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## “Being Malaysian does not mean being Malaysian” - Cultural stereotypes is a hindrance to modern hospitality management

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### Abstract

This research revolves around the field of cross cultural study whereby the researcher focuses on discovering exactly by what means and way cultural stereotypes influences management effectiveness in the Malaysian hospitality workforce. It was observed from past studies that organizations are taking necessary measures in forming strategies to overcome challenges formed by cultural stereotypes. However, the issue still exists due to the challenges in terms of adaptation and understanding of cultural differences among people. This indicates that the growing phenomenon of globalization has not spared culture, as the integration of different cultures leads to the act of “cultural stereotyping”, one of the many facets in the context of culture. This study consists of three research objectives; (i) to explore the understanding of management effectiveness among the Malaysian hospitality workforce, (ii) to examine and explore the means of influence cultural stereotypes has upon management effectiveness within the hotels in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and (iii) to identify the gaps of cultural stereotyping as being a hindrance to modern hospitality management within the hotels in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Methodologically, this study employed a qualitative approach whereby the samples were chosen based on snowball and criterion method. Data collected were then coded using In Vivo and Initial coding of which then were analyzed using Thematic analysis. This study proved the existence of contradictory evidence as oppose to the extensive literature from previous studies with regard to this research area. Therefore, findings from this study can be made as a comparison to prior studies with its aim in exploring for an in-depth understanding of what lays behind the different perspectives as previous studies were mostly conducted in Western settings. It is undeniable that comparisons made will bring to light of how cultural differences shape the mind set of individuals and societies alike.

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## 1. Introduction

Since the Industrial Revolution, globalization has been linked to a variety of global activities. It became a universal term which refers to the breaking of barriers that enables people, companies, organizations, and nations to interact and integrate with one another (Northouse, 2010). This phenomenon has fairly impacted the environment, culture, political situation, economic status and the physical wellbeing of humans in the different societies around the world. Consequently, the world is becoming global whereby people of different backgrounds are interacting and working with one another which results in the increased of multinational organizations, international trade, and worldwide telecommunications systems as well as cultural exchange (Northouse, 2010). However, it was observed that despite the benefits from globalization, there are challenges that have been brought to surface as well such as, the necessity to form effective multinational organizations, to identify and select fitting leaders for these entities as well as to manage organizations particularly with the culturally diverse employees (House & Javidan, 2004). This proves that culture has not been spared from the impacts of this growing phenomenon as the integration of different cultures bring about “cultural stereotyping”, one of the many facets in the context of culture. This act is inevitable as each culture has the tendency to judge the other based on theirs as the starting point. Stereotyping is not necessarily a negative action, seeing that if used appropriately, it could be a competitive advantage for organizations. However, if used in a negative approach, it could be a hindrance towards attaining an effective management in the organization. Consequently, it proves the relationship between globalization and culture of which calls the need to create competent leaders in cross-cultural awareness and practices (Northouse, 2006). This highlights the value of identifying leaders and top management that are able to minimize cultural stereotyping to ensure employees are able to work with one another in achieving organizational goals without causing any negative conflicts taking into consideration the diverse background. Cross-cultural management and a deeper insight of cultural influences has gained the focus of the world due to the increasing fast pace of globalization. This is further agreed by Adler and Bartholomew (1992) in their argument that to compete globally, leaders need to form five cross-cultural competencies consisting of the following characteristics; (i) the need for leaders to have suffice understanding of business, political and cultural environment worldwide (ii) the need to learn the perspectives, tastes, trends and technologies of the different cultures, (iii) the need to possess the ability to work in a diverse environment, (iv) leaders should adapt to live and communicate with other cultures from their own and (v) the necessity to learn to relate to other people of different cultures from the angle of equality instead of cultural superiority (Adler and Bartholomew, 1992).

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Culture defined

Over the years, philosophers, sociologists and anthropologists are among the many that held continuous debates and discussions in determining the understanding of culture. Up till today, despite the number of studies on culture, a singular definition of culture is yet to be defined due to the volatility of its characteristics for cultural groupings that are constantly changing laid down by their environment. However, they remain constant to a certain extent in maintaining definite concept about the world and attitudes towards their fellow humans. According to Schneider & Barsoux (2003), culture as was proposed by anthropologist Margaret Mead can be understood as “a shared patterns of behavior”. Unfortunately, observing a particular behavior is not sufficient as one is not aware of the meaning behind the action as solitary action may carry different meanings and vice versa. The significance of meanings behind a behaviour results in another understanding of culture as was defined by Claude Levi-Strauss & Clifford Geertz (1971) whereby culture is seen as a “systems of shared meaning which is driven to explain a behavior or action observed”. However, for the usage of this research, the expression culture refers to “desirable and undesirable set of beliefs and values within a community of people as well as the formal and informal practices in support of the values” (Javidan & House, 2001, p. 292). The varying concepts and dimensions which fall under the umbrella of culture have made it into a complex and dynamic phenomenon. The complexity of understanding culture is due to the existence of two important elements occurring simultaneously; the current practices of cultures against the ideal practices of the particular culture (Javidan et al., 2005).

## 2.2. *Understanding the act of stereotyping*

A stereotype as was defined by Barak (2011) is a standardized, generalized conceptual image which is held in common by members of the same group. It could also be referred to a compilation of “mental files” that aids in processing new information by making a comparison of past knowledge and experience (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003). Nonetheless, due to the nature of human beings which tends to jump into negative conclusions rather than otherwise, the act of stereotyping is often deemed to be a negative character. As agreed by (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003), stereotyping often holds a negative perception whereby it is seen as ignorant and immoral which is far from being right. Stereotypes does not necessarily come up to a full guarantee of precision as sometimes it could indeed be wide of the mark, based on misguided information. This is further explained by Tavris & Aronson (2007) stating that imprecise insights and generalizations may trigger expectations that may validate harmful and immoral actions. Needless to say, the critical issue of stereotyping is based on how it is used. If properly bring into play, it would be a cultural advantage and if not, it would only lead to the building up of conflicts. It was brought to attention that effective managers are one that acknowledges and accepts stereotypes by constantly updating themselves of their current surroundings, in terms of the changing culture in people, countries, organizations and many more. By doing so, it will help them in opening up their perceptions and have a better understanding of why people act or behave the way they do. However, for managers who have the tendency to deny stereotypes may not perform efficiently due to their ignorance in trying to understand other cultures. Hence, it will affect their performance in forming an effective and efficient management.

The assumptions of stereotyping being labeled as a negative act is not entirely flawed as initially this conception was developed in relation to ethnic groups that has been perceived to be morally incorrect (Barak, 2011). The misguided usage of stereotyping caused it to be infamous as it was comprehended as politically incorrect for categorizing people who had no intention to be categorized. Furthermore, it was deemed as a process of overgeneralization or oversimplification (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994; Corrigan, 2004). Apart from that, as was mentioned by Van Dijk (2007), there will be occurrence whereby images or information generated by the media to the public on a certain group may be inappropriately applied to the same group in another country. Situations such as these are clear examples of the inapt usage of stereotyping. Under the umbrella of stereotypes, Geert Hofstede (2004) extended it into two categories: heterostereotypes and autostereotypes. Heterostereotypes refers to the perceptions about members of the other group while autostereotypes refers to perceptions about an individual’s own group (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2004, p. 326). It may be seem far less than neutral to claim that it became a norm for people to view positively over members of their same group (autostereotypes) while harboring negative views over members of the other group (heterostereotypes). Although the comprehensive literature review above confirms the legitimacy of stereotyping, it is important to take heed that it could be misleading if misuse due to the nature of human being of which each individual is unique in their own way. The generalization of one’s behavior may be right to a certain degree but bear in mind that factor such as family origin and their own characteristics too play a significant role in influencing their behaviour.

The nature of culture allows it to be explored from a varying angles depending on the research objective and gaps. For the suitability of this research, gender and age are used as the determinants of understanding cultural stereotypes as how it plays as hindrance to modern hospitality management.

## 2.3. *Gender stereotypes and workforce management*

According to Rimashevskaja (2008), a Russian politician indicated that gender equality ought to be enforced for a promised democratic society. In a broad-spectrum, it clearly highlights the importance of addressing the issue of gender stereotypes in the society we live in, also known as the “gender decade”. Gender stereotypes as defined by Littrel and Nkomo (2005), as the differentiation between men and women across many cultural groups based on psychological characteristics. In the workforce, often gender stereotypes influences the perceptions of leaders and managers (Littrell & Nkomo, 2005). Though there are indications that the gender gap has reduced, there is still a substantial partiality against women in both upper management positions and in compensation (Jarrell & Stanley, 2004). It appears that the workforce perceive women as a burden due to certain social factors such as the nature of

womanhood in bearing children, require social services and maternity leave (Rimashevskaja, May-June 2008). This is further agreed by Erying and Stead (1998) in their identification of other barriers such as lack of informal advice and sponsorship for women, less work assignments, etc. Such perceptions on women generally placed men of primary importance and women as secondary. This explains why men are famously labeled as the “breadwinner” of the family while women as “housewives”. Hence, this results in the marginalization of women in senior or top management positions in an organization which depicts the low number of their representation on the corporate boards. In addition, it is worth noting that generally corporate boards are male dominated (Mythili S., 2013). Nonetheless, based on a study conducted, two stable stereotypes were identified of which the first perceives women workforce as cost incurring and less profitable due to their “responsibilities” such as housekeeping and child rearing. The second type looks at how the occupation of male and female increases gender segregation that results in the existence of “glass ceiling” and “glass walls”. The term “glass ceiling” denotes a phenomenon of women who sees opportunities but are beyond their reach due to vertical hierarchy in the management. On the other hand, “glass walls” describes the differences in terms of jobs among the genders. For example, task which requires higher skills and knowledge are most likely in favour of men while women endures the otherwise (Rimashevskaja, May-June 2008). Similarly as mentioned by (Kaufman and Fetters; 1983, Andrew, et.al. 1990), women have been unfairly perceived to be less competent in comparison to the opposing gender and their feminine image is seen as lacking of credibility and inefficiency. Another contributing factor to this issue could be seen from the focal point of communication skills which differs between the genders. So to speak, the society concedes that men and women differ in terms of speech and management styles. Mythili S. (2013) mentioned that several studies indicated that women possess tentative and indirectness in deliberating task while men appeared to be direct and assertive. Needless to say, tentative does not represent lack of confidence or being direct mean overconfidence. (Heilman & Eagly, 2008) specified certain attributes in women such as positive communal qualities of warmth and niceness are somewhat inconsistent with the ideal attributes required in attaining success of mainstream organizational positions. As clearly agreed by (Schein, 2001) that people have the inclination to associate such roles with masculine attributes over femininity. By allowing such phenomenon to take place and grow will only limit the performance of an organization as it confines the opportunities for all the employees despite the different genders to perform their utmost best. Rimashevskaja (2008) statement puts more weight to the prior statement when she claimed that such segregation creates barriers and walls for women in wanting to utilized their human and intellectual capabilities. This in turn does not only affect the women workforce, but the entire organization as it causes loss to the society as a whole in a long run. However, although certain societies and organizations have come to accept the importance of gender governance, yet according to prior studies, women are still trapped in junior or middle management level positions due to the segregation caused by the act of stereotyping in the workforce. It appears that the voice of men is louder than the women, as it carries more weight in comparison to women. It is unfortunate that women have to work the extra mile in producing greater evidence to prove their competence (Talmud & Izraeli, 1999). Eagly & Carli (2007) highlighted in their study that it was observed of the occurrence of explicit gender bias favouring men demonstrating traditional gender roles in hiring, promotion and career opportunities. This prevents them from being able to share in the responsibility of decision making in the management. Nelson and Quick (1985) pointed out that such stereotypes impedes the performance of professional women which eventually leads to unproductive outcomes.

#### *2.4. Age stereotypes and workforce management*

Age stereotype is another infamous label that has been made known to the society particularly in the workforce. In addition, a recent survey reported that age discrimination takes the lead among the others (e.g. based on gender; Kelly Services, 2006). Parallel to the term of sexism and racism, this typecast is also known as ageism, a form of discrimination resulted from stereotyping. O’Cornnell and Rotter (1979) pointed out that other researches have shown positive links between age stereotyping with work environment and management practices. The society today has the perception that elderly employees are lacking in terms of competency and performance in the workforce of which can be clearly seen by the selection process in organizations. Hence, it was agreed by Shore and Goldberg (2005) with their view that with ageist stereotypes reign in the workforce, it underlies discriminatory conducts, to be precise, biasness in hiring equally qualified older candidates compared to the younger candidates. According to Macik-Frey, some of the perceived attributes consists of decreased performance, stamina, difficulty in training,

inflexibility and holds less volume of work due their age. However, it is important to take note that these assumptions are not necessarily true, having proven by prior researches. Unfortunately, it has stirred up the ongoing discrimination due to the stereotyping which greatly affects the mature aged employees (Johnson & Neumark, 1997). Therefore, situations which points out biasness in the workforce that of which older employees are not given equal opportunities in attending training and career development in comparison to their younger counterparts are expected. As was agreed by Finkelstein, Burke and Raju (1995); and Gordon and Arvey (2004) indicative of that meta-analyses specified that younger employees are treated more favourably than their older co-workers. Contributing factors towards this milieu was found debatable as it was suggested that the selection stage of a recruitment process is largely dependent on the criteria required for a specific job role (Eagly and Diekmann, 2005; Heilman, 1983). Nonetheless, the increase of age stereotypes in the workforce, not does it only placed unfavourable consequences towards a large group of victims, but simultaneously risking organizations' performance as well (Redman and Snape, 2006).

### *2.5. Nationality stereotypes and workforce management*

According to Smith and Thomas (1972), as one part of the world claimed that cultural differences are often the source of challenges to effective management, the other fraction, however, blamed it on the habitual automatic stereotyped assumptions of differences (Jenner, 1982). The latter claim was mainly referred to the presumptions of other nationalities which clouds the perception of others that the effectiveness of organizations are limited due to these assumptions (Jenner, 1982). In the context of nationality stereotypes, it is important to recognize it from the view point of people representing different cultural backgrounds / origins. Although some countries share similar characteristics namely common language, common religion, political status, economical status and geographical location, there still exist distinctive uniqueness of each country due to cultural differences. As being pointed out by Jenner (1982), people from different parts of the world have the tendency to misunderstand people from different countries, misread signals, may take offence easily or experience rejection as a result. Situation such as these are unavoidable as people are brought up with the culture of their country of origin, therefore what has been imparted to them are considered "right" or the "norm". Needless to say, people behaving out of the "norm" are considered "abnormal" or "wrong" which results to clashes if the understanding of cultural differences is not observed by either parties. Hence, it was highlighted by Jenner (1982), that analyzing stereotypes could be vital to the management of international business particularly accounting to the diverse nature of hospitality industry. Edvardsson (1992) added that the significant role played by the element of nationality and culture brought about the national variance in career developments to top management positions, as well as relationship of managers and their subordinates.

### *2.6. Current state of the Malaysian workforce management*

It is essential to have a deeper understanding of the Malaysian workforce to ensure quality and significant findings for this study. In their book of "Understanding the Malaysian Workforce : Guideline for Managers" , (Abdullah & Low, 2001) contributed to this study extensively by providing a general view of the current status of the Malaysian labour force in terms of how it was characterized based on observed behaviours from both the local and foreign managers towards the Malaysian workforce. The characteristics consists of; (i) Malaysians were observed to be dedicated to their job and often found it difficult to reject or insist their rights, (ii) Malaysians have a strong hold of respect for seniors and practices the act of "saving face" in order to avoid embarrassment to others, (iii) Malaysians were found to be particular in being loyal and respect for authority whereby subordinates are expected to practice loyalty to the company and authority, (iv) Malaysians are team orientated as they like to have the sense of belonging, (v) Malaysians prefer to tolerate conflicts rather than being forward in addressing them as they seek for harmonious working environment, (vi) Malaysians have a strong preference in relationship building approach oppose to task oriented approach in the case of performing tasks. This proves that trusts and partnership understanding is far more valued than contractual work obligation (Abdullah & Low, 2001).

In addition to the literature above in relation to the characteristics of the Malaysian workforce, the writer pointed out some issues and challenges faced by the workforce concerning managerial leadership in Malaysia. To begin



with, it was highlighted that based on statistical data attained from the Statistics Department of Malaysia (1993) that in year 1990, majority of the Malaysian labor force were under the age of 34 years of which was claimed to be young in comparison to other developing countries like Japan and the United States. (Abdullah & Low, 2001). Such factor plays a part in influencing a country's workforce in terms of mobility, flexibility, competence and energy (Abdullah & Low, 2001). Secondly, it was observed that the Malaysian society is inclined towards a hierarchical structured social order. This can be seen by the acceptance of leadership as a norm in an organized hierarchical society of which authority is usually not challenged (Abdullah & Low, 2001). Another point to be taken into consideration would be relationship building approach of which is deeply embedded in the society. This is in line with the point highlighted by Abdullah & Low (2001) concerning how the formation of "family atmosphere" plays a significant role in influencing the level of commitment among employees' in an organization as well as to contribute to national unity. From the three mentioned points above, it signifies that the current issues and challenges in the Malaysian workforce is in line with prior studies on how certain cultural elements plays a part in influencing the workforce.

### 3. Methodology

The gathered literature review above showed a significant relationship between cultural stereotypes of gender, age and nationality with an organization's management effectiveness. Therefore, as a step towards discovering the gap and to have a deeper understanding of this research, this study uses the qualitative approach to discover the understanding behind it through the lenses of the Malaysian society. For the purpose of this study, samples were selected using the snowball and criterion method whereby respondents were employees representing the management level of hospitality establishments (hotels) in Kuala Lumpur. The number of samples was not pre-determined as it does not require any statistical calculation which demands any prescribe level of accuracy (Veal, 2011). For this study, a total of 9 respondents were interviewed before it reached data saturation. A semi-structured interview was employed using open ended questions which revolve around the related cultural dimensions. It is an ideal method as was pointed out by Jennings (2001) due to its effectiveness in gathering empirical materials on issues which are complex and sensitive as the interviewer takes time to establish rapport and proceed to analyse the issues. The collected information was then coded using In Vivo and Initial coding of which then were analyzed using Thematic analysis (Saldana, 2009), where themes was collected which reflects the finding of each hotel, as well overall findings. Braun and Clarke (2006) indicated that such analytical method is suitable in identifying, analyzing and reporting themes within data whereby it minimally organizes and describes data set in detail. In addition, it interprets various aspects of the research topic which is deemed suitable for this study as it is a combination of phenomenology and ethnography.

### 4. Results

Based on the extensive number of research conducted in the field of cultural stereotypes in the workforce, it proved that the widely acknowledge issue is still being explored by researchers alike in trying to discover and understand the complex phenomenon for the purpose of minimizing the gap found from previous studies. For that reason, it is sound to label this study as an exploratory study of cultural stereotyping being a hindrance to modern hospitality management in the Malaysian workforce. The interviews conducted during this exploration provided information which was guided by the following research questions;

#### 4.1. *Question 1: How do you understand or define management effectiveness at your workplace?*

Findings from this study highlighted the most frequently discussed themes which were "management effectiveness is having a structured system", "management effectiveness means to have effective leadership skills" and "management effectiveness values management support". Some respondents described their understanding as follows;

*...for me...I mean management effectiveness is probably how well they structure their own team (Anna)*

*...it's like...how effective is the organization is run....uhhh in order to achieve the goal that they want... that*

*means how they manage the whole process (Eric)*

*Management effectiveness...for me...my understanding...management effectiveness, the leader must be a leader, and then, they must be supportive, they must know how to empower the staff and delegate... (Mary)*

Therefore, these findings suggest that management effectiveness is understood as by having a structured system to follow as well as to be led by superiors who possess effective leadership skills which simultaneously provide support to their employees. The respondents believe that it is important to have a proper system laid out which will enable the hotel to reach its main goal while looking out for the employees. As by doing so, it creates a balance in the workforce.

#### 4.2. *Question 2: How do you think gender affects management effectiveness in your workplace?*

Respondents for this study disagree that gender posed any negative affects towards management effectiveness as it is a common understanding that gender equality and inequality exists everywhere. Excerpts from the interviews indicated that “accepting different genders in the workforce”, “individual’s capability” and “different organizational culture” were the favourable themes pointed out by the respondents. This suggest that the employees are aware of the existence of gender stereotypes in the workforce but it does not hinder them in achieving management effectiveness as they are evaluated based on individual’s capabilities. In addition, different organizations have their own culture of which explains their different organizational styles and how they view gender stereotypes. However, the findings of this study proved that it contradicts previous studies which indicated that balancing career and family can cause stress and anxiety, particularly in women (Ford, Heinen & Langkamer, 2007). This can be seen in the following excerpt;

*Uhhh...I mean I've seen a lot of women who are leaders in this company as well...and their fine you know...we...they have children, they have lives, their married, but they can still do what they're supposed to do... (Rose)*

*Well..we don't find it exactly an issue because the thing is ummm uhh..our co-workers and everything, we worked, we worked as a team.... (Danny)*

*It doesn't matter if you're female or male, as long as you get the job done (Majorie)*

#### 4.3. *Question 3: How do you think age affects management effectiveness at your workplace?*

According to numerous authors (Finkelstein, Burke and Raju, 1995; Gordon and Arvey, 2004), it was brought to light that meta analyses indicated that the younger generation are more in favour in comparison to the older workers. However, the findings from this study suggest otherwise with his reoccurring themes of “traditional mind set of baby boomers “, “positive attitude of the younger generation” and “ importance of a solid foundation”. These strongly highlight that in the Malaysian workforce, age stereotypes is not a new phenomenon. However, it is studied from a different lens whereby the traditional mind set of baby boomers of how they perceive the younger generation as young, fresh and lack of experience impedes their growth in the workforce. Despite that, the positive attitude that lingers in this young generation has helped them survive and pull through in the workforce. It appears that baby boomers placed a huge importance in step-by-step learning experience in order to have a solid foundation. It is deemed needed before one could be promoted or even to gain respect from the older workers. The following excerpt proves the mentioned points;

*Age is important because in terms of management, you need someone that is older to run the hotel operations, if you get the youngsters to run the hotel operations, the Generation Y, the fresh graduates, you know, to run the organization, they have a lot of idea, on thing, uhh..they may give you a good innovation but they may not drive through result because they have not even reach to the level of experience of how to manage it... (Daniel)*

#### 4.4. *Question 4: How do you think nationality affects management effectiveness at your workplace?*

Previous studies in relation to this research area showed that nationality has an impact on how the society

perceives successful leadership as well as on the relationship between leaders and subordinates. However, it was found in this study that the Malaysian workforce focuses on the level of experience an individual has in order to climb the ladder. Based on the themes for this study, “being experienced means having international exposure”, “being experienced means meeting the standard” and “being experienced is to meet society’s perception” proposes that the Malaysian society have the strong tendency to perceive that locals are somewhat lacking in comparison to the expatriates. Hence, it becomes a hindrance for the locals in achieving management effectiveness in the workforce as the expatriates would be given priority in many aspects, more commonly in attaining top management post in the hotels. This is pointed out in the excerpt below;

We don’t have many leaders who have gone out to the outside world or to out of Malaysia to work, a lot of them have already develop their careers right here in Malaysia and I feel that their thinking is very narrow, their perspectives are not international, their ideas are good but not there, as in, yah, if you bring someone from outside, like uhhh I mean not to say (name of hotel) or anything, or colour, but white person to come in and..I don’t know somehow their..their thinking sounds so much...it looks like a bigger picture than what we have (Lisa).

*However, the excerpt below pointed out that this is not necessarily true as there were no significant changes in terms of hotel’s revenue or performance even with the hiring of expatriates to the workforce.*

*In the past, we have already managed to see that even expatriates are not exactly good, in the sense that they are not able to, to deliver the type of uhh..result that uhh..the hotel needs (Mark)*

#### 4.5. Question 5: How do you think such cultural issues become a hindrance in achieving management effectiveness?

Findings from this study proved that despite the on-going cultural stereotypes in the workforce and its way of being a hindrance to some extent to the employees in attaining management effectiveness, the Malaysian workforce do not view it as a major hindrance to their growth, instead it was termed as a “trivial issue” which can be minimized over time. The favourable themes such as “acceptance & adaptability”, “diplomacy” and “open-minded” suggests that being in the hospitality industry calls for an understanding from each individual in accepting and adapting to the different cultures. The management has a an important role to play in practicing diplomacy with their employees in terms of handling people from all walks of life due to the cultural differences. Hence, being open-minded in terms of looking at the bigger picture and looking past small issues formed by cultural stereotypes would help in minimizing the issue. Therefore, this can be seen in the excerpt below;

*I believe it is all up to the higher management, the the one who they are reporting to, to play the role to actually be able to change their mentality to a very positive one..umm, the role to actually change the mentality, as in like like..the the..the reason they must be a reason, as like the higher management must be the reason themselves to able to change the mind-set of the managers below them, to be able to accept umm such differences in culture in their own department and all (Dan)*

## 5. Conclusion

This research has given important insights into the Malaysian hospitality workforce’s understanding of management effectiveness and most importantly their perspectives on cultural stereotypes that comes hand in hand with its influencing factors in the industry. It is worth noting that findings from this study have proven contradictory evidence in comparison to the extensive literature from previous studies with regard to this research area. Eagly & Karau (2002) mentioned that generally the society has been educated to perceive females are expected to fulfil certain characteristics such as to be nurturing, deferential, and passive while men should be someone who is aggressive, autonomous, dominant and achievement oriented. Interestingly the Malaysian workforce view gender stereotypes in a whole different angle whereby females and males are judged according to their performance respectively. Such stereotypical assumptions were proved “Wrong” as there are many capable women who are in the position of top management of hotels in Kuala Lumpur and jobs were allocated to the different genders according to their suitability in carrying out the task. As for age stereotypes, results from a previous study indicated that rapidly growing company prefers to hire younger candidates while traditional and stable organizations favours older candidates. However, findings suggest that the older candidates are much preferred due to their level of experience



as oppose to the younger generation who are mostly fresh graduates. In terms of nationality, the society holds contradictory views as some would prefer to have foreigner leading the management due to their “international exposure”. However, by doing so, it would also impede their growth in the organization as priority and favouritism would occur between the locals and expatriates. The existence of these differentiated views calls for a more extensive research to verify the results obtained whereby more hotels in the Kuala Lumpur vicinity should be covered to determine if these hotels have the same understanding or otherwise. This will offer the modern hospitality workforce in Malaysia deeper insight in the aspect of handling employees from all walks of life brought together to work for the same goal. In addition to that, this study contributes significantly to the literature concerning the current Malaysian workforce in the hospitality industry and their take on cultural stereotypes. Finally, according to Smith and Thomas (1972) a great number of researchers have debated that cultural differences are a major barrier to effective management in multinational companies. However, there were also those who claimed that challenges often occur due to automatic, stereotyped assumptions of differences. Hence, findings from this study can be made as a comparison to prior studies to explore further for a better understanding of what lays behind the different perspectives as the extensive literature that was mentioned in this study were mostly studies conducted in a Western setting. Therefore, comparisons made will bring to light of how cultural differences shape the mind set of individuals and society alike.

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