2008

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.7bx4-tjcx>

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ROLE OF ETHNIC PLACES IN MAINTAINING CULTURAL IDENTITY OF
BUSINESS TRAVELERS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Hospitality, Recreation, and Tourism Management

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

by Wen-chyi Chen

May 2008

UMI Number: 1458136

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ABSTRACT

ROLE OF ETHNIC PLACES IN MAINTAINING CULTURAL IDENTITY OF BUSINESS TRAVELERS

by Wen-chyi Chen

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding about the role of ethnic places in maintaining cultural identity of business travelers. A qualitative research design was employed for this study as cultural identity is unique and individualistic. A total of ten research partners, nine males and one female, who had at least a three-month business travel stay in the USA, participated in this study. Following data analysis, several themes emerged, among which were culture shocks, the experience at the grocery place, grocery store as a familiar place, and the role of the grocery store in the travel experience and adjustment. Ethnic places helped create a feeling of overall satisfaction with the travel experience. Practical applications supported by the study findings include travel marketers promoting ethnic places in a destination to attract more travelers in general to the destination and encourage business travelers to return to the destination.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my committee chair, Dr. Gonzaga da Gama, for his valuable suggestions and guidance during this research experience.

Without his support and help, this thesis would not have been possible.

I also want to thank Dr. Ranjan Bandyopadhyay and Dr. Tsu-Hong Yen for their valuable advice during the preparation of this thesis. I want to specially acknowledge them for really taking time from their busy schedules to provide feedback on my thesis.

I would particularly like to thank my parents in Taiwan for their incredible support. They gave me the opportunity to study abroad and support me during my studies in a foreign land. I want to extend special thanks to my mother who always encouraged me, even when she was suffering from an illness. Their selfless love empowered me to achieve my goal and arrive at this stage. When times were difficult, I could always count on them.

Finally, I would like to say a word of thanks to my peers and friends Hao, Venus, and Marianne. We went through this graduate program together and always supported and encouraged each other. We shared the joy and sorrow during the process of completing our graduate education. And now we have all achieved our goal.

Also I want to say a word of thanks to all the research partners who participated in this thesis. Without your participation, this thesis would not be a reality. A final expression of gratitude is to my friend Andrew who assisted in editing my thesis. I am indeed very happy that I am surrounded with so many friends who are always there to help and support me.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

An increase in wealth, peace, and stability in the world since the end of World War II has caused a tremendous increase in travel (Plog, 2005) catapulting the travel industry to prominence (Frangialli, 2005). Theobald (2005) claimed “today tourism has grown significantly in both economic and social importance” (p. 5). In addition, Davidson (2005) emphasized that tourism is not just a single industry, but a collection of several industries that provide services and goods to tourists, as indicated by Werthner and Klein (1999) who noted that a trip or vacation “is not a single transaction” (p. 35).

When on a trip, travelers are often exposed to various cultures in addition to their own, leading to the creation of a new amalgamated culture integrating aspects of both the tourist and local culture. Furthermore, the destination may also provide access to events, experiences, or places that help maintain or solidify the traveler’s cultural identity (Schouten, 2007). Thus tourism not only acts as an economic engine, but also serves as a vehicle for cultural exchanges (Archer, Cooper, & Ruhanen, 2005; Davidson, 2005).

A review of the tourism literature indicates that people have several motives for traveling (Mason, 2003). However, with the rise of global economies and outsourcing

of jobs and services, traveling for business purposes has recently been gaining importance (Oppermann, 1996) because of an increase in business demand and business travel between countries (Khan, Toh, & Chua, 2005). The demands of business travel are different with those of leisure travel as the purpose of travel is different. Leisure travel is often voluntary where travelers chose destinations based on a variety of factors. On the other hand, business travelers are forced to get away from their daily routine and face new environment and the local culture (Sandberg, 2007b; Hinch, 2006). Due to the difference of travel purpose in each different travel market, tourism marketers have begun identifying the needs of specific market segments in order to target their marketing efforts to those segments (Plog, 2005).

For the travel industry, business travelers can be profitable for destinations if they feel comfortable and are satisfied with their trip (Thomas & Worth, 2004). To satisfy business travelers, it is very important to identify what they care about during their stay. According to Sandberg (2007b), while on a business trip, business travelers miss their families and their usual environment. One strategy employed by travelers to overcome being in a new and unknown environment is to seek out ethnic places reflecting their own culture so as to protect the uniqueness of that culture, make themselves feel much more

comfortable, and solidify their own cultural identity (Kaya, 2005; Schouten, 2007).

This strategy also eases the level of cultural shock experienced by business travelers when in a new destination.

Cultural identity perspectives have gained prominence in the travel industry because of the increased awareness of different cultures and how they inform individual and collective behaviors (Mason, 2003). When business travelers arrive in a new environment and face a different culture, their cultural identity emerges (Ho, 2006).

When they notice that their own culture is different than the local culture, they suffer the culture shock (Christofi & Thompson, 2007). They feel the difficulty to adapt to the new environment (Austin, 2005). This causes business travelers to seek the ethnic places which close to their culture because ethnic places allow for a safer and smoother introduction to the host culture (Ajrouch, 2000; Mills, 2005). For example, ethnic places have staff and customers who are bilingual; the places also have goods and services available both for ethnic and mainstream clientele. Furthermore, when individuals gain familiarity with the host culture in a safe and nonthreatening way, they are more open to experiencing it and becoming more acculturated (Shirikian, 2006). If tourism marketers take advantage of the ethnic places to ensure a smooth introduction to

the host culture and satisfy business travelers, those people will be more likely to revisit as leisure travelers (Alegre & Cladera, 2006), thus contributing to the local economy.

As suggested by the discussion above, ethnic places can play a contributory role in ensuring quality experiences for business travelers. However, the literature is relatively silent on the type of role that ethnic places play, particularly as that role pertains to the traveler's cultural identity. In addition, tourism literature does not expound on the experience of business travelers, since this segment of the travel segment has grown exponentially with the advent of globalized economies. Hence, this study was conducted to address this gap in the literature.

Purpose of the Study and Research Question

The purpose of this study was to understand the role of ethnic places in helping to maintain the cultural identity of business travelers. Specifically, the following questions guided the research study:

1. What are the factors that motivate business travelers to go to an ethnic grocery store rather than an American store?
2. What is their experience at the ethnic store?

3. In what way does engagement with an ethnic place affect their cultural identity and business travel experience?

Background

Because of the tremendous growth and the increasing importance of the business travel segment to the travel industry, travel operators have started paying more attention to business travelers (Oppermann, 1996). However, most of the focus has been on airline tickets and accommodations (hotels) in order to capture the attention of business travelers and lure them to return, with profits being the main motivator (Gourdin & Kloppenborg, 1991; Sandberg, 2007a). In contrast, there has been very little emphasis on the intrinsic needs and demands of the business travelers such as services catering to their cultural needs.

Tourist satisfaction is affected by both internal and external attribution (Valle & Wallendorf, 1977). Even though travelers may appear very satisfied with airline services such as airfare, promotion, or service quality, they still miss their families and the places with which they are familiar (Armour, 2007; Sandberg, 2007b). These constitute the internal demands of travelers.

Ethnic places are those that allow people who have similar cultural backgrounds and lifestyles to get together and maintain their cultural identity (Grunewald, 2002).

These places can help to strengthen cultural identity, preserve the culture, and at times provide a reprieve from the host culture (Chacko, 2003; Kaya, 2005). For a person who has recently arrived in a new environment such as overseas business travelers, ethnic places are very important and necessary in their attempts to get used to a new life and face a different culture.

Due to the importance of ethnic places to a recent arrival, scholars have begun to address the role of ethnic places in maintaining cultural identity (Berry & Henderson, 2002; Crow, 1996; Kaya, 2005). However, the majority of this research has focused solely on new immigrants (Clark, 2005) rather than on business travelers, who are those sent to a foreign country because of the demands of their employment. They may not only be forced to go to an unfamiliar area, but stay there for an extended period (Travel-related Expenses, 2006). Unlike leisure travelers who are ready and willing to experience a different culture, cuisine, and environment (Ondimu, 2002; Smith & Duffy, 2003), the main motivation for business travelers being in these places is to work. It is not a voluntary choice made by the travelers.

However, a critical evaluation of business travelers suggests that they share similarities with both leisure travelers and new immigrants in a foreign country. Like leisure travelers, business travelers feel excitement and a desire to visit a new destination and environment, while at the same time they confront all the challenges of being in a new place, such as culture shock, acculturation difficulties, etc (Sandberg, 2007b). As with new immigrants, the ability of business travelers to access ethnic places should reduce the stress associated with encountering a new environment, thus making them feel closer to home and more comfortable in that environment (Grunewald, 2002). However, as stated above, the current study was prompted because there was no prior research focusing on the role of ethnic places in helping business travelers adjust to their temporary new location.

Significance of the Study

According to Holt (1997), marketing managers should listen to different voices from distinct cultural segments to promote their products/services, even if the products/services are very common. From the results of this study, the travel industry can gain a greater understanding of the role of ethnic places in maintaining a traveler's cultural identity and facilitating a smooth transition to life in the new environment. It is

hoped that the study's findings will encourage tourism planners and marketers to collaborate with businesses that require their employees to travel for business in promoting various ethnic places at the destination. Furthermore, the findings will provide support for ensuring culturally appropriate marketing efforts to promote a particular destination for business travel. Finally, the findings will provide an impetus for many of the business travelers to return to the destination as leisure travelers.

Definition of Terms

In this study, the following terms will have the meaning specified:

Business traveler: Khan et al. (2007) noted that "the World Tourism Organization has defined tourism as the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than 1 consecutive year" (p. 171). For the business traveler, the purpose of travel is not leisure, but business (Khan et al.; Theobald, 2005), and most companies cover business traveler's expense including transportation and accommodations (Archer et al., 2005).

Cultural identity: Culture is what people consider themselves and their relationship to the world (Ho, 2006). Identity is a people's own rule or standard of beliefs, habits,

lifestyle, ethic, and traditions (Reisinger & Turner, 2003). Therefore, cultural identity is what people think about who they are and the way they deal with different cultures (Ho).

Ethnic place: This is a place that displays certain culture and lifestyles for attracting people who have a similar identity and encouraging them to get together (Grunewald, 2002). It may also promote “the formation of identities, production of culture, and shaping of social relations” (Kaya, 2005, p. 425), and can represent an ethnic group’s unique culture and identity (Garcia-Warren, 2006)

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is comprised of five chapters. Chapter 1 is the introduction, including the purpose of the study and research question, background, significance of the study, definition of terms, and structure of the thesis. Chapter 2 consists of the literature review covering cultural identity and culture shock, differences between leisure and business travelers, importance of business travelers to the travel industry, threats to the cultural identity of business travelers, ethnic places and business travelers, and Silicon Valley as a business travel destination. It also provides a description of the research framework employed in the study - a hermeneutic framework. Chapter 3 discusses the research methods used in the study, including the research design, recruitment of research

partners, data collection, data analysis, researcher bias, and credibility and trustworthiness of the research design. Chapter 4 presents the emergent themes representing the results of the study. Finally, Chapter 5 contains discusses the results, presents conclusions, and makes recommendations for future research and practice.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Due to the tremendous boom in business travel (Khan et al., 2005), travel operators have started to pay particular attention to this market segment (Oppermann, 1996). As indicated in Chapter 1, most of this research has focused on airlines and accommodations preferences of this segment. The literature is relatively silent on the experiences encountered by business travelers in a foreign land, having to deal with unfamiliar working environments, or encountering a new culture (Sandberg, 2007a).

As the current investigation focuses on understanding the role of ethnic places in maintaining and solidifying cultural identity while easing the traveler's transition to a new destination, several areas of related literature were reviewed: definitions of cultural identity and culture shock, difference between leisure and business-related travel, and value of the business traveler market segment to the travel industry. In addition, threats to cultural identity of business travelers and importance of ethnic places to the business traveler are also discussed in this chapter. As the focus of the current study is business travelers visiting the Silicon Valley, there is also a discussion of the background of Silicon Valley as a business travel destination. Finally, the chapter ends with a

justification for the appropriateness of a hermeneutic framework as a foundation for the current investigation.

Cultural Identity

Identity

To better understand the construct of cultural identity, it is first essential to understand what constitutes identity. In Erikson's model of human development, "identity is a concept made up of all of our prior experiences, good and bad, positive and negative" (Shirikian, 2006, p. 1). Individual identity can be affected by several factors during the earlier years of one's development, including family members, peers, school, and society (Shirikian).

As Shi (2005) noted, "Identities are social constructions" (p. 56). Hall (1996) indicated that identity is a process of identifying individuals themselves by history, language, and culture. Identity also is the way individuals perceive themselves based on their cognition of social value and life experience (Hinch, 2006). Therefore identity is not neutral; rather, it is the way people present themselves to others as well as a person's process and manner of decision making (Reisinger & Turner, 2003).

One's identity is expressed naturally and instinctively (Ballesteros & Ramirez, 2007), shaping everyday actions and behaviors (Maguire, 2007). Identity also is a way that individuals perceive themselves "based on prevailing social and ideological values and practices" (Hinch, 2006, p. 18). Therefore, identities are made, not born, and they can be shaped and altered because of social interactions (The American Political Science Association, 2005). Furthermore, identity can emerge in conversations when individuals insist on something or treat something as important to them (Shanks, 2001). This sense of uniqueness and individuality represents their identity (Byron, 1996).

Several factors influence one's identity, with one of the most common factors contributing to identity being one's cultural background.

Culture

Anthropologists have posited that human behavior is typically birthed in culture, which is "a collection of beliefs, habits and traditions, shared by a group of people and learned by people who enter the society" (Reisinger & Turner, 2003, p. 6). Culture informs a group of people about what constitutes appropriate and accepted conduct and behavior when interacting with other members of the group sharing the culture (Shim & Schwartz, 2007). It also has a particular way of promoting artifacts of the culture to

members outside the group, such as food, music, dance, etc. (Chong, 2006; Mason, 2003; Schouten, 2007). At the same time, a group may decide to protect certain attributes of culture, namely certain culture-specific traditions and customs (Chong). Overall, culture is the predominant way in which people distinguish themselves and their relationships with others, and often culture plays a critical role in aiding people to define a personally meaningful life (Ho, 2006).

Culture can and does influence an individual's decision-making process, as decisions are often germinated in one's culture. Bosley (1993) described culture as "an established set of values and a way of thinking that is passed from generation to generation" (p. 53). As cultures vary, so do the behaviors and decisions of members of different cultures (Landis & Brislin, 1983). This can lead to misunderstandings and stereotyping of certain cultures and a lack of desire to interact with them due to conflict, misunderstanding, and lack of information (Reisinger & Turner, 2003). Therefore understanding and respect are the key elements ensuring success in enriching cross-cultural interaction.

Cultural Identity

In the past, the travel industry did not pay tremendous attention to the cultural identity of travelers. This was due in part to the lack of awareness that travelers faced culture shock when in unfamiliar destinations (Reisinger & Turner, 2003), and that the host community may be affected as well (Reisinger & Turner; Sandhu, Portes & McPhee, 1996). However, given the increased awareness of different cultures and the way they inform individual and collective behaviors, cultural identity perspectives have now gained prominence in the travel industry (Mason, 2003; Reisinger & Turner).

As described earlier, cultural attributes can be either promoted or protected, and engagement in familiar cultural experiences can help to maintain a person's cultural identity. Some familiar cultural events include (but are not limited to) traditional opera, native language groups, festivals, and cuisine (Chong, 2006; Mason; Mitchell, 2002; Schouten, 2007).

Hunsinger (2006) stated that "culture is commonly treated as a prediscursive, effectively autonomous essence posing as a set of durable habits and practices, and cultural identity is something brought to communication rather than constructed and mobilized during communication" (p. 34). In addition, Ho (2006) asserted that when

one is faced with different cultures at the same time, one becomes keenly aware of one's cultural identity. For example, when a tourist from a developed country goes to an undeveloped country, or when a traveler from the West visits the East, the differences in how people think and their values become more apparent, resulting in greater awareness of one's culture in relation to the new culture (Ho). Sometimes, travelers may also experience a threat to their culture necessitating a focus on maintaining their cultural identity (Reisinger & Turner, 2003). Therefore, when people notice that their cultural identity differs from that of others, they will try to strengthen or protect the uniqueness of their own culture (Reisinger & Turner; Schouten, 2007). A common experience of many individuals when they are experiencing a new culture or environment is culture shock.

Culture Shock

Culture shock, which is a primary threat to cultural identity, can “occur when individuals become immersed in a culture different from their own” (Christofi & Thompson, 2007). This shock results from an inability to adapt to the new environment (Austin, 2005). The representation of culture shock occurs in many ways, including language shock, cultural fatigue, and transition shock (Reisinger & Turner, 2003).

Language shock occurs when one is unfamiliar with the host language (Reisinger & Turner). In such a situation, misunderstandings can tend to occur both to hosts and travelers. Cultural fatigue results from the tiredness people feel when they are constantly trying to adapt to the host culture. Transition shock is a “negative reaction to change and adjustment to a new cultural environment” (Reisinger & Turner, p. 58). As a result of culture shock, often travelers fail to interact with the host culture and lose their enthusiasm for the trip, leading to a poor travel experience (Reisinger & Turner).

It is important to note that culture shock can be a common occurrence regardless of the type of travel due to the cultural differences between the host and the tourist (Reisinger & Turner, 2003). However, the form, type, and extent vary with the type of travel (Theobald, 2005). The following section will discuss the differences between leisure and business travel.

Differences Between Leisure and Business Travel

Historically, the main focus of travel has been recreation and leisure (Crompton, 1979; Iso-Ahola, 1982; Theobald, 2005). However, in more recent times, the travel market has diversified primarily based on the focus of travel (Theobald). Based on the focus of travel, the demands and needs exerted by different travel segments vary.

Accordingly, the demands of business travelers are different than those of leisure travelers (Callan & Kyndt, 2001). Although both business and leisure travelers may engage in activities other than their regular routine during their travel, most activities of leisure travelers happen voluntarily, whereas business travelers are forced to participate in most of their activities, primarily as a result of their job duties (Sandberg, 2007b).

In visiting a new environment while on vacation, the main purpose of travel for leisure travelers is personal pleasure (Reisinger & Turner, 2003). They visit different countries in order to get away from their daily routine and thus experience something different (Cohen, 1996; Hinch, 2006; Ondimu, 2002). Therefore, leisure travelers look forward to tasting different food and witness the uniqueness of the local culture (Hinch; Reisinger & Turner). They also expect to hear the sounds of a different language and are more likely to be better prepared to deal with any inconvenience posed by the language barrier (Ondimu; Smith & Duffy, 2003). In general, leisure travelers are more willing to expose themselves to new and different cultures (Besculides, Lee, & McCormick, 2002) and are more willing to experience some events and specific destinations that cannot be found at home (Hinch, 2006), which in turn may reduce the impact of culture shock.

On the other hand, business travelers are defined as individuals who go from one place to another place primarily for work. They possess a mind-set that work is their first priority while traveling (Theobald, 2005; Travel-related Expenses, 2006). They are forced to go to a new and different destination primarily for work, leaving behind their comfortable and familiar environment.

However, as stated before, it is important to note that business travelers may still engage in leisure-related activities during their business trip, and as such, the economic returns to a destination are comparable between business and leisure travel (Oppermann, 1996). Both groups of travelers will spend money on transportation, food and beverages, overnight accommodations, souvenirs, and recreational activities (Davidson, 2005).

The difference lies in the way these activities are financed. For the business travelers, most of these are business-related expenses covered by their employers. For the leisure travelers, the expenses are incurred by individuals who pay them from personal funds (Oppermann). The notion that business travelers do not engage in activities outside their work commitments while traveling is an antiquated one. In fact, business travelers have a tendency to spend more money as compared to leisure travelers because certain expenses can be subsumed as business-related expenses covered by their employers.

Thus this market segment has tremendous potential for contributing to the economic viability of a destination (Callan & Kyndt, 2001).

Although the motivations behind business and leisure travel are different, both groups have an opportunity to engage in activities that allow them to explore a local culture that may be distinctly different than their own (Reisinger & Turner, 2003).

However, leisure travelers may be more willing to face the conflicts presented by the various cultural differences because of their initial desire and preparedness to visit and experience a new culture (Pearce, 1982; Reisinger & Turner). On the other hand, business travelers may be less inclined or even feel forced to adapt to their temporary environment because exposure to a new culture was not the main motivation for their travel (Ondimu, 2002; Pearce). For both business and leisure travelers, possibilities exist for exposure to various cultures leading to both culture shock and the creation of a new, amalgamated culture integrating aspects of both the tourist and host culture (Reisinger & Turner; Pearce).

The current trend toward globalization and outsourcing of jobs has exponentially increased the business travel segment, which has tremendous implications to the travel industry that will be elaborated in the following section.

Significance of Business Travelers to the Travel Industry

With the growth of demand in business travel, the business travel segment is becoming more and more important to travel industry because of the increased revenues business travelers bring to the destination (Khan et al., 2005). A thriving travel industry creates many new job opportunities, increases local revenue, and inflates the value of the local currency. It can also result in a rich exchange of cultures between different countries (Archer et al., 2005). Undeniably, leisure tourists will spend a certain amount of the money on lodging, food, public transportation, entertainment, rental cars, gasoline, souvenirs, etc. at their designated vacation destination spots (Archer et al.), thus improving the local economy of their travel destination. However, this is also true for business travelers. They incur expenses that cover the essentials, such as lodging, food, and transportation, and are also likely to partake in the local entertainment or purchase souvenirs for friends and family (Khan et al.). As employers are likely to cover most of the business-related expenses, the revenue brought in by the business travelers is expected to be equal to, if not greater than, the revenue brought in by leisure travelers because the business travelers are free from putting out money for lodging, transportation,

etc., resulting in more personal funds available to spend on non-business items (Callan & Kyndt, 2001).

Another way business travelers may contribute to a local economy pertains to return trips. As business travelers have only limited time to spend on leisure activities during their business trips, if they have a pleasurable and satisfying business trip experience, they are likely to return in the future for personal enjoyment and/or to bring along their family and friends (Khan et al., 2005; Sandberg, 2007a). Thus a satisfied business traveler will often transition into a repeat traveler (Alegre & Cladera, 2006).

Furthermore, business travelers can be tremendous word-of-mouth marketers for the destination as they share their positive experience in daily conversations with coworkers, friends, family, or even complete strangers (Hsu, Kang, & Lam, 2006). According to Bayus (1985), word-of-mouth recommendations have played a large influence on an individual's travel decision-making process. Personal experiences shared by other travelers are considered a popular way for people to acquire travel ideas or additional travel information (Hsu et al.). Therefore, if business travelers are satisfied during their business trips, they will be good and free, promoters for a destination, which in turn will attract other people to that destination.

Because of the above mentioned benefits that business travelers can bring to their travel destination, satisfying business travelers has emerged as a principal focus for the future of the American travel industry (Thomas & Worth, 2004). Any business destination can be transformed into a popular tourist spot through positive impressions spread by word-of-mouth that increase the incoming traffic for the local travel industry (Hsu et al.; Thomas & Worth). These word-of-mouth promotions can also help reduce the potential impact of culture shock if prospective travelers are aware of local culture prior to their visit as well as threats to their cultural identity.

Threats to Cultural Identity of Business Travelers

Richards and Wilson (2005) stated that “culture has now become an essential element of the tourism system” (p. 1209). Therefore, when discussing tourism, the relationship between traveler and their cultural identity cannot be omitted because it can affect travelers’ perceptions (Stebbins, 1997), which subsequently affect their impression of the destination and their level of satisfaction (Alegre & Cladera, 2006). This is true for all travel segments including business travelers.

According to Kaya (2005), individuals who arrive at a new destination and expect to stay for an extended period of time tend to display behaviors representative of their

own cultural identity. Travelers will seek familiar cuisine, associate with individuals who speak their language, and engage in events with which they are culturally familiar (Reisinger & Turner, 2003). At the same time, they are reticent to engage in the host culture (Reisinger & Turner; Sandhu et al., 1996). This difference in culture that they encounter may result in culture shock when getting along with the host culture (Pearce, 1982). However, in order to interact with the local society, travelers will have to adapt to the new culture (Sandhu et al.).

A predominant problem faced by business travelers at a new destination is diet (Sandberg, 2007a). Food is an integral component of one's cultural identity (Hu, 2006). Eating culturally familiar food items aids in maintaining cultural identity and alleviating the negative impacts of culture shock. One of the important ways this can be achieved is with the act of purchasing culturally familiar food items (Hu). According to Douglas and Isherwood (1979), every purchase has its own story. People will buy the goods or service as a result of their past experience or personal story, including the fact that they had seen or used the products before or had received recommendation from their friends or family. Therefore, when business travelers go to an ethnic grocery store for ethnic food shopping, the primary motivating influences are their personal stories. For

example, when people from Mainland China and Taiwan go to a Chinese grocery store to buy Chinese cooking materials, they are maintaining or even strengthening their cultural identity by recalling fond memories of their homes.

Business travelers find culture shock harder to overcome than leisure travelers (Pearce, 1982). According to Austin (2005), business travelers have a tendency to suffer greater inconveniences and discomfort because the primary purpose of their trip is to be successful in their business or job endeavors. Often their professional careers depend on how successfully they perform their job duties in a host culture, and as a result, they experience greater pressures. Unlike leisure travelers, they do not enjoy the luxury of choice when it comes to interacting with the host culture. They are forced to do so, and therefore have to try harder to adapt to the new environment and interact with individuals from the host culture (Austin), resulting in a likelihood of experiencing a higher degree of culture shock, which in turn plays a prominent role in how travelers perceive the quality and satisfaction of their travel experience (Pearce).

While shouldering the pressure of being successful with their jobs, business travelers also have strong nostalgic feelings for their family and friends and the culture they have left behind (Sandberg, 2007b). Therefore, they try hard to find ways to ease

the adjustment process into a new environment. Scholars suggest that one of the ways this process is accomplished is by searching for familiar things similar to their home environment (Reisinger & Turner, 2003).

The literature identifies several strategies to diminish the impact of culture shock. One strategy includes finding social support from local cultural groups similar to their own (Reisinger & Turner, 2003; Shirikian, 2006; Tse, 1999). For example, Taiwanese business travelers may join Chinese-American or Asian-American groups because the members speak the same language or share a similar cultural identity. Another common strategy that business travelers employ to deal with culture shock is to mimic the feeling of being in their home and familiar environment by finding food from their own country or people who speak the same language (Kaya, 2005). This aids them to preserve their cultural identity (Kaya).

Business travelers are likely to maintain and preserve their cultural identity because they are cognizant of the temporary nature of their travel (Schnell, 2003). However, it must be noted that preserving their own cultural identity does not preclude them from acknowledging and appreciating the different host culture (Besculides et al.; Tse, 1999). They just choose to exhibit their own culture as a strategy to eliminate or decrease

homesickness and increase their ability to face a new environment with more confidence and support (Shirikian, 2006).

Typically, in host destinations, ethnic places and spaces are the reservoirs of cultural attributes specific to that ethnic group. Some of these include ethnic grocery stores, ethnic restaurants, ethnic community centers, and ethnic social and recreational activity clubs (Kaya, 2005), all of which play a pivotal role in dealing with culture shock.

Ethnic Places and Business Travelers

Scholars view an ethnic place as an intersection of the majority and minority culture (Ajrouh, 2000; Mills, 2005) where the minority culture dominates (Ajrouh).

Ethnic places in the host destination are rich resources providing connections to the familiar, particularly for business travelers visiting a new destination. It is at these places that business travelers begin to find similarities with their cultural identity in a new environment (Shirikian, 2006).

In addition, ethnic places create a sense of belonging in a new environment that coincides with basic human needs on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1993). A sense of belonging encompasses feelings of being welcomed and accepted by a social group or place, such as a team, family, or friends. Furthermore, in a place that fosters a

sense of belonging, individuals can love and be loved, feel needed, and address needs.

In contrast, when individuals lack a sense of belonging, they will become anxious, depressed, and helpless, symptoms associated with culture shock (Sandhu et al., 1996).

According to Keyes and Kane (2004), individuals will experience safety and belonging when they are with people of a similar cultural background. Ethnic places promote certain cultures and lifestyles, encouraging persons who share a similar cultural identity to get together (Grunewald, 2002). This in turn will help individuals to develop a positive sense of self and belonging. Individuals can draw from this positive self-concept when exposed to different cultures as well as the conflicts arising between two cultures (Ajrouch, 2000; Mills, 2005).

When business travelers experience discomfort living in an unfamiliar environment, they have a tendency of identifying an ethnic place aligned with their own cultural identity similar to their home environment (Kaya, 2005). Ethnic places can provide a sense of belonging, particularly when individuals are tired of adapting to the host culture or have failed in their attempts to do so (Grunewald, 2002; Kaya; Maslow, 1993). For example, according to Shi (2005), Chinese ethnic products can make living in the Western world more amenable to the Chinese diaspora.

According to Pritchard and Morgan (2001), ethnic places are not just geographical locations, but cultural constructions where individuals with the minority cultural identity typically congregate to support each other. They may live in the same community, work in the same company, and go shopping at the same grocery store (Kaya, 2005). These ethnic places allow for individuals to strengthen their own cultural identity (Pritchard & Morgan). They allow opportunities for individuals to construct and reinforce their own cultural identities (Hu, 2006). For example, Chinese immigrants or business travelers purchasing goods or food in a Chinese grocery store can construct their specific cultural identities through the purchase process. They do so by recalling the memory and meeting people in a similar situation as theirs (Hu). This creates a sense of pride pertaining to their cultural identity (Besculides et al., 2002; Tse, 1999).

Grunewald (2002) suggested that enhancing the connection between ethnic places and individuals can help people maintain their cultural identity. For these reasons, ethnic places can be regarded as places for business travelers to smooth over their distress of being in a foreign country. Travelers may want not only tangible products, such as the food in at Chinese grocery store, but also the intangible ones, such as the atmosphere of preparing for the Chinese New Year celebration in a Chinese grocery store. This

kind of emotion and behavior stems from searching for their own cultural identity in a strange place (Kaya, 2005). Therefore, ethnic places can assist business travelers in developing a sense of belonging, strengthen their cultural identity, preserve their culture, and even for short moments provide an escape or isolation from the host culture (Chacko, 2003; Kaya).

The position taken by Silicon Valley, California in terms of the global technology sector makes it a prime location to receive business travelers from all over the world. The following section briefly describes the Silicon Valley as a preferred business destination.

Silicon Valley as a Business Travel Destination

Silicon Valley is located in the southern part of the San Francisco Bay Area in Northern California in the United States of America. It includes the cities and towns of Campbell, Cupertino, East Palo Alto, Fremont, Gilroy, Los Altos, Los Altos Hill, Los Gatos, Menlo Park, Morgan Hill, Mountain View, Milpitas, Palo Alto, Redwood City, San Jose, Santa Clara, Saratoga, and Sunnyvale (Tajnai, 1985). The geographical area described above received the name “Silicon Valley” in 1971 when Don Hoefler used the term in a weekly trade newspaper to represent the above-mentioned geographical area

because of its vibrant high-tech industry. Silicon Valley has now become a byword for the area (NETView, 1999).

Because of the achievements of several high-tech companies, the growing economy of Silicon Valley has attracted everyone's attention (Sturgeon, 2000).

Compared to other areas in the USA, Silicon Valley attracts the most business travelers due to thousands of high technology companies located in the area, such as Adobe Systems, Advanced Micro Devices (AMD), eBay, and Google (NETView, 1999). As meetings and conventions are often determined by the location of company headquarters (Oppermann, 1996), this adds to the increase in business travelers to the area. Consequentially the area has experienced a tremendous economic boom (Bruce, 2007; City of San Jose, 2006).

The last section of this chapter presents a brief discussion on the theoretical and philosophical foundations of the current study. As cultural identity is very individual and reflects how individuals make sense of their world, a hermeneutical inquiry framework seems appropriate to provide a sound theoretical lens through which to conduct the proposed study.

A Hermeneutic Framework

Hermeneutical inquiry is commonly employed in the social sciences to examine customer perceptions and conduct marketing research studies (Holt, 1995; Thompson, 1997). In the social sciences, a hermeneutic framework is usually concerned with understanding an experience from the point of view of those encountering it. Social and cultural factors that have aided in forming a point of view are also taken into consideration when creating meaningful interpretations. Hermeneutical analyses allow for understanding experiences and text in context (Trumbull, 2005). In-depth interviews along with personal stories and life experiences constitute the text being interpreted in a hermeneutical epistemology (Schwandt, 2001). This process can help researchers to set aside their prejudices and concentrate on hearing what the text says (Trumbull).

For example, in marketing research, a hermeneutic framework “interprets consumption meanings in relation to both a consumer’s sense of personal history and a broader narrative context of historically established cultural meanings” (Thompson, 1997, p. 439). This framework focuses on how personal narratives can influence personal behaviors. Narrative is “a type of discourse that usually concerns real or imagined memories of something that happened and therefore is often largely told in the past tense”

(McCabe, 1991, p. 4). It can reveal how research subjects interpret their product/service needs and desires related to their personal stories. According to Thompson, personal history will affect the interpreted meanings of consumption, and personal cultural identity will affect personal history.

In this study, a hermeneutic framework was employed to interpret the personal narratives of the role of an ethnic place in maintaining or strengthening one's cultural identity.

Summary

This chapter discussed the concepts of cultural identity, culture shock, and ethnic places to determine interrelationships among them. From the review, it can be surmised that exposure to a new culture as a result of a travel experience can lead to culture shock. The degree of culture shock depends on several factors. One predominant factor is the type of travel, as the literature on the differences between leisure and business travel illuminates the specific challenges that each of these segments face in terms of encountering culture shock. As business travelers typically do not choose to travel to a destination but rather are forced to do so because of their jobs, increases the likelihood of experiencing a higher degree of culture shock for this segment. On the other hand,

leisure travelers voluntarily visit a new location and engage in a new culture so the anticipated expectation of encountering a new culture can act as a mitigating factor in managing culture shock. The literature review on threats to cultural identity and ethnic places in mitigating these threats revealed that ethnic places can play a significant role in reducing the level of discomfort that travelers face at a new destination by providing the travelers with a familiar environment akin to their home countries.

It is abundantly clear from the literature that the business travel segment is a tremendous source of revenue for the host destination, and as a result, tourism marketers are paying special attention to this group. The discussion on Silicon Valley as an example demonstrated its important and strategic position in terms of bringing in large number of business travelers who deal with its many high-tech companies. Finally, discussion on the use of hermeneutical analysis provided the theoretical foundation upon which the current investigation rests.

CHAPTER 3

Methods

The business travel segment has begun to be treated with greater importance due to its ability to generate revenue for the travel industry. However, the travel literature is relatively silent on the experiences business travelers encounter when at a new destination, including culture shock. The purpose of this study was to ascertain the role ethnic places play in maintaining the cultural identity of business travelers. This chapter covers the research design, recruitment of research partners, data collection, data analysis, researcher bias, and credibility and trustworthiness used in conducting the investigation.

This research employed qualitative methods for a deeper examination of the role of ethnic places in maintaining and solidifying cultural identity of business travelers. As the concept of cultural identity is unique and complex, a structured quantitative method was deemed to be inappropriate. Furthermore, as the purpose of visiting an ethnic place varies depending on the individual (Bonn, Joseph-Mathews, Dai, Hayes, & Cave, 2007), also further justified the use of qualitative methods (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004). According to Riddick and Russell (1999), qualitative research methods can uncover

research subjects' perceptions, experiences and motivations. This has also been supported by the work done by Phillimore and Goodson.

A hermeneutical epistemology described in the preceding chapter guided data collection, data analysis, and interpretation in this study (Thompson, 1997).

Semi-structured interviews, participant observations, and informal conversations allowed the role of ethnic places in maintaining cultural identity to be captured from a lived experience perspective. An interview protocol was developed via a comprehensive review of literature followed by a thorough examination by a panel of experts. The interview protocol was field-tested for intelligibility and understanding of the questions and modified prior to official data collection.

Recruitment of Research Partners

As the study sought to develop a deeper understanding of the role of ethnic places in maintaining cultural identity for business travelers, business travelers to the Silicon Valley from Taiwan in the past two years were invited to participate. The scope of the current investigation was to capture the lived experience of business travelers from Taiwan visiting the Silicon Valley. In order to be included in the study, the research partners had to have stayed at least three months in the Silicon Valley and had frequented

a Chinese grocery store (namely Marina Foods or 99 Ranch Market) during their trip.

Research partners were recruited through personal contacts with a purposive sampling strategy being employed. Snowball sampling methods helped supplement recruitment efforts.

Research partners were informed of the purpose of the investigation and notified about the voluntary nature of their participation and the approval of the investigation by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The research partners were assured that all the information shared by them would be kept confidential, consistent with the IRB approval, with only the lead researcher and academic advisor having access to it. The recruitment of research partners ended when data analysis resulted in a saturation of themes (Patton, 2002).

Data Collection

Development of Interview Protocol

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were used as one of the methods of collecting personal lived experience stories for this study. Face-to-face interviews allowed the lead researcher to directly observe the expressions and body language of the research partners while eliciting information and opinions through probing questions

(Jordan & Gibson, 2004; Kvale, 1996). In addition, the semi-structured face-to-face interview method is useful for “generating experiential data that can then be theorized” (Jordan & Gibson, p. 222), and can also enable the researcher to insure research subjects understand all the questions (Jordan & Gibson).

The interview protocol consisted of open-ended questions exploring the area under investigation. The three larger questions that the interview protocol focused on were primarily the main questions under investigation in the study. They were: (1) What are the factors that motivate travelers to go to an ethnic grocery store rather than an American store?; (2) What is the experience of the travelers at the ethnic store?; and (3) In what way does participating in an ethnic place affect their cultural identities and business travel experience? A pilot test was employed using the interview guide to determine the understanding and intelligibility of the questions. Questions seeking further details were brought up as needed. As always several probing questions were used to allow the research partners to explain in greater details their lived experiences.

The interview process was sufficiently flexible that more questions could be added as they arose during the data collection process. Initial questions for the interview protocol were crafted following a comprehensive review of literature on the topics of

cultural identity, business travel, lived experiences, and culture shock, to name a few.

Following the compilation of the questions, a panel of experts comprised of university professors was asked to review the questions. Based on the feedback, the protocol was revised, and then field-tested with three business travelers to determine understandability and intelligibility of the questions. Based on all of the feedback received, the final version of the protocol was developed (Senior, 2003). Please refer to Appendix A for a copy of the Interview Protocol.

Data Collection

The data for the investigation was received from face-to-face interviews with 10 business travelers from Taiwan to Silicon Valley. In addition, there were a series of informal conversations and participant observations, with copious field notes recorded to capture thoughts, feelings, and expressed perceptions during the entirety of the investigation. All of the various methods targeted lived experience stories pertaining to the participants' encounters with ethnic places while in the Silicon Valley. More specifically, what was captured was the role these ethnic places played in helping the participants maintain and solidify their cultural identity.

The researcher reviewed literature on identity development and cultural identity to determine the choice of ethnic places. As seen in chapter two, the literature was replete with references to the importance of food and diet to a person's sense of self and cultural identity (Hu, 2006). Not only did eating culturally familiar foods aid in maintaining cultural identity, but the act of purchasing culturally familiar food also played a significant role (Hu). As Douglas and Isherwood (1979) indicated, every food item purchase comes with a rich story of either a direct past experience or a personal story. Therefore, grocery stores were selected as the ethnic place to be studied in the current investigation.

Specifically, the two grocery stores selected for the study were Marina Foods and 99 Ranch Market, both located in Cupertino, California. As a Taiwanese national living in Silicon Valley, the lead researcher can attest to the fact that these two grocery stores are the most popular and that they carry the most authentic Taiwanese and Chinese grocery items. The following paragraphs provide a brief description on each of the stores according to researcher's experience being a customer at the grocery stores, 99 Ranch website and personal communication.

99 Ranch Market. The 99 Ranch Market is a Chinese grocery store that mainly sells Asian foods, especially from Taiwan and Mainland China, with Chinese items being in the majority. The target market is Chinese immigrants in the USA. The 99 Ranch Market is part of the biggest chain of Chinese grocery stores, with 21 retail outlets in California. Due to the number of choices of Chinese items, including kitchenware, food, beverages, snacks, and commodities that are exclusive to Chinese grocery stores, the majority of the customers are Chinese, Taiwanese, or from other Asian countries. Because they must communicate with a variety of customers, the majority of the staff are bilingual speaking both English and Mandarin. The lead researcher in the study observed the business travelers' shopping behaviors in the store in Cupertino (99 Ranch, 2001; A. Lee, personal communication, May 16, 2007; Y. Hsieh, personal communication, May 16, 2007)

Marina Foods. Marina Foods is also a Chinese grocery store that mainly sells Asian foods, especially those from Taiwan and Mainland China. As with 99 Ranch, the majority of the customers are Chinese, Taiwanese, or from other Asian countries due to the many choices of Chinese items exclusive to Chinese grocery stores; however, Marina Foods also stocks more categories of food items from Taiwan and Japan than 99 Ranch

Market, and some lotions, toners, and masks for skin care from Japan can also be purchased there. As with 99 Ranch Market, the majority of the staff are bilingual speaking both Chinese and English. As a bonus, the store provides a sales coupon to the Chinese restaurant next door to it if customers spend a certain amount of money in the store, thus increasing its appeal to its customers (A. Lee, personal communication, May 16, 2007; Y. Hsieh, personal communication, May 16, 2007).

Data Collection Procedures

Interviews, informal conversations, and participant observations were conducted with 10 business travelers from Taiwan who were working in the Silicon Valley. These data collection interactions ended when there was a saturation of themes, as is common practice with any qualitative research investigation (Patton, 2002). The interview questions concerning the reasons for going to a Chinese grocery store, perceptions after shopping at the store, and ways shopping in a Chinese grocery store contributes to the travel experience of business travelers were addressed through the interviews. In addition, detailed questions pertaining to the maintenance of cultural identity while on a business trip helped capture the lived stories of the participants, with probing questions being employed to help uncover the essences of engaging in an ethnic place.

Each interview took place at a time and place that was convenient to the research partner. This assisted in creating a comfortable environment and increasing empathy and trust among the research partners (Jordan & Gibson, 2004). Based on their level of comfort, as directed by the research partners, the interviews were conducted either in English or Mandarin. To ensure accurate recall, the researcher recorded each interview using a digital recorder. Following the conclusion of each interview, copious field notes were written to capture thoughts, feelings, and expressed perceptions to avoid missing or misunderstanding the research partners' opinions (Morgan, 1995).

In addition, the researcher conducted both informal conversations and participant observations. While the research partners visited the grocery store, the lead researcher accompanied them and observed their interactions and engagement while in the store. Following each encounter with the grocery store, the lead researcher made extensive notes capturing the thoughts, experiences, observations, interactions, etc. of the participants. This method of data collection is akin to conducting an ethnography or doing fieldwork, where the intent of the researcher is to understand the culture of the place. While at the grocery store, research partners engaged in informal conversations with the lead researcher capturing the lived experience, all of which were recorded. At

the conclusion of each interview, informal conversation, and participation observation, all the gathered data was transcribed verbatim and analyzed for emergent themes or main plots of the story. The transcription yielded 120 double-spaced typed pages. The profiles of the 10 research partners are provided below.

Profile of Research Partners

1. *Research partner A:* Research partner A was a 31-year-old male who visited the USA for the first time in 2007 for a half year. He was a trainee for a new implement application at the Taiwan branch of his company. He liked the environment in the USA, such as the slow pace of life and good traffic conditions. He said he shopped at a Chinese grocery store because he preferred Chinese food to American food. He often went to a Chinese grocery at least once a week, and sometimes would also pick up some products when he passed by the Chinese grocery stores.
2. *Research partner B:* Research partner B was a 27-year-old female who visited the USA in 2007 for three months. She was working as a secretary in the shipping department. This was her first visit to the USA, and before she arrived, she was excited about experiencing American life. However, she suffered from greater culture shock than she imagined. She regarded the Chinese grocery story as a safe

haven because it was the place she knew best in the USA. She also considered shopping in Chinese grocery stores to be one of her leisure activities when she was bored.

3. *Research partner C*: Research partner C was a 25-year-old male who visited the USA in 2007 for six months, and came back to the USA again after one week for two months. He came to the USA for an internship on the technical marketing team for a semiconductor manufacturing firm in charge of market research. Even though he spoke English very well, he still felt frustrated sometimes at work. He also craved Taiwanese foods and wanted to buy even those he has never tried in Taiwan as those foods reminded him of his hometown. If there were no Chinese grocery store near by, he sought one out elsewhere because it was so important to him.
4. *Research partner D*: Research partner D was a 28-year-old male who visited the USA in 2007 for three months. He was a software engineer in research and development. He did not exclude Western foods and enjoyed life in the USA. His girlfriend came to the USA with him, so he could have Chinese food at home. He liked to have similar leisure activities which he experienced at home in the USA.

5. *Research partner E*: Research partner E was a 35-year-old male who had visited the USA twice in 2007 for six months and four months, respectively. He was a software engineer in research and development. He enjoyed experiencing the different environment in the USA. However, he did not like the promotion style in the USA that customers must to buy certain amounts of food for getting the advertised price. He came here alone without any family, so he did not need large amounts of food. He always felt American grocery stores were pushing him to buy more than he was accustomed to, or else he would be unable to receive any of the advertized discounts.
6. *Research partner F*: Research partner F was a 30-year-old male who visited the USA for the second time in 2007 for three months. His first trip was also a business trip in 2004. He considered Chinese food as necessary to his daily life. The snacks, cookies, and small dishes imported from Taiwan that were available at the Chinese grocery store eased his cultural shock and fed his nostalgia.
7. *Research partner G*: Research partner D was a 34-year-old male who visited the USA in 2007 for six months. As he liked traveling with his wife, she came to the USA with him. Even though he was tired at work on weekdays, he still went out every weekend. Their goal every week was discovering new things to do for fun.

However, this sense of adventure was not applied to their diet, as Research partner G and his wife still preferred Chinese food to American, and went to the Chinese grocery once every three days. They considered shopping in a Chinese grocery store to be easier because of their brand awareness.

8. *Research partner H:* Research partner H was a 35-year-old male who visited the USA in 2007 for six months and four months. He did not enjoy his time in the USA because his original plan met with a lot of uncertainty. Initially he was expecting to stay only for six months but his company asked him to stay longer. He felt he had no control on any facet of his life while in the USA. All of the facets of his life were determined by his employer. Compared to the unexpected extension of his stay in the USA, he had less difficulty dealing with the cultural identity and culture shock issue. He treated shopping in Chinese grocery stores as a routine activity. Even though he did not exclude American food, he still liked Chinese flavors better.

When he saw the familiar brands or products in Chinese grocery stores, he felt happy to have them available.

9. *Research partner I:* Research partner I was a 27-year-old male who several visited the USA in 2007 for six months and three months. Life in the USA was very exciting to

him. He complained about the boring night life, but found a lot of other activities he could do at night, such as swimming or working out at the gym. He liked the apartment where his company assigned him to live because there was a big swimming pool, Jacuzzi, and a fully equipped gym. Chinese grocery stores also helped him to maintain a Taiwanese life as he could buy the food he craved and season it to his taste. He emphasized he would die if there were no Chinese grocery stores around him.

10. *Research partner J:* Research partner J was a 29-year-old male who had visited the USA in 2007 for six months and three months. He came to the USA with his wife and eight-month-old daughter. At first, he thought he could adapt to American food very well, but after he went out with his friend and had American food all day, he started insisting on having Chinese food. Research partner J also highlighted the not so negative aspects of the Chinese grocery store, such as problems with the crowded environment, sanitation issues, quality and freshness of products, and import sources, but also indicated the reasons being low cost and low prices to meet the demand of the target market of Chinese grocery stores.

Data Analysis

Typically data analysis in qualitative methods is a continuous process. Unlike quantitative methods where data analysis occurs at the end of all the data collection, when qualitative methods are used, data analysis occurs simultaneously as data collection. It follows Wolcott's (1994) three-step formula: description of the phenomenon, analysis, and interpretation.

Interviews and conversations conducted in Mandarin were translated into English by the lead researcher who is fluent both in Mandarin and English. The transcripts were read several times for cluster the common characters from the lived experience stories of the research partners. The data was coded using both open and axial coding. The researcher then used thematic analysis and constant comparison methods to allow themes to emerge (Patton, 2002). Both convergent and divergent thoughts were employed to collapse or expand themes to ensure that the essence of the experience of engaging in the ethnic place and its impact on the cultural identity of the research partners was captured (Patton). These themes representing the findings of the study will be elaborated on in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

Researcher Bias

As the purpose of the study was to understand the role of ethnic places in maintaining the cultural identity of business travelers, with the business travelers being studied being from Taiwan, it is important to clarify the cultural and ethnic identity of the lead researcher. The lead researcher is a Taiwanese national who is currently in the USA and hailed from the same geographical region as many of the research partners. As an international graduate student living in Silicon Valley temporarily for the past three years, the lead researcher has personal experiences in the role of ethnic grocery stores in maintaining and solidifying cultural identity. This cultural similarity allowed for the creation of a more reflexive researcher while facilitating a deeper understanding and empathy toward the experiences of research partners (Bih, 1992). Furthermore, this connection allowed for the creation of an insider status when the lead researcher interacted with the research partners.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

Unlike quantitative research where the main criteria of judging the quality of research rests on reliability and validity, qualitative research is judged on the basis of credibility and trustworthiness. Several strategies have been identified in literature as

the means to ensure that research is both credible and trustworthy. One of the more common strategies is triangulation (Golafshani, 2003; Guion, 2002). As described by Denzin (1978), triangulation can efficiently derive information from different angles or perspectives. This study used methods triangulation, with more than one data collection method being involved ensuring the same or similar conclusions in the data collection procedure. Also analyst triangulation was employed in the current investigation. In this study, methods triangulation involved using interviews, informal conversations, participant observations, and field notes (Patton, 2002). Analyst triangulation (Patton) was achieved when the lead researcher and advisor were engaged in conducting the data analysis, including coding of the data and allowing themes to emerge. There was a 100 percent agreement between the lead researcher and advisor indicating credibility of the results.

In addition to triangulation, other strategies ensuring credibility included using member checks, maintaining an audit trail, and prolonging the engagement. Member checks is a process whereby the results obtained following data analysis were sent to the research partners to confirm the accuracy of the themes identified or interpretations attributed to the research partners. Following the member check, there was 100 %

agreement among the research partners with the emergent themes. For the audit trail, the lead researcher kept a rigorous and systematic audit of the data gathering and analysis process to confirm adherence to sound and ethical research practice, including confidentiality, coding, and interpretation of emergent themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Finally, the lead researcher engaged with the research partners for an extended period of time, providing several opportunities for confirmation of the findings with the research partners, implying greater credibility.

CHAPTER 4

Results

The purpose of this investigation was to gain understanding of the role of ethnic places in maintaining the cultural identity of business travelers. As described in the previous chapter, ethnic places for this research investigation comprised of Chinese grocery stores and the research partners included business travelers from Taiwan. By employing qualitative methods, this study aimed at capturing 10 research partners' lived experiences related to their reasons for frequenting Chinese grocery stores, their experiences there, and the way these ethnic places affected their cultural identities and business travel experiences. Following data analysis, several themes emerged describing the role of ethnic places in the maintenance of cultural identity of the business travelers. Upon closer scrutiny, employing both convergent and divergent strategies (Patton, 2002), the themes coalesced into the following larger areas: culture shock, the experience at the grocery store, grocery store as a familiar place, and the role of the grocery store in the travel experience and adjustment. In the following sections each of these areas will be elaborated and the voices of the research partners will be highlighted.

Culture Shock

A predominant theme emerging in the investigation was the experience of culture shock felt by the research partners as a result of being in a new environment. As scholars have suggested (Shi, 2005, Reisinger & Turner, 2003), culture shock occurs when individuals enter an environment unfamiliar to their own. Culture shock has been identified as the main threat to cultural identity, which in turn influences the travelers' experiences at their new destination (Christofi & Thompson, 2007).

All of the research partners in this investigation expressed that they had suffered culture shock as a result of being in a new country. It must be noted that seven out of ten research partners were visiting the USA for the first time. Culture shock for the research partners was represented in the following manner. It included being in a new environment with different mores and traditions. In the current study, the research partners identified the following as the manifestation of their culture shock.

Being in New Environment

The research partners in the investigation revealed their experience in the USA and shared their cultural shock arising from the new environment, experiencing different weather, distinct traffic regulations, public transportation, new and different leisure

activities, difficulty with spoken language in the USA, and type and quality of social relationships. In addition, the research partners experienced a feeling of home-sickness, particularly during their ethnic festivals, adding to their culture shock

In terms of the weather, the research partners expressed that in the USA, the weather was very different compared to their home country of Taiwan. In the USA, it has seldom rain, good quality of air, and varying ranges of temperature from morning to evening. The following quotes capture the research partners' experiences in the USA.

The weather is so nice here. It is seldom raining. I feel like taking pictures everyday. (What kind of weather is good for taking picture?) Not rain, blue sky, and fresh air.....No fog.

The weather is good, and so is the quality of air. I used to have a running nose in Taiwan because I am allergic to dust in air, but I do not have this symptom here in U.S.

It is cooler here than in Taiwan. Temperature is very different from morning to evening. However, the air quality is very good. I can see a very clear sunset.

As can be seen from the above quotes, weather, while different from their home countries, had a positive impact on the experience of the research partners. They noted that weather in the USA was pleasant and appealing to them.

The research partners were very surprised with traffic and traffic regulations in the USA. They indicated that the regulations were very different in the USA compared to Taiwan. This thought is well represented in the following quotes.

Everyone is speeding on the highway. (Laughing) (So do you also speed on the highway?) No, I am afraid of getting into an accident because I am unfamiliar with the traffic and its regulations. I have also heard that getting a ticket here is quite expensive, so I don't want to take any risk. (What risk do you think you would be running? Could you explain in detail?) I could get injured more seriously here than in Taiwan because the speed is faster.

There are a lot of local stop signs in U.S. Everyone has to stop when they see it. There is no stop sign in Taiwan, so I feel everyone drives faster and careless in Taiwan. (Laughing) Furthermore, there are a lot of motorcycles in Taiwan, so the traffic situation is really different from here.

Upon further probing, research partners described the inconvenience of the public transportation in the Silicon Valley, USA. They stated that a car was a necessity for daily living and hard to do without due to the inconvenience of the public transportation.

It must be noted that the research partners were primarily located in the Silicon Valley region of the San Francisco Bay Area, where public transportation services are limited.

I have to drive wherever I want to go. If I want to take the bus, it takes me a fair walk to the bus stop. The public transportation in Taiwan is very convenient and well-done. I have more options than driving. Maybe the public transportation is good in big city, like San Francisco, but not here (San Jose).

The public transportation is not convenient. You must have a car; otherwise you cannot go anywhere.

I felt that the U.S. was totally different compared to Taiwan. For example, I have to drive wherever I go. If someone tells you “hey, it’s pretty close to there,” don’t believe him or her. You have to ask “how long does it take by car?” It would not be within “walking distance.”

Also, the leisure activities that the research partners engaged in were changed because of the different environment. They experienced difficulties in maintaining their original leisure activities in USA, but found different and newer leisure activities which they seldom or never participated in Taiwan as highlighted in the following quote

The lifestyle here is also different than in Taiwan. For example, stores in the U.S. close much earlier. It seems like Americans pay more attention to their families. (Why do you feel Americans pay more attention to their families?) Americans like family activities such as family trips, family dinners or any other family-oriented fun or games. In Taiwan, we usually hang out with friends or dates. Of course, we do spend time with our families, but not as much as the Americans do. (You mentioned that the stores close earlier in the U.S. What time is considered early for you?) Eight or nine. After eight or nine p.m., you have nowhere to go.

Another difficulty faced by the research partners when in a new country was the exposure to a new language. For all of them, English, the predominant language in the USA, was not a primary language. This caused a lot of anxiety and stress to the research partners. They expressed nervousness and pressure when they found themselves in an environment that required communicating primarily in English as is aptly captured in the following quotes.

I get nervous when I speak English at work, either while presenting something at a meeting or talking to my boss. That's why I feel relief when I am in an environment where I can speak my native language.

Due to the fact that I am a newcomer, my English is not fluent. I felt under pressure when I communicated with my co-workers. I felt discriminated against because of my poor English. They could not understand my expressions. (Can you describe how pressured you were or what kind of pressure you experienced?) Every time I tried to describe my questions, they would frown at me. (Do you mean they didn't understand your words?) Yes. And the problem was the grammar. Chinese grammar is different than English. I used Chinese grammar to speak English. (Can you give me an example?) For example, I should have said "I went to the shopping mall yesterday", but I said "I yesterday went to the shopping mall." This is an example of Chinese-English. (Were they friendly when they did not understand you?) Yes, but their faces would show they could not understand. They would try to figure out what I meant, but in reality I felt they only pretended to understand. (How do you feel when they pretended to understand you?) When I asked "you get it?" they would say "yes." But minutes later, they would ask me the same question again. (Laughing) (Are they nice to you?) They have to be nice because we are co-workers. (Laughing)

Despite the language difficulty and interaction at work, research partners expressed that they felt forced to interact with local people in their daily lives. This also contributed to their experience of culture shock. Culture shock in this regard surrounded around the types and quality of social relationship. Research partners in the investigation noted the difference between their experience of relationships in their home country and those in the host country. The following quote captures the perceptions of the research partners pertaining to the types of relationships.

Compared to Taiwanese, Americans are more superficial. People say “hi” or ask “how you are doing” but don’t really mean what they say. I think some would be surprised or might not even know how to respond if one answered “I am not doing well.” So, it seems they are very friendly, but in reality it is a superficial conversation.

When research partners faced a culture shock being in unfamiliar environments, they also experienced strong nostalgia for their family, friends, and their culture which they left behind at home as indicated by Reisinger and Turner(2003) and Sandberg (2007b). One of the occasions that particularly triggered nostalgia centered around Chinese holidays and festivals. These times were particularly challenging to the research partners. They used several strategies to negotiate these challenges. The following are some of their articulations of ways they overcame these challenges.

Chinese Holidays and Festivals

Chinese festivals and holidays would motivate the research partners to go to Chinese grocery stores, especially those who regarded Chinese festivals and holidays as important days in their lives. They would go to Chinese grocery stores to feel the atmosphere of the holidays and festivals to recover from their homesickness. They would even crave and many times buy the food they usually saw but ignored in the markets when they were back in Taiwan. This was their way of getting of recreating the

holiday spirit they were used to in their home countries and soaking in the ambience surrounding the holidays and festivals.

I would like to buy some materials for cooking for the Chinese holidays. (You mean you want to make some holiday specialties?) Yes, I would like to live out the holiday feeling and experience the festival atmosphere. (You believe you cannot find these materials at an American grocery store?) No. (So you only go there for holiday foods? Such as moon cakes for the Moon Festival?) Not really, I just want to go there and check it out. I might not buy anything, but I would still want to go there to see something special that is related to my culture.

I can get sticky rice in Chinese grocery stores. (Oh, do you like it?) No. (So why do you get it?) I get it because of the festival. (So you don't have it at other times throughout the year.) No. I only have it during the Dragon's Boat festival. I feel myself more involved with the holidays if I have the holiday food and shopping experience at a Chinese grocery store. I cannot experience a Chinese festival at Safeway stores.

Americans eat turkey on Thanksgiving, and we eat hot pot on some of our holidays. They can buy turkey at American grocery stores, but we can not get the ingredients for the hot pot, a popular holiday dish, during our holidays. We have to go to Chinese grocery stores. When I am here, I crave for seasonal food especially on our holidays, such as sticky rice tamale or moon cake on the Dragon Boat and Moon Festival. However, I do not crave for these back in Taiwan. I would like to get the food because of the holiday atmosphere. (So you would want things that taste like home here more than when you were in Taiwan?) Yes. (Even though you did not crave for these back in Taiwan?) Yes, it is a psychological need in which I mentioned previously.

The above discussion clearly indicates that being in a new environment caused a sense of culture shock for the research partners. Furthermore, they also experienced a

pronounced sense of nostalgia for their own culture and used several ways of negotiating the challenges.

The Experience at the Grocery Store

Several themes emerged articulating the experience of research partners while they were at the ethnic grocery store. Not all of the experience was positive. While the research partners indicated that access and a visit to an ethnic grocery store was a positive experience overall, several negative perceptions were recorded by the research partners. These included the environment, sanitation issues, quality and freshness of products, or import sources. The positive perceptions included their feeling of familiarity with the place and their understanding of the badly organized layout of stock. The following will elaborate both the negative and positive experiences.

Negative Perceptions

When research partners shopped at Chinese grocery stores, they had some negative perceptions and experiences. When describing these perceptions, terms such as “smell”, “messy”, “dirty”, “crowded”, “quality and freshness”, “source of products” were commonly used. The negative perceptions and experiences about the environment and sanitation issues are accurately summed up in the following quotes.

A lot of middle-aged women, a lot of shopping carts,....(laughing). Sometimes I just carry the basket for convenience. The smell in a Chinese grocery store is stronger than in an American grocery store.....Sometimes I felt it was hard to reach some areas in the Chinese grocery store due to the crowd.

The aisles are narrower. I don't like the seafood booth there. It's smelly. The floor is dirty, too.

Some Chinese grocery stores are very messy, but some are not. (What do you mean by messy?) The layout and products are not well organized. The categories of products in a Chinese grocery store are not as clear as the American ones. It makes the Chinese grocery store very messy. I feel it is easier to find certain products in an American grocery store than the Chinese one. Chinese grocery stores do not have enough space to stock all the products. To display all the products, Chinese grocery stores have to put similar kinds of products together which are supposed to be separated. American stores utilize their large space to arrange their products.

Research partners observed sanitation issues and physical environment while shopping at the ethnic store and these were also identified as negative by the research partners.

A distinct negative experience highlighted by the research partners was the level of comfort they felt with the quality and freshness of the products. They felt that at times products were not very fresh and did not adhere to specific regulations pertaining to expiration dates. Also the research partners were suspicious of the sources and

countries where products were imported from. Following are the voices of the partners articulating the above concerns.

I buy eggs, juice, milk, and most fresh products in an American grocery store because I feel they are fresher in American stores than in Chinese stores. (Is price a factor in your decision-making process?) Not really. Quality and freshness are what I care about more. A lot of products are made in China at Ranch 99 and I do not feel safe about them.

I try to avoid buying something made in China. Food is very important for us. It's not discrimination or anything. I just felt it's safer if it is made in Taiwan. The Taiwanese has more moral than the Chinese who are from mainland China.

I felt some of the seasonings are not as good as I imagine they will be. They are not like the ones I had in Taiwan. I even couldn't find the expiration date on the product. It is unbelievable. Every product has its own expiration date in Taiwan.

I knew I could find green beans in the Chinese grocery store, but I doubted if American eat green beans. I knew they have bean sprouts, but I am not sure if they have green beans. In a Chinese grocery store, I only needed to worry "where are those green beans from?" (Laughing)

The negative perceptions voiced by the research partners indicate that Chinese grocery stores suffer from a lack of space and possess smelly fish booths. In addition, the layout was bad and the sanitation was poor. Furthermore, the quality and freshness of food was very important to the research partners, and food products lacking an expiration date did not provide the research partners any assurance of food quality, while

some import sources are considered insecure and suspicious places for acquiring food products. Based on where food products were imported from, research partners would determine the quality of food and even assign an inferior value to the products.

Positive Perceptions

Even though the research partners had negative perceptions, they were able to look beyond them and provide reasonable justifications for them. They indicated that they understood the reasons why the grocery store was badly organized in order to reduce cost and maintain the low price. The following quote indicate the reasons according to the research partners.

I could not compare it with any grocery store in Taiwan. The quality, layout, and sanitation are really bad. But sometimes I was thinking it was resulted from trying to stock so many products, so the layout and sanitation are not good. The grocery stores in Taiwan only need to sell Taiwanese products. One more reason: maybe it was not appropriate to say it in this way, but there are a lot people from mainland China. Their consumer behaviors were not very good. Therefore, the Chinese grocery store operator has to find a balance. If he made it as good as in Taiwan, the cost would increase. However, Chinese from mainland China might think the current standard is fine for them.

However, the research partners were overwhelmingly complimentary of the ethnic grocery stores. One of the compliments centered around the ethnic grocery stores supporting and maintaining a purchasing culture common in the home country, namely

providing customized fish sales and a meat booth. The research partners also had several positive experiences and perceptions of shopping in an ethnic grocery store.

Following are quotes describing the positive perceptions about layout and sanitation in the ethnic grocery stores.

I think the layout is very neat and clean in 99 Ranch. I don't think there is a big difference in sanitation between Chinese and American stores.

I have a different perception of each grocery store. The one in Milpitas is the biggest. The one in Cupertino is the most crowded, and the vegetables look stale. The one in San Jose is the cleanest and neatest. Compared to American stores, everything is cheaper at a Chinese grocery store.

Besides the layout and sanitation at the ethnic grocery store, the customized service was complimented by researcher partners because they could buy expected amount as well as type of food.

It not only sells fresh meat and fish, but also has customized services for the meat and fish so the customer can ask the staff to slice the pork thinner or chop it. You could not get this service at an American grocery store.

Seafood is really fresh in Chinese grocery store, but stinky. If you would like to buy a fish, you have to tell the staff who are in charge of fish. They will help you clean the fish. (They did that in Taiwan, too?) Yes, but the seafood is all already ready to go in American grocery stores. It is sliced and well-packed. (Any thing else?) I can speak Chinese to them if I have any questions.

I bought the cookie at an American store because it has a different flavor than the Chinese ones. But I prefer buying meat at the Chinese grocery store because the amount at the American grocery store is always huge. And they pack the meat in

a very simple way. They only cut it without preserving it. The meats are preserved or salted before we buy them at the Chinese grocery store. The Chinese grocery store also has ground pork, while the American store does not. (So you think the meat in Chinese grocery store is more like our food culture?) Yes.

Based on the above quotes, familiarity with the ethnic grocery store including available goods and products is an important factor that results in positive perceptions for business travelers because they feel like they are at home. Not only can they continue to maintain their preferred food habits such as buying customized meat and fish, but they also have brand awareness of products available in their country.

Grocery Store as a Familiar Place

As described earlier, cultural attributes can be either promoted or protected, and engaging in familiar cultural experiences can also help in maintaining a person's cultural identity. Therefore, Chinese grocery stores can support individuals in carrying on their Chinese cultural background by maintaining cultural identities in several ways, including things that are familiar, food habits, cultural identities, frequency of visits, and miscellaneous. The following narrative comments are indicative of the above sentiments:

Feeling of Familiarity

Being in a familiar place was a major motivator for research partners to visit the ethnic grocery store. At Chinese grocery stores, majority of the sold Chinese products are similar or the same as in Taiwan and these are in majority at the store. Therefore, this familiarity with the brand awareness was able to smooth the culture shock of research partners as highlighted by the following quotes.

I really think it helps me on awareness of the food's brand. I can find some snacks and cookies imported from Taiwan with the same labels and brands that I am familiar with. (Will you feel better after you have them when you are suffering from homesickness?) Of course!

I have seen these products or similar ones in Taiwan, so I know or can guess what they are like. I have instincts when I am at a Chinese grocery store. It's like...when I feel like eating a certain cookie, I can recognize it at the first sign by the picture on its package. I have to pay more attention when I am shopping at an American grocery store because I might end up buying the dog food.

Because of the familiarity with brand awareness, they claimed that the ethnic grocery store was the only one and at time the first place they perceived as familiar in the USA. Several of the research partners even stated that their encounters with ethnic grocery stores created a sense of feeling of being home, and a sense of security. When they were at the ethnic grocery store they felt that they were in a safe haven.

Chinese grocery store is the first place that I strongly felt to be familiar. It is a place that gives me both familiarity and security. I know their products. I don't

need to figure out what is what. I do not think it is a new environment for me which I need to adjust myself to. Moreover, it sells many products and food that I am familiar with. I can find the food there that I am used to eating. (You mean you know what you need to buy in there?) Yes, for example, in Taiwan, I wouldn't really plan what I should eat for every meal. I can just have a noodle or something simple because I am already familiar with the materials and contents. I think for us who work overseas, Chinese grocery stores play an important role in our routine. I don't need to plan or think ahead what I should eat. It makes me feel that I am still in Taiwan. I can still have my Taiwanese lifestyle. Do you understand me? (I got it!)

I feel more comfortable when shopping in the Chinese stores because it's easy to find everything I want. The category or layout ... is similar to that at home and makes me feel relaxed. (How about the American stores?) There are a lot of products at the American store, no matter what it is. I feel the pressure when I look for something. (Do you mean the American one is too big so it's tiring to find something?) Yes. For example, if I would like to buy a body wash, I have to check all the body washes. In addition, I do not really know the American brands, so I have to check them one by one. Therefore, when I want to buy something, I have to check each one and think which one I need and what I want. I think that is because I am not familiar with American products. (So you mean you have to spend more time on choosing something you want?) Yes.

I feel secure there. It is like "home" or a "safe haven". Even though I am here alone in another nation, it would still feel like home whenever I am at a Chinese grocery store.

In addition, research partners believed that their business travel experience would be miserable if there were no Chinese grocery stores nearby because Taiwanese food played an important role in their lives. The following statements indicate their feelings and the solutions that they came up with to deal with the daily lives without Chinese

grocery stores including asking their Taiwanese coworkers how to make Taiwanese food using American products, or moving to an area where they would be in the vicinity of a Chinese grocery store.

My business travel would be miserable (laughs) because food is everything to me. (Why?) If there are no Chinese grocery stores here, then I cannot eat the food I want. I like Taiwanese foods so much that I cannot live without them.

I would probably have to move to a place with Chinese grocery stores. (Laughing) (But sometimes you cannot choose the company you work for.) In that case, I will be starving every day then. (Laughing) I will try to ask my coworkers who are from Taiwan to learn how to cook Chinese food. For instance, what kind of seasonings or food in an American grocery store can substitute for the Chinese ones? For example, they do not sell pork strips at American grocery stores, although we can get pork chops and slice them into strips by ourselves, which is actually a tedious work.

Food Habits

In addition to preferring the way the food tastes, the reasons research partners went to Chinese grocery stores was to obtain preferred foods, products and services.

Researcher partners bought foods in Chinese grocery stores rather than American grocery store because they felt that they had more choices such as drumsticks, pork, canned food, vegetable, seasonings, cookies, and frozen foods. Their preferences for foods available at a Chinese grocery store are indicated by the following quotes.

I don't know how to cook, so I always buy some Chinese seasonings or sauces [pointing to the Chinese seasonings]. When I feel the taste of the food is different

from my expectations, I add those sauces. The food will then taste similar to the one in my imagination. I cannot find these sauces at American grocery stores.

I bought fruit, meat, vegetable, canned food, seasoning....(You almost buy every thing at the Chinese grocery store.) Yes. My wife is here, too, so we buy a lot of groceries from the Chinese grocery store. (Why don't you buy the meat at an American store?) In my mind, Americans prefer chicken breasts to drumsticks. I prefer drumsticks, so I buy them at the Chinese store. (How about pork?) Oh, yes. I bought that at the Chinese store as well. (How about vegetables?) I bought vegetables at both grocery stores. They sold different kinds of vegetables, so I bought different ones from each grocery store.

I buy seasonings and vegetables. (Why do you buy them at a Chinese grocery store?) The vegetables at the Chinese grocery store look familiar to me. I always eat them at Taiwan. I am used to having them. (You mean you know how to cook them?) Yes. It's easier for me to think about how I can do them. (How about seasonings?) I bought seasonings in there because I like to make something that tastes authentic. I pick the seasonings whose tastes are closer to my memories.

I bought vegetables. (Do you cook?) I cook only vegetable soup (Laughing). I also bought frozen food. I can put it directly in the microwave to get ready. (There are a lot of frozen foods at American grocery stores—why do you buy them at the Chinese store?) The flavors are different. The sauce is different, too. I don't like American sauce.

Besides food items, research partners also purchased products they were accustomed to in their home country because they felt that the design was superior than American products. Furthermore, they felt more at ease using these products and in their own words were “better or smoother” to use.

I bought these spoons last time, and I want to buy two more today. Even though there are some spoons in my apartment provided by the leasing office, I still like the spoons in this style. The shape and the size are different than American one.

The amount of foods that could be purchased at an ethnic grocery store was also a major factor considered by the research partners when deciding whether to shop at an ethnic store or an American store. They felt that they had to buy a large amount when shopping at American grocery stores, but at a Chinese grocery store, they can choose the amount they needed.

At a Chinese grocery store, you can decide how many pounds you need, but at an American store, they are all packed. You can only choose the one closest to your need. The layout and organization are different, too. At an American grocery store, there are too many products. At a Chinese grocery store, the price tags are much clearer. Also, for me, there are more choices of brands at a Chinese grocery store. I do not like the amount of promotion at American grocery stores. It pushes me to buy in large quantities. (You mean like, “buy one get one free”?) Yes, I cannot pay for just the amount I want at the price I expect, but I can do it at a Chinese grocery store. The amount of product is really an issue for individuals. It is like buying shoes. The salesperson told me I have to buy two pairs if I want to get a discount, but I only need one pair. Why do I have to buy two?

Cultural Identity

In addition to a sense of familiarity and food habits, the locality of the ethnic stores was also perceived as a familiar place for research partners. Ethnic places located in the area are generally filled with people with similar cultural background (Pritchard &

Morgan, 2001). Therefore, there are always Chinese-related stores or people around the locality of a Chinese grocery store.

The locality around Chinese grocery store. Not only the Chinese grocery store itself, but also the neighborhood around the Chinese grocery store aided in maintaining the cultural identity of the research partners. The following quotes describe the research partners' perceptions of the locality around Chinese grocery stores.

I will say this place [the plaza where the Chinese grocery store is located] is like the center of my life. (Why?) Because I can not only buy the things I need from Ranch 99, but also from the stores in the same plaza. Wherever there is a Ranch 99, there are always many stores around it that I am familiar with. Everything is in Chinese. I feel secure when I am in the area.

Milpitas Square, or some areas near Ranch 99 have a lot of Chinese people and Chinese stores. I can even hear people speak Taiwanese. There is quite a strong sense of familiarity.

There are a lot of stores surrounding the Chinese grocery stores which target the same customers. These include bubble tea shops, Chinese restaurants, karaoke entertainment, etc. Bubble tea shops and karaoke entertainment are two of the most popular places for leisure in Taiwan. Taiwanese can socialize and enjoy the ambience in bubble tea shops and karaoke entertainments. In addition, Chinese restaurants located in the vicinity provided not only similar cuisine, research partners were accustomed to,

but they also provide a similar cultural atmosphere. Furthermore, research partners were able to engage in and continue their preferred leisure activities through these ethnic stores located in the vicinity of the ethnic grocery stores.

Bubble tea shop. (Is it run by Chinese?) Yes. (Why?) Because bubble tea shops are very popular in Taiwan and can represent Taiwan. Americans drink soda more than tea. Tea is a representative of Taiwan. (Do you go to the bubble tea shop frequently?) Yes. (So you think the bubble tea shop can remind you of your culture and home?) Yes. (Do you like the drink or atmosphere better?) I like them both. The drink is pretty much like the ones in Taiwan. The teashop is similar to the ones around the campuses in Taiwan. I feel it is familiar when I am there.

I forget which Ranch 99, but there is a karaoke entertainment near by. The first time I got there, I am impressed that even though I am in America, I can still go to a karaoke entertainment and sing Chinese songs. (So Chinese karaoke for you is a place to recall home?) Yes.

Karaoke. I haven't been there yet. But when I knew I can go karaoke here, I felt interested and excited. Karaoke can present the Taiwanese leisure lifestyle. Karaoke was a very popular indoor leisure activity. When we did not know where to go or what to do on weekends, we would come up with karaoke.

When I dined out with friends, I found out the Ranch 99 is in the same plaza. I noticed that wherever a Ranch 99 is, there are always many Chinese and Taiwanese stores and restaurants around it. It is where people hang out. (People run into each other there a lot?) Yes, we might have dinner together in that plaza. (So you know Ranch 99 because you have dinner in the same plaza and saw it there?) Not really. When I just arrived here, I already knew Ranch 99 is the largest Chinese/Taiwanese chain grocery store in California. (How do you know that?) My aunt told me about it. She also told me that it is in a plaza with many Chinese/Taiwanese restaurants so I went and checked it out.

Last time we saw the “crispy fried chicken” on the menu of a Chinese restaurant, I was so excited I said, “See, they have crispy fried chicken!”, and then I ordered it. Whenever I saw crispy fried chicken, I would think about Taiwan immediately. Crispy fried chicken could represent Taiwan’s food culture. So does the oyster omelet, which makes me think of Taiwan.

Frequency of Visits

The research partners visited the Chinese grocery stores more frequently than American stores. Some of them even went there for engaging in leisure experiences rather than going grocery shopping.

I went to Chinese grocery store every three or four days (Laughing). Even though I don’t have anything I need to buy, I still go there when I am bored. (Why?) It’s really close to my place. On the other hand, I felt like home over there. I felt it is the place that I know best in the U.S.

It gave me the motivation to stay here longer. It gave me the feeling that I still have a connection with my hometown and culture. (When you miss home, will you go there?) Yes, whenever once I am homesick, I go there to buy some food. (What kind of food do you buy?) Instant noodles, cookies, anything imported from Taiwan or anything Taiwanese. (Why do you like instant noodles so much?) Instant noodles is like a combination of all the flavors from Taiwan, such as seasonings, noodles, and soup. I don’t eat instant noodles that often in Taiwan, but it is the easiest and fastest way to have a connection and feeling to Taiwan. Besides, instant noodles are part of our culture!

Other Factors

Interestingly during their stay in the USA, several research partners discovered that they develop an interest in and taste for foods that typically they would not have craved

or thought off. When queried about those new and acquired tastes, research partners stated that they developed love and craving for these food items because these foods represented their home country Taiwan for them.

I think people would get something that they wouldn't usually have back home as long as it is something from home on this foreign soil. Such as an oyster omelet. I never felt like having one when I was in Taiwan, but when I saw it in here, I actually ordered it. (Why?) Um...two reasons. First, I was so excited that I was able to see an oyster omelet here. I was thinking, 'Wow, there are oyster omelets in the United States? I should try it and see how it tastes.' Second, it reminded me of my home country, even though I don't really eat it in Taiwan. But I still want to order it. It's just a feeling. (That recalls your memory of home?) Yes, but I don't know why it makes me feel like home when I eat it even though I never had it in Taiwan. (But at least you can see it everywhere in Taiwan) Yes, I think it's because oyster omelet is a representative Taiwanese food. It is almost a symbol of Taiwan. When I saw the oyster omelet, I made a connection to Taiwan. It makes me feel like I want to have it, even though I do not really like it. And so does the pearl milk tea. I think I drink more pearl milk tea here than in Taiwan. (Really? Why?) I think it is a psychological thing of human nature. People usually treasure more the things that are rare and hard to get. Something is always valued more if it is scarce. Even though the price of pearl milk is like three times what it is in Taiwan, I still feel like having it, just because it is rare in the US.

I always bought instant noodles. (But you already brought a lot from Taiwan) Haha, yes. But not all the flavors. Even though I already brought a lot to here, sometimes I would just feel....."oh, I miss that flavor so much", but I didn't bring it or it was already gone.

I was excited, when I was shopping in a Chinese grocery store. I would go aisle by aisle because I like to find out what is offered here. (You mean you like to know what kind of Taiwanese products you can buy there?) Yes. Sometimes I

bought stuff I have never had in Taiwan. Sometimes I just wanted to buy it, but not really eat it. It was the psychological thing again.

The Role of the Grocery Store in the Travel Experience and Adjustment

As indicated by Reisinger & Turner (2003), the research partners encountered culture shock when in the USA because of exposure to different cultures and unfamiliar environments. When they encountered culture shock, their own cultural identities emerged and they endeavored to maintain their culture of origin (Arends-Toth & Vijver, 2007). As highlighted in Chapter two, ethnic places can assist individuals in a new environment to strengthen their cultural identity, preserve their culture, and even for a short moment provide an escape or isolation from the host culture (Chacko, 2003; Kaya, 2005). The following sections discuss the research partners' sense of acceptance, isolation, and adjustment to the new environment.

Sense of Acceptance

Research partners were minorities in the U.S. host culture, so they suffered culture shock as mentioned before. However, when they went to ethnic places, they found that they were regarded as members of the majority there. Thus their minority role was transformed into majority role when at a Chinese grocery store.

Whenever I am at a Chinese grocery store or plaza, I feel they are my turf. As a minority, we will always have the feeling of being on someone else's land.

However, when we are at a Chinese grocery store or plaza, we become the majority. I feel more secure and comfortable. When people consider themselves as the minority, they have a strong sense of anxiety and insecurity. Sometimes it is a feeling that I get at work. In some sense, Chinese grocery stores provide me with a sense of security and warmth. (So you mean you feel frustrated when you are here, but the Chinese grocery stores relieve your frustrations and make you feel more comfortable?) Yes.

If my parents come here, I would not need to worry if they cannot adapt to the new environment. There are a lot Chinese grocery stores and restaurants. In fact, they don't even need to use English and as they can buy items there. (So do you think Chinese grocery stores are like gateways to the new life in the U.S.?) Yes. I cannot agree more. I have exactly the same feeling. Chinese grocery stores can make the oversea life easier.

Isolation of Chinese Grocery Stores

In addition to fostering a sense of acceptance, ethnic places also provided the research partners, a sense of refuge or isolation from the host culture (Chacko, 2003; Kaya (2005).

One interesting fact that I have observed was that there are no Americans at Chinese grocery stores, but there are Chinese at American grocery stores. Asians shop at American grocery stores, but I rarely see Americans shop at Chinese grocery stores. (So you mean Chinese grocery stores are more exclusive?) It seems to me Chinese plazas that have Chinese grocery stores are a town excluded from America. It almost seems to me that it is another world here on this territory. People come here for a sense of security and identity awareness. It feels like a safe haven to them.

I found out that the main customers in Chinese grocery stores are Asian, such as Chinese, and Indians. Amazingly there are some non-Asians, such as Mexicans. There are very few Americans in Chinese grocery stores. If they go, they go with

their Asian family members. (So you feel only minority individuals go to Chinese grocery stores?) Yes. However, the customers in American grocery stores are not only Americans, but also Chinese, Mexicans, and Indians.

Adjustment

Research partners stated that they were willing to bring their relatives or friends to Silicon Valley because they could adapt to the new environment easily without there being any need to deal with food issues. This was possible because of the presence of ethnic grocery stores in the local vicinity. These sentiments are captured in the following quotes.

I have already made some friends here. I will visit them some day when I have a chance. (With friends and family?) Yes. I want to come here again with them. (Why?) I would like to show them that even if you are overseas, you can still have Chinese food. (But you can have authentic Chinese food in Taiwan. Why do you come here again for that?) Oh, because my parents and some friends might not be accustomed to Western food. Therefore, they can experience different cultures without dealing with Western foods.

My parents will come visit me tomorrow. I will take my mother grocery shopping. I guess she could buy everything that she needs. She does not need to spend a lot of time at the American grocery stores.

If my parents come, I will not need to worry about if they cannot adapt to the new environment. There are a number of Chinese grocery stores and Chinese restaurants; they don't even need to speak English to buy something they need.

I believe my parents will fit into the U.S. environment quite well by going to the Chinese grocery stores. Besides, it could be boring if I only take them to Chinese

stores, so I will also try to take them to other places as well. But it is more like ... a place for one to take a rest and feel secure.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the role of ethnic places in maintaining the cultural identity of business travelers. The emergent themes collapsed around four broader areas – culture shock; experience at the grocery store, the grocery store as a familiar place, and the role of the grocery store in the travel experience and adjustment. All the research partners in this study expressed that they experienced culture shock because of the unfamiliar environment such as weather, traffic regulations, public transportation, leisure activity, language, and social relationships. When asked how the research partners overcame some of the difficult experiences and shock of being in a different culture and environment, they unanimously indicated that the availability and access to ethnic places consistent with their ethnicity provided some reprieve to their situation. Since all the members in the current study identified themselves as ethnically Taiwanese, they stated that having access to and visiting Chinese grocery stores was very helpful in negotiating some of the ill-effects of culture shock. The research partners also stated that ethnic places helped them to maintain their cultural identities because ethnic places could soothe their culture shocks by providing a safe haven, assist their

adjustment as a gate to the host culture, help them gain a sense of acceptance by being involved in ethnic places, and allow them to be isolated from the host culture.

Besides the adjustment, analogous culture experiences could also help maintain the research partners' cultural identities. Therefore, the familiarity of the Chinese grocery store allowed the research partners to retain their food habits, which resulted in frequent visits to the ethnic stores. Furthermore, the frequency of visiting ethnic places helped to sustain research partners' cultural identities. When research partners discussed their experiences in ethnic places such as Chinese grocery stores, they revealed both positive and negative perceptions. The emergent negative perceptions of Chinese grocery store included environment and sanitation issues and concerns about the import source and quality of the products, and freshness of products. The positive perceptions of Chinese grocery stores included customized services, similarities things with which they were familiar, and brand awareness.

All the research partners were glad to have Chinese grocery stores nearby. Some of them treated Chinese grocery stores as an indispensable factor in their business travels, and others regarded them as a benefit to them. Even though they could name some disadvantages of Chinese grocery stores, they were willing to come back to Silicon

Valley either for business or leisure, and bring their friends and family if possible, solely because of the various benefits derived by having an ethnic store in their host destination.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion and Conclusion

The current study focused on understanding if ethnic places had any influence on the cultural identity of business travelers. Specifically, the main purpose of the study was to gain an understanding of the role of ethnic places in aiding business travelers in maintaining their cultural identity in a different country. The specific research questions guiding the investigation were:

1. What are the factors that motivate business travelers to go to an ethnic grocery store rather than an American store?
2. What is their experience at the ethnic store?
3. In what way does engagement with an ethnic place affect their cultural identity and business travel experience?

The target of the investigation was business travelers from Taiwan who identified themselves ethnically as Taiwanese, while the ethnic places chosen in the study were Chinese grocery stores. As indicated in the methods chapter, the rationale for choosing Chinese grocery stores was based on the experience of the lead researcher in the investigation, who had discovered that in the USA, Chinese grocery stores are the

primary venues carrying ethnic foods and products typically available in Taiwan. In addition, usually a Chinese grocery store in the USA is located in a plaza surrounded by several Chinese and Taiwanese restaurants.

Since the relationship, individuals have with ethnic places and spaces are not only unique and individualistic, but also largely dependent on personal perception, quantitative research methods were deemed inappropriate for the current investigation. Therefore, qualitative research methods were used to conduct a deeper analysis of individual perceptions pertaining to the research questions.

The following criteria were employed to recruit research partners for the investigation: (a) all research partners were business travelers to the Silicon Valley area of the USA during 2007, b) all came from Taiwan, c) all had stayed in the USA for at least 3 months, and (d) all had visited Chinese grocery stores during their business trips. Nine males and one female consented to participate in this study. Semi-structured interviews ranging from 30 to 130 minutes were used as one of the methods of collecting personal lived experiences. Field observations, informal conversations, and field notes were also used as methods of data collection. The interview guide which was created in consultation with a panel of experts from San Jose State University was piloted with

seven business travelers for determining clarity and understandability of the questions.

Based upon the feedback received, the interview questions were modified. The interview questions elicited the reasons and factors motivating the research partners to go to ethnic grocery stores rather than American grocery stores, their experiences at ethnic places, and the way ethnic places impacted their cultural identities and business travel experiences.

Following the interviews, the researcher recorded copious field notes. All of the interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed along with the field observations, informal conversations, and field notes. Taken together, the written text yielded 120 double-spaced pages.

When the lead researcher employed constant comparison techniques and thematic analysis with both convergent and divergent strategies (Patton, 2002), four major themes emerged representing the main research questions in the study.

This chapter is organized into three sections. The first section discusses the findings related to the research questions. The second section elaborates on the limitations of the study. The third section includes the conclusion, implications of the research, and areas for future research.

Discussion

Travel operators have started to pay more attention to the business travel segment because it has become more important in the travel industry (Oppermann, 1996).

Therefore, understanding business travelers' demands is significant in being able to satisfy them and obtaining additional profit (Gourdin & Kloppenborg, 1991; Sandberg, 2007b). Unlike leisure travelers who are ready and willing to experience a different culture, cuisine, and environment (Ondimu, 2002; Smith & Duffy, 2003), business travelers are forced to face an unfamiliar environment because of their work, as it is work demands or needs that require them to travel to a foreign destination.

Even though business travelers share with leisure travelers excitement and a desire to visit a new destination and environment, at the same time they experience all the difficulties of being in a new place, such as culture shock, adjustment difficulties, engagement with a new culture and traditions, etc. (Sandberg, 2007b). In the light of increased business travel among countries as a result of a globalized economy, it is important to identify how business travelers negotiate these experiences. Scholars have indicated that identifying familiar places and experiences in a new environment can help business travelers reduce the culture shock (Grunewald, 2002; Shi, 2005). In addition,

people feel safe and accepted when they interact with people the same cultural backgrounds (Keyes & Kane, 2004).

According to Grunewald (2002), ethnic places help develop a positive sense of identity and a place to fit in by promoting certain cultures and lifestyles; they also may motivate people who have similar cultural identities to get together. When business travelers face conflicts between two cultures, they can develop positive identity concepts from ethnic places such as Chinese grocery stores (Ajrouch, 2000; Mills, 2005).

As described above, developing positive identity concepts motivates the research partners to visit Chinese grocery stores. However, although ethnic places play an important role for business travelers, there is insufficient research on the correlation between ethnic places and business travelers despite the importance of understanding the demands of a specific segment such as this for marketing planning (Ryan & Glendon, 1998). The findings from this study address this gap and provide suggestions in the ensuing sections.

The results of this study identified four broader themes: culture shock, the experience at the grocery store, grocery store as a familiar place, and role of the grocery store in the travel experience and adjustment. In an overall analysis, culture shock and a

sense of familiarity motivated business travelers to visit Chinese grocery stores rather than American ones. Their perceptions of ethnic places will be discussed in the next section. Finally, engagement with ethnic places as it affects people's cultural identities and business travel experiences in adjustment will also be discussed.

Culture Shock and a Sense of Familiarity

When research partners go into an unfamiliar environment, they encounter culture shock (Christofi & Thompson, 2007; Shi, 2005). Ethnic places ease their culture shock and promote or protect their cultural identities through familiarities with their own culture (Kaya, 2005). The findings of the current investigation are also consistent with the above studies. Besides lessening culture shock, the research partners in the current study also stated that Chinese holidays or festivals motivated them to visit ethnic places, such as Chinese grocery stores, to obtain products and enjoy an atmosphere related to their culture. In the following sections, the culture shock that research partners pointed out in this study and the sense of familiarity that research partners received from Chinese grocery stores will be discussed.

Culture shock. Research partners in the current study encountered culture shock because they faced an unfamiliar environment (Christofi & Thompson, 2007; Shi, 2005).

In this study, research partners revealed several elements of culture shock they encountered during their business trips to the Silicon Valley, such as differences in the environment, weather, traffic regulations, public transportation, leisure activities, language, and social relationships.

Most of them considered the pace of life in the USA to be slower than in Taiwan. The opening hours of stores were shorter, so they would felt there was nowhere they could go after work, and they were forced to change or adjust their leisure activities. Even though they still found some of the leisure activities in which they were usually involved with in Taiwan, such as singing karaoke, hanging out with friends at a bubble tea shop, or dining out with friends, their choices were limited as compared to Taiwan.

The weather and environmental differences motivated research partners to enjoy outdoor activities in the USA more than in Taiwan. During the weekends, the resorts and attractions in Taiwan are always crowded, unlike in the USA where they are less crowded due to the vast amount of land. In addition, there are always typhoons in Taiwan during the summer unlike in the USA which has desirable summer weather that can inspire people to go outside and enjoy the sun.

Because of the unfamiliar traffic, when the research partners went out, they felt insecure and worried about getting injured or violating the regulations. Public transportation was not convenient for them because they still had to walk a fair way to get to the bus stops, and sometimes had to transfer in between to reach their destinations. The findings of culture shock in pace of life, different weather, environment, and unfamiliar traffic are consistent with those of Christofi and Thompson (2007) and Austin (2005) claiming that some of the culture shock results from the inability to address the new environment.

Language was also a barrier for them. Even though most of them could speak English, and some of them could speak English fluently, they still felt pressure when they had to communicate in English at work or in their daily life. They were afraid they could not express themselves appropriately. One of the research partners even said that he felt his co-workers only pretended to understand him. In addition, they were not used to U.S. social relationships. They considered people in the USA to be more superficial than in Taiwan. They also thought when people in the USA asked a question, they did not really mean it. The language shock is supported by Reisinger and Turner (2003) expressing language shock is one of culture shock result from unfamiliar with the

host language. The explorations of culture shock in this study are consistent with those of Christofi and Thompson (2007), Reisinger and Turner (2003), Ho (2006), and Schouten (2007) indicating that when individuals face a culture different from their own, they suffer culture shock.

Chinese holidays/festivals. Research partners felt more nostalgic during Chinese holidays and festivals. Those popular cultural events including (but were not limited to) traditional opera, native language groups, festivals, and cuisine can protect individuals' cultural identities (Chong, 2006; Mason, 2003; Mitchell, 2002; Schouten, 2007).

Research partners claimed they liked to visit Chinese grocery stores to experience the holiday atmosphere and purchase seasonal foods or products to celebrate the holiday.

This also had an impact on their frequency of visits. Research partners went to Chinese grocery stores not only for grocery shopping, but also for leisure activities. They stated they were excited, and when shopping in a Chinese grocery store, they went aisle by aisle to check on what was being offered. In addition, sometimes they went there just because they were bored. This finding shows engagement with activity and event which are culturally familiar can smooth the culture shock, and this finding is supported by Reisinger and Turner (2003) and Kaya (2005).

Sense of familiarity. In addition to culture shock, a sense of familiarity was identified as one of the main reasons for research partners to go to Chinese grocery stores rather than American ones. All of the research partners in this study admitted that since they were familiar with at about the Chinese grocery store motivated them to go there. They claimed they knew everything better in the Chinese grocery stores than in American ones and did not need to adjust to something new. They could distinguish the category of food at first sight and did not have to spend much time on confirming what the food was because they had seen the same or a similar one in Taiwan. Thus they could keep their original lifestyle because they could find what they need there.

Maintaining their food habits was also a motivation to go to Chinese grocery stores that provide customized, familiar items or services such as sliced or chopped meat, fresh unpacked seafood, and customer-preferred promotions. Most importantly, the research partners could speak Chinese in communicating with the staff. When shopping at Chinese grocery stores, they felt they were still in their home country.

Not only Chinese grocery stores, but also other ethnic places can provide a feeling of familiarity to research partners (Kaya, 2005). Some of the research partners expressed that bubble tea shops or karaoke places created a sense of being in their home

culture because the environment was very similar to that in their home country of Taiwan. Therefore, ethnic places that display a certain culture or lifestyle can attract individuals of the same cultural background by providing them with a location to get together. This finding is supported by Grunewald's (2002) declaration that when individuals encounter culture shock, they look for a place that can promote or protect their cultural identities. Therefore, research partners in this study went to the Chinese grocery store or other ethnic places to fulfill their cultural needs.

The Perceptions of the Chinese Grocery Store

Research partners went to ethnic places to reduce culture shock and seek familiar things. When the research partners in the study went to Chinese grocery stores, both negative and positive perceptions were generated. Some of them had negative perceptions because of the environment, sanitation issues, food quality, freshness of products, or import sources, while others carried positive perceptions because of the sense of familiarity and their understanding of the badly organized layout of the store and products. .

Negative perceptions. Most of the research partners described their concerns about shopping in Chinese grocery stores as being due to the environment, sanitation

issues, food quality, freshness of products, or import source. They pointed out the first image they received when they entered a Chinese grocery stores was that it was crowded. The layout and products were also not well organized for them. They complained about the categorization of products in Chinese grocery stores as not being clear enough. In addition, because Chinese grocery stores provide customized service at the fresh meat and seafood booth, there were many unpacked fresh meats and seafood on the shelves for customers to choose. Therefore, as compared to American grocery stores, the smell in Chinese grocery stores was stronger and unappealing. Even though Chinese grocery stores provided fresh meat and seafood, the research partners in this study were concerned with the freshness and quality of other products, such as eggs, juice, and milk. One of them even mentioned the vegetables looking stale at Chinese grocery stores. They noticed that the expiration date was always approaching, while some of the products did not even have an expiration date. The factor of the import source of the products was very important to research partners in this study. Certain import locations were deemed unsatisfactory due to prior bad reputation.

Positive perceptions. Even though some research partners in this study had negative perceptions about Chinese grocery stores, others showed their understanding

regarding the badly organized layout and complimented the Chinese grocery store on maintaining their food habits by offering a customized seafood and meat booth, and brand awareness. They pointed out that Chinese grocery stores in the USA were not only targeting Taiwanese, but also all people with a Chinese cultural background. Therefore, it was important for the stores to supply sufficient products to satisfy all of their target customers, but this was difficult to do because of the limited space available at the store. Hence, products that would have been separated were displayed together resulting in a chaotic and un-organized layout. Research partners were also aware that the Chinese grocery stores are seeking a balance between the bad layout and a sufficient number of products. They felt that if the Chinese grocery stores planned to maintain high quality in all aspects, the cost would rise, which would have an adverse impact on the customers. The research partners also claimed that they preferred buying meat and seafood in Chinese grocery stores because they could get customized orders, such as chopped or sliced meat, small amounts, or marinated meat and fried fish at the booths. Besides the customized service, they also could maintain their food habits by their brand awareness of items from their home country. When they were able to buy the products

imported from Taiwan with the same labels and brand name with which they were familiar, they did not have to adopt American products.

The layout and categorization also gave them positive perceptions. They stated the layout and categorization were very similar to those at home, which made them more relaxed at the grocery store. In contrast, they felt a sense of anxiety and pressure when shopping in American grocery stores because of unfamiliar products and layout. Furthermore, the choices and number of products at an American grocery store made decision making and choice more difficult. Price also gave research partners a positive perception, as products were usually cheaper at a Chinese grocery store than at an American one. They felt that if the product brand in a Chinese grocery store was identical to the one in an American store, it was not necessary to buy it in an American store. This finding also consistent with Ajrouch (2000) and Mills (2005) who view an ethnic place as an intersection of the majority and minority culture. They can both see the products from majority and minority culture in ethnic places in which the minority culture dominates.

An interesting finding of the study was that the research partners in the study developed a new craving for food products at the host destination that they had never

craved when they were in their home cultural environment. When queried for the potential reasons for such behaviors, the answer was that these food products in the host destination represented their home culture, their country. This strong connection motivated them to consume these products even though they had not done so in their home country. It is consistent with Hu (2006) that individuals purchase goods or food in ethnic place can construct their specific cultural identities through the purchase process. The findings of the current study also revealed that engagement with grocery stores can affect the overseas' lives of research partners. Ethnic places not only helped regarding the food and dining issue, but it also reduced their nostalgia and provided a sense of security to them. These findings are consistent with those of (Shirikian, 2006) who stated that if travelers gain familiarity with the host culture in a safe and nonthreatening manner, they will have an increased openness to experience it and become more acculturated. In other words, ethnic places can provide a sense of acceptance, isolation, and adjustment to research partners.

The research partners in this study were minorities in the USA host culture, and also suffered from various types of culture shock. According to Tse (1999), the reason individuals conceived themselves as a minority was their limited contact with the ethnic

group of their same cultural background. However, Chinese ethnic products and ethnic places made it easier for those in the Chinese diaspora to live in America (Shi, 2005).

Therefore, when research partners went to ethnic places, they regarded themselves as the majority as people of a similar identity gathered at those places (Ajrouch, 2000; Grunewald, 2002). Simply put, their minority roles flipped to majority roles at Chinese grocery stores. The research partners indicated that had a feeling of being on someone's land, and regarded themselves as minority. They felt very anxious and insecure. This is consistent with the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1993) which stated that when people considered themselves as members of minority, they would struggle to satisfy their safety needs. They could not feel where they belonged and as such felt out of place (Mo & Shen, 2007). Therefore, when they went to ethnic places, they felt strongly that those places were their "turf". The feeling of being home results from a sense of acceptance gained by interacting with the cultural environment such as ethnic grocery stores, as indicated by Mo and Shen (2007). In addition, they believed their family and friends could adapt to the new environment by visiting Chinese grocery stores because ethnic places function as gateways to host culture or intersections of the majority and minority cultures as consistent with Ajrouch (2000) and Mills (2005).

Besides providing a sense of acceptance, ethnic places also assisted research partners in temporarily isolating themselves from the host culture, a concept supported by Chacko (2003) and Kaya (2005). Berry (1980) pointed out that when individuals entered a new culture, they did not have to be assimilated into the host culture, but rather could still remain in their own culture. Chinese grocery stores assisted the research partners in escaping from the American culture and remaining with their cultural identity. Some of them observed that only minorities such as the Chinese, Indians, and Mexicans shopped in Chinese grocery stores, while in contrast, the customers in American grocery stores are not only American, but also Chinese, Mexican, and Indian.

Adjustment to the new environment happens during the acculturation process which is when two different cultures interact (Berry & Sam, 1997), and at the same time, individuals' "attitudes and behaviours are altered as a result of contact with another, dissimilar culture" (Shim & Schwartz, 2007, p. 410). People living in an area that has two different cultures may not completely change their own culture to adapt to the host one, but they may assimilate things from the different culture for accommodating the new culture (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovitz, 1936). The process of accommodating to host culture is called adjustment. The research partners in this study considered ethnic places

such as Chinese grocery stores as helping them to maintain their ideal lifestyle. They stated that they were willing to bring their relatives or friends there because they could adapt to the new environment easily, with there being no need to convert their food habits to American ones. This finding from the current study is confirmed by Redfield et al. and Cuellar (2000), who indicated individuals change their own cultural identity partly for living in host culture, but do not entirely adopted the host culture. In addition, because research partners have to contend with difficulties in a new environment such as discrimination and rejection, they remain close to ethnic places that provide a sense of security which is supported by Kosic, Kruglanski, Pierro and Mannetti (2004).

Limitations of the Study

Some limitations in the current study need to be acknowledged. First, the small sample size might be considered a limitation. However, in this study, as qualitative method was applied to gain the unique and individual personal perceptions regarding Chinese grocery stores, the small sample size is not regarded as a limitation. The strength of this method lies in deeper and prolonged engagement with the research partners to gain a deeper understanding of the research queries. These perceptions were fully developed through the series of participant observations, informal conversations,

and copious field notes that were taken during the length of the investigation. The recruitment of research partners ended when data analysis resulted in a saturation of themes (Patton, 2002). In this case, saturation was reached within 10 interview transcripts, and employing triangulation, member check and an audit trail, credibility and trustworthiness was established. Since the research partners in the study were business travelers from Taiwan, the results of this study cannot be generalized to a larger group of individuals. In future studies, research partners need to include individuals from different countries. Also there was not an equal representation of males and females in the current study. Despite attempts to recruit more females, the final group of research partners were primarily males. As the segment of business travelers gets more diverse, future studies should include more women business travelers. Currently, the business traveler segment is primarily male and is accurately represented in the group of research partners participating in the current study.

In addition, this study was conducted in Silicon Valley which is located in the southern bay of San Francisco where many business travelers visit every year. As the sample size was not only small but restricted to a particular geographical area, opinions might differ from those of travelers to other areas that do not have as many ethnic places

as compared to the San Francisco Bay area. However, qualitative method researchers seldom take generalizability, akin to external validity in quantitative methods into account because they pay more attention to individual lived experiences. However, the concept of user generalizability (Thomas & Nelson, 2001) can be employed with the findings of the current investigation.

Conclusion and Implications

The current study attempted to answer three main research questions to gain an understanding of the role of ethnic places in helping business travelers maintain their cultural identity. The results of this study indicated that finding items and experiences familiar to home country and culture shock were the factors motivating business travelers to visit ethnic places. Even though they had negative perceptions of Chinese grocery stores regarding elements such as product layout, sanitation, food quality, freshness of products, and import source, they expressed positive perceptions such as feeling familiar with the ethnic places and understanding the badly organized layout of the stock. Engagements with the ethnic places affected their business travel experience when it came to adjusting to the new environment including giving them a sense of acceptance and providing a safe place where they could be isolated from the host culture.

This study revealed that ethnic places can be gateways that connect the host culture to the culture of the business travelers (Shirikian, 2006), safe havens that isolate them from host culture (Chacko, 2003), and places with familiar things that ease the culture shock they encounter (Kaya, 2005). Previous studies indicated engagement with ethnic places can help immigrants adapt to the new environment (Hu, 2006), but there was no research investigating the business travel segment. This study aimed at the business traveler segment and indicated that ethnic places play a crucial role in helping business travelers to maintain their cultural identities as they are for immigrants.

Because of the increasing number of business travelers, destination marketers should pay more attention to the business travel segment as they cannot ignore the profit these travelers bring to the destinations. If destination marketers can take advantage of ethnic places and further promote them to business travelers, business travelers will be more satisfied with their trip and likely to become repeat travelers (Alegre & Cladera, 2006). When these travelers experience pleasure during their stay, they will be more willing to bring their friends or relatives to visit the destinations (Khan, Toh & Chua, 2005; Sandberg, 2007b).

Business travelers can also be a tremendous source of word-of-mouth advertising for marketers as they share their positive experience in daily conversations with coworkers, friends, family, or even with complete strangers (Hsu, Kang, & Lam, 2006; Jang & Wu, 2006). Therefore, it is important to ensure these travelers have positive feelings about their travel experience in the USA. To accomplish this goal, marketers need to enhance the positive image of ethnic places during business travelers' visits which can then strengthen their cultural identity and provide them with the capability of adapting to the new culture.

Future Research

This study attempted to gain an understanding of the role of ethnic places in helping business travelers maintain their cultural identity. As described previously, a small sample was used in this study because a qualitative rather than a quantitative method of obtaining data was utilized. For future research, a quantitative method should be employed to ensure wide generalizability of the findings.

In addition, the target market of Chinese grocery stores includes not only people from Taiwan, but all those with a Chinese background. Thus, the sample should be expanded to include all business travelers with a Chinese background. Furthermore,

because Silicon Valley is a high tech concentrated industry, males are in the majority (City of San Jose, 2007b; U.S. Census, 2006, Engineers Canada, 2007, Pieronek, Uhran, McWilliams, & Silliman, 2004). This trend also applies to Taiwan. Therefore, the majority of research partners in this study were male. However, gender can impact behavior and perceptions (Shirikian, 2006). Further research studies should recruit more females as participants to see if women business travelers have a different experience when it pertains to the role of ethnic places in negotiating culture shock.

Researcher's Reflection

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the role of ethnic places in maintaining the cultural identity of business travelers. As the business travelers being studied in the current investigation were individuals from Taiwan, and as the methods employed for this investigation were qualitative, it is imperative for researcher reflexivity. It is in this vein that it is deemed important to clarify the cultural and ethnic identity of the lead researcher. As a Taiwanese international graduate student living in Silicon Valley temporarily for the past three years, the lead researcher has had personal experiences of culture shock in a new country and the role that ethnic grocery stores played in maintaining and solidifying her cultural identity. Her own experiences and

identity made her sensitive to the research partners' conversations, behaviors, and emotions (Bih, 1992), thus ensuring the "reflexivity" and "transparency" that are important for qualitative studies (Jamal & Hollinshead, 2001).

Furthermore, the similarity of the lead researcher's cultural identity along with the research partners allowed for the creation of a better and deeper connection among the research partners, while facilitating a deeper understanding and empathy toward the experiences of research partners (Bih, 1992). When research partners were sharing their personal lived experiences, she was able to empathize for those experiences. She understood the research partners' struggles in overcoming difficulties in a new environment, and was able to share in their pleasures when they expressed excitement and positive experiences. This empathy inspired and motivated the research partners to share more personal experiences with the researcher.

However, to ensure the validity and credibility of the research, during the data analysis process, the lead researcher took care to limit projecting prior personal experiences on the lived experiences of the research partners. In addition, the lead researcher applied triangulations, member checks, audit trail, and prolonged engagement in analyzing the transcripts. After the results were obtained, the transcripts and themes

were sent to the research partners to confirm the accuracy of the themes and the interpretations of the research partners.

As a final note, some research partners did not want to admit Chinese grocery stores affected their business travels. They denied that their engagement with Chinese grocery stores made any difference to them. However, following a series of interviews, questions, and field observations, the results showed Chinese grocery stores supported these travelers' overseas life either physically, such as in dining, or psychologically, such as giving them a the sense of acceptance via familiar food. Eliciting this information that research partners did not want to want to express at first was very difficult, but also important for researcher to gain deeper understanding of the experiences of the research partners pertaining to their lives as business travelers in a new environment.

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Appendix A

Agreement to Participate in Research

Responsible Investigator: Wen-chyi Chen

Title of Protocol: Role of the Ethnic Places in Maintaining Cultural Identity of Business Travelers.

1. You have been asked to participate in a research study investigating the role of ethnic places in helping to maintain the cultural identity of business travelers.
 2. You will be asked to participate in a face to face interview and share your perceptions and experiences about visiting an ethnic grocery store. In addition, the researcher may visit a Chinese grocery store with you and ask you to describe your perceptions and motivations of Chinese grocery store. Furthermore, the researcher may also engage in informal conversations. The interview will be recorded using a digital recorder.
 3. There are no anticipated risks to participating in this research study.
 4. There are no overt benefits to participating in the investigation. It is hoped that as a result of participation, you may have an increased awareness and enhanced understanding of the role of ethnic place in maintaining the cultural identity of business travelers.
 5. No alternative procedures will be employed.
 6. Although the results of this study may be published, no information that could identify you will be included. You have the right to remove your data from consideration at any time.
 7. There is no compensation for participation in the study.
 8. Questions about this research may be addressed to Wen-chyi Chen at (408) 888-3980 or Dr. Gonzaga da Gama, Department of Recreation studies at (408) 924-3009. Complaints about the research may be presented to Dr. Bethany Shifflet, Interim Chair of Recreation and Leisure Studies Department at (408) 924-3000. Questions about research subjects' rights or research-related injury may be presented to Pamela Stacks, Ph.D., Associate Vice President, Graduate Studies and Research, at (408) 924-2480.
 9. No service of any kind, to which you are otherwise entitled, will be lost or jeopardized if you choose not to participate" in the study.
 10. Your consent is being given voluntarily. You have the right to not answer questions you do not wish to answer. If you decide to participate in the study, you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative effect on your relationship with San Jose State University or with any other participating institutions or agencies.
 11. At the time that you sign this consent form, you will receive a copy of it for your records, signed and dated by the investigator.
- **The signature of a subject on this document indicates agreement to participate in the study.**
 - **The signature of a researcher on this document indicates agreement to include the above named subject in the research and attestation that the subject has been fully informed of his or her rights.**

Signature

Date

Investigator's Signature

Date

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

1. How long have you been in the US?
2. How long do you plan to stay in the US?
3. What brought you to the US?
4. What has been your experience in the US so far?
5. Has it been very different from your home country? In what way? Please describe!
6. Have you been able to find places that remind you of your culture and home? Can you describe these places?
7. Have you ever been to an American grocery store?
8. How often did you go to an American grocery store?
9. How often did you go to a Chinese grocery store?
10. Which do you prefer and why?
11. How do you find out about the Chinese grocery store?
12. Generally speaking, do you go there with friends or by yourself?
13. Do the Chinese holidays or festivals motivate to you go to there? Why?
14. Have you ever met friends at the Chinese grocery store?
15. Did you get every grocery items that you miss from hometown/upbringing in the Chinese grocery store?
16. What kind of product will you buy most in the Chinese grocery store (meat, vegetable, cookie, seasoning, etc)
17. What is your perception of shopping in Chinese grocery store, and American

grocery store?

18. Is there a difference?
19. Do you think you know everything better and easier in Chinese grocery store?
20. Do you feel more comfortable when you are searching for an item in Chinese grocery store than in American grocery store?
21. Do you enjoy shopping in the Chinese grocery store?
22. When shopping at an American grocery store, what are your experiences when compared to shopping at a Chinese grocery store?
23. If there was no Chinese grocery store in the area, what would you feel? How would it impact your experience as a business traveler?
24. In what way does having a Chinese grocery store, help you deal with being in a different culture?
25. As a result of your experience as a business traveler to the area, what are your thoughts about returning to visit either for leisure or business?
26. Do you have any questions or comments to add?

Appendix C

訪談問題 Interview Protocol in Chinese

1. 你在美國停留多久了?
2. 你會在美國停留多久?
3. 你來美國的目的?
4. 到美國後感覺如何?
5. 你覺得美國跟台灣(大陸)最不同的地方是什麼? 在那方面?
6. 你有找一些有家鄉感覺的地方嗎? 你可以描述一下這些地方嗎?
7. 你有去過美國超市嗎?
8. 多久去一次?
9. 你有去過中國超市嗎?
10. 多久去一次?
11. 你怎麼知道中國超市的?
12. 一般而言, 你都自己去還是跟朋友去?
13. 在中國的節慶期間, 你會比較想去中國超市嗎? 為什麼
14. 你有在中國超市遇到過熟人嗎?
15. 你在中國超市有找到所有你想要的台灣食物(物品)嗎?

16. 你最常在中國超市買的東西是什麼 (例如：肉類、蔬菜、餅乾、調味料)?
17. 你在中國超市採買的感覺是什麼，在美國超市採買的感覺是什麼?
18. 他們兩者有什麼不同?
19. 你會覺得你對於中國超市的商品比較熟悉或是比較容易了解嗎?
20. 當你在找特定商品時，你會覺得在中國超市比較自在嗎?
21. 你喜歡去中國超市嗎?
22. 你覺得在美國超市購物與在中國超市購物有什麼不同?
23. 如果這裡沒有中國超市，你會有什麼感覺?對你在這裡的生活會有什麼影響?
24. 你覺得中國超市如何幫助你面對不同的文化衝擊?
25. 身為一個商務旅客，你會考慮再回到這裡觀光或是工作嗎?
26. 是否任何意見想補充的?

Appendix D

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

**San José State
UNIVERSITY**

**Office of the Provost
Associate Vice President
Graduate Studies & Research**

One Washington Square
San José, CA 95192-0025
Voice: 408-924-2427
Fax: 408-924-2477

E-mail: gradstudies@sjsu.edu
<http://www.sjsu.edu>

To: Wen-chyi Chen

From: Pamela Stacks, Ph.D.
Associate Vice President
Graduate Studies and Research

Date: June 13, 2007

The Human Subjects-Institutional Review Board has approved your request to use human subjects in the study entitled:

"Role of ethnic places in maintaining cultural identity of business travelers"

This approval is contingent upon the subjects participating in your research project being appropriately protected from risk. This includes the protection of the anonymity of the subjects' identity when they participate in your research project, and with regard to all data that may be collected from the subjects. The approval includes continued monitoring of your research by the Board to assure that the subjects are being adequately and properly protected from such risks. If at any time a subject becomes injured or complains of injury, you must notify Dr. Pamela Stacks, Ph.D. immediately. Injury includes but is not limited to bodily harm, psychological trauma, and release of potentially damaging personal information. This approval for the human subject's portion of your project is in effect for one year, and data collection beyond June 13, 2008 requires an extension request.

Please also be advised that all subjects need to be fully informed and aware that their participation in your research project is voluntary, and that he or she may withdraw from the project at any time. Further, a subject's participation, refusal to participate, or withdrawal will not affect any services that the subject is receiving or will receive at the institution in which the research is being conducted.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (408) 924-2480.

cc. Gonzaga da Gama, 0060

The California State University:
Chancellor's Office
Bakersfield, Channel Islands, Chico,
Dominguez Hills, East Bay, Fresno,
Fullerton, Humboldt, Long Beach,
Los Angeles, Maritime Academy,
Monterey Bay, Northridge, Pomona,
Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego,
San Francisco, San José, San Luis Obispo,
San Marcos, Sonoma, Stanislaus