An Examination
of the Influence of Organisational Culture
on the Service Predispositions of Hospitality Workers
in Tropical North Queensland

Thesis submitted by

Josephine PRYCE

DipHospMgt, BBus, BAdmin(Tourism)(Hons)
in June 2004

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the School of Business
James Cook University
CAIRNS QLD 4870
STATEMENT OF ACCESS

I, the undersigned, author of this work, understand that James Cook University will make this thesis available for use within the University Library and, via the Australian Digital Theses network, for use elsewhere.

I understand that, as an unpublished work, a thesis has significant protection under the Copyright Act and;

I do not wish to place any further restriction on access to this work.

________________________________________  ____________
Signature       Date
STATEMENT OF SOURCES

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other institution of tertiary education. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

____________________________________        __________________
Signature   Date
DECLARATION OF ETHICS

The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted within the guidelines for research ethics outlined in the *National Statement on Ethics Conduct in Research Involving Human* (1999), the *Joint NHMRC/AVCC Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice* (1997), the *James Cook University Policy on Experimentation Ethics. Standard Practices and Guidelines* (2001), and the *James Cook University Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice* (2001). The proposed research methodology received clearance from the James Cook University Experimentation Ethics Review Committee (Approval Number H1379).

_____________________________________  __________
Signature                               Date
I, the undersigned, the author of this work, declare that the electronic copy of this thesis provided to the James Cook University Library is an accurate copy of the print thesis submitted, within the limits of the technology available.

_________________________       ______________
Signature           Date
DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my husband, Ron, who set me free.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project has been a long journey and has been made possible through the assistance, support and encouragement of many people, and I would like to acknowledge and thank them. My sincere thanks are extended to the following people.

I would like to give special thanks to Associate Professor Darren Lee-Ross, my supervisor, for his expert guidance, scholarship and time throughout this study. Your wisdom, feedback and advice are very much appreciated. I thank-you for your encouragement and support in making this journey an achievable task.

In addition, I would like to thank Associate Professor Glen Ross for his assistance, advice and encouragement. Also, my thanks are extended to Dr Neil Black for his invaluable guidance with the statistical analysis. Both were encouraging and made the process easier.

A special thanks goes to Greg Kealy for unfailing technical assistance, patience and advice on any computing matters.

In acknowledging the assistance of the administrative staff, sincere and deep thanks go to Sam Richards and Jackie Leahy for always being there and doing the impossible. Your ongoing patience, assistance and support are truly appreciated.

Many thanks to all the participants in the study who allowed me to question them *ad infinitum* and provided information that would ultimately benefit their working lives and the future of the industry.

Particular thanks go to the hotel managers. I wish to acknowledge their generosity in allowing me into their hotels to administer questionnaires and conduct interviews.

Finally, a multitude of deep thanks go to all my family for their love, patience and understanding. Especially, I would like to thank my husband for believing in me and for always supporting me in everything I have done. You have been an unfailing tower of strength and have made this journey possible. I thank-you eternally. To my beautiful children who have been so proud of my achievements and walked each step of this journey with me. To you all, I give a special thank-you.
PREFACE

I have worked in service industries for as long as I can remember. When I was seven my father leased a poultry farm and we serviced a large community on the outskirts of Melbourne. From the beginning I was always at the frontline assisting my Dad with sales and customer service. Eventually, I got my first paying job as a shop assistant in the local corner store. Here I was able to continue the personalized style of customer service I had grown accustomed to and took great pride in. It was not until I began working for the supermarket chains that I noticed differences in employees’ attitudes to their work and how this impacted on customer satisfaction. I marveled at how organizations sought to make profits while employing individuals who were not service-oriented. Years later while working for Australia Post, I realized that there were organizations who tried to address these issues. Customer-service training programs were made available to those individuals who struggled with work at the frontline. Yet despite such initiatives some individuals did not improve. Further, I noticed a unique camaraderie between individuals from different offices. Individuals moved from one office to another and settled in easily. It was like there was a common work culture that united employees.

Over the past ten years, I have worked in a number of hotels and found similar issues. Hotel workers’ behaviour can be inappropriate and unpredictable. Some employees’ may have personalities suitable to working in hospitality but lack the attitude to overcome the difficulties and pressures of the job. They fail to deliver quality service in an industry that demands working long, irregular hours in emotionally and labour intensive environments. I have often questioned whether it is an organizational ‘thing’. Much is written and said about organizational culture. I have thought perhaps there is some association. On the other hand, like Australia Post, I noticed a certain camaraderie that transcends organization boundaries and connects the workers within the same occupation.

These observations and thoughts have perplexed me for some time and were the impetus for this study into the influence of organizational culture on the service predispositions of hotel workers.
ABSTRACT

The past decade has witnessed a continued emphasis on services and the delivery of quality service. More recently, increasing attention has been focused on the hospitality industry as it has become more widely recognized as an important sector of the service economy. The hospitality industry, like other service industries, is a people-oriented industry. The importance of satisfying customers and its association with quality is well established. Customers’ perceptions of the level of quality within the service transaction are dependent on the attitudes and behaviours of service providers. Traditionally hospitality workers are expected to exhibit positive attitudes toward the customer. In the author’s experience this is not always the case. It seems that attitudes alone are not responsible for delivery of quality service. Hospitality workers are seemingly influenced by an overarching industry culture. This study sets out to explore the service predispositions of hospitality workers and examines the relationship between the attitudes of hospitality workers and organizational culture.

In an attempt to examine the influence of the organizational culture on the service predispositions of hospitality workers, data was gathered from six four-star hotels in Tropical North Queensland, Australia. Research into the key components of service predispositions is emergent and while there is a plethora of research into organizational culture, there are no studies that have investigated the relationship between organizational culture and employees’ service predispositions. First, profiles of service predispositions were developed. Second, the nature and characteristics of organizational culture were examined. Third, the relationship between service predispositions and organizational culture was investigated.

The Service Predispositions Instrument (SPI) was used amongst a sample of 254 hotel employees to assess their attitudes toward providing quality service. Initially, the data was analysed and used to validate the dimensionality of the questionnaire. Thereafter, the ‘service attitudes’ of hospitality workers were collated to develop hospitality SPI norms. The results showed that some dimensions were considered to be more important by hotel employees for delivering quality service. The greatest value was given to the dimensions of communication, competence and individual consideration. This suggests that
hospitality workers recognize the importance of communicating clearly, openly and with enthusiasm with customers, of being confident in the command of skills and knowledge necessary to perform the job and of accepting that all customers are different and so, have a willingness to consider that their needs on an exclusive basis are necessary. These three dimensions could then be considered as ‘industry norms’ for the delivery of exceptional service.

Organisational culture was measured using an instrument that consisted of 96 seven-point Likert-type statements. This instrument represented a set of questions that were developed from issues important to hotel workers and the literature. Once the reliability and validity of the instrument were tested, the data was analysed using a range of analytical procedures, including correlations, ANOVAs and multiple regressions, to develop a profile of the organisational culture in hotels and to establish the relationship between organisational culture and employees’ service predispositions. Principal components analysis (PCA) produced 28 underlying dimensions of organisational culture. The findings showed that importance of job, customer orientation, rituals, training and role ambiguity were seen as the most important components of hotel culture. More importantly, the relationship between organizational culture and service predispositions was confirmed and the notion of the existence of an overarching occupational hospitality culture emerged. It is proposed that employees of the hotel industry, as an occupational identity, generate an occupational hospitality culture where hospitality workers share some commonalities about the nature of being hospitable and service delivery, regardless of the hotel or firm they work for. This culture is a powerful, ubiquitous influence, which may override organisational hospitality culture and drive the behaviour and performance of hospitality workers.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STATEMENT OF ACCESS</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STATEMENT OF SOURCES</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECLARATION</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECLARATION OF ETHICS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELECTRONIC COPY</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>xviii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xxii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER 1: HOSPITALITY, THE WORKERS AND THE CULTURE

1.1 INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................... 1
1.2 THE PARADOX OF HOSPITALITY WORKERS’ BEHAVIOUR .............................................. 2
1.3 RATIONALE OF THE RESEARCH .................................................................................... 5

### 1.3.1 An Introduction to Services ........................................................................ 5
### 1.3.2 Definition of Service .................................................................................. 6
### 1.3.3 The Nature of Services ................................................................................ 7
### 1.3.4 Service Quality ............................................................................................ 8
### 1.3.5 The Service Encounter ................................................................................ 9
### 1.3.6 Dimensions of Service Encounters .............................................................. 11
### 1.3.7 Behaviours in Service Encounters ............................................................... 12
### 1.3.8 The Employee – a Key Player in the Delivery of Service .......................... 13
### 1.3.9 Employee Attitudes or Service Predispositions ......................................... 16
### 1.3.10 The Power of Organisational Culture ......................................................... 18
### 1.3.11 Service Cultures ........................................................................................ 21
### 1.3.12 Organisational Culture in Hospitality ...................................................... 22
### 1.3.13 A Distinctive Way of Doing Things .......................................................... 24
### 1.3.14 The Importance of This Study .................................................................. 27

1.4 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH .............................................................................. 28

### 1.4.1 The Concept of Hospitality .......................................................................... 28
4.5.2. Statistical Analysis ...................................................................................... 145

4.6. HOTELS ..................................................................................................................... 148

4.6.1. Criteria for Selection of Hotels ................................................................. 148

4.6.2. Gaining Participation of Hotels ................................................................. 150

4.6.3. Response Rate ............................................................................................ 152

4.7. THE QUALITATIVE STUDY ......................................................................................... 152

4.7.1. Research Design ............................................................................................ 152

4.7.2. The Ethnographic Approach ........................................................................ 153

4.7.3. Emergence of Themes .................................................................................... 155

4.7.4. Some questions ............................................................................................ 157

4.7.5. Response ..................................................................................................... 160

4.7.6. Analysis of qualitative data ........................................................................... 161

4.8. SUMMARY ..................................................................................................................... 162

CHAPTER 5: DEVELOPMENT OF QUESTIONNAIRE ....................................................... 163

5.1. INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................. 163

5.2. A REVIEW OF THE SPI ............................................................................................ 163

5.3. EMPLOYEE DEMOGRAPHICS ............................................................................... 164

5.4. DEVELOPING THE OC QUESTIONNAIRE ............................................................. 167

5.4.1. Contributions from organisational climate literature .................................... 168

5.4.2. Contributions from the culture literature ....................................................... 176

5.4.3. Generating variables and items ..................................................................... 184

5.4.4. Pilot Study of OCQ ....................................................................................... 186

5.4.5. The Final OCQ ............................................................................................. 187

5.5. THE PILOT STUDY ......................................................................................................... 204

5.6. THE FINAL INSTRUMENT ......................................................................................... 204

5.7. SUMMARY ..................................................................................................................... 204

CHAPTER 6: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESEARCH SAMPLE ......................... 206

6.1. INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................. 206

6.2. CHARACTERISTIC OF THE RESEARCH SAMPLE ................................................. 206

6.2.1. Demographics ............................................................................................... 206

6.2.2. Gender ............................................................................................................ 209

6.2.3. Age .................................................................................................................. 212

6.2.4. Employment status ....................................................................................... 214
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.2.5</td>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.6</td>
<td>Employment tenure</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.7</td>
<td>Education level</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.8</td>
<td>Departments</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.9</td>
<td>Customer Service Training</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN DEMOGRAPHIC ITEMS &amp; SPI DIMENSIONS</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>SUMMARY</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### CHAPTER 7: AN EXAMINATION OF THE SERVICE PREDISPOSITIONS INSTRUMENT

7.1 INTRODUCTION | 230  
7.2 RELIABILITY OF THE INSTRUMENT | 230  
7.2.1 Factor Analysis | 231  
7.2.2 Factor analysis of all SPI items collectively | 232  
7.2.3 Factor analysis of service dimensions only | 235  
7.2.4 Factor analysis of cognitive expression items only | 236  
7.2.5 Cronbach’s alpha | 237  
7.3 RATIONALE OF THE SERVICE PREDISPOSITIONS MODEL | 239  
7.3.1 Correlations | 239  
7.3.2 Regression analysis | 240  
7.4 MODERATING AFFECT OF DEFERENCE | 248  
7.5 SUMMARY OF RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF SERVICE PREDISPOSITIONS MODEL | 252  

### CHAPTER 8: THE SPI SURVEY RESULTS

8.1 INTRODUCTION | 253  
8.2 SERVICE PREDISPOSITIONS MODEL REVISITED | 254  
8.3 HOSPITALITY WORKERS’ SERVICE PREDISPOSITIONS NORMS | 255  
8.4 ORGANISATIONAL NORMS | 257  
8.5 DEPARTMENTAL NORMS | 261  
8.6 SEARCHING FOR SERVICE ATTITUDES | 267  
8.6.1 Dimensions Profiling Individuals’ Service Attitudes | 268  
8.6.2 Discussion of Service Attitudes | 274  
8.7 A QUALITATIVE APPROACH | 276  
8.7.1 Service Predispositions | 276  

xiv