect the latter (Delcourt et al. 2016). With regard to intrapersonal EI, the participants distinguished positive versus negative emotions and attempted to regulate their negative emotions to match with the desired emotional display although little was revealed in terms of the mechanisms employed to recognise their inner feelings. In contrast, they paid a lot more attention to recognising customers' and colleagues' emotions so as to regulate them

accordingly. The research findings show that EI, ER and EL were closely intertwined in the way hotel workers managed their own and others' emotions. This confirms the inter-relationship between EI, ER and EL and echoes Lindebaum's (2015) findings that EI feeds into ER instead of EI theories. Therefore, lay researchers of EI are recommended to review theories on ER for a better understanding of the EI concept.

Furthermore, the research contributes to current literature from a cultural perspective by researching EI in an under-researched context like Vietnam. Vietnamese culture was found to influence hotel workers' emotions and the way they managed them in interactions with customers and colleagues. As Thang et al. (2007, p.125) noted, Vietnamese people follow their own formula of *"adaptation"* instead of *"adoption"* (translated from *"hòa nhập nhưng không hòa tan"*), which makes them avoid confrontation and willing to compromise for mutual and long-term benefits. The positive perceptions of hotel work from Vietnamese hotel workers' perspectives supports Liu and Liu's (2008) proposition that the unfavourable evaluation of tourism employment is inapplicable to less developed countries because of the variations resulting from the nations' ideologies, culture, and political economy systems. Specifically, Vietnamese culture highly values harmony and benevolence (Edwards and Phan 2013), which aligns with the ideological values of three religions (Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism) and creates a healthy, harmonious, and peaceful lifestyle in society (Le 2016). Therefore, this lends credence to Hosie et al.'s (2016) suggestion that EI research should shift the focus from the West to the East where self-reflection, contemplation, and meditation are highly valued and practised in their daily life.

The theoretical framework (Figure 3 p.31) built upon previous research on EI, EL and ER serves as a guideline for exploring how Vietnamese hotel workers recognise and regulate their own and others' emotions in the hotel workplace. The qualitative approach allows for the exploration of *"how"*, *"when"*, and *"why"* their EI was employed in interactions with customers and colleagues. This highlights the importance of context in researching EI and suggests numerical data may not be sufficiently representative.

The research findings show that interactions with customers seem to follow hierarchical and sequential processes whereas interactions with colleagues vary and

are greatly influenced by Vietnamese culture. Therefore, two separate models are proposed to demonstrate these interactions (Please see Figures 11 and 12).

With regard to interactions with customers, the first and fourth branches of the ability EI model (emotion perception and emotion regulation) were vividly illustrated in the hotel workers' accounts. The second branch, emotion facilitation, existed in some cases but was relatively obscure in others, which makes it difficult to determine whether Vietnamese hotel workers' EI practice follows Salovey and Mayer's (1997) ability EI model or Joseph and Newman's (2010) cascading model. Instead, the notion of building relationships with customers was highlighted in the way they practise EI, which may result from the indirectness in Vietnamese culture whereby Vietnamese people engage with their counterparts in casual conversation to build a relationship as noted by Borton (2000). The third branch, emotion understanding, was drawn upon their sources of knowledge enabling them to recognise customers' emotions and regulate them in emotionally charged situations. Therefore, it is suggested that emotion understanding is an overarching ability influencing the other three branches of EI practice.

The hotel workers recognised customers' emotions based on their countries of origin as in the case of international customers. With domestic Vietnamese customers, the hotel workers had different perceptions towards northern and southern Vietnamese and expressed a preference for southerners. Several studies have attempted to explain this difference within the Vietnamese population (e.g. Ralston et al. 1999; McCann et al. 2004) but there exists a dearth of research on the differences in their travelling or consumption behaviours. In the second branch of EI, hotel workers tend to build relationship with customers to generate positive emotions. This is enhanced by the sources of knowledge obtained from their own experiences or those of their senior colleagues and managers. Little training on this skill was provided by the hotel, particularly in small and medium-sized hotels. This indicates the need for more formal training on culture for hotel workers because it is argued that cultural intelligence is even more important than EI in cross-cultural interactions (Alshaibani and Bakir 2017). In emotionally charged situations, the regulation of customers' emotions tends to follow a sequence of three stages; calming down customers, understanding and analysing customers' emotions, and detaching or engaging customers' emotions. The

findings on managing customers' emotions support findings from the CIT which demonstrate the hierarchical and sequential processes of EI. Nevertheless, these processes do not seem to be applied in every single interaction because their EI practice varies depending on each circumstance and this result confirms the importance of context in researching EI noted previously by Lincoln (2009).

Figure 11. EI model of interactions with customers
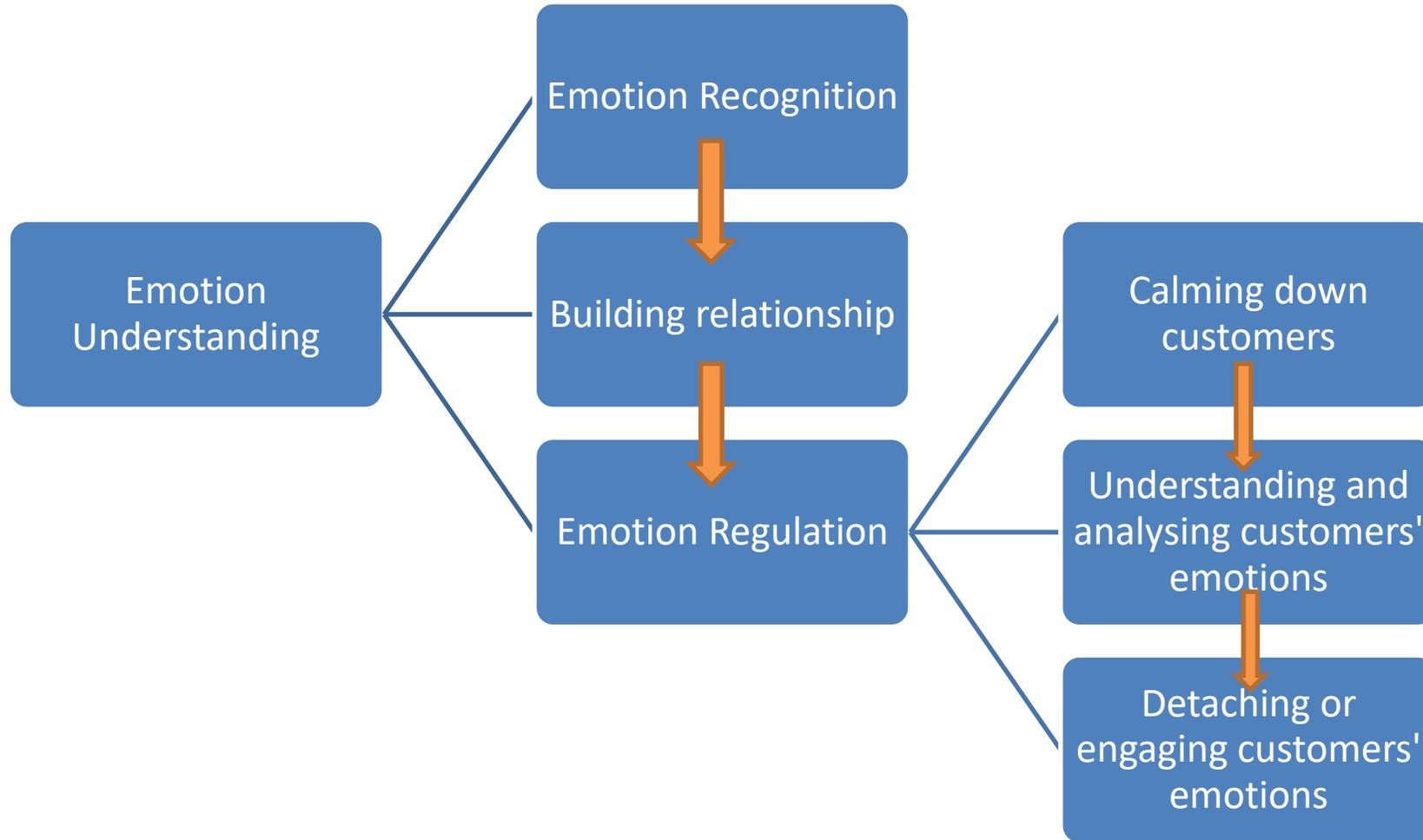
Source: Author

Interactions with colleagues are influenced by differing layers of cultural and religious practices, which makes them much more complicated than interactions with customers. Nazarian et al. (2017) show that hotel workers' national culture influences balanced organisational culture which in turn impacts performance. The research found that Vietnamese hotel workers have different perceptions of interactions with colleagues depending on their position in the workplace, whether they are bottom-line or in supervisory or managerial positions. This echoes Hofstede et al.'s (2010) interpretation of Vietnam as a high power distant culture. Previous empirical research of the Vietnamese workplace shows that Vietnamese subordinates submit to the power distribution and are used to being told what to do without questioning (Nguyen and Aoyama 2013; Nguyen and Truong 2016).

From the bottom-line staff perspective, three strategies of managing colleagues' emotions include putting oneself in others' shoes, paying attention to others' emotions, and listening honestly and frankly. However, the common opinion on interacting with managers was to behave in accordance with their managers' preferences and little was revealed in terms of the recognition and regulation of their managers' emotions. Vietnamese people have been taught to respect seniors since their childhood (Hoang 2012) and this influences their behaviours such as avoiding eye contact with seniors (Stauffer 1995).

From the supervisors' or managers' perspective, some expressed their anger or frustration as a way of establishing authority and power over their staff while others offered emotional support to enhance the working environment. Vietnamese culture is considerably influenced by Confucianism which values face-saving practice and harmony (Dinh et al. 2000; Phan 2008). Furthermore, the work relationship is regarded as a family link and people of higher ranking are addressed as "uncle" or "aunt" in Vietnam (Phan 2017). This may explain why subordinates expect their managers to possess such qualities as *"trust", "consolation", and "empathy"*. It is not an exaggeration to say that managers play the role of moderators in all relationships in the Vietnamese workplace and are expected to provide emotional support even with their subordinates' personal matters.

It is noteworthy that both bottom-line staff and those in supervisory or managerial positions revealed a high degree of socialisation after work in order to understand

colleagues' personal problems, express empathy, and solve conflicts. Nguyen and Aoyama (2013) found that Vietnamese workers tend to strive for cooperation and solidarity but require room for individual disposition. Furthermore, Vietnamese society was established on the basis of small closed villages which have their own rules and principles regulating the relationship amongst their members (Nguyen 2016b). Hence, this makes the differentiation amongst groups or factions even stronger in the Vietnamese workplaces; *"we only work in groups with those we like" (FG3)*. Therefore, socialising after work, specifically going out for a drink after work, enhances working relationship. Similar phenomenon were documented amongst Vietnamese medical students who considered drinking as a way of creating and improving relationships with teachers, fellow students, and colleagues as well as expressing their respect to others (Nguyen et al. 2018b).

Figure 12. EI model of interactions with colleagues
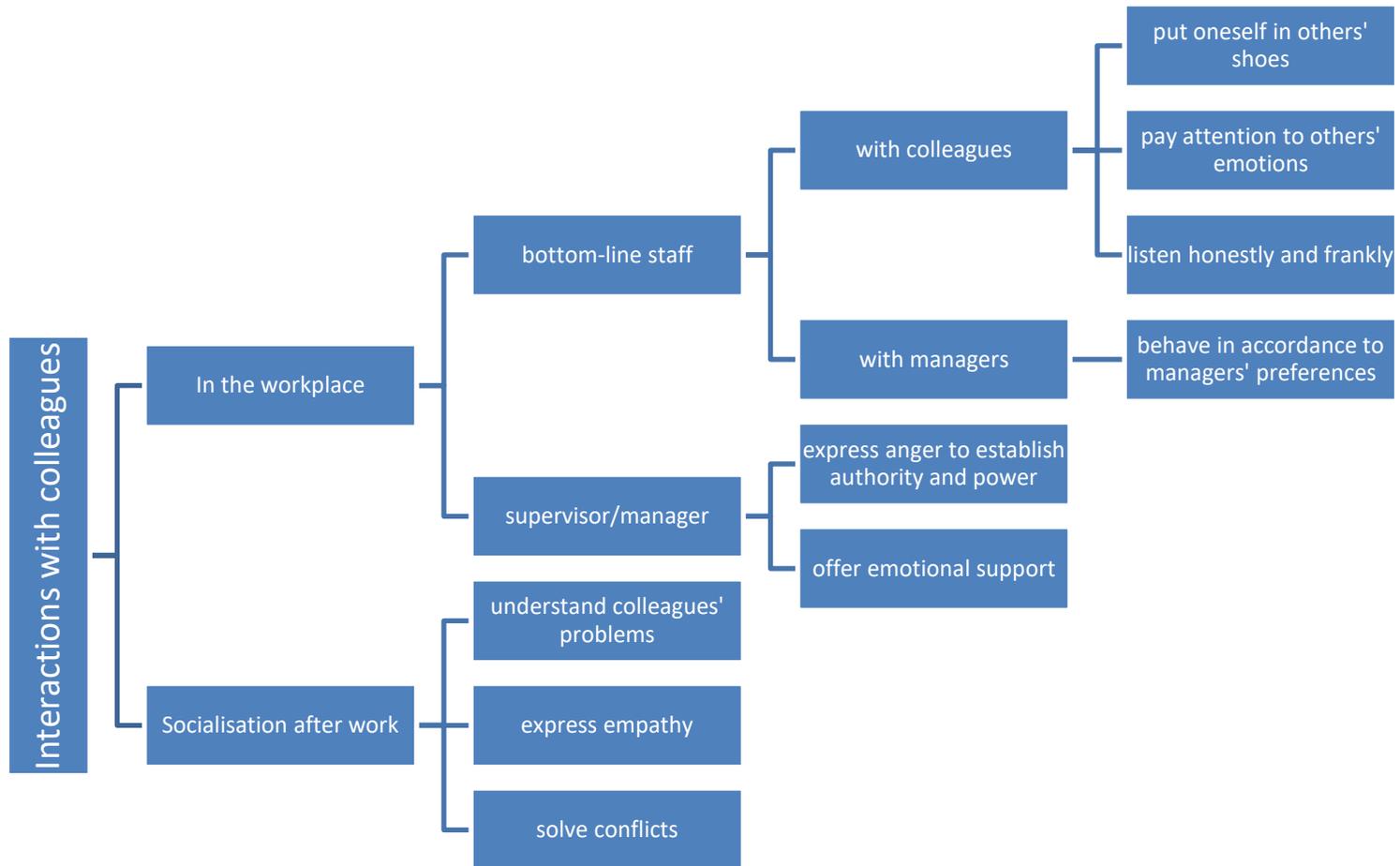
Source: Author

In order to understand the differentiation between the customers EI model and the colleagues EI model, the dimensions of EL proposed by Morris and Feldman (1996) are revisited since high EL occupations require more ER (Joseph and Newman 2010).

In conceptualising EL, Morris and Feldman (1996) proposed four dimensions: frequency of appropriate emotional display, attentiveness to required display rules, variety of emotions expressed, and emotional dissonance. Whereas frequency implies how often the appropriate emotion is required; attentiveness refers to the duration and the intensity of emotional display which were found to be positively related (ibid.). In other words, longer interactions require more unscripted and intense emotions. Given that hotel workers interact with their colleagues on a daily basis, these interactions are likely to be longer, more intense and more demanding of EL than interacting with customers. This may explain why Vietnamese hotel workers barely follow a certain pattern in interactions with colleagues.

The third dimension, variety of emotions, is associated with differing emotional displays required by the work roles (Morris and Feldman 1996). Whereas hotel workers are required to be friendly, cheerful and hospitable to customers; their emotional displays are less likely to be scripted in interactions with colleagues. Emotional dissonance is defined as the conflict between genuinely felt emotions and emotions required to display in organisational settings (Middleton 1989). Since there are less requirements on emotional displays in interactions with colleagues, hotel workers may experience less emotional dissonance in these interactions.

In addition, Vietnamese culture also determines how hotel workers perceive their work and customers, which in turn influences their behaviours. A traditional image of *"daughter-in-law"* was used by hotel workers to illustrate the nature of hotel work to emphasise the responsibilities and pressure imposed on them. The adoption of the metaphor serves as a guideline and a reminder for hotel workers to direct their thinking towards the duty associated with their position. In so doing, they perceive themselves as daughters-in-law to everyone in the workplace and therefore submission is of crucial importance. Notably, little was recorded in terms of their feelings towards that perception, which implies the acceptance of the requirements associated with their work roles. In addition to suppressing negative emotions, their positive emotions were generated through interactions with customers and *"passion for the job"* was

highlighted as the key to success for hotel workers. To some extent, this notion is in line with Mkono's (2010a) proposition that there is a set of qualities found in hospitality managers who enjoyed working in the sector such as having excellent interpersonal skills, striving to improve their cultural awareness and sensitivity, and focusing on the positive rather than the negative side of hotel work. In other words, hotel workers' emotions are determined by the way they perceive their job and customers.

However, Vietnamese hotel workers expressed different perceptions of interacting with international and domestic customers. They preferred to serve international customers to the domestic counterparts. Similar phenomena was found in hostels in central London where employees expressed negative sentiments towards customers from similar or proximate cultures (Moufakkir and Alnajem 2017). It is noteworthy that the reason behind Vietnamese hotel workers' preference is their seeking opportunities for linguistic and cultural exchange. Ozanska-Ponikwia (2012) suggested that those who are open to new experiences, and who are friendly and cooperative tend to seek opportunities for using a foreign language and adapt their behaviour to the linguistic and cultural norms while operating in that language. This has significant implications for practical and managerial contributions in terms of recruitment and training, which will be discussed in section 8.2.3.

Psychological research suggests that the relations between language and emotion exist over the entire process of children's development (Beck et al. 2012). Specifically, Beck et al. (2012) emphasise that language may serve as the main medium upon which emotional competence is constructed. Based on the psychological constructionist Conceptual Act Theory, Lindquist et al. (2015) propose that language helps humans acquire and use concept knowledge to make meaning of their experiences and perceptions. To be specific, they suggest that improvements in conceptual and linguistic resources regarding emotions will enhance one's ability to identify and articulate their feelings in a way that fosters emotion regulation.

The question raised is how different these relations are in the case of foreign language. Previous research shows that foreign language learning has strong association with several dimensions of EI (Genç et al. 2016). Lin et al. (2013) found that language played an important role in foreign customers' perception and choice of local services

in Taiwan and that Eastern cultural customers expressed more negative experience of employee's incompetence to assist in English compared to their Western counterparts. The main markets of tourists to Nhatrang are from China and Russia and the language barrier made their communication with customers from these countries more problematic because both service provider and receiver resorted to English which is not their native language.

On the one hand, Ozanska-Ponikwia (2017) suggested that some of the personality traits and EI might play an important role in expressing emotions in the second language. On the other hand, Dewaele and Salomidou (2017) revealed that those in a cross-cultural romantic relationship encountered the limitations that the foreign language imposed on their emotional communication, and felt like actors on stage forgetting their lines and struggling to get through to each other. However, most of them managed to overcome this problem after a few months (ibid.). This research finding highlights the differences that frequency and intensity can make towards interactions. This may explain why Vietnamese hotel workers emphasised the importance of building relationships with customers to overcome the language barrier. However, Dewaele and Salomidou's (2017) findings confirm the possibility of improving hotel workers' EI and language practice over time and emphasise the importance of training these areas to hotel staff.

Taken together, these findings from previous research imply the close relationship between foreign language and EI. EI research tends to focus on the impact of EI on language learning (e.g. Abdolrezapour 2018; Ebrahimi et al. 2018) and neglect the role of language in EI practice, the current study fills this gap and suggests taking language into consideration in researching EI because the recognition and regulation of others' emotions involves a high degree of verbal communication.

To a greater extent, a study on emotion amongst Vietnamese and English bilingual and monolingual speakers found that compared to native speakers, the bilingual speakers were less competent in either language but their use of meaning was consistent with the culture of the language they were speaking instead of the dominant culture where they were currently living (Alvarado and Jameson 2011). This is a possible explanation for the fact that Vietnamese hotel workers intentionally spoke the customers' language to create positive emotions and build relationship with

customers. In so doing, the bond between the service provider and the customer is enhanced, which makes it easier for them to solve any issues arising from their services.

8.2.2. Methodological implications

Research on EI is predominantly quantitative and qualitative research is scarce. However, there exists several qualitative Doctoral studies on EI (e.g. Conrad 2007; Cates 2008; Gina 2009; Beaman 2013; Strickland 2014) and this raises a question as to why. A possible answer is that researching EI qualitatively is difficult and time-consuming. The combination of three methods, focus group interview, CIT, and semi-structured interview enhanced the collection of information on *'how'*, *'why'*, and *'when'* EI is practised, particularly in the case of CIT. The pros and cons of CIT have been extensively discussed in section 4.5.2 but it is stressed that the adoption of CIT needs another method as a follow-up in order to ensure the data collected is rich and detailed. Also, the collection of both favourable and unfavourable incidents allows for a comprehensive investigation of their EI practice, particularly how the participants defined a *'favourable'* versus an *'unfavourable'* incident. It is recommended that future research employ this method to study complicated phenomena as in the case of EI.

8.2.3. Practical and managerial implications

The results from the current research provide significant implications for stakeholders in the hospitality sector. Firstly, the research shows that there exist considerable differences in the way Vietnamese hotel workers manage their emotions in interactions with customers and colleagues. It is crucial that hoteliers are aware of these differences and adapt HRM strategies to the Vietnamese hotel context. There were two distinctive characteristics of the Vietnamese hotel workers that emerged from the research including socialisation after work and their expectations of managers' qualities. After work, they tend to go for a drink and talk about colleagues' issues, which is an opportunity to deal with workplace issues and reinforce their relationships. This also provides a forum for discussion which is difficult during work hours. Furthermore, socialising after work facilitates an open dialogue between managers and their subordinates which transcends the hierarchical distance. From the Vietnamese cultural perspective, managers are expected to adopt roles analogous to

senior family members – a caring yet authoritative role with respect to their subordinates, which goes above and beyond responsibilities typically attributed to managers in other countries. Ideal managers are also expected to extend their attention to their subordinates' personal problems outside of the workplace. Developing strategies to meet these needs is crucial in establishing and maintaining a positive working environment, and thus requiring less emotional labour.

Secondly, the research findings offer empirical evidence relating to the stereotyping of customers' behaviours and emotional expressions based on their country or region of origin. This calls for further research on stereotypes in the tourism and hospitality industry. Customer stereotypes typically stem from two main sources – worker personal experience and expectations informed by their managers and senior colleagues. This cultural awareness may provide them initial information about the customers before their interactions, however, conversely this may also lead to offensive behaviour and discrimination in the way they treat customers. Furthermore, hotel workers have limited access to this knowledge and their managers have not received formal training in this area. What is needed is a training system which brings knowledge of cultural idiosyncrasies to the attention of hotel workers at both managerial and bottom-line levels. Ideally, such a program would have two core objectives. In the first instance, staff would be trained to accommodate customers with diverse backgrounds and requirements. For example, customers of differing cultures may express their emotions differently. The second aspect of this training would encompass sensitivity training, with a focus on combating negative stereotyping which would lead to preferential treatment of some customers over others. Being able to address such issues would ensure that hoteliers provided a safe and welcoming environment, improving the experience of their customers.

Thirdly, the findings on training preferences provide an insider's perspective into the current state of training on interactions with customers and colleagues in the hotel workplace. The research findings showed that Vietnamese hotel workers appreciate on-the-job training and hands-on experience more than theory-based courses. More importantly, the effect of speaking a foreign language on hotel workers' EI practice deserves more attention from hoteliers. The ability of staff to speak foreign languages plays a crucial role within the Vietnamese hotel industry. Quantitative studies have

shown links between the ability to speak a foreign language and positive aspects of EI. English is the bridging language between Vietnamese hotel workers and customers, particularly those from China and Russia, and as such proficiency allows for an improvement in communication and emotional awareness. Being able to speak more languages compounds the benefits of being widely understood, and improving ability to understand the emotions of customers. While English is a current requirement of hotel workers, it is important to encourage the use of other languages which are commonly spoken by customers who are not proficient in English. Unfortunately, it is difficult to recruit native speakers, given they would require a competitive salary which is not sustainable for many Vietnamese hoteliers. Training Vietnamese hotel workers to use such languages is potentially a more cost effective, and politically expedient option, but this could take a considerable amount of time. A more effective strategy would be to incorporate language learning within the training of Vietnamese hotel workers earlier in their development. If such language learning, apart from English, was nurtured earlier in their academic career, the benefits would be substantial once they were ready to join the workforce. This last strategy would perhaps require the greatest investment in terms of resources and time, but would most likely provide the greatest reward. The findings generated from this study will assist educators and trainers in designing their training programmes for current and future hotel workforce.

8.3. Suggestions for further research

The first area for future research is training in EI for hospitality managers. Results from the research show that managers were likely to play the role of a moderator in managing conflicts in the workplace but could negatively influence their subordinates' emotions. Bratton and Waton (2018) found that Scottish hospitality managers expressed an ambiguous understanding of EL and EI, and no formal training was provided to assist them. This issue was not explored and would warrant further exploration. Notably, the context needs taking into consideration given that the relationship between managers and subordinates are mostly based on trust in the Chinese hotel industry compared to more developed countries (Cheung et al. 2012).

In the research, the department heads and managers revealed that *"a smiling face"* or *"background family"* were amongst the criteria they were seeking for front-line positions. Researching this may provide an answer to the question of whether hotel workers are good at regulating their emotions or hotel work is best suited to some particular people. A cross-cultural study between the UK and Vietnam may provide insights into the possibility of culture informing EI.

The third topic was inspired by the fact that Vietnamese hotel workers considered the skills and competency received from higher education were insufficient to prepare them for entering the workplace. This opens an area of research for tourism and hospitality educators by investigating the motivations and goals that Vietnamese undergraduate and postgraduate students were pursuing when undertaking higher education in the UK.

8.4. Limitations

A detailed discussion of limitations associated with each research method has been presented in section 4.5. Apart from the aforementioned limitations, the entire study was restricted to samples collected in Nhatrang, a city in southern Vietnam. Therefore, the research findings are not generalisable or representative of all Vietnamese hotel workers. Nevertheless, the study has provided significant insights into Vietnamese culture and its influence on hotel workers' EI practice. Furthermore, the study intended to explore how Vietnamese hotel workers managed their own emotions and the emotions of their customers and colleagues. The managers emerged as one of the most important factors that may either moderate or trigger their emotions. The data collected was insufficient for further exploration of this issue, which opens up a new area for future research. To the researcher's best knowledge, this is also the first study to investigate hotel workers' perspectives from a qualitative approach. The findings contributed to an understanding of *'how'*, *'why'*, and *'when'* EI was employed, which fills the gap in current research on EI in the hospitality sector.

8.5. Personal reflection

I have always been interested in the tourism and hospitality sector which may originate from my personal experience as a local resident in the seaside town of Nhatrang in

south central Vietnam. Inspired by how dramatically the town has changed thanks to tourism development, I chose to major in tourism management for my bachelor degree. In addition, having a strong command of English has facilitated my communication skill with extra curricula activities organised by Nhatrang University such as working as a tour guide and interpreter for international events. Through these activities, I realised that language and culture played an important part in our interaction with people from different parts of the world, which may connect or separate us if not properly dealt with. As a result, the emotions aroused in these interactions may become unforgettable memories.

From my own experience of working as a tour guide for the Malaysian basketball team, I experienced both positive and negative emotions when interacting with the Malaysian basket players and those from other countries during the champions' league. Later on, this experience became my reference for interactions with people from these countries. Therefore, I was driven to conduct a work-based research on the emotions and interactions of Vietnamese hotel workers with international and domestic customers. One of the major outcomes of the research is to provide Vietnamese hotel workers with a good source of reference for interacting with customers and dealing with emotion-related issues. This research also serves as a bridge linking what workers need and what kind of support is needed from hoteliers to improve their emotional management skills in the workplace.

Nonetheless, researching emotions is relatively challenging because I have encountered considerable doubts interpreting the participants' descriptions and experiences of their emotional management. This may explain the predominance of quantitative research on emotions because using a questionnaire with predefined emotions would make it much simpler. On the other side of the coin, this highlights the originality of the research and the in-depth insights into their emotion management in the hotel workplace.

Doing a PhD is a lonely journey and there were moments when I struggled to make sense of the data collected. I felt that doing a PhD has widened my intellectual horizon and there are still many things I do not know about. This highlights the significant advantage of conducting this research as an insider who is familiar with and able to reflect on the cultural element embedded in the participants' thoughts and behaviours.

Doing this research also offered me a chance to learn more about Vietnamese culture and understand why Vietnamese people do things in a certain way compared to those in the UK. Being unfamiliar with my hometown due to the immersion in the British culture has indeed made great contributions to my interpretation and reflection of the participants' perspective on EI practice. I myself found the research findings inspiring and illuminating because conducting the research motivated me to read and learn more about Vietnamese culture and answer many *'why'* questions. Perhaps this is what has kept me going through this challenging but rewarding journey.

8.6. Final conclusion

Given the proliferation of research on EI in hospitality and the predominance of quantitative research, there is a need to understand *'how'*, *'why'*, and *'where'* EI takes place. Therefore, the current research aims to explore how Vietnamese hotel workers practised EI in their workplace. The qualitative approach allows for in-depth insights into their EI practice in interactions with customers and colleagues. In so doing, the research findings reinforce the role of context in researching EI as noted by Lincoln (2009). The research serves as a response to Walter et al.'s (2011) call for research on the influence of culture on EI. According to Nguyen (2016b), Vietnamese culture reflects a blend of Oriental, Western and Socialist values, which possibly makes their emotional management distinctive and thus it deserves further research. Furthermore, it is hoped that the current research will stimulate replication studies to enhance an understanding of EI. One of the main contributions of the current research is the adoption of CIT to investigate EI practice from the perspectives of Vietnamese hotel workers, which offers rich and detailed information of the incidents where EI was employed. It is suggested that CIT be used in future research to explore such multifaceted concepts as EI.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Definitions, models, and measures of EI

Type of EI	Author(s)	Definition	Model	Measure
Ability EI	Mayer and Salovey	"the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional meanings, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote both better emotion and thought" (Mayer and Salovey 1997, p.22)	Four-branch ability model (Mayer and Salovey 1997): • Emotion perception • Emotion facilitation • Emotion understanding • Emotion regulation	Multifactor Emotional Intelligence Scale (MEIS) Mayer-Salovey-Caruos Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) and its successor MSCEIT V2.0
	Joseph and Newman		Cascading model of EI (Newman et al. 2010) • Emotion perception • Emotion understanding • Emotion regulation	
	Gignac	"the ability to purposively adapt, shape, and select environements through the use of emotionally relevant processes" (Gignac 2010, p.131)		GenosEI
Trait EI	Petrides and Furnham	"a constellation of emotional self-perceptions located at the lower levels of personality hierarchies" (Petrides 2010, p.137)	Trait EI comprises the following components: • Well-being • Self-control • Sociability • Emotionality	Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue)
	Schutte et al.		• Appraisal and expression of emotion • Utilisation of emotion • Regulation of emotion	Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (SEIS)

Type of EI	Author(s)	Definition	Model	Measure
Mixed EI	Goleman	"the ability to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations, to control impulse and delay gratification, to regulate one's moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think, to empathise and to hope" (Goleman 1995, p.34)	Goleman 1995: • Self-awareness • Self-regulation • Self-motivation • Empathy • Handling relationships The Five Components of Emotional Intelligence at Work (Goleman 2004): • Self-awareness • Self-regulation • Motivation • Empathy • Social skill	Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI)
	Bar-On	"a cross-section of interrelated emotional and social competencies, skills and facilitators that determine how effectively we understand and express ourselves, understand others and relate with them, and cope with daily demands" (Bar-On 2006, p.14)	Bar-On (2006) model of ESI: • Intrapersonal • Interpersonal • Stress management • Adaptability • General mood	Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i)
	Boyatzis	"emotional intelligence competency is an ability to recognise, understand, and use emotional information about oneself that lends to or causes effective or superior performance" (Boyatzis 2009, p.757)		

Appendix 2. Protocol for focus group interviews

1.   What do you like about your job?

2.   Can you please tell me about dealing with customers, both in positive and negative situations?

3.   What makes you annoyed at work? How do you deal with these emotions?

4.   What kind of training have you received in relation to customers?

Appendix 3. Critical Incident Technique form

This self-completed questionnaire is a part of a Doctorate research in Hospitality Management. *(Bảng hỏi này là một phần của một đề tài nghiên cứu bậc Tiến sĩ chuyên ngành Quản trị khách sạn.)*

Understanding Emotional Intelligence (EI) among hotel employees during interactions with customers and colleagues in Vietnam

(*Tìm hiểu về chỉ số cảm xúc của nhân viên khách sạn trong quá trình giao tiếp với khách và đồng nghiệp ở Việt Nam*)

Name (Tên): ....

Age (Tuổi):..

Gender (Giới tính):..

Level of education (Trình độ học vấn):...

Major (Chuyên ngành): ....

Number of years working in hotels (Số năm làm việc trong khách sạn): ....

Previous position(s) (Chức vụ trước đây):...

Current position (Chức vụ hiện tại): ....

Phone number (Số điện thoại):..

Email address (Địa chỉ email):..

1. Think of a situation when you had a **satisfactory** interaction with **customer(s)** at your hotel over the last year. In the space below describe exactly what happened in either English or Vietnamese. (Nghĩ đến một tình huống giao tiếp khiến **khách hài lòng** ở khách sạn trong năm qua. Mô tả chính xác chuyện đã xảy ra trong chỗ trống cho sẵn bằng tiếng Anh hoặc tiếng Việt.)

Suggested questions (Câu hỏi gợi ý):

- When did it happen? (Việc đó xảy ra khi nào)

- What happened? (Chuyện gì xảy ra?)

- What did you and/or others say or do? (Bạn và/hoặc những người khác đã làm gì hoặc nói gì?)

- How did you feel? (Bạn cảm thấy như thế nào?)

- What did you do to control your emotions and the emotions of others? (Bạn đã làm thế nào để kiểm soát cảm xúc của mình và của những người khác?)

- What made you feel that the incident was particularly (un)favourable? (Điều gì khiến bạn cảm thấy tình huống giao tiếp đó rất (không) thuận lợi?)

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2. Think of a situation when you had a **dissatisfactory** interaction with **customer(s)** at your hotel over the last year. In the space below describe exactly what happened in either English or Vietnamese. (Nghĩ đến một tình huống giao tiếp khiến **khách không hài lòng** ở khách sạn trong năm qua. Mô tả chính xác chuyện đã xảy ra trong chỗ trống cho sẵn bằng tiếng Anh hoặc tiếng Việt.)

Suggested questions (Câu hỏi gợi ý): Please see the questions above. (Xem câu hỏi ở trên)

What should you have said or done? (Lẽ ra bạn nên làm gì hoặc nói gì?)

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3. Think of a situation when you had a **satisfactory** interaction with
   colleague(s) at your hotel over the last year. In the space below describe
   exactly what happened in either English or Vietnamese. (Nghĩ đến một tình
   huống giao tiếp khiến **đồng nghiệp hài lòng** ở khách sạn trong năm qua. Mô
   tả chính xác chuyện đã xảy ra trong chỗ trống cho sẵn bằng tiếng Anh hoặc
   tiếng Việt.)

Suggested questions (Câu hỏi gợi ý): Please see the questions above. (Xem câu hỏi ở
trên)

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4. Think of a situation when you had a **dissatisfactory** interaction with
   colleague(s) at your hotel over the last year. In the space below describe
   exactly what happened in either English or Vietnamese. (Nghĩ đến một tình
   huống giao tiếp khiến **đồng nghiệp không hài lòng** ở khách sạn trong năm
   qua. Mô tả chính xác chuyện đã xảy ra trong chỗ trống cho sẵn bằng tiếng
   Anh hoặc tiếng Việt.)

Suggested questions (Câu hỏi gợi ý): Please see the questions above. (Xem câu hỏi ở trên)

What should you have said or done? (Lẽ ra bạn nên làm gì hoặc nói gì?)

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5. Do you have any other positive or negative incidents you would like to share? (Bạn có những tình huống tích cực hoặc tiêu cực nào khác để chia sẻ không?)

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Thank you very much for your help! (Cảm ơn bạn đã giúp đỡ rất nhiều!)

Appendix 4. Protocol for semi-structured interviews

Objectives	Questions
1.Factors influence their emotions in the workplace	• Tell me about your emotions at work. How do you deal with them? • What are the factors that influence your emotions at work? • What exerts positive/ negative influence on your emotions?
3.Favourable and unfavourable incidents of EI	Examples of incidents where EI is used. Subject to participants' stories described in CIT forms or interviews
4.Strategies to manage their own and others' emotions	• How do you deal with difficult situations where emotion is intense? • How do you control your emotions in dealing with customers/colleagues? • Can you share your own ways of managing customers' or colleagues' emotions?
5.Suggested ways for improving EI	• What can hoteliers do to support you with improving your EI?

Appendix 5. Timeline of data collection and analysis

Year	Month	Activity
2015	Sep	Call for participants in focus group interview (FGI)
	Oct	FGI – data collection
	Nov	
	Dec	FGI – 1st data analysis
2016	Jan	
	Feb	
	Mar	
	Apr	
	May	
	Jun	
	Jul	
	Aug	
	Aug	Call for participants in CIT & semi-structured interviews
	Sep	CIT – data collection
	Oct	Interview – data collection
	Nov	
	Dec	
2017	Jan	
	Feb	Interview – 1st data analysis
	Mar	
	Apr	
	May	
	Jun	Interview – 2nd data analysis
	Jul	CIT – 1st data analysis
	Aug	
	Sep	
	Oct	
	Nov	Interview – 3rd data analysis
	Dec	CIT – 2nd data analysis
2018	Jan	FGI – 2nd data analysis
		CIT – 3rd data analysis

Appendix 6. List of critical incidents collected from CIT forms and interviews

(Researcher's comments are in the row below each incident)

Name	Interactions with customers		Interactions with colleagues		Notes
	Favourable incident	**Unfavourable incident**	**Favourable incident**	**Unfavourable incident**	
Linh	1. Linh got to know the customers and recommended the entertainment activities they might like. They were happy and appreciated his help.	1. Some customers made a fuss over things during their stay for their benefits which Linh called opportunistic customers. Linh did his best and followed the procedures regardless of who the customer was. However, they were on the blacklist and would never come back.			
	Linh's good understanding of customer needs enhanced their satisfaction, which in turn made Linh happy with the services he provided.	Though the customers had unreasonable requirements, Linh controlled his emotions and treated them as equally as others. Only after they left, further actions were taken.			
Man	2. A couple staying in another hotel came to the hotel Man is working for better services. The customers were happy with the services provided, which made him happy for the whole day.	2. Man failed to communicate with the kitchen staff to fulfil customers' order, which made them annoyed. He admitted his fault and apologised but he was not sure if they understood			

	3. A regular customer came to the restaurant Man worked and wanted Man to serve him. He enjoyed talking to Man and they started talking more about personal issues. *"He's old, his children are successful, he's alone and needs some company… Overall, when I go to work, if I'm happy and smile at them first, they will like me."*	because their English was not good. *"So it's my fault. It is important that I have the passion for the job, without it I wouldn't be able to work in the sector."* Man emphasised that the couple was easy-going and he compared with a similar situation when the customers were difficult and complained to the reception. 3. The customers could not get a table because it was crowded in the restaurant. They did not say anything. Then, they were given the wrong dish, which made them angry and complain at the reception. The receptionist and a kitchen staff brought some fruits to their room as an apology.			
	The hotel worker demonstrated an interest and passion in talking to customers, understanding what they were seeking and satisfying them. He also believes in his proactive role	Similar problem occurred but different customers reacted differently, which in turn determined the staff's solution. Language emerged as a barrier preventing staff from understanding			

	in creating a positive impression towards customers.	customers' emotions. Man emphasised his passion for the job as an impetus to overcome negative feelings to satisfy customers.			
Nga		4. The customers were sick or tired but HK staff did not know and entered their room, which made them annoyed. Nga offered them with a plate of fruits and apologised for the trouble. She also suggested using the sign to avoid being disturbed. *"When receiving complaints, we're unhappy of course. We must find some way to calm them down, we can't lose our temper and get angry. We must find out the reason and find a good solution."*		1.Staff refused to separate the beddings though Nga found some stains, Nga tried to speak to them in a calm manner but they did not take her words seriously. She felt ignored. She had to do it on her own, she tried not to lose her temper because she knew they were tired already. *"We must separate sentiment and work."* 2. A room needed to be done for guest check-in, Nga found some mistakes and asked staff to clean them. She had to repeat several times but it was still undone and she had to do it in the end.	
		This incident involves dealing with guest complaints. It also reflects how the staff regulated her emotions and calmed down the customers.		Some tasks required urgent action but her staff did not prioritise them. Nga was not happy with it and tried to think about reasons for their behaviours so that she would not get angry. After trying	

				several times, she decided to do it by herself.	
				Nga experienced difficulties in being a young supervisor when working with junior staff who are much older than her.	
Thi	4. A Russian customer enjoyed exchanging food and have a close relationship with staff – *"the hotel is another home"*. 5. The customer was drunk and sexually harassed the female receptionist. He made a fuss over it and made the hotel staff apologised to him, otherwise he would check out immediately. Thi managed to calm down the customer and saved face for him by implicitly talking about what happened. *"There are things we need to prove if it's right or wrong but in case of working in hotels, defining right and wrong can't solve any problems, you won't get any benefits from showing that the customer is wrong!"*	5. The travel company didn't transfer the money, a group of tourists were held at the hotel lobby before their flight. Everyone was annoyed and looked grumpy, which created a bad image for new customers checking in. The good relationship between the group and staff built over their stay was destroyed in the end.	1.A staff member was sexually harassed by a drunk customer, she cried because of the customer's unacceptable behaviour. Thi managed to comfort her and showed the empathy to her. It was also considered a lesson for both staff and the hotel. *"As you know, working in hotels, staff has to suffer from bad reputation… It was full of pent-up frustrations, she cried a lot but it's over. I felt sorry for her but she's supposed to accept that when she's working in hotels."*		

	Whereas the first incident was about building the relationship and cultural exchange with the customer through food, the second incident was sexual harassment which involves interacting with both customer and staff. It was solved well by saving face for the customer and consoling the staff.	The problem was caused by the third party, which was out of his control. It was the moment when customers' emotions were not prioritised as opposed to the hotel revenue.	Though Thi empathised and comforted the receptionist, he believed it was her fault for coming to the customer's room and she must accept that kind of behaviour when working in hotels. Bad reputation was also believed to be something that female workers should be prepared to cope with.	
Hung	6. Hung took care of sick customers during their stay and built up the friendship though they seemed reserved and quiet at the first place. They gave a generous tip to express their gratitude and invited him to come and visit them in their country. *"Their happiness made me happy."*	6. Hung was too enthusiastic about taking care of a gay couple while they needed more privacy. It was the first time he had served gay customers and the lack of communication made it harder for him to get to know them. The experience became a lesson for him to serve lesbian or gay couples.	2. A colleague supported him in taking care of his customers while he was off to deal with his personal problems. He chose 'close buddy' to hand over because *"people tend to do their job individually"*.	3. His supervisor was dissatisfied with him because he thought Hung did not support him and he chose to report to the manager instead of speaking to Hung. The manager was not straightforward when mentioning the issue either. *"After that incident, my interactions with colleagues were better, they were more active in asking for my opinion than I expected."*
	The hotel worker showed his care through his deliberate act, which was beyond the relationship between a service provider and a receiver. It is	This incident implies the lack of cultural background where hotel workers have limited interaction with this type of	The hotel worker had to hand over the customers he was assigned to take care of due to personal problem. The handover was communicated	The lack of communication led to the conflict and made it a more serious issue which could have been resolved.	

	noteworthy that butler is a special customer service offered by five-star resorts.	customers and LGBT is not common in Vietnam.	well to a colleague that he had a close relationship with. He also emphasised the individualism in his workplace.		
Huong	7. Huong suggested to first-time visitors to NT the activities they can do before they ask for it. *"I had to actively interact with them, ask about their needs and offer to help."*	7. Some foreigners and Viet kieu seemed confident about remembering the hotel address and telephone number, they got lost and it took them some time to look for the hotel. They were frustrated when they got back. Huong apologised and showed them that she cared about them and tried to meet their needs, including unspoken ones.	3. She was new and did not know it was a colleague's birthday. All staff members including Huong were invited to a luxurious restaurant, she was a bit embarrassed that she did not prepare a present for him but he understood and seemed fine.		
	Huong mentioned taking initiatives in meeting customers' demands and making them satisfied. The emotional aspect seemed not to be an important part of her experiences in customer service.	The hotel worker emphasised the importance of understanding customers' needs before they asked to make them satisfied.	Huong was embarrassed that she had not known the colleague's birthday. The event made her feel that she was treated as a part of the community though she was a newbie.		
Huy	8. He got an important contract with a difficult customer who had many requirements. He tried to meet his demands. His manager appreciated it and		4. He supported his colleague by doing her job while she's on holiday. He took full responsibility over her job as if it's his. That's how he built the trust and love with them.	4. The customer asked his manager for special offers and blamed him on promising those offers. He was scolded for those unreasonable offers though he did not do that. He	

				was upset and frustrated when his manager shouted at him but he also emphasised that he understood her personality and her shouting at him was just to release the frustration caused by the customer. *"Afterwards, she understood and … though she didn't apologise directly, she had some gestures of easing my upset."*	
	Huy likes dealing with difficult customers because it gives him a sense of achievements. He considers observing and being sensitive as important elements in understanding customers' needs.	Huy listed the incident in which he interacted with the customer and his manager in this category but it involves interacting with his manager instead of the customer. So, it has been moved to the fourth category.	Being sincere is key to establishing the relationship with colleagues. He believes once he tries his best to support his colleagues, they will be open and appreciate him more.	The fact that Huy understood his manager's personality guided his thought and made him less upset when being scolded for something he had not done. He could also pick up the indirect apology from her behaviour. In a hierarchical society like Vietnam, apologising to junior staff is not considered a professional act for managers.	
Khoi	9. The customer's jacket was washed in wrong way. Khoi felt guilty and tried to solve it in his own way. He offered the customers with his own jacket and a jacket given by his colleague. The customer was happy with Khoi's jacket.	8. Customer's scarf which is valuable and important to them was washed in the wrong way, it was damaged. The customer was angry and asked for compensation. Khoi apologised and negotiated regarding the compensation. In the end, he had to seek the		5. He criticised a staff for not working properly in public so that others know what will happen if they don't fulfil their tasks. *"That's my purpose in criticising someone in front of*	

		manager's support because it was out of his control.		*others, soft reminders don't work here."* *"In this competitive and stressful working environment, I have to put the empathy aside, work is more important."*
	Khoi emphasised the responsibility he had over the mistake and tried to solve it before reporting to the managers. The colleague also showed the support by offering his own jacket to the customer to make up for Khoi's mistake. Expressing the empathy and guilt was considered important in solving the problem.	Khoi tried to calm down the customer and expressed the empathy with the customer. However, it was a large amount of money which was beyond his authority, he had to report to the manager and let him solve it.		Khoi deliberately criticised the colleague in front of others as a warning because he thinks soft reminders are not applicable to his department. Later on in the interview, Khoi interestingly mentioned that being strict is his personality and he has never changed his working style. He also emphasised that his working style is in accord with the competitive and stressful working environment there.
Van	10. She found out it was the customer's birthday by talking to her and noticing her happy face. She contacted FO to offer the customer with a birthday card, fruit and wine. *"I think I'm just a piece of sand which shows polite etiquette to foreigners, which brings a small change to their*	9. She was asked to change the flight ticket for the customer. He did not believe she could contact the airline office in VN because he thought it did not exist. The customer scolded her continuously with an extremely rude attitude, which made her feel shocked. She considered his act as a	5. She was called to go home because her mom was sick. Her supervisor made up an excuse to help her go home quickly by the canoe which was supposed to be for customers or work matters only. A colleague knew it and reported it to the resort manager because of jealousy. Her supervisor got	6. In the same incident with a dissatisfied customer, she experienced the lack of understanding, trust and respect from her manager. She was scolded by the manager for being stubborn and arguing with the customer. She took it as a serious offense and believed

	awareness of travelling in Vietnam and Vietnamese people."	consequence of the social status. The customer gave her a tip after his problem was sorted but Van rejected. "*my honour cost more than \$50, it's almost two months' worth of my salary but I gave it back to him*". She burst into tears because of the pent-up frustrations.	disciplined, which made Van appreciate the kind act.	the reason lying in the cultural difference.	
	Van emphasised that she liked taking care of customers and making them happy though it was not her responsibility, which made a difference between her and her colleagues. She did not expect anything in return for her extra mile service either.	Van was shocked by the aggressive customer for two underlying reasons – the low-status nature of her job and the rude behaviour of a man towards a woman.	Van believed her supervisor's decision was out of love and the fact that the child wanted to leave work when her mother was ill was understandable. It is the cultural difference which resulted in the lack of understanding and empathy from her resort manager.	Van was disappointed at her manager for not trusting and supporting her. She emphasised his lack of cultural understanding and respect towards Vietnamese staff.	
Ngoc	11. She surprised the customer with a birthday cake, wine and flowers. The customer was very moved, which made her happy for bringing happiness to the customer. To her, the comments and high score they left on the website made her feel the love they had for the hotel staff.	10. A drunken customer asked her for 'happy' services and rudely dragged her out of the reception desk to his room. She was scared and almost crying. She screamed and the security guard came. The customer looked embarrassed the following day when seeing her.	6. After Ngoc left due to the conflict with the hotel owner for supporting the HK staff, other staff quit the job to show that they agreed with her way.	7. Her hotel owner bullied HK staff and used very rude words when talking to them, which she considered a bad behaviour. She tried to give constructive feedback but it did not work. She quit the job in the end. *"most HK staff are quite old, one of them is almost as old as my mom. They don't have a degree or certificate, just work based on their*	

	"I felt really happy to see how happy they were because of what I did."			*experiences. The hotel owner is young, just a few years older than me but she didn't show respect to those HK staff. No matter what mistake they made, she's not supposed to say "I've said this…" because she's a northerner (laugh). She rebuked when she's unhappy, she even kicked the door and used 'mày tao', I think it's unacceptable no matter how serious the mistake is."*	
	Ngoc took the initiative to suggest giving the customer a surprise birthday gift. She was moved by the emotions they expressed and the satisfaction they showed through their comments and score for the hotel.	Ngoc cited her young age and little experience as reasons for not being able to deal with the drunken customer. She was very scared but the comfort and sympathy from her manager made her feel ok.	Ngoc did not mean to influence others but the fact that they quit their jobs proved that she had fought for the right thing. She also demonstrated the strong belief in the age grading rather than the power distance between the hotel owner and bottom-line staff.	She believed in the age hierarchy though the hotel owner holds the highest position in the hotel. She tried to speak up for the disadvantaged and took the risk of getting in trouble with the hotel owner.	
Vien	12. There was a water cut in the hotel during the high season (Lunar New Year), which made customers frustrated. He calmed them down and apologised to every single customers. He refunded and gave them vouchers for a free stay. It		7. The way he solved the problem resulting from the water cut made staff pleased and willing to give all the tips to the hotel owner to compensate for the loss of the company. *"Staff were pleased too, it's tip, so theoretically they could*	8.The receptionist accidentally revealed to the customer that they paid higher room rate to the tour company compared to the hotel room rate, which resulted in losing that business partner. He was extremely angry, rushed back	

turned out to be a success for gaining trust and satisfaction from the customers, which he thinks he has gained more than the loss of the revenue.		*have shared it but they considered it a big problem for the hotel, so they gave all the money to the hotel owner who was very pleased and talked about it happily to many people."*	from a café and asked the receptionist to go up to the terrace where he could shout and release his anger.

8. A staff argued with another colleague, he was so angry that he wanted to quit the job. Vien knew that he was a good worker, so he talked to the staff and persuaded him to stay.

"You're now angry so you decide to do that. What's the point of quitting the job? If you quit the job and stay at home, the other guy still goes to work as usual. First, you don't get paid and may get bored when staying at home. Don't think too negatively. Don't decide when you're angry and don't promise when you're happy. Think about it and let me know tomorrow."

"I was straightforward to them, "upset them first but they'll be happy afterwards" or "a civil denial is better

			than a rude grant" (mất lòng trước được lòng sau). We're all paid to work here, there's no need to be complaisant."		
	This incident involved customers, hotel staff and owner in which Vien made them all pleased with his 'crazy' decision. The customers were frustrated by the water cut but pleased with his offer to refund and vouchers for a free stay. The satisfaction was shown in the way they left feedback on the websites, recommended to their friends and family and came back to stay without using the vouchers offered. Some even gave tips to the staff as a way of contributing to the company loss.		The first incident highlighted the commitment and respect hotel staff had for the GM. They chose to contribute their tips to compensate for the company loss and prioritised the organisation benefits. In the second incident, he patiently explained to the staff and gave him a chance to think about the resignation. He described his approach as being straightforward and genuine. He also encouraged staff to speak up for themselves because they are all equal, which is unusual for a hierarchical culture.	Vien knew how angry he could get, so he chose to ask the staff to go to the terrace where he could express his anger but apart from the people involved, nobody would notice that.	
Truong	13. The customer had his car mirrors stolen though he expected the security guard to keep an eye on them. The hotel tried very hard to help, which resulted in his satisfaction. He was pleased with the sincere attitude from	12. The customers had someone book the room for them and they expected not to pay for their 14-year-old child. They got frustrated and wanted to cancel the booking. They shouted and insulted Truong and another receptionist by offering them			Both incidents with satisfied customers are the recovery of service failure.

	the hotel staff and gave them tips from his room refund. 14. The customers were annoyed at the power cut. He explained the reason to them and offered a discount. They were pleased and gave the discounted money to staff as tips. In addition, Truong compared the reaction between western and Vietnamese customers to the same incident to highlight their different behaviours.	money. Truong was so angry that he felt his body was shaking but he hid it because he was supposed to be a good example for his staff. 13. The customers complimented on the hotel services to create a positive impression, then they asked for prostitutes which are illegal. They changed their attitude and made a fuss over everything. Truong had to remain smiley but cleverly rejected their demands.		
	In the first incident, Truong guided his staff how to deal with this situation. He also emphasised that someone with such as expensive car would have a proper insurance to cover the lost item. It was more about showing the appropriate attitude and willingness to compensate for the mistake. The satisfaction was shown in the way he tipped the receptionist and security guard with the refund. The staff's attitude was considered more important to	In the first incident, Truong described the genuine emotions he had (angry) and his thoughts guided him to control his emotions. It was the responsibility of being a model that motivated him to deal with the customers in a *"gentle but decisive"* way. In the second incident, he emphasised the need to understand their demands and acted accordingly. *"Being smiley but clever in the way we talk to them"* but he		

	the customer in this service recovery. In the second incident, Truong managed to calm down the customers by apologising and explaining the reason for the power cut. He offered the customers a discount but the customers were pleased with the way he dealt with the issue, so the discounted money was given back to staff as tips.	admitted the tension remained if their demands are not met.			
Lan	15. An old Vietnamese-French couple enjoyed staying at her hotel for their good care and friendly staff over another hotel which is of higher ranking. Based on the understanding of their needs, she offered customised services which made them pleased.	14. The Chinese customer wanted to take the tea pot away. She tried to explain to him and he took it as her blaming him on stealing it. He did not accept her apology and made a fuss over it by involving many other people.		9. She trained staff on the same thing many times but they did not do it, which annoyed her. She ended up shouting at them or giving them a discipline minute.	
	Lan prioritised to serve the couple and tried to meet their demands. However, due to the characteristics of a city hotel, customers at her hotel do not spend much time in the restaurant, so she had limited interactions to customers.	At first, Lan encountered difficulties when communicating with the customers because of the language barrier. However, the customer was not satisfied with her apology even when another staff translated for		Lan emphasised she expressed negative emotions like frustration and annoyance to staff when they make mistakes but most of them are quite nice, they do not have negative attitudes when being scolded.	

		him, which made Lan angry. The incident highlighted the role of the manager in dealing with customer complaints in a high power distant country.			
Truc	16. The customers complained about the noise from the other room connected to theirs. He managed to change their emotions from dissatisfied to satisfied by talking to other customers.				
	Truc solved the problem well because he showed the empathy to customers and suggested two choices which were good for both customers and hotel staff. Turning down the volume is also a part of the hotel rule, which helped avoid the disappointment for the other customer.				
Tran	17. She was a cashier but the restaurant got busy, she tried to help out. She could not speak much Chinese but the customers were happy that someone could understand them.	15. She spilled hot water on a customer at a banquet, which was the first time she had ever annoyed a customer. She was scolded for using an old-fashioned way of treating the burn by a senior colleague who came to help her. She was scared by different	9. A bartender staff complimented her on helping others. She was happy that she could make everyone satisfied but she was not proud because she considered it her responsibility. She believed other colleagues	10. She has never upset a colleague because she always helps them out.	

		factors – annoying the customer (the first time), being scolded by the senior colleague, getting customer complaints, losing the job, being disciplined or ruining the hotel reputation. She was anxious for the rest of the day at work but she forgot it as soon as she got home.	would also support her in the same capacity.		
	Tran stepped forward to help out when the restaurant got busy despite the limited Chinese. Her drive was to contribute to the company revenue. She was happy and proud of herself because she could communicate with the customers more than she expected.	Tran was too anxious to control her emotions but tried to put herself in the customer's shoes to understand his emotions. Though she was anxious after the incident, she admitted she could soon forget these problems when she got home and it is a part of her personality.	This incident implies the importance of positive feedback from colleagues to hotel staff. Though Tran considers it her responsibility, being recognised is a drive for her performance. In addition, a supportive working environment is reflected from Tran's experiences.	Tran demonstrated a strong belief in the importance of support at the workplace which motivated her to help out as much as she could.	
Hoan	18. Hoan approached the Japanese customer the first time by greeting him in Japanese, which surprised the customers. The moment when Hoan spoke Japanese attracted the customer's attention and he became more interested in talking to Hoan, which made them closer to each other and talk more. He considers speaking the				

	customer's language and being friendly is the key to approaching and getting to know the customers.				
	The incident showed that speaking the customer's mother tongue helped connect the hotel staff and the customer who appeared quite cold and indifferent.				
Thinh	19. A family with a sick child coughing so much asked to be seated somewhere without an air-con but in a non-smoking area, which was quite challenging due to the design of the buffet area. He managed to meet their difficult demand and they appreciated that. They expressed their appreciation by writing him a thank you letter and a tip. 20. He tried to provide customers with bread which was unavailable in the restaurant. A lot of efforts were made to bring the bread over promptly because the resort was huge, which made	16. He spilled water over a customer, which annoyed her and she said "You're stupid! I'll never come back." This happened when he was a student and worked part-time in a restaurant. He felt really bad but still managed to apologise and say *"Hope to see you again"*. The customer replied *"I will never come back"*, which he described as *"splashing cold water onto his face"*. He quit the job afterwards because he thought it did not suit him.			

	the customers appreciate a lot. Thinh was happy that he could help them too.				
	In the first incident, when the customer was annoyed in the morning, Thinh successfully calmed him down and reassured him that his unreasonable demand would be met. In addition, he managed to explain the situation to other customers and raise the empathy for the sick child so as not to disappoint them with his arrangement.

The second incident highlighted the extra mile the service could go when Thinh happily met the customer demand. He did not tell the customer how difficult it was to transfer the bread, which took them by surprise for the efforts Thinh and his staff made to meet their needs and their satisfaction in turn made the staff happy. | He started working without any experience or knowledge about hospitality and had an unfavourable incident with the customer. Therefore, what the customer said when she was angry influenced him negatively. He failed to manage his own emotions and the customer's emotions, which even exerted a long-term impact on him and made him quit the job because he believed hospitality work did not suit him. | | | |
| Hoa | 21. Some Australian customers came to stay at the hotel and staff did not know | 17. At check-out, HK staff told FO that they could not find the towels in guest room | 10. At check-out, HK staff told FO that they could not find the towels in guest room | 11. She was transferred to another hotel of the chain to work as an FOM. FO staffs | The incident with the dissatisfied |

	that Australians drank a lot of black tea. Hoa order it and offered them for free because she was trying to build the positive word-of-mouth with this new market segment. She apologised to the customer for the lack of cultural understanding and expressed the enthusiasm to learn about their culture, which made the customers happy because of the attempt to understand their needs.	though they had filled them up. The Chinese customer insisted on not taking them and making the FO staff apologise to him in Chinese. The supervisor refused to do that, so she came and apologised to him in Chinese to please him. *"the staff didn't like the customers much, that's why he solved it that way. If it had been Russian, German, European or Vietnamese customers, the supervisor would have had a different attitude."*	though they had filled them up. The Chinese customer insisted on not taking them and making the FO staff apologise to him in Chinese. The supervisor refused to do that, so she came and apologised to him in Chinese to please him. *"the staff didn't like the customers much, that's why he solved it that way. If it had been Russian, German, European or Vietnamese customers, the supervisor would have had a different attitude."*	were against her and showed negative attitudes towards her. She ended up firing most of them and covered their shifts while recruiting new staff. "I suddenly felt much bolder after firing the staff." She was afraid of being attacked by some stubborn staff but insistent with her decision. She gave them all a chance before firing them. She also made them believe it was not her decision.	colleague is a distinctive one.
	As a new hotel in the town, Hoa paid much attention to building the hotel image, particularly customers with online booking because of the powerful word-of-mouth. She admitted the gap in their service and demonstrated the willingness to improve, which created the positive impression towards the customers.	Hoa noticed that the supervisor over-reacted to the customer because of his prejudices towards Chinese people. Though she did not get involved in the incident at the first place, she observed and read the customer's behaviour – *"The customer was so angry that he almost burst into tears, which means we offended his self-respect for accusing him of stealing things"*. She pleased the customer by apologising in Chinese first, then explained it to her staff. Interestingly, she emphasised that "as an FOM, I put my self-respect aside to apologise to customers, why he couldn't do it." She knew it was the staff's fault for being stubborn, instead of telling him off, she chose to explain to him and pointed out that they are all servers and the government would take care of political issues. This incident can also be used to relate to the way she manage the colleague's emotions.		The incident reflects the difficulties Hoa encountered when transferred to a hotel as an FOM manager. The uncooperative and negative attitudes expressed by the FO staff members towards their young new manager imply the hierarchy based on age in Vietnam. Hoa tried not to show her upset and annoyance in front of her staff and made a risky decision to dismiss those who did not show any improvement. Besides, Hoa got the support from her GM and learnt how	

				to control her emotions from him.	
Khoa	22. A drunken Dannish exchange student staying at the hotel blamed the security guards for hitting him when escorting him to his room because he got some bruises the following morning. Khoa calmed down the student and his teacher and showed them the camera extract. 23. The customer was angry because he suspected someone stole his stuff. He was shouting in front of other customers. He took the customer to a quiet place to talk. After investigation, he found out the thing was still in the customer's room. The customer apologised and appreciated their help.	18. The customers were unhappy because the hotel representative did not inform them thoroughly about surcharge when they booked the rooms. It turned out to be more people and the customers refused to pay for the surcharge.	11. There were some conflicts when arranging rooms for walk-in customers. One made some arrangement and the other did not notice, some clashes occurred but everyone was open and friendly and try to understand each other.	12. The same situation with satisfied colleagues because they managed to turn conflicts into cooperation and solved them smoothly.	The incidents were collected via the self-completed form. The participant agreed to complete the form after the interview; thus it limited probing and follow-up questions
	In both incidents, Khoa first tried to calm down the customers and solve their problems. Separating the customers from the crowd to talk to them privately was considered an effective way to calm them down. He also		The conflict was solved well because the staff members were working towards delivering the best services.		

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	emphasised the important role of timely reaction, which can be implied as the responsibility and care they have for customers.			
Ngan	24. She made the Russian customers satisfied by remembering their names and favourite drinks in the breakfast buffet with her enthusiasm and friendliness despite the language barrier. The relationship got better over 4 weeks of her internship and they enjoyed teaching her Russian.	19. She did not ask the customers before clearing their dishes at the buffet, which made the customers frustrated. They stood up and wrote on the comment card that she disturbed them while they were eating.	12. Ngan was asked to carry the umbrellas but did not get the full instructions on how to do it. She broke the glass on the table. Her manager ran towards her and said she had to make up for it. She was scared and sad but she realised he did not look angry. He was actually teasing her and since then her colleagues always came to help her with that because she was quite tiny and weak. She felt the love and care they had for her. 13. The restaurant got really busy during lunch time that day. It's time for her lunch break but she voluntarily stayed to help them out. Afterwards, they had lunch together and built up the relationship, which made them understand and support each other better.	13. Her colleagues were not happy when she was promoted as a trainer, especially when she came to supervise their on-the-job training. That day she came to check FO training session but they could not organise it because it was busy. The FOM was angry with her, she explained the regulations and thought they knew the regulations but intentionally booked the training session at the busy time.	

	It is the ability to observe and be proactive which distinguished Ngan from her colleagues and made the customers satisfied with her service. It went beyond the relationship between a customer and a service provider when they carried the plates for her or taught her Russian and checked it the following day.	The insufficient communication led to the misunderstanding between the hotel staff and the customer. However, the form was completed after the interview and the participant had not mentioned it; thus it was difficult to get more details on the emotion aspect.	In the first incident, Ngan did not suppress her emotions when she made the mistake – she was scared and sad but her manager did not tell her off. Instead, he was teasing her about compensating for the broken glass. This incident reflects the importance of support from managers and colleagues in the workplace. The second incident highlights Ngan's initiative to support her colleagues during peak time, which in turn enhances the relationship with her colleagues.	One of the reasons for the conflict with the colleague is Ngan's young age and she was working as a quality control officer. Even though it was her job to ensure the departments followed the company regulations, she was much younger than the department managers. This is one of the incidents highlighting the feature of age grading in Vietnam.	
Thuc	25. His hotel welcomed a group of VIPs and he was told to take extremely good care of them. The hotel staffs did their best and were given good compliments.	20. There were a Russian mom and her child staying at the hotel. They looked grumpy and were dissatisfied however hard the team tried. He thought she was releasing all her stress to FO staff unreasonably. He also felt helpless because the heavy workload and the language barrier limited the communication with the customer and the solution to	14. A staff made a serious mistake and he was aware of it but due to his ego, he did not admit it. Thuc could read his feelings from the facial expression – 'embarrassment', so he chose to speak to the staff in a gentle but straightforward way.	14. He tried to minimise the conflict in the department when a colleague blamed another one for doing something which they all knew that it was against the regulations. He let the other colleague have a chance to explain the reason for his action.	

		the root reason for her dissatisfaction.		
	The way Thuc spoke to the customer highlighted the hierarchy based on age when he called the customer 'uncle' and the customer's compliment for him and the hotel staff is 'well-mannered' which is often used by adults when commenting on children's behaviour. Calling the customer 'uncle' is also a way of getting close to the customer as if he was a family member.	The language barrier emerged as the main factor mitigating the understanding of the customer. Thus, the hotel staff failed to manage the customer's emotions, which in turn made them tired and feel as if the customer was looking for someone to release her pent-up emotions. Though the hotel staff found the customer unreasonable, he still expressed a strong desire of understanding and meeting her needs.	Thuc demonstrated the ability to understand the colleague's emotions. Though it was an obvious mistake, Thuc controlled his emotions because he knew it would not make the situation better. In so doing, he managed to regulate the colleague's emotions and make him change after the incident.	In this incident, Thuc did not let the colleague influence his emotions and attitudes towards another colleague. He tried to find out the reason for the colleague's decision before judging him, which helped prevent the conflict among staff members and regulate the staff's emotions towards his colleague.	
Huong	26. The customers came back to the hotel and looked worried. She asked them what happened and was told that they lost their bank card at an ATM. She contacted the bank and took them to the bank the following day to get it back. They were happy and she was pleased that she could help them. They also sent her a friend request on WeChat.	21. The customers booked a room online, then they changed their mind and chose another one. They left a message telling the hotel to contact them but they did not answer the phone. When they showed up, they did not like the room and blamed the hotel for neglecting their message. There was only one room the guest just checked out, it needed some time to clean it for them but they did not accept and left.	15. Her colleague forgot to book a tour for the customers, they expected to be picked up that morning to the harbour but no one showed up. She rang the tour company, found out nothing was booked. She asked the bus driver to wait at the harbour while sending the customers by taxi there. She explained to the customers that they would be picked up by taxi due to the traffic jam, so the customers did not know it was her colleague's fault. Then she rang her colleague	15. She provided washing powder from HK to a customer, which was against the hotel regulations. A colleague pointed out that it was wrong and it added up the expenses for the hotel. *"It is hard to say no"*.

16. Some money went missing in the shift she worked with a colleague who was supposed to keep all the money in the locker. Huong had to pay half of the missing | |

			and told her about it. Her colleague kept thanking her because the customers could have got annoyed and the hotel image could have been negatively influenced.	money. Huong tried to have a frank conversation with the colleague but her colleague did not admit it due to her big ego, which caused some tension in their relationship and made Huong upset.
	Huong could read the emotions on their face, calm them down and helped them contact the bank. When the problem was sorted, not only the customers but also Huong were happy; the customers expressed their satisfaction by offering her a coffee and keeping in touch on a social network.	The lack of communication caused the misunderstanding between the hotel staff and the customers regarding the room booking. The customers were rude and did not take Huong's words, which upset her.	Huong not only regulated her emotions when dealing with an unexpected situation but also satisfactorily explained to the customers. She also informed the colleague of the incident instead of complaining about it as her fault. Her solution to the problem pleased the customers and her colleague.	In the first incident, Huong found it hard to say no to the customers' requests and try to provide them with what they asked for because she did not want to let them down. It also implied Vietnamese culture where people hesitated to say no. In the second incident, Huong believed her colleague made the mistake but denied it. Huong was upset because she had to make up for the missing money caused by her colleague. Though she tried to resolve the conflict by talking frankly to her colleague, it did not work and she felt uncomfortable when facing the colleague. However, the tension faded away after a while because Huong tended not to keep these problems in her mind.

Duyen	27. The customer complained about insects in the room and deliberately asked for offers. The receptionist could not deal with him, so Duyen came to talk to the customer. She made up for it by calling a bigger taxi for him, she did not offer anything else because she knew he was an opportunistic customer. He was satisfied with her explanation and offer.	22. The customer was frustrated because he could not check in as soon as he arrived. Then when he got the room, he complained it was too hot. The technician was sent to fix that for him. He complained three times and asked to speak to the FOM. She calmed him down, explained that the weather made it hot everywhere. She brought a fan for his room and upgraded to a better room for him the following day. The customer was pleased when Duyen promised to upgrade to a better room for the same price.			
	Duyen did not interact with the customer at the first place but she was observing behind the reception desk. She stepped out to help when she noticed he was an opportunistic customer and the receptionist could not deal with him. She was calm and firm with her explanation and offer, which made the customer give up his unreasonable request and accept the offer. However, Duyen pointed out that	Duyen emphasised the differences in reactions between Vietnamese and western customers to the same situation – arriving at the resort before 2pm. She cited the lack of travel experience amongst Vietnamese as the root reason for their impatience to the standard check-in time.			

	foreign guests tended to consider finding a cockroach in the room a serious mistake whereas Vietnamese would not take it too seriously.			
Lam	28. She accidentally found out the couple were newly-weds when talking to them. She informed the hotel and offered them with wine, flowers and bed decoration, which took them by surprise. They had an unforgettable time at the hotel.	23. There were a couple of honeymooners staying at the hotel. Everything was prepared in advance for them including a card. After being escorted to the room, the man came to reception and complained that the name on the card was not his wife's. Lam made a mistake when writing the name though checking several times. She felt guilty. 24. The customers booked rooms on different floors, at check-in they changed their mind and wanted to stay close to each other. Their initial room was available for 12pm but the new one was not. They were unhappy because their family got the room but they had to wait until 2pm. They shouted at Lam though she tried to explain many times. She could not control her	16. A colleague kept forgetting to hand over pending tasks to others. Lam spoke to her personally and suggested her taking notes during the day. The colleague followed her advice and got better at her job, which made everyone in the team happy. The colleague appreciated and thanked for her help.	17. The incident happened when Lam was a newcomer. It was a busy day and she was asked to continue sending out letters. She was so hungry that she could not control her emotions and shouted at her colleagues, which upset them because she was young and not supposed to shout at senior staff. Though she was sad when scolded, she admitted it was her fault for talking to them rudely. 18. Lam unintentionally assigned many tasks at the same time for the colleague who was in a bad mood due to some problems with her family and her boyfriend, which made her colleague burst into tears. Lam talked to her privately and apologised for not caring about her feelings. Her colleague apologised for being too sensitive too.	

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<td>emotions, she was bursting into tears.

25. A customer ordered balloons and a cake for her birthday party. It was all ready but the staff got busy with a big group checking in and no one remembered the balloons were supposed to be delivered. The customer complained to their manager, everyone involved in the event were fined.</td>
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<td>The customers were taken by surprise and pleased with the service and offers of the hotel. They appreciated the hotel staff, which in turn made them happy.</td>
<td>In the first incident, Lam made the mistake when writing the customers' names on the card. When the customer informed her of the mistake, she felt bad and disappointed at herself for making such a careless mistake though the customer seemed happy and polite.

In the second incident, Lam failed to control her emotions when the customers made a fuss over check-in. She tried her best to explain but they did not understand and asked for some offers, which made</td>
<td>Instead of being annoyed by the colleague's mistake, Lam spoke to her personally. This helped save her face because criticising someone in public is a taboo in Vietnam. The fact that the colleague got better pleased the team as well.</td>
<td>The first incident reflected the hierarchy at the workplace in Vietnam where young and new staff were supposed to show respect in the way they speak to senior staff. It was perceived as the rule of etiquettes by members of the society – Lam and her colleague.

The second incident highlighted the empathy Lam had for her colleague when finding out she had some personal problems. Though she did not attempt to regulate the colleague's emotions at</td>
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		her consider them as 'opportunistic customers'. However hard she tried, they would be dissatisfied. She also cited pregnancy as one of the reasons for her being emotional. The third incident demonstrated a service failure where the customer complained directly to the manager and there was no interaction between Lam and her, so no emotional regulation was involved.		the time of the conflict, she spoke to the colleague afterwards and the understanding and empathy between them were enhanced.	
Vy	29. The customer could not find her money in the room and blamed HK staff for stealing it. She calmed down the customer, listened and sympathised with her. She also reassured the customer about the hotel service and offered to get the police involved if needed. However, she asked the customer about her daughter who was away then. It turned out to be her daughter taking the money. The customer apologised and appreciated her help.	26. A customer booked 4 rooms with a colleague who provided her with room numbers which was against the hotel regulations. When they arrived, one of the rooms was not available and Vy did not know that, she had already arranged that room for another customer. The customer was angry because she could not get the room she wanted. Vy felt frustrated because of the colleague's fault and the customer's rude behaviour. The customer did	17. A colleague covered Vy's days off and made some mistakes with room booking. Vy was blamed for the shortage of rooms for customers by her manager. At first, she was annoyed because she was blamed for something she did not do. However, she admitted it was her carelessness. She just spoke to the colleague privately. The colleague appreciated it and thanked her.	19. There were many groups of customers checking in at the same time on that day. After a long journey, the customers were tired and impatient, they kept complaining and asking to check in. She rang HK staff and shouted at them, her colleague shouted back at her because there were so many rooms to do at the same time. She knew her colleague was not happy with her, she regretted not apologising then. She admitted the pressure from customer	

		not even give her a chance to explain.		complaints and crowd effect made her lose her emotional control.	
	Vy successfully regulated the customer's emotions – anxious and frustrated. She mediated between the customer and HK staff who were blamed for stealing the money. She also encouraged the customer to rationalise the incident, which took the customer a while to think about her daughter and check if she had taken the money. Vy described her being calm, listening attentively and being sympathetic with the customer though the customer was angry. Vy also tried to maintain a neutral position between the customer and the HK staff.	Vy was annoyed for two main reasons – it was her colleague's fault and the customer was so angry at her. Vy managed her emotions and explained to the customers calmly but the customer did not listen and left angrily. The customer was too impatient to listen to Vy; thus, Vy could not regulate the customer's emotions and solve the problem.	When criticised for the mistake, Vy took it as her fault and apologised for it. She managed to control her annoyance and chose to speak to the colleague personally instead of revealing whose fault it was. Her solution was appreciated by the colleague, which harmonised the relationship between her and the colleague. Vy also highlighted the support they should have for each other so that work goes smoothly.	When dealing with customer complaints, Vy failed to manage her emotions partially because the customers kept asking her and looked tired. In this incident, apart from the complaints, the empathy Vy had for the customers became the pressure which made her annoyed at her colleagues for the room unavailability. She was not empathetic with their workload and ended up shouting at them via the phone. Looking back at the incident, Vy regretted that she lost her emotional control and did not apologise to her colleagues.	
Vi				20. B told Vi A did not do the job properly, which she appreciated and made B colleague of the month. Others isolated B. The cleaning team needed someone to cover maternity leave, B volunteered. C was half joking half mocking that she would love to but B	

				already took the opportunity. She announced in the meeting that she would choose C, which put C in a difficult situation.
				"In this case I had to do that at all costs to show them that they can't say whatever they like, they are supposed to bend their tongue several times before saying something. I don't like those who talk behind others' back like that. Just say it directly."
				21. Vi was complained that her staff stole customer's money. She was so angry that she shouted at the colleague in front of others, which made the staff embarrassed and sad. She regretted saying that.
				The first incident demonstrated how Vi managed and harmonised the tension in the department between B and other colleagues which was caused by her reporting to Vi about another colleague's misconduct. Her solution also implied that she was aware of the tension and group formed

				within the department and she was not favour of this behaviour. However, she did not point it out in the briefing, which saved face for the colleague who expressed the negative attitude towards B.	
				In the second incident, Vi was too frustrated to control her emotions when getting the complaints about her staff stealing the customer's money. Telling someone off in public is a taboo in a culture where face-saving is highly valued. Besides, Vi was under pressure of being a department manager but she failed to train her staff regarding the tips – a sensitive issue in hotels.	
Duc	30. A customer who was staying there wanted to check out that room and check in another room but it was not shown on the system. So, a new customer was taken to the room which was occupied. Duc contacted HK to clean another room for the new customer who looked quite annoyed. He apologised	27. A female customer stayed at the resort with her colleagues on an incentive trip, she planned to introduce her boyfriend to her colleagues. However, her boyfriend was not a company staff, he bought a ticket to the entertainment park and waited to be taken to the resort area. Duc could not let	irrelevant	22. A colleague suggested reporting the revenue of the whole day in the evening shift but Duc disagreed because it might lead to the insufficient control over the revenue which is often a huge amount of money. A duty manager came across, noticed the argument and asked them what happened. After Duc	

	and offered them some fruit as an apology. He kept calm by controlling his breath and thoughts, took initiative to apologise to the customer and cooperated with HK staff.	him come over because he was supposed to buy a room but it was fully booked that day. She was upset and walked away because her plan failed. Duc regretted not suggesting that she could have paid for an extra bed. He thought he was too stressed to come up with this solution.		told him the pros and cons of reporting the combined revenue, the manager agreed with Duc, which upset his colleague. They became distant to each other after the incident. Later on, they went out for a drink to talk about it, which enhanced their relationship.	
	Duc emphasised his emotional control by breathing and directing his thoughts to solve the problem. In addition to managing the customers' emotions, Duc communicated with HK staff successfully to make the rooms quickly for the customers, which also helped prove to the customers that they were striving for the best service.	Duc cited the heavy workload as the reason for the stress which prevented him from suggesting a better solution. Taking it as his mistake and seeing how upset the customer was influenced his emotions. This shows the strong desire to please customers expressed by Duc.		The conflict happened because the colleague believed he had much more experience and was older than Duc, which is another implication of the hierarchy based on age in Vietnam. Duc noticed that his colleague expressed the big ego in the argument and expressed strong anger. Duc managed his emotions and the decision made by the duty manager upset the colleague. Interestingly, Duc pointed out that the duty manager was only two years older than Duc; thus the distance was not considerable and his approach to staff was to treat them as family members.	

Vinh	31. The first time Vinh served a customer a certain type of tea. He noted it down. Two years later, he served the customer again and offered him his favourite tea, which made the customer surprised and satisfied. He added it was the first time a hotel staff member remembered his favourite tea. Last year, the customer came back and pumped into him at the hotel lobby, the customer called his name, which made Vinh pleased with the little thing he could do to the customer.	28. A customer was frustrated because there was no tooth paste in his room. Vinh came to his room, calmed him down by explaining that the hotel tried to protect the environment by limiting the amount of tooth paste but they would provide it if required. The customer emphasised that he did not care about the environment, he wanted the service to be of equal value to the amount of money he spent. Vinh thought it was understandable and tried to satisfy the customer with a flawless room service.	18. Vinh celebrated a colleague's birthday with a cake, which made her touched because she had worked there for only two days. It was her first workplace too, she felt that she had not contributed much to the department. She burst into tears, which almost made him cry and spread the happiness in the room.		
	"The customer remembers my name, which means he cares about me."		19. Vinh and other supervisors distributed sweets to colleagues' children on mid-autumn festival, which made staff feel respected and recognised by the department. He tried to build up the commitment and a supportive environment for colleagues.		
	32. A loyal guest who likes to be in one room and every time he comes, that room is made available for him. *"He likes this room because he's used to staying there and considers it his second home."* Both HK staff and the customer are happy because there is a mutual understanding between them.				

	In the first incident, the care Vinh showed to the customer went the extra mile and impressed the customer, which made the customer remember the hotel and the hotel staff over the years. The fact that the customer returned and remembered Vinh's name made him happy with his service. The second incident highlighted the need to take notes of customer preference and understand them, which makes it easy for both service provider and the customer.	This incident reflected the utilisation of thoughts to guide his emotions and behaviours towards the customer. Though he had some negative emotions, he regulated them and managed the customer's emotions – calming him down. Vinh's explanation did not please the customer but attempts were made to ensure the room service met the customer's expectation.	In the first incident, the colleague was touched by the birthday surprise, which made her feel bad because she was a newcomer and had not contributed much to the department or the hotel. The incident also showed that positive emotions like happiness and gratitude are encouraged to express at the workplace. On the other hand, the second incident highlighted the importance of care the hotel should have for staff's personal lives. In addition, celebrating Mid-autumn festival and offering sweets to children is a tradition in Vietnam, which emphasised the cultural knowledge hoteliers should have to show the respect and recognition they have for staff, which in turn enhances their commitment and satisfaction and uplifts their emotions at the workplace.		
Thanh		29. Thanh was asked to bring a basket of fruits to a customer's room. As soon as			In the incident with dissatisfied

		he got there, the customer scolded him severely for a while. He just kept quiet, listened and found out the fruit basket was sent as an apology from FO but he was not informed about it. He calmed her down by expressing the empathy, making good questions, choosing proper words and tone of voice. He reported what happened to FO so that they could find another chance to apologise to the customer. 30. An Indian customer did not show any emotions when Thanh delivered the room service. Thanh could not understand or guess how he was feeling and whether he was easy or difficult. He came up with the conclusion that Indians are *"the most irritable, picky and difficult to please"*.			customer, Thanh explained the steps quite clearly.
		In the first incident, though not fully informed of the situation, Thanh demonstrated the skills in regulating the customer's		

		emotions. Offering the fruit basket at the right time was also one of the key elements determining the customer's emotions. Thanh suggested someone of managerial position could have come and apologised in this incident or he should have been better informed. Although the second incident did not show whether the customer was satisfied or dissatisfied, it was noteworthy that Thanh was confused because the customer had neither facial expressions nor verbal communication. After the incident, Thanh created his own stereotypes of Indians.			
Dang		31. A Korean customer had the seafood buffet at the hotel, he enjoyed the first two crabs but complained that the last one was stinky and bad quality. Dang tried to explain that crap lived in another habitat, which made its colour and stink different from the others. The customer was insistent that it was bad			

		quality however hard Dang tried to explain. The customer insisted they cheated him, which made Dang very frustrated. The customer was aggressive until he paid the bill and went back to his room.			
		In this incident, Dang controlled his frustration, expressed the empathy and explained the reason for the differences between the first two and the last crabs. However, he failed to regulate the customer's emotions. The offers were not very useful to make the customer satisfied either. Interestingly, it was not Dang's fault in making the customer dissatisfied, so he was not very worried and stressed about it.			
Thuy	33. It was a couple of honeymooners who wanted a room on a high floor. Thuy let them check in early because the room was available and she deliberately arranged a sea view room for them, which exceeded their expectation. They were very happy and wrote a thank-you	32. The customers booked a limousine to pick them up at the airport but another customer with the same surname just got on the hotel bus because he thought it's for free. Thuy got a taxi to pick them up instead and apologised to them. She was emotionally ready to hear			

card for her. She thought she did not do anything, she just put herself in their shoes and tried to meet their requirements. She was happy that they appreciated it.	their shouting and let them release their anger. She kept apologising and admitted their fault. It was quite late, she took them to their room for a rest and followed up with an apology and a complimentary bottle of wine. 33. A Vietnamese doctor stayed at the hotel and had a conference which was organised by someone else. The conference organiser wanted to apologise something to the doctor and asked to leave some flowers in his room. Thuy took him to the doctor's room. Not long after the doctor returned, he blamed them for searching for some of the important documents in his room. Thuy could not calm him down though she tried to explain and showed him the time in and out on the record. Out of anger, Thuy suggested calling the police, which her manager considered an over-reaction. Her manager spoke to the customer and calmed him down in the end.			

| | According to Thuy, the key to making customers satisfied is putting herself to their shoes so as to understand and meet their expectations and needs, which in turn improves the relationship between the hotel workers and customers. | In the first incident, when the problem occurred, Thuy was prepared to speak to the customers because she could guess how angry they could be. Apologising and listening attentively was the first thing to do. After the customers released their anger, she admitted their fault and explained why things went wrong. Follow-up was done the following morning so that the customers took a rest. This incident reflects the procedures of dealing with customer complaints.

In the second incident, Thuy emphasised that the incident was a lesson for her because she failed to manage her emotions when blamed for searching for important documents in the doctor's room. However hard she tried to explain for it, the customer rejected and used rude words when speaking to them, which showed that the customer lost his temper. To Thuy, reporting to the police was the only way to prove that she was innocent but it could | | | |
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		damage the hotel image and make the customer lose face. Thus, the hotel manager got involved and managed to solve it.			
Hau	34. The customers found a hair in the bowl of pho, Hau apologised and showed the sympathy to them. Instead of offering another bowl, he suggesting them trying something else because he was afraid the customers had already got a negative impression of pho, which might influence how much they could enjoy it. He also offered the customer to come to the buffet the following day and would be happy to wait for the customer. The customers came quite late that day and Hau was still there waiting to serve them, the customers invited him to join and they talked to each other as family members.

35. The customers had some problem with the food, Hau showed the sympathy and care to them and their child, which turned out to connect | | 20. Hau organised a fishing trip for staff in the department on occasion of two staff members' birthday. One of the staff came to thank him for doing that for his birthday. Hau thought that he was supposed to know the colleague's birthday and everyone would do something special on their birthday. The colleague was so touched by Hau's action that he could not speak clearly.

21. A colleague often does things in his own way which is not uniform with the procedures Hau tries to establish in the department. Hau was so angry that he scolded the colleague and made him follow the procedures. Hau tried to explain that he wanted everyone to follow the same procedures because it made it easier to manage the | | |

	them and they started sharing experiences of parenting. They also gave him some souvenirs to show their appreciation and looked forward to coming back and seeing him.		department. The communication between Hau and the colleague made the colleague feel better, he smiled.		
	In the first incident, when the customers were disappointed, Hau calmed them down and expressed the sympathy to them. It is noteworthy that he understood the customers had some negative impression of the food, so he suggested trying it another day instead of offering another bowl as a common way of service recovery. Indeed, he recommended something else as if it was a friend where the distance was minimised and he waited to serve the customers, which in turn built up the relationship between him and the customers. The second incident is also another example of service recovery. It reflects how Hau changed the customers' emotions from dissatisfaction to satisfaction by being		The first incident illustrated the care Hau had for his junior staff by deliberately organising the birthday celebration, which made the colleague moved and happy. However, Hau considered being emotional while on duty as unprofessional. Though Hau failed to control his emotions and ended up scolding the colleague, his explanation was convincing enough. Also, Hau highlighted that he understands his staff so well that he knows how to communicate with each individual for the best results.		

	understanding, showing his care and talking about topics of the same interest. They became not only loyal customers of the hotel but also a friend of his.			
Vu	36. Vu served Japanese customers who could not speak much English, he took very good care of them despite the language barrier. On the day they left, they gave him a letter written in English which they spent the whole night using the app on the phone to translate into English in order to show how much they appreciated his service and the unforgettable experience he gave them. He was surprised and moved. He still kept the letter as a good memory of them and shared it with his colleagues. 37. The customer complained that the resort was much more local than expected, they wanted to cancel the booking and stay somewhere else. Vu tried to convince them to try some local activities which are authentic and cannot be	34. The customer was drunk and asked for a BBQ at midnight which was impossible due to the availability of food and staff. Vu tried to persuade him to have it the following day but he got angry and chased after him in the hotel lobby. Vu was upset because he had to wake up at midnight to serve such a rude customer, he wanted to take a holiday or to quit the job. However, after talking to his GM, he was cheered up and the customer spoke to him politely after the night sleep. 35. A customer had some problem with the hotel staff at the airport, she got angry and rang Vu to complain. He was shocked that she swore at him though they had been quite close to each other, she was a regular customer at the resort.		23. The customer asked to change the room, Vu had to contact the HK manager who was stressed due to the heavy workload. The HK manager and Vu got on quite well but the HK manager got angry at that time and shouted at Vu, which made Vu frustrated too. Vu threatened that he would report to the GM, which made his colleague even angrier and hang up the phone. After taking some time to calm down, Vu decided to speak to his colleague in person and offered some help. He also emphasised it was the customer's requirement, Vu did not mean to cause the trouble for him. They soon calmed down and helped each other meet the customer demand.	

	found anywhere else. He took them to go hiking and fishing with him, they really enjoyed it and gave very good comments. Vu had to work overtime to make up for the time being out with them but he was happy that they had a good time.	Vu tried to ring her after she hung up the phone, he also texted to speak to her in person but she did not reply. He thought he would probably quit the job because he was too depressed. They met accidentally in the restaurant the following morning, the customer took initiative in apologising and they both apologised to each other, they got on well afterwards. "*I meant to walk slowly to think if she'd be upset with me. I was prepared psychologically for 2 things: first, apologise to her because no matter what happened, I must admit my mistake; second, I paid attention to her attitude to see how I should talk to her. I tried to be normal, smile and talk to her. When I noticed she's replying to me, I thought she's calm then. Afterwards, I apologized. After the casual greetings, I mentioned the incident that had happened the previous day and the problem was sorted.*"			

	The service Vu delivered to the Japanese couple in the first incident went beyond the language barrier, which in turn brought him very good feedback from the customers and the act of translating the comments meant more than the feedback itself. The incident also implied the importance of customer feedback in lifting up hotel workers. In the second incident, when the customer showed that they were disappointed at the resort facilities, Vu impressed them with the unique activities which satisfied them. Moreover, Vu actively took his time to accompany the customers and accepted to work overtime, which highlights the strong commitment and passion for the job.	Both of the unfavourable incidents with customers were the time when Vu wanted to quit the job. The first incident demonstrated how Vu controlled his emotions when dealing with a drunken and rude customer. However, when the customer was about to fight against Vu, he was more worried about the consequences it might lead to rather than the fight itself, which reflects how the responsibility he had for the job guided his thinking and action. The fact that he failed to meet the customer demand and calm him down made Vu depressed and thought about quitting the job. Nevertheless, the timely encouragement from his GM helped him overcome the tough time and continued with the job, which highlights the important role of GM in supporting and guiding hotel workers. In the second incident, Vu was shocked when the customer swore at him over the phone because of their close relationship. He asked		The pressure from customer demand and workload in each department could lead to conflicts between departments. In this incident, Vu wanted to please the customer but he needed cooperation from another department who were also under pressure. Neither of them could control their emotions and ended the conversation abruptly. Nevertheless, Vu utilised his thinking to guide his action by seeing the colleague and offering help, which also expressed the empathy he had for the colleague. Therefore, the conflict was resolved.	

		to speak to her in person what he actually thought and was ready for the resignation. However, the customer did not reply. Interestingly, over the night, both of them were calmer. Vu always starts his days by greeting customers, which makes him happy and love his job. When the customer actively greeted and apologised to him, he was pleased and the conflict was resolved.		
Dinh			24.Dinh was in charge of the male staff dormitory. He got angry because they blamed each other for the mess, he shouted at the young colleagues, which led to an argument and they were about to fight against Dinh. Another colleague interfered and calmed them down. Dinh admitted it was his fault for not checking it properly, he also considered it a lesson for him in terms of managing conflicts with colleagues. 25. A colleague often posted her pent-up frustrations from work on Facebook, Dinh	

| | | | | thought it was improper and spoke to her several times but she was quite stubborn and she did that more often. She offended someone on FB, which was considered quite serious and Dinh had to fire her. He felt lost and empty because he failed to persuade her to stop doing that whereas she thought it was her personal life and no one had the right to ban her from that. She did not seem regretted what she had done and hated Dinh for not protecting her. | |
| | | | | In the first incident, Dinh failed to manage his emotions, shouted at the colleagues and made them all angry which led to an argument and almost a fight. Dinh admitted it was his fault for losing his temper and cited another reason for the explosion of the argument was that *"young people tend to be aggressive and cannot stand pent-up frustrations"*. The second incident was quite unusual when Dinh dismissed a colleague because of her | |

				posts on FB. Dinh considered the colleague a young sister who needed life orientation. Interestingly, Dinh emphasised the weaknesses of young staff regarding emotional control. He managed to control his annoyance and talked to her in a soft voice but could not help feeling *"lost and empty"*, which implied the intimate relationship between him and the colleague as brother and sister instead of manager and staff.	

Appendix 7. Sample incidents of interactions with customers

Group	Extract	Summary	Comment
A – Lack of communication	29. T: I remember there's once that the customer got angry. In general, when I went to her room, she was very frustrated but I didn't know why. My job was to bring a fruit basket to her room as a requirement from FO. She shouted at me as soon as she saw me. I had no idea, kept quiet and started listening. She kept shouting, then I asked "Did you have any problems with check-in?" After she released her anger, she calmed down and told me she had this problem at the reception. Then I realised the fruit I was asked to bring to her room from the reception is to apologise. If I'm supposed to apologise, I should have been told what mistake was made. I put the fruit basket down and talked to her gently "I knew you had some problems upon check-in and this is a small gift which may not make you less frustrated but I hope you would". She said ok, I went out and told the reception about it. I think with customers like her, managers possibly have another solution. That's it. I: When you met the customer, she was already angry, how did you feel then?	Thanh was asked to bring a basket of fruits to a customer's room. As soon as he got there, the customer scolded him severely for a while. He just kept quiet, listened and found out the fruit basket was sent as an apology from FO but he was not informed about it. He calmed her down by expressing empathy, asking helpful questions, using appropriate words and tone of voice. He reported what happened to FO so that they could find	Though not fully informed of the situation, Thanh demonstrated the skills in regulating the customer's emotions. Offering the fruit basket at the right time was also one of the key elements in determining the customer's emotions. Thanh suggested someone of managerial position could have come and apologised in this incident or he should

		another chance to apologise to the customer.	have been better informed.
	T: I was surprised because I felt as if she wanted to send me away. I didn't know what mistake I made because I was in another department. I still stood there, listened until she released her anger. I was still there when she looked back. I: What was your facial expression then? T: The customer was angry, of course I couldn't smile. Of course, I had to show empathy with her. It's important that I made the good question to communicate with her, chose the proper words and volume of the voice which were suitable for that situation and made her a bit relieved. I: Can you tell me more about this, no one has mentioned this? T: It sounds interesting (I: smile). When I brought the fruit basket there, I knocked the door and she opened the door "Why do you bring this here? I don't need it anymore". I was a bit surprised. She shouted for a while, I listened. Basically I stood there saying "yes, yes, yes" ("dạ, dạ, dạ"). When she finished, I asked "Did you have any problems with check-in?" When I asked in a soft voice, she replied in a soft voice too. Then I asked her if I could leave the fruit there. If I had given it to her at the start, I'm sure she wouldn't have received it. Afterwards I told the FO staff that I brought the fruit to the customer and described her attitude so that they could find some other ways to contact her and find a better chance to apologise. That's how it works in 5-star hotels. I don't know much about		

	others but at S, we take really good care of customers. If there's anything they aren't happy with, just a minor problem, we 'start running around' ('bắt đầu chạy đôn chạy đáo'), everyone is worried, staff is worried too. It's tiring… (laugh)		
B – Lack of experience	10. N: I'm pretty new here, so I haven't got much to tell but the worst interaction I have ever had with customers was when I worked as a receptionist, the customer was drunk, he came and asked me to go out with him (laugh). I replied "No, I finish at 10, I can't go out." "Do you have happy services here?" (laugh). It's a sensitive topic but I'm sure female staff have encountered this because not all customers are polite and decent. I just graduated, I didn't know what 'happy services' meant, I thought it means going out. So, I recommended him places to go out at night. "No…" he wanted me to call someone but I said "We don't have that here." Then he suddenly jumped onto the reception desk "Let's go with me then!" I was so scared, I didn't know what to do, I was almost crying. I: It's just you then? N: Me and the security guard but he's downstairs. He ran upstairs. It's an unforgettable memory to me (laugh).	A drunken customer asked her for 'happy' services and rudely dragged her out of the reception desk towards his room. She was scared and almost crying. She screamed and the security guard came. The customer looked embarrassed the following day when seeing her	Ngoc cited her young age and little experience as reasons for not being able to deal with the drunken customer. She was very scared but the comfort and empathy from her manager made her feel ok.

I: When the customer dragged you out, what was his emotional expression?

N: I think he's drunk, then he saw a girl, it means… I knew at first he came to flirt with me but I'm not that kind. I didn't provide him with the service he asked for, maybe he's frustrated. He looked so scary, as if he would have eaten me. He jumped towards me, took my hand and dragged me out "Let's go to my room". I was so scared, I just screamed, then the security guard came. I'd just graduated then.

I: Did you see him again?

N: No, with big hotels like V, they could take him out and send him to the mainland...

I: Blacklist (smile)

N: Yes, blacklist but they could take him to the mainland right away regardless of him being a high-class customer. But the hotel I worked for at that time was two-star, I was scared; though he's wrong, I still tried to control myself. The manager consoled me, so it's ok. When I saw him the following day, I didn't dare to look at him.

I: What about the customer?

	N: He must have got embarrassed the following morning, he didn't say anything, just gave me the key or took it back.		
C – Conflict between EI practice and hotel revenue	5. The travel agency booked accommodation and food for their customers and hired a tour guide who also stayed at the hotel. On the day of check-out, they didn't transfer the money. Theoretically, they must pay the money before we let the customers check out. They said they had done that but I checked once, twice and 3 times but there's still no money. When it's closer to the flight departure time, I tried to ring them but no answer. They also made excuses like busy network bla bla bla. Finally, our relationship with customers built during their stay of 3-4 days was destroyed because we couldn't get hold of the travel agency, the tour guide stood there and we had to issue an ultimatum. I asked the tour guide to ring his company, if they don't pay the money, we won't let the customers check out. As you know, the customers were ready for the flight with lots of luggage and gifts. The group included children and the elderly as well but they all had to wait for the company to send the money. All the services, happiness and emotion regulation used over the last 3 days were 'thrown away'. It gave us a really bad image with not only those who stayed but also the customers who were staying and even those who were waiting to check out. About 30 people standing at the hotel lobby with lots of luggage but we couldn't let them go, otherwise we'd lose the money. It's really really bad. The customers started getting	The travel company didn't transfer the money, a group of tourists were held at the hotel lobby before their flight. Everyone was annoyed and looked grumpy, which created a bad image for new customers checking in. The good relationship between the group and staff built over their stay was destroyed in the end.	The problem was caused by the third party, which was out of his control. It was the moment when customers' emotions were not prioritised as opposed to the hotel revenue.

	frustrated and scolding the receptionists and didn't want to know whatever had happened. They're worried about missing the flight. So, all the happy faces were replaced by grumpy ones. It's about emotional control. We tried to be polite "I'm sorry but the travel agency hasn't transferred the money to us, I can't let you go". The customers started to scold them; the staff kept calm after one sentence and two sentences but they became really frustrated afterwards. Who would pay for us if we let them go? So, when people don't behave properly and follow the procedures; conflicts arise, which makes it really hard to control ourselves. When it gets more serious, it's impossible to control. The customers were really dissatisfied that time and similar incidents have happened several times.		
D – Ineffective emotion regulation	9. CH: Actually, people tend to remember more negative experiences than positive ones. I'd like to share with you an incident that I'll never forget. I met a customer from the Middle East who is a CEO in petroleum, he came here with his wife. He's got a schedule to attend a conference while he's staying at the resort, everything had been booked. One day, he came to BC and said "I'm staying at your resort but my meeting has been changed to another date. I've got the flight tickets with Emirates, can you change the date for me?" It's his request. I told him that he didn't have to worry about that, I'd change the date for him. He added "My meeting is extremely important, I can't be late, you have to	She was asked to change the flight ticket for the customer. He did not believe she could contact the airline office in VN because he thought it did not exist. The customer scolded her continuously with an extremely rude attitude, which made her	Van was shocked by the aggressive customer for two underlying reasons – the low-status nature of her job and the rude behaviour of a man towards a woman.

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ring Emirates airlines to change the ticket for me and let me know asap". I told him that we don't have to ring the company, they have an office in HCM City, which made it easier and staff are helpful. He got angry with me suddenly "Are you kidding me?" "I've flown with Emirates for ages, my staff work directly with them", he's on business class too. "I've been to Vietnam and other Asian countries, there's no office of Emirates in Asia. You can't say that, you don't know it." He scolded me continuously and didn't let me explain.

I: How did you feel then?

CH: Shocked, very shocked. It's the first time that I had met someone that rude and aggressive since I started working there… Generally speaking, no matter what happened, the fact that a man scolded a woman like that with an extremely rude attitude was a shock to me. Even his wife who was standing next to him tried to stop him and she couldn't though she didn't know who was right or wrong but I noticed her embarrassment when she saw her husband scold me. Actually, the way to control my own emotions is to calm down and assume that customers are always right, I also think so. When I think the customer is right, I can calm my anger and tenderly continue to explain what is wrong. I told myself that but I was shaking due to the anger. I told him to let me ring the Emirates office, he didn't even try by asking me to give him their number or address to check if it exists. It's the attitude of someone wealthy to the

feel shocked. She considered his act as a consequence of the social status. The customer gave her a tip after his problem was sorted but Van rejected. "my honour cost more than $50, it's almost two months' worth of my salary but I gave it back to him". She burst into tears because of the pent-up frustrations.

service staff. He asserted that that there's no representative office of Emirates in Southeast Asia, not Asia. He assumed that I made it up and wasn't professional enough. I waited until he finished and said "Calm down, Sir. I'll ring them today and ask them to confirm if they can change the date for your flights. I'll also ask them to send a fax to the resort and we'll bring it to your room to find out if there's an Emirates office in Vietnam." He was very angry "You're still stubborn, I'll speak to your manager."

I: When he warned that he'd speak to the manager, how did you feel?

CH: I thought he's too big-headed, I can't persuade him with words. I replied "I hope you'll speak to my manager, then I have the chance to prove that there's an Emirates office in Vietnam. I'll explain to him." He said "You're very stubborn, if you can't do that, I'll cut your neck", he didn't use the word "cut your neck" but used the body language to imply that. His wife was very embarrassed when she saw how aggressive her husband was, she apologized to me and dragged him away. Not very long after that, my manager came spitefully and told me off "Why did you make the customer so angry? You're not professional. They've worked with that airline and were sure that there's not office in Vietnam. Are you confused? Why did you speak to the customer like that?" He scolded me once more. Actually I could control myself with such a maniac like the customer, I had no problems dealing with the manager because I was sure

it exists, I've worked with them several times. I explained to him that there's an office in Vietnam, he told me to contact them that day and confirm if they could change the ticket. I promised with him. I contacted the office in HCM city immediately, I spoke to a staff called My, told her about the situation and asked her to let me know asap so that I could give the fax to the customer and my manager. After listening, she's very nice, saying she'd do it right away and get back to me. I gave her my cell phone number to contact because I would finish the shift and other colleagues might not know about the flight ticket. Luckily, My rang me in the afternoon and told me that it's fully booked, she had to put him on the waiting list. I asked for the fax to be sent to the colleague working on that afternoon shift and let the customer know that he'd be on the waiting list for a few days if he still wanted the ticket. Fortunately, he didn't mind coming to the conference venue 1 or 2 days in advance. The fax was brought to his room. The following day when I started the shift, my manager had an unsightly smile "Well done". It's confirmed, so the customer wasn't angry any more. I was quite stubborn, so I told him "You're working in Vietnam and your staff are Vietnamese, it's not about the managers being always right, you need to respect Vietnamese. If you were me who had been offended by the manager yesterday without confirming if it's right or not. You just listened to the customer and scolded your staff like that, it's a serious offense. I hope from now on,

when you work with Vietnamese staff, you should respect us. You should understand our culture…"

I: Where is he from?

CH: Hungary.

I: Hungary. How did you feel then? Did he accept the criticism?

CH: He was ashamed because I was very certain. He likes showing off but doesn't respect staff as much as the previous manager, so he has had several clashes with Vietnamese staff. In the same manner – blaming us without any investigation and being uppish, many of us have criticized him. Actually, Vietnamese tend to forbear very well, once we need to, we'll be very straightforward, even to managers, as long as we don't offend them. We must make them respect us, if he wants to be respected, he must respect us, we're workers, not housemaids. When I said that, he pretended to be friendly "Oh, I've got too much to do, it's a mistake, sorry." That's it. Two days later, I got a call from My saying that he's got that seat and asking if he wanted her to book it for him. We rang his room, asked for his confirmation and emphasizing that it's the only seat to book for him. He agreed and asked us to confirm. He took the signed confirmation to BC to fax to the Emirates office. He played one more show. He apologized to me, left $50 on the desk, my honour cost more than $50 though $50 was more than 1million dong, and it's quite high at

that time, whereas my salary was 600k, it's almost two months' worth of my salary but I gave it back to him. "I'm not taking your tip." He said "It's not a tip, I want to thank you for helping me." I replied "Never shock a woman with your offensive and violent words because you should know why you get mad. I was certain that the information was accurate, you could have asked me to give you their phone number for checking. It's simple. There was no need for violence and the gesture of cutting my neck. I think it's a memorable experience not only at work but also in life because you really hurt my feelings." I burst into tears because I was so frustrated, but it's to release the pent-up frustrations. When he threatened me, I didn't cry because if I had cried, it means I had lost, why did I have to cry? But now, after saying what I thought and criticizing him for his rude behaviour, unsuitable for a gentleman, his wife looked embarrassed then. He apologized and said he considered it a lesson for himself, he wouldn't jump to conclusion that quickly. His wife also apologised many times. I told her it's not her fault. I just wanted to tell him how I felt when I was offended that deeply. In fact, working in service sector means serving others and living with the predefined emotions – cheerful and enthusiastic with customers and put aside all personal emotions, which isn't easy. I managed to release my emotions after talking to them for a few minutes. It's an unforgettable experience in my life.

| E – Support needed from managers | 34. There's a VIP customer who is the son of the mayor of St Petersburg, a politician as well as a famous businessman. As you know, Russian don't look very friendly. They travelled in a group of 5, with his friends. Russians are quite chaotic and drink a lot. When they drink, they can't control themselves. I remember they went to NT, came back at 1am and asked to speak to the manager. I asked "How can I help you?" they wanted to have a BBQ. I said sorry because they're supposed to book it in advance so that staff have time to prepare. They were very frustrated, they didn't care "I have the money, it must be done for me." I had to sit down with them and persuaded them that it's impossible to do that due to the availability of staff and food. Even if we could, the food wouldn't be good. "Would you like to go to your room and take a rest? I'll bring some food for you tonight, the BBQ will be ready tomorrow." He didn't care what I said because…

I: How did they behave?

V: They started getting angry, stood up and were almost hitting me because they're too drunk. I still stood up and…

I: How did you feel then?

V: I was scared, not of getting hit but if I don't solve it well when they're so serious, it may lead to serious consequences. I stood up and spoke to | The customer was drunk and asked for a BBQ at midnight which was impossible due to the availability of food and staff. Vu tried to persuade him to have it the following day but he got angry and chased after him in the hotel lobby. Vu was upset because he had to wake up at midnight to serve such a rude customer, he wanted to take a holiday or to quit his job. However, after talking to his GM, he was cheered up and the customer spoke to him politely after a night's sleep. | The incident demonstrated how Vu controlled his emotions when dealing with a drunken and rude customer. However, when the customer was about to fight against Vu, he was more worried about the consequences it might lead to rather than the fight itself, which reflects how the responsibility he had for the job guided his thinking and action. The fact that he failed to meet the customer's demand and calm him down made Vu depressed and thought |

them "Sorry, I can't help you now." He didn't speak to me in English any more but changed to Russian. I said "Sorry, I can't understand anything." He stood up and chased me around. His friends were calmer and held him. I had my colleagues to protect me too but I was ok with that because I knew he's drunk and he couldn't control his emotions. Finally I spoke to his friend "He can't talk now, he's drunk, can you explain to him that we can't organize a BBQ right now?" I was very depressed and thought I'd speak to my manager and asked for a holiday; otherwise I'd have to apply for another job. I was too depressed to serve those who can't control their emotions.

I: Just that one customer who made you depressed or you'd had similar incidents and it's the last drop to spill the glass?

V: I've encountered many incidents. It's not the last drop to spill the glass. I work in tourism, I have to accept that customers pay us to make them satisfied. I was just depressed at that time, I had to get up at midnight to serve him but he didn't understand and had a rude attitude like that. I thought working in the tourism sector was so boring, the money I got from customers wasn't worth the efforts made on serving customers. After that night, I spoke to my manager, he encouraged me a lot "You've done really well!" which made me confident and love my job again. I met the customer the following morning but I forgot what happened the previous day. I greeted him "Did you sleep well? I'm sorry

about quitting the job. Nevertheless, the timely encouragement from his GM helped him overcome the tough time and continued with the job, which highlights the important role of GM in supporting and guiding hotel workers.

that I couldn't prepare the BBQ for you yesterday." He didn't remember anything, he said "Really? Can you do it for me today?" then I prepared the BBQ and was very happy. It's one of the moments I got depressed about the tourism industry.

I: Can you tell me more about what made you change from the depression that night to the good mood the following day?

V: The boss is very important. When I talked to my GM, he encouraged me a lot and explained to me. Also, it's important to meet other customers to change from being depressed to loving the job. My task every morning is to talk to all customers in the restaurant and checked if they're happy or have any problems. That morning, after being encouraged by my manager, I tried to see all the nice customers and talk to friends, which made me forget what happened the previous day. The important thing is to see other customers when I'm not in the good mood. Talking to customers helps me reduce stress and makes me love my job. The important thing in tourism and hospitality is that we get paid to make customers happy, when they're happy, we've done a good job. I walked around to meet all the nice customers, they looked happy and said things like "good food, good service", which made me love my job again.

| F – Follow-up after service failures | 35. V: It's a Vietnamese customer, very rich, she spent almost 100 mil on the room and food. Airport staff made a mistake and she rang me, she even swore on the phone. When she swore on the phone, I held it for a few minutes, so did she. She has returned several times and always rings me whenever she needs anything. I didn't expect her to scold me that severely. I knew she's frustrated and I was upset. Then she hung up. I tried to ring her but she didn't answer. I texted to her "Can I see you for a few minutes? I'd like to talk to you." I was ready to be straightforward to her and quit the job. I wanted to say "First, I'm sorry for the mistake; second, I'd like to share with you that you shouldn't have said that to me. I agreed that it was our fault but you're supposed to respect others. I agree that you pay for staying here and I'm responsible for that but you shouldn't have said that to me." Then I'd be ready to hand in the resignation. She's quite close to me, she's stayed here for more than 10 times, I don't know what happened that made her talk to me like that. But she didn't reply my message. Then I rang my wife, "I'll probably quit the job." She said "If it's too stressful for you, it's up to you to decide." Until that night she still didn't reply message, I met her the following morning. She apologized to me first "I'm sorry, I was too hot-tempered and swore at you." I apologised to her and we got on well again.

I: Did you talk to her via phone or have a face-to-face conversation? | A customer had some problem with the hotel staff at the airport, she got angry and rang Vu to complain. He was shocked that she swore at him though they had been quite close to each other, she was a regular customer at the resort. Vu tried to ring her after she hung up the phone, he also texted to speak to her in person but she did not reply. He thought he would probably quit the job because he was too depressed. They met accidentally in the restaurant the following morning, the customer took initiative in apologising and they both apologised to each other, | Vu was shocked when the customer swore at him over the phone because of their close relationship. He asked to speak to her in person what he actually thought and was ready for the resignation. However, the customer did not reply. Interestingly, overnight, both of them were calmer. Vu always starts his days by greeting customers, which makes him happy and love his job. When the customer actively greeted and apologised to him, he |

		they got on well afterwards.	was pleased and the conflict was resolved.
	V: I spoke to her directly. Luckily I didn't speak to her at that time, otherwise I wouldn't be working here anymore and I could have lost the close relationship with her which has been built up for years. Afterwards, I rang my wife and told her that I had a chat with the customer, we apologized to each other and it's all sorted. I: Did you meet her intentionally or accidentally? V: Accidentally because neither of us wanted to see each other, we weren't pleased about each other. I: When you accidentally saw her, how did you feel? V: In fact, I was still thinking. I went to the restaurant not to see her but to see other customers. I was standing at one end of the restaurant and she was at the other end. I had to come and greet her, I couldn't just pretend that I didn't see her, which could be my fault. It's my responsibility to speak to her. While I was walking towards her, I was thinking "What am I going to say?" Over the night, I got less annoyed anyway. I talked to her as if nothing had happened. I just asked if she slept well and if she enjoyed the breakfast. We both talked to each other as usual. She took the initiative to apologise to me "Sorry, I was shouting at you yesterday." "No worries, it's my responsibility, it's my fault. I'm sorry." Then we talked to each other as we normally do.		

	I: When you saw her at the table and were walking towards her, did you try guessing how she was feeling? V: Yes, I was thinking a lot. I meant to walk slowly to think if she'd be upset with me. I was prepared psychologically for 2 things: first, apologise to her because no matter what happened, I must admit my mistake; second, I paid attention to her attitude to see how I should talk to her. I tried to be normal, smile and talk to her. When I noticed she's replying me, I thought she's calm then. Afterwards, I apologised. After the normal greetings, I mentioned the incident that had happened the previous day and the problem was sorted.		

Source: Author

Appendix 8. Summary of research findings in chapter 7

Research objective	Research findings		
	Management of their own emotions	**Management of customers' emotions**	**Management of colleagues' emotions**
RO4 - To discover strategies the workers use in managing their own emotions and the emotions of their customers and colleagues.	Strategies adopted in the workplace • During the interactions ○ Wearing a concerned mask ○ Deep breathing ○ Leaving the work floor • After the interactions ○ Leaving the work floor ○ Self-talking ○ Doing something they enjoy Emotional growth • Working experience ○ Experience and expression of negative emotions are perceived as weaknesses and failures ○ Talking to colleagues to release stress and annoyance from	Recognition of customers' emotions • Differences in customers' emotional expressions based on their country of origin ○ Russia ○ China ○ Hong Kong ○ Japan ○ India ○ The UK, the US, Australia, France, and Germany • Differences between northern and southern Vietnamese customers: Northern Vietnamese customers are associated with negative impressions regarding their behaviours, language, and emotional expressions. Regulation of customers' emotions • Generating positive emotions	Interactions at work • From the perspective of bottom-line workers ○ Recognising colleagues' emotions ○ *"Putting themselves in others' shoes"* ○ *"Paying attention to others' emotions"* ○ *"Listening honestly and frankly"* ○ Interacting with managers: behave in accordance with managers' preferences • From the perspective of supervisors and managers ○ Express anger and frustration as a way of establishing authority and power on staff

	interactions with customers ○ Seeking family and friend support to de-stress • From workplace to daily practice ○ Taking a deep breath ○ Buddhist meditation ○ Switching off with hobbies	○ Talk about culture, language, and entertainment activities ○ Greet customer by names • Calming down customers ○ Apologise ○ Use appropriate language and volume • Understanding and analysing customers' emotions ○ Understand customers' emotions and behaviours when things go wrong ○ Rationalise reasons for customers' anger and explain ○ Facilitate thinking towards customer expectation • Detaching or engaging customers' emotions depending on the situations ○ Encourage customers to talk about what made them upset or angry ○ Separate customers from the crowd and take them to someone of higher ranking ○ Seek manager support	○ Offer emotional support to enhance working environment ○ Combine both Socialisation after work to enhance the recognition and regulation of colleagues' emotions • Understand colleagues' personal problems • Express empathy • Solve conflicts The influence of culture and religion on their interactions with colleagues • The social hierarchy versus work hierarchy • The Golden Rule *"Do unto others"* • Vietnamese culture at the workplace from the participants' viewpoint

Research objective	Research findings

RO1 - To investigate cultural factors that influence the workers' emotions in the workplace.	Their perceptions of hotel work and customers
	
	• Not as routine as commonly known
	
	• A *"daughter-in-law"* job
	
	• Passion for the job and customers are their source of positive energy
	
	Their perceptions of the workplace
	
	• Colleagues
	
	• Working environment
	
	The characteristics of a hierarchy-based culture
	
	• The hierarchy of the prestige associated with each department
	
	    o Preference for FO
	
	    o HK is the least skilled job
	
	• The conflicts between age-grading and position-grading hierarchy
	
	    o Position-grading hierarchy
	
	    o Age-grading hierarchy or respect for seniority
	
	• The role of family and academic achievement
	
	    o The role of family
	
	    o Academic achievement

Research objective	Research findings
RO2 - To explore the sources of their knowledge of emotional management.	Work-related experiences • Customers • Colleagues • Managers Personal experiences • Personal network • Self-study Teachings from Buddhism and Vietnamese culture • Buddhist teachings • Vietnamese culture

Research objective	Research findings

RO5 - To suggest ways to improve hotel workers' practice of EI.	Training issues
	
	• Topics for training
	    o Psychology
	    o Communication skill
	    o Interaction with customers
	    o Regional and national cultures
	• Forms of training
	    o On-the-job training
	    o Pen-and-paper exercise
	    o Case study
	    o Role play
	    o Incentive trips
	    o Talks delivered by senior colleagues or managers
	
	Working environment
	
	• Fair
	• Open
	
	Desired qualities of managers
	
	• Trust, consolation, and empathy
	• A moderator in different situations
	• A buffer against stress and burnout

Source: Author