

**THE CROSS-CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT OF HOTEL
EXPATRIATES IN MALAYSIA: THE MEDIATING EFFECTS OF
COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION**

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**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
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COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION**

**A Thesis Submitted to the College of Arts and Sciences
in fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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**BY
HASLINA BT. HALIM**

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Abstract

Despite the abundance of research in the area of expatriation, the growth of hotel industry and the increase in the number of people serving abroad in the industry, there remains a relative lack of empirical research investigating the mediating effects of variables such as communication and interaction on expatriate adjustment. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to investigate the mediating effects of communication and interaction in the adjustment of hotel expatriates in Malaysia. The study also investigates differences in the patterns of adjustment between organizational expatriates (OEs) and self-initiated expatriates (SIEs). Besides, relationships between individual, organizational and nonwork factors and expatriate adjustment are determined and the most influential predictors of expatriate adjustment are also identified. The U-Curve Theory and Social Learning Theory guided this thesis, which used a survey to measure the attitudes and opinions of the 203 respondents comprised of expatriates working in the Malaysian hotel industry. Multiple statistical tests were used to analyze data and ensure the reliability and validity of the instruments. Results revealed that communication and interaction partially mediated the relationships between individual, organizational and nonwork variables and expatriate adjustment. The results also showed that OEs and SIEs in the hotel industry did not differ significantly in their adjustment but there were significant differences in the pattern of adjustment of expatriates from different regions. Previous international experience, social support and family adjustment showed significant positive relationships with expatriate adjustment. Meanwhile, social support and family adjustment were the most influential predictors of expatriate adjustment. The findings are significant for the industry and also contributed to new empirical findings to the literature on expatriation and cross-cultural adjustment.

Keywords: Expatriate adjustment; Personality; Communication and interaction; Human resource support; Social support

Abstrak

Walaupun banyak kajian telah dijalankan dalam bidang ekspatriasi, pertumbuhan dalam industri perhotelan dan peningkatan bilangan individu yang berkhidmat dalam bidang tersebut di negara asing, masih terdapat kekurangan yang relatif dalam kajian empirikal berkaitan pengaruh pemboleh ubah pengantara (*mediating*) seperti komunikasi dan interaksi ke atas penyesuaian ekspatriat. Oleh itu, tujuan utama kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji pengaruh komunikasi dan interaksi sebagai pengantara ke atas penyesuaian ekspatriat dalam industri perhotelan di Malaysia. Kajian juga bertujuan mengenal pasti perbezaan dalam corak penyesuaian antara ekspatriat yang dihantar oleh organisasi (OEs) dan mereka yang mengambil inisiatif sendiri (SIEs). Selain itu, hubungan di antara faktor individu, organisasi dan yang bukan berkaitan dengan pekerjaan (*nonwork*) dan penyesuaian ekspatriat turut dikaji dan peramal paling berpengaruh di dalam penyesuaian ekspatriat juga dikenalpasti. Teori *U-Curve* dan Teori Pembelajaran Sosial digunakan sebagai panduan kajian yang dijalankan ini. Kaedah tinjauan diguna pakai dan 203 responden yang terdiri daripada ekspatriate yang bekerja dalam industri perhotelan di Malaysia terlibat dalam kajian ini. Pelbagai ujian statistik digunakan untuk menganalisa data dan memastikan kebolehpercayaan dan kesahan setiap instrumen yang diguna pakai. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa komunikasi dan interaksi hanya bertindak sebagai separa perantara dalam hubungan di antara pemboleh ubah individu, organisasi dan *nonwork* dan penyesuaian ekspatriat. Keputusan juga menunjukkan bahawa OEs dan SIEs dalam industri perhotelan tidak menunjukkan perbezaan yang signifikan dalam penyesuaian mereka. Bagaimanapun, terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan dalam pola penyesuaian ekspatriat yang berasal dari rantau yang berbeza. Pengalaman antarabangsa, sokongan sosial dan penyesuaian keluarga menunjukkan hubungan positif yang signifikan dengan penyesuaian ekspatriat. Sokongan sosial dan penyesuaian keluarga pula menjadi peramal yang paling berpengaruh dalam penyesuaian ekspatriat. Penemuan ini mempunyai implikasi yang signifikan kepada industri terlibat serta menyumbang kepada penemuan empirikal yang baru dalam literatur berkaitan ekspatriasi dan penyesuaian antara budaya.

Kata Kunci: Penyesuaian ekspatriat, Personaliti, Komunikasi dan interaksi, Sokongan sumber manusia, Sokongan sosial

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List of Abbreviations

ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
BM	Bahasa Malaysia
CAS	Communicative Adaptability Scale
CS	Culture Shock
EPP	Entry Point Project
ETP	Economic Transformation Program
FA	Factor Analysis
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GM	General Manager
GNI	Gross National Income
HCNs	Host-Country Nationals
HRs	Human Resources
HRDF	Human Resource Development Fund
HRM	Human Resource Management
IHR	International Human Resource
IHRM	International Human Resource Management
IJVHCs	International Joint Venture Hotel Companies
JVs	Joint Ventures
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
LEP	Look East Policy
MAHs	Malaysian Association of Hotels
MIDA	Malaysian Industrial Development Authority
MNCs	Multinational Companies
MNHCs	Multinational Hotel Companies
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MTPB	Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board
NEAC	National Economic Advisory Council
NERP	National Economic Recovery Plan
NKEAs	National Key Economic Areas
NKRA	National Key Result Areas
OEs	Organizational Expatriates
PCNs	Parent-Country Nationals
SEA	Southeast Asia
SDs	Standard Deviations
SEM	Structural Equation Modeling
SIEs	Self-Initiated Expatriates
SLT	Social Learning Theory
SMEs	Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises
SSS	Social Support Scale
TCNs	Third-Country Nationals
UCT	U-Curve Theory
US	United States
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Advances in modern technologies have significantly reduced the spatial and temporal barriers previously constraining transnational intercourse. As noted by Samovar, Porter and McDaniel (2010), global communication links and its ability to effect rapid, efficient movement of goods globally have created a growing international economic interdependency among countries of the world. Reich (1991) points out that those geographical boundaries are no longer a concern to international business. The process of internationalization and market expansion does not only lead to the transfer of management styles, products and services but also technology, corporate culture, organizational and management policies and practices to its foreign offices (Nickson, 1999). For many companies also the practice is believed to be logical and an unavoidable step in developing their own competitive potential (Harzing & Ruysseveldt, 2004). In hospitality companies for example, even though there are still a huge number of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that are unlikely to expand their business overseas, many have actually expanded their businesses abroad. Go and Pine (1995) suggest that even in the hotel industry, the weak growth opportunities in the “slow growth” industrial economies are pushing firms to internationalize their business. The expanding markets in the Third World and developing countries for example, have opened up the opportunity for developed nations to expand their markets in that particular region.

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